religions

MDPI

Article

Exploring Motivation and Engagement: Voices of Adolescent Non-Arab Muslim Learners of Arabic at Australian Islamic Schools

Nadia Selim * and Mohamad Abdalla

Centre for Islamic Thought & Education, University of South Australia, Magill Campus, SA 5072, Australia; mohamad.abdalla@unisa.edu.au

* Correspondence: nadia.selim@unisa.edu.au

Abstract: This article explores the motivation and engagement of adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic (a-MLA) enrolled at Australian Islamic Schools (AIS). To this end, the 'L2 Motivational Self System' was used as a theoretical lens. This research gives 'voice' to learners and is dialogic, 'speaking with' rather than 'speaking for' learners in Islamic schools. It also responds to calls for the 'renewal' of Islamic Schools in the Western context, including in Australia, through a focus on Arabic learning. A basic interpretive qualitative approach was used, and data were collected from 40 participants using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were supplemented by classroom observations. In keeping with the emphasis placed on learners' voices, the data presented focus on the students' own words and perspectives. The findings suggest the presence of predominantly religious orientations to learning Arabic, but that a subset of other orientations also exists. The findings also indicate that several contextual factors can lead to disengagement and that the L2 Motivational Self System might not fully explain the situation of these learners. Nonetheless, these findings can inform the practice of teachers engaged with a-MLA and provide grounds for further research.

Keywords: Arabic; L2 motivation; Islamic schools; engagement; non-Arab; renewal; L2 motivational self-system; L2MSS; religion; religious motivation

check for updates

Citation: Selim, Nadia, and Mohamad Abdalla. 2022. Exploring Motivation and Engagement: Voices of Adolescent Non-Arab Muslim Learners of Arabic at Australian Islamic Schools. *Religions* 13: 560. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060560

Academic Editors: Labeeb Bsoul and Klaus Baumann

Received: 6 April 2022
Accepted: 8 June 2022
Published: 16 June 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction and Literature Review

The bond between Arabic and Islam was forged with the revelation of the Qur'an. To Muslims, the Qur'an is the supreme word of God sent down to people of all times and places (Abdel Haleem 2005, p. ix). In the Qur'an, God (Allah-*Subhanahu wa ta'ala*) refers to Arabic as the medium of His message in several verses. For instance, the second verse of the twelfth sura states: "We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran so that you [people] may understand." (Abdel Haleem 2005, p. 145). Such verses emphasise the importance of Arabic. Additionally, Muslims use Arabic to practice their religion (e.g., Arabic is used in the five daily prayers). Therefore, from the inception of Islam, Muslims have expended great energy in promoting Arabic learning and literacy (Lydon 2010; Selim 2018a). Today, Arabic remains part of the Islamic educational agenda in many contexts. This is true of the Australian Islamic schooling context.

Australian Islamic schools (AIS) are formally recognised non-governmental providers of primary/secondary education that fall under the umbrella of Australian *independent schools*. The annual snapshot published by Independent Schools Australia (2022a) identified that 49 Australian Islamic schools are catering to 43,906 students. AIS operate under state (or territory) and federal legislation (Independent Schools Australia 2022c), which entails the use of national curricula, participation in national testing, and providing annual reports (Independent Schools Australia 2022b). Saeed (2004) explained that AIS students learn the same subjects taught in other public schools but "receive Islamic religious education, and are usually taught Arabic as well" (p. 56).

In the 1980s, AIS began emerging in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth (Abdullah 2018). Similar to other faith-based schools, AIS emerged as an alternative to secular governmental schools (Clyne 2001). The Muslim community pursued the establishment of Islamic schools in Australia because they wanted their children to be formally educated in an environment that allows them to learn their faith and practice it freely (Ali 2018). Abdullah (2018) noted that the community felt "that a quality Islamic religious, cultural and Arabic/ethnic language experience could be more readily realised by the establishment of full-time Islamic schools" (p. 196). Clyne (2001) stated that the "teaching of the Qur'an and Arabic, as well as the practice of Islam, are central to the school's purpose" (p. 134).

In many ways, Arabic language education can be seen as a part of the AIS promise. Jones (2013) explained that in Islamic schools, "Muslims learn Arabic just as Jews learn Hebrew in their schools and Catholics used to learn Latin" (p. 281). One of the earliest AIS, the Al-Noori Islamic school launched their Arabic program in 1983 (Campbell et al. 1993), because the "school believes that a sound understanding of Islam rests on the knowledge of Arabic" (Campbell et al. 1993, p. 4). However, research has not sufficiently understood the perspectives of young Muslims learning Arabic at these schools. Moreover, in English-dominant multicultural societies such as Australia, Muslims constitute heterogeneous minorities, and this heterogeneity is reflected in AIS. Therefore, creating a better fit between Arabic language programs and the interests and needs of diverse Muslim school students requires a contextualised understanding of students.

1.1. The Need for Research Focused on Arabic at AIS

Despite the relatively rapid growth of the AIS sector (Jones 2012) and the increase in research exploring AIS over the last two decades, research focused on Arabic language learning in the AIS context remains scarce. Recent research on Australian Islamic schools has dealt with reasons for establishment (Shakeel 2018); leadership (Brooks and Mutohar 2018; Succarie et al. 2018); what is taught at Islamic schools (Jones 2018); Islamic Studies (Abdalla 2018; Abdalla et al. 2020, 2022); Islamic pedagogical frameworks (Abdullah et al. 2015; Abdullah 2018); and renewal of Islamic schools (Memon et al. 2021; Abdalla et al. 2020), but not Arabic studies and/or learning.

In his PhD thesis, Jones (2013) examined what is taught in the faith units and who teaches these subjects and the extent to which an Islamic ethos pervades the 'hidden curriculum', as well as responded to the allegation that these schools form ghettos that isolate the students from mainstream Australian society and thus function as agents of exclusion. Although Jones did not focus on Arabic learning, he provides some useful insights. He interviewed 50 teachers and 31 former students (mostly under 30 years of age, some were older).

Jones (2013) considered Arabic a faith topic (alongside the Qur'an and Islamic studies) and described various structural aspects of the Arabic programs at AIS. For instance, he explained that schools taught Arabic as the language of the Qur'an (p. 68). He also noted that two hours of basic Arabic were offered per week in Years 1–10 and that primary lessons focused on the script and taught simple words. He noted that a teacher reported that Arab students spoke colloquial varieties at home and stayed at low proficiency levels in Classical Arabic (p. 117). He also explained that some students "said they really struggled and got little or nothing out of attending Arabic" (p. 117). He reported that one non-Arab alumnus spent their time in lessons doing other things, and another non-Arab alumnus felt that they memorised everything only to pass the test (Jones 2013). Additionally, the majority of students gave up Arabic in Years 11–12 (Jones 2013). Jones' research offered valuable insights, but a study focused on Arabic that examines learners' perspectives can further the efforts in this space.

Selim (2019b) stated that it was important to prioritise research focused on non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic in AIS. Several studies on Arabic teaching and learning exist in Australia; however, the voices of adolescent non-Arab Muslims are practically absent from all of these, given their broad focus on language maintenance in the Arab–Australian

communities (Abdelhadi 2016, 2017; Cruickshank 2008; Maadad and Thomas 2013; Taft and Cahill 1989). Selim published several important studies on Arabic teaching and learning (Selim 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2022), but none of these focused on the motivation or engagement among non-Arab learners in AIS, hence the significance of this work.

1.2. The Need for Contextualised Research Findings

This research is premised on the idea that English-dominant Muslim-minority (EDMM) contexts, such as Australia, are distinct. Among other specificities, these contexts are marked by the super-diversity of their Muslim minorities (Hassan and Lester 2018; Selim 2022) and an emphasis on English as the vehicle of assimilation into the broader community (Selim 2019a). These contexts might create language maintenance/learning pressures (Sai 2017; Temples 2013) and possible tensions in regard to the place of Arabic in the construction of Muslim identity in members of non-Arab Muslim communities (Sai 2017). Thus, the study perceives a need for EDMM-specific research focused on adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners' motivation. However, the research recognises that while EDMM contexts are more comparable to each other than to other Muslim-majority contexts, each is unique. The migration histories and contemporary realities of their Muslim minorities differ. Thus, it is important to have Australia-specific examinations of adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners' motivation. Contextualised research is likely to yield richer, more nuanced findings immediately pertinent to educators in Australia while remaining relevant to educators in other EDMM contexts.

1.2.1. Overview of Research in EDMM Contexts

The literature review focused on EDMM contexts only and yielded a modest body of research. Seventeen publications were identified (11 peer-reviewed journal articles, one book chapter, and five theses). The review revealed that Australian research is underrepresented in this space. Of the seventeen studies, fifteen were from the United States of America (AlAeraini 2004; Alkhateeb 2014; Belnap 1987; Bouteldjoune 2012; Brosh 2013; Husseinali 2005, 2006, 2012; Kenny 1992; Nichols 2010, 2014; Seymour-Jorn 2004; Taha 2007; Temples 2010; Winke and Weger-Guntharp 2006), and two were from the United Kingdom (Ramezanzadeh 2015, 2021). The review also revealed that more studies focused on post-secondary participants, as only five of the seventeen studies included school-aged participants (Alkhateeb 2014; Kenny 1992; Ramezanzadeh 2015, 2021; Temples 2010).

Post-Secondary Participants

In the post-secondary setting, several researchers tried to understand who was learning Arabic and why (Belnap 1987; Brosh 2013; Husseinali 2005, 2006; Winke and Weger-Guntharp 2006). One study examined differences in motivation and attitudes between American and international students (Taha 2007). One article and a thesis explored the motives of army veterans learning Arabic post-deployment (Nichols 2010, 2014). One study compared the motives of Arab and Muslim heritage learners of Arabic (Husseinali 2012), and another focused on the attitudes and motives of Arab learners of Arabic in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Seymour-Jorn 2004). The researchers used different approaches to answer their research questions (seven quantitative, four qualitative, and one mixed-methods).

A few key points can be surmised from these studies. First, some Arabic learners are interested in 'reading the Qur'an/religious texts' (Belnap 1987). In addition, to interest in reading the Qur'an, a broader religious orientation/motivation can exist. In a qualitative case study of three participants conducted by Husseinali (2005), one participant who was non-Arab and identified as Muslim felt "something akin to spiritual in her need to know the language" (p. 105). Second, there are differences in the motivations of heritage and non-heritage learners (Husseinali 2006; Winke and Weger-Guntharp 2006). There are also differences in the motivation of Arab and non-Arab Muslim heritage learners (Husseinali 2012). Muslim heritage learners "desired to learn more about Islam and Islamic texts"

than Arab heritage learners (Husseinali 2012, p. 97). Language level and proficiency also contribute to motivational differences (Winke and Weger-Guntharp 2006). Third, as few studies honed in on a single group or category of learners (Husseinali 2012; Nichols 2010, 2014), we seem to have merely tapped into the motivations of different types of learners.

School-Aged Participants

Research on school-aged participants' Arabic learning motivation is nascent (one chapter, two peer-reviewed articles and two theses). The researchers used different approaches to answer different research questions. Perhaps most relevant to this research is the work of Ramezanzadeh (2015, 2021) undertaken in the UK. Ramezanzadeh (2015, 2021) focused on students studying Arabic in the General Certificate of Secondary Education context. In both of her studies, Ramezanzadeh used a mixed-methods approach and recruited participants from multiple schools.

In her master's thesis, Ramezanzadeh (2015) explored performance and motivation in students studying Arabic. She tried to recruit a range of schools; however, the participating schools were all Muslim Girls' schools. The 75 student participants (Arab and non-Arab Muslims) were in Years 10–11. Six teachers also participated. Eight reasons (or orientations) for learning Arabic were identified. The "most prominent orientation given overall, was a desire to understand religious texts, primarily the Qur'an" (p. 62). However, she also found that some students only studied Arabic because it was compulsory. Additionally, demotivation and negative attitudes were detected. The negative attitudes centred around a perceived lack of utility and difficulty.

In her PhD thesis, Ramezanzadeh (2021) explored students' Arabic learning motivation. She used the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei 2009) as a lens, but also adopted elements of Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015). An initial sample of 265 students (mostly Muslim) responded to a survey. Ninety-five of these participants later participated in interviews. Motivation was measured for Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and Dialects. Ramezanzadeh's research generated many valuable insights. For instance, she found that interest in acquiring the "ability to understand the Quran was one of the most prominent religious motivations for studying Arabic" (p. 201). However, she also found that 25 out of 95 interviewees could not see themselves using Arabic in the future at all (p. 206).

Overall, it appears that our understanding of Arabic language learning motivation (ALLM) in EDMM contexts is largely shaped by the American experience. More research from Australia and the UK is needed to develop a more nuanced understanding of ALLM in EDMM contexts. Ideally, this research needs to focus on the motivation of school students learning Arabic, given the paucity of research focused on schools and school-aged participants. Moreover, more qualitative research is needed in research on ALLM. Such research can deepen and extend our understanding of the ALLM in different groups of learners. Moreover, qualitative explorations could uncover new research needs.

Thus, the broader literature review suggested that there is room for qualitative research focused on the voices of Australian adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic (a-MLA) by way of diversifying research contexts, participants, and methods in explorations of ALLM.

1.3. The Emphasis on Students' Voices

Unlike university students, school students have fewer opportunities to choose what they learn or how they are educated. Schools could impose educational goals on students (Dörnyei and Ottó 1998). For instance, some AIS offer Arabic only, while others might offer Arabic and another ethnic language, such as Turkish. Additionally, the AIS context can impose religious goals for Arabic learning. Such impositions necessitate consultations that bring students' often-marginalised voices into discussions about their education. In terms of L2 motivation research, Ushioda (2008) stated that "the most promising line of inquiry lies in enabling language learners' own voices and stories to take centre stage" (p. 29).

Consulting students and getting to know them could aid in creating more successful Arabic programs in diverse settings such as AIS (Selim 2022).

2. The Theoretical Lens

The field of L2 motivation[1] is rich. The need to understand what makes learners take up learning of a language other than their own and persist in learning it (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011) has generated six decades' worth of research and theorisation (Al-Hoorie and Macintyre 2019). Research on L2 motivation can be divided into three key periods: the social–psychological period (or foundational period); the cognitive-situated period; and the process-oriented period (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015). In the current period, connecting motivation with learners' selves and identities remains a key interest (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009). In this regard, the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) introduced by Dörnyei (2005, 2009, 2019b) sustains interest.

The L2MSS drew on 'possible selves theory' (Markus and Nurius 1986) and 'self-discrepancy theory' (Higgins 1987). An individual's "repertoire of possible selves can be viewed as the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats" (p. 954). Possible selves incentivise future behaviour and conceptually link the individual's cognition and motivation (Markus and Nurius 1986). Higgins (1987) outlined three self domains (actual/ideal/ought) and two standpoints on the self (own/other), explaining that if we perceive a discrepancy between our actual self and our personally relevant self-guide (ideal or ought), we experience discomfort, which motivates us to take action to minimise the discrepancy.

Dörnyei's L2MSS includes three components:

1. The 'ideal L2 self' (IL2S) represents the L2 aspects of the ideal self that we aspire to acquire and captures integrative or more internalised instrumental orientations (Dörnyei et al. 2006). It covers facets of motivation such as personal goals, desired levels of L2 competence or language-intrinsic goals (Dörnyei 2005). "The hopes, wishes, and aspirations represented in ideal self-guides function like maximal goals" (Higgins 1998, p. 5).
2. The 'ought-to L2 self' (OL2S) represents attributes one believes they ought to possess (e.g., duties, obligations, responsibilities) and pursues to avoid potential adverse outcomes (Dörnyei 2005) or to meet expectations (Dörnyei 2009) defined by others (Lamb 2012). The OL2S captures social pressures that impress upon a learner the need to learn the L2 (Dörnyei 2014). The OL2S functions more in terms of minimal goals (Higgins 1998).
3. The L2 learning experience (L2LE) is conceptualised differently from the two 'self' components (Dörnyei 2009). It focuses on executive motives related to aspects of the immediate learning experience, such as the teacher, curriculum, peers, sense of success (Dörnyei 2010), positive learning history (Dörnyei 2005), or enjoyable quality of the language program (Dörnyei 2014).

For a self to motivate, it must be plausible from the language learner's perspective (Macintyre et al. 2009), and a future self-image needs to be in harmony with a learner's social environment (Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie 2017).

Theorisation and discussion of the model continue. Dörnyei (2019a) noted that the L2LE dimension of the L2MSS might not be "sufficiently compatible with the other two self-based dimensions" (p. 48) and recently suggested conceptualising the L2LE in terms of learner engagement (Dörnyei 2019b). The need to explore the L2MSS in connection with motivation to learn languages other than English (Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie 2017) in English-dominant contexts (Olsen 2017) has been highlighted. Several researchers have introduced or described other 'selves' (Lanvers 2016; Macintyre et al. 2017; Taylor 2013; Thompson 2017).

Additionally, Djigunović and Nikolov (2019) noted that research using the L2MSS with 'younger learners (up to 15 years)' is rare and inconclusive. The literature on adolescent possible selves suggests that their possible selves are validated or invalidated through

social interactions (Roshandel and Hudley 2018), that their possible selves remain unstable till late adolescence (Zentner and Renaud 2007), and that their selves are subject to other contextual influences. For instance, Oyserman and Fryberg (2006) explained that the number of "academic possible selves declines across the transition to middle school and from middle to high school" (p. 17).

This research contributes to the discussions of the model, through an exploration of its capacity to explain Australian non-Arab Muslim adolescents' motivation and engagement in connection with Arabic learning in the Australian Islamic schooling sector, i.e., the learning of a minority language in an English-dominant context. However, given the emphasis on contexts (AIS and Australia), and evidence that adolescents' possible selves are susceptible to their contexts, data analysis will remain flexible. As Heywood (2015) noted, we can be "seduced by the artifice of simplicity" and try to twist reality to fit the model, rather than recognise its limitations (p. 119).

3. Research Questions and Aims

This article reports some findings from a bigger research study focused on non-Arab adolescent Muslim learners of Arabic (a-MLA) at Australian Islamic Schools (AIS). The main study sought answers to three questions: (1) how do a-MLA make sense of Arabic learning; (2) what do they make of their L2 learning experiences; (3) how do they want their L2 experiences improved. The study also wanted to identify other factors that influence these students' motivation.

This article has four key aims:

1. To identify the motivational orientations of the a-MLA participants;
2. To explain the nature of their engagement with Arabic learning;
3. To outline the contextual influences that impact their engagement;
4. To explore whether the L2MSS can be used to sufficiently explain a-MLA motivation and engagement with Arabic learning at AIS

4. Research Methodology

The research was approved by the human research ethics committee. A basic interpretive qualitative approach (BIQA) was used in this research. Studies that use a BIQA are also called: descriptive, noncategorical, inductive, and generic qualitative research (Caelli et al. 2003; Kahlke 2014; Liu 2016; Merriam and Tisdell 2015). To triangulate the design, semi-structured interviews were supplemented with classroom observations. The interviews incorporated a form-filling activity in which students listed the languages they knew, self-assessed their language skills in each, and ranked the importance of the languages they listed.

The research instruments were refined in a two-phase pilot study. Data collected during the pilot were not included in the final data set. The main study data collection followed. Interviews generally lasted around 40–45 min, but with a few senior girls, they lasted around 60 min, and with a few junior boys, they were shy of 30 min. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Loosely structured classroom observations, in which the researcher was a nonparticipant-observer offered additional insight into observable aspects of engagement, learning, and classroom dynamics.

A thematic analytical approach was used to interpret the data. NVivo software was used to support the analytical process. The data presented here focus on students' own words. The analysis was not focused on frequency counts. Therefore, the data being presented uses only guiding words such as "majority", "some", etc.

4.1. Research Participants

A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit information-rich participants (Lawrence 2014; Merriam 2009). This approach does not pursue statistical generalisability but establishes selection criteria linked to the purposes of the research (Merriam 2009). The selection criteria were that participants had to be non-Arab Muslims in Years 7–12 that are

enrolled in AIS. Being of non-Arab Muslim background meant that a student did not have access to spoken Arabic through one or both of their parents.

Forty-nine (49) students from Years 7–10 volunteered, but nine did not meet the selection criteria. Ultimately, data from forty (40) participants were analysed. The interviews of 18 males and 22 females were included in the data set. The participants were 11–17 years of age. The cohort of participants was diverse. Most students reported using English alongside their home language/s but reported different abilities in their home language/s. Students were exposed to the following home languages: Urdu, Somali, Malay, Farsi, Dari, Turkish, Bosnian, Hindko, Italian, Punjabi, Sindi, Sinhala, and Tamil. Only one girl of Ghanaian descent had no exposure to any languages other than English at home. See Figures 1–3.

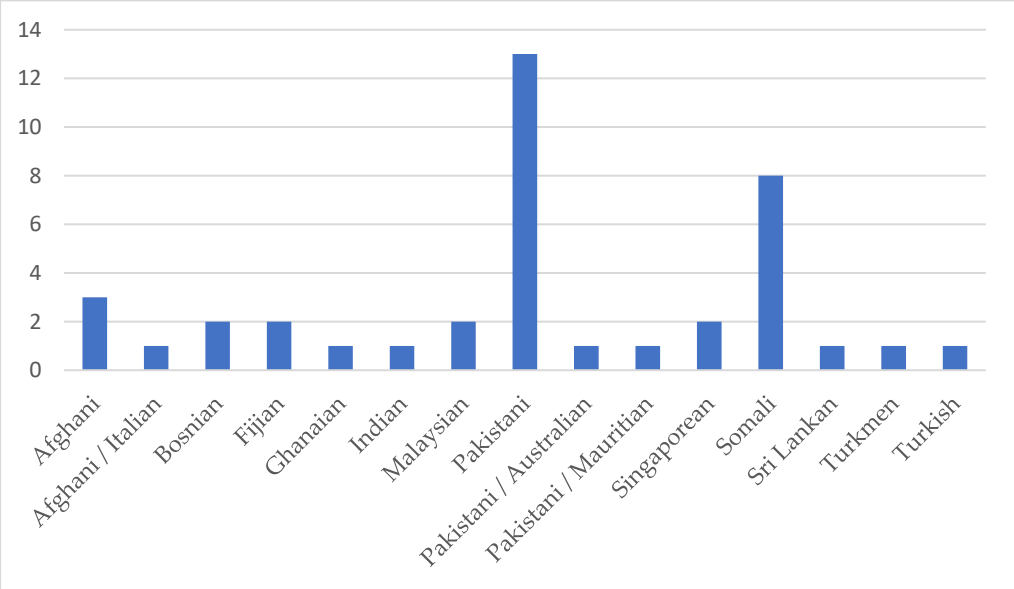

Figure 1. Backgrounds of participants.

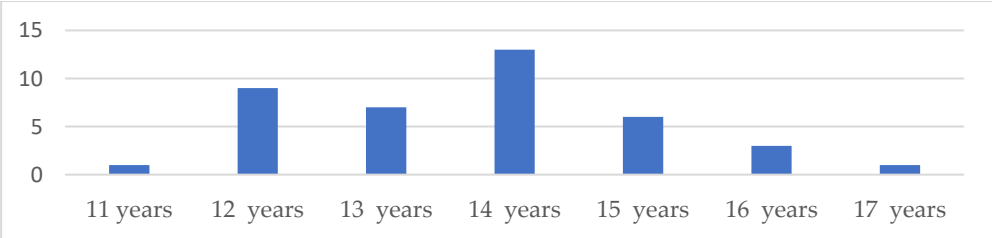

Figure 2. Ages of the participants.

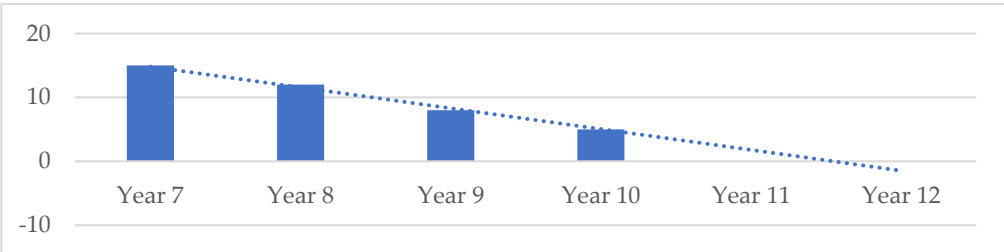

Figure 3. Participants by year of study.

4.2. Research Sites

The pilot and main study data were collected from four comparable Australian Islamic schools (see Table 1). All of the schools required L2 learning in Years 7–9. Three schools only

offered Arabic, and one offered Arabic and Turkish. All schools taught Modern Standard Arabic.

Table 1. Information about the research sites.

School	Pilot School	School 1	School 2	School 3
Stage of research	Two-phase pilot study	Main study—Source of the 40 analysed interviews		
No. of Arabic teachers	2	1	3	3
Registered teachers	0	1	0	3
Lesson time in minutes	45 min	45 min	75 min	45 min
Lessons in Years 7–9	One	Two	One	Two
Lessons in Years 10	0	Three	0	Two
Lessons in Years 11	0	Three	0	0
Lessons in Years 12	0	Five	0	0
Streamed by level	No	No	Yes	Yes
Textbooks/Resources	Textbook	Photocopies	Photocopies	Textbook
Modern Standard Arabic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

It was important to select schools based in bigger and smaller cities to gain diverse perspectives from different Australian Muslim contexts. The main study data were collected from three schools located in Adelaide (South Australia) and Melbourne (Victoria).

Melbourne is home to a large Muslim community (Hassan and Lester 2018) and to a smaller Arab population than Sydney. Adelaide is home to a smaller but rapidly growing Muslim community (Hassan and Lester 2018, p. 20).

5. Findings

Inviting students to discuss their motivations for studying Arabic at AIS led to three key findings: first, the different types of motivational orientations that learners had to Arabic language learning; second, the nature of learners' engagement/disengagement with learning; third, the presence of several contextual influences that influence motivation. These are outlined in the following subsections.

5.1. Motivational Orientations to Arabic Learning

Motivational orientations are reasons for language learning, which can be categorised in terms of the goals or activities they enable a learner to realize (Noels et al. 2019; Zarrinabadi et al. 2019). Ortega (2009) noted that "reasons are not antithetical or mutually exclusive, and therefore a given individual may exhibit several orientations at once" (p. 173). This was true of the participants in this study. The overwhelming majority were religiously oriented to Arabic learning; however, a small minority of students outlined additional interests.

5.1.1. Religious Orientations to Learning Arabic

Religious orientations were the most dominant in the cohort of participants. Students often had more than one religious interest in Arabic learning. The data analysis revealed seven religious orientations to Arabic learning. These were: *enlightenment, sacred text, ritual, obligation, preservation, transmission*, and *afterlife.* The students' religious motivational orientations are elaborated with representative students' quotes.

Enlightenment Orientation

The *enlightenment orientation* focused on a desire to answer the call of Allah (*Subhanahu wa ta'ala*- SWT) and acceptance of His decision to convey his final message to humanity in the Arabic language. A male student said passionately:

> ***Yes, I want to learn Arabic. I wanna learn Arabic with all my heart. So, I wanna fully know it. Everything, In sha Allah!*** [God willing!] ***I'll study my best, In sha Allah … Arabic is a good language, and it's the language that was chosen by Allah … Allah could have chosen a number of languages, but He chose this specific language, and like, I wanna study it, and I wanna learn it, and I wanna understand what He is trying to tell us in the Qur'an.***

Sacred Text Orientation

The *sacred text* orientation focused on the desire to read and understand scripture. Comprehending the Qur'an was a major interest for most of the students.

A female student said: ***"My goal is, to one day, to be able to … understand the Qur'an just by reading it."*** A male student explained:

> ***I wanna be able to understand it*** [Qur'an] ***with the Arabic, not like the translations. The Arabic would be, it'd be like, it would give a different meaning, or it would feel different to know it.***

A male student said: ***"I want to learn Arabic because … when I read the Qur'an I can understand … I can understand the Qur'an … you know?"***

Another female student elaborated:

> ***there is no exact … translation of the Qur'an or the Ḥadith. They'll be like assumptions, but there isn't any exact. So, to know the exact, you have to know Arabic.***

Ritual Orientation

The *ritual* orientation captured interest in enhancing one's experiences of their religious duties (e.g., daily prayers) through comprehension of the language.

One female student stated: ***"I want to learn Arabic because I want to understand what I'm saying like when I pray."*** Another female student was keen on understanding the Arabic content of religious sermons. She said:

> ***on Fridays, for Jumu'ah prayer*** [Friday Congregational Prayer], ***umm … our school they talk in Arabic … When I listen to the stories, I can like connect some words with each other, and I understand which story they are talking about, and … that still gets me emotional.***

Obligation Orientation

The *obligation* orientation expressed a sense of 'duty' or 'obligation' to learn Arabic because it was part of the religion for a few students.

A female student explained ***"I feel like it's my responsibility to learn Arabic" and a***nother female student said: ***"because we are Muslims, and like, many things told to us in our religion are in Arabic."*** A male student was more emphatic:

> ***It's important in the religion to learn. That's the only reason. I don't really … wanna learn it for the fun of it … I don't want to learn any languages just for fun. Like, there has to be a purpose behind it.***

Preservation Orientation

The *preservation* orientation captured concerns for preserving Arabic for future generations and a concern for its disappearance. A female student discussed this matter passionately.

> ***If Arabic finishes in our country, in our world, will the Prophet be happy? No, because, this language, they sacrificed so much for this language, so much for us, and we don't even value their language …***

She added:

> ***I don't want Arabic to finish in this world. I'm gonna learn it. I'm gonna teach future generations if I can . . . because I want to continue this Arabic. Even if one person knows it in the entire world, it's gonna make a big difference!***

Transmission Orientation

The *transmission* orientation was focused on aspirations to transmit religious knowledge to others. A female student explained:

> ***For me, being able to read Arabic is, gonna be something really, like, big! . . . I can like help my mum more, as compared to like knowing, like, just reading the translated version. And there are some people in my country, back home, some of my family members even, that wanna learn more about their religion, but they aren't getting like good umm, facilities like me.***

While a male student said:

> ***I wanna grow up to be a Qur'an teacher . . . and teach them the Arabic.***

Afterlife Orientation

As for the *afterlife* orientation, this captured some learners' feeling that they need Arabic to communicate with Allah (SWT) in their *Hereafter.* A female student explained that after we die, on the Day of Judgement:

> ***God is gonna, like, say to us 'As-salāmu Alaykum!' [peace be upon you] . . . and like, stuff like that. And then we're gonna be speaking Arabic, and stuff!***

A male student explained that ***"when you die, In sha Allah we all go to Heaven, you speak Arabic there."*** Another female student indicated that she had internalised this motive from her teacher, saying:

> ***One of the other reasons, I wanna learn Arabic, is it would help me in my Hereafter too . . . 'cause my teacher he said, that . . . we'll be speaking in Arabic over there, so I'm like, Okay!***

Likewise, another female student affirmed: ***"Arabic is important, in terms of religion as well, 'cause that's what you speak in Jannah*** [Heaven]***."***

5.1.2. Additional Orientations to Learning Arabic

A small group of learners outlined additional interests in learning Arabic. These interests were grouped into five orientations.

Language/Cultural Orientation

Affinity for Arabic and its cultural products emerged. A female and a male student said: "***I like the language." Another*** female said she used to watch Arabic shows, while another female student said: ***"the poetry is 'real' nice, yeah? So that's, like, another reason."***

Travel Orientation

There was interest in using Arabic when travelling to the Arab world for pilgrimage or other reasons. One male student explained: ***"In sha Allah when I go to Ḥajj*** [religious pilgrimage] ***it will help me to communicate with other people."***

A female student explained:

> ***I'm thinking of doing . . . medicine and philanthropy so if I learn Arabic, I could go to . . . Middle Eastern countries, and I wouldn't need a translator to be sitting beside me. I can just like converse with them.***

Friendship Orientation

A desire to improve relationships with Arab friends also emerged. One female student said: ***"I have friends also living in other countries, like Dubai and stuff . . . so, it'll be***

easier to communicate." Another female student emphasized her desire for social inclusion saying:

> ***My friends speak in Arabic, and I don't understand what they're saying. So, it kind of feels really awkward next to them . . . . It's kind of something, like, excluding.***

Instrumental Orientation

The possible utility of Arabic was apparent. One male student said: ***"it can help me hugely . . . I can do a lot of stuff with, you know, reading and writing, and understanding Arabic."***

Another male student explained:

> ***I think it would be good for my . . . studies, for me to learn a third language, and Arabic is the language that is the most important, I think.***

Recognition Orientation

A desire to impress others also emerged. One female student wanted to ***"impress teachers"***, and one male student said: ***"I'll be the only one in my house to learn."*** Another female student explained:

> ***If I'm able to do this and impress my parents, the other people will be impressed. . . . some people actually wanna do this, but they're afraid, so maybe this will also encourage them.***

5.2. Nature of Engagement with Arabic Learning

Students' motivational orientations were distinct from the nature of their engagement with Arabic learning. For instance, while a student might have mentioned interests or aspirational goals in connection with Arabic learning, they might have described their disengagement, or how they had dropped Arabic or intended to do so. Disengagement appeared prevalent among participants, and a minority expressed resistance. Disengaged behaviours were also observable in classroom observations.

5.2.1. Explicit Resistance

A small minority of participants expressed open resistance to Arabic learning. This means that at some point in the interview they said that they did not want to learn Arabic.

One male student said:

> ***learning Arabic is not for me, even though it is good to know multiple languages . . . I guess Arabic is not*** [the] ***one for me . . .***

A female explained her resistance, saying:

> ***I don't really need to learn it . . . . I'm like, not used to having it like in my life.***

She elaborated:

> ***Like, people, it's their choice if they wanna do it or not. Like, no one has to force someone, say that 'Oh, you have to do this. You have to do that'. And I think, like, when you get into high school, I think you should like have an opinion like, if you wanna do this subject or not . . . . . .***

When probed, she added:

> ***That's what like people tell me to do, they say like, umm . . . you have to learn Arabic if you're a Muslim . . . 'cause it's part of your deen [religion], and all that.***

Another female student explained:

> ***I would rather learn my home language, like, Urdu, and like stay good at English first. And then, maybe if I'm really good at Urdu, then I would go to Arabic. But I think I want to know Urdu first than Arabic.***

5.2.2. Disengagement

Engagement with learning has internal and external dimensions (Sinatra et al. 2015), and in a study focused on 'student voice', it is important to focus on students' explanations rather than merely frame students from the researcher's perspective as engaged or disengaged (Erickson and Shultz 1992). In this cohort, interviews revealed facets of external and internal dimensions of disengagement.

A male student said that students ***"don't have the motivation to, actually, do work"***. Another male student explained that students: "***wag, which means that they don't come to the class for a long time***." Another male student described lessons as ***"sometimes chaotic"***, while another stated: "***100% there's a lot of mucking around in the class***."

One female student said:

> ***people just sit there, listening but not really listening . . . Lots of students just disobey. They don't do work most of the time. When the teacher says something, they just sit there, talking or doing nothing . . . or they'd be like, on their iPads,*** [playing] ***games, watching movies, listening to music. Like they put*** [their] ***headphones under their scarves.***

Another male student said:

> [Some] ***will be on the iPads doing whatever they want. Then, some will just be talking. And during the answering of questions, some will . . .*** [They] ***just won't do it. They'll just leave it to the last minute. Just sleep the rest of the class.***

Several students alluded to their own disengagement. For instance, one male student said there are:

> ***Students who just play on their iPads, like, sometimes I used to play on my iPad, but there's other students who resort to, you know, jumping out of windows, running out of class.***

A female student who had dropped Arabic in Year 10, reflected on Year 9, saying: ***"we annoyed Mr . . . I think that's why he gave us so much . . . demerits, and we didn't even care! "***

One male student conceded:

> ***I don't pay too much attention to Arabic . . . it's actually because of me as well because I was never into Arabic from the first.***

A female student explained:

> ***Students think of Arabic, just like a course . . . that you got to learn all the stuff until the exams, and then after you're gonna forget it . . . most of the people I've seen they don't have a real connection to Arabic. Like, like in this school, like outside, I don't see any real connection.***

Another female student explained that her disengagement impedes her learning, saying:

> ***I don't know, I just get bored in class, I don't really pay attention. That's why I don't learn, I don't learn much.***

5.3. Contextual Influences on Engagement

The data revealed that several overlapping or interrelated contextual influences potentially contributed to students' disengagement from Arabic.

5.3.1. Negative Learning Experiences

Negative language learning experiences emerged as a cause of disengagement and resistance. The students described their language learning experiences in great depth and detail. Pervading students' discussions were dissatisfaction and disillusionment with various aspects of their learning experience (e.g., teachers, prescribed texts, program

structure, peer disruptions) and its outcomes. The overwhelming majority dropped Arabic as soon as it became non-compulsory.

A male student said: "[learning] ***wasn't very effective, to be honest, yeah. Didn't learn much since I started school***". He explained: ***"I didn't really learn anything in primary, to be honest, up until grade 6" . . . . "like Arabic wasn't serious, it was just not serious".*** He added: ***"maybe the fact that it wasn't serious made me not believe that it was serious***", emphasising that Arabic ***"became like a whole joke!".***

There appeared to be a pervasive sense of failed learning experiences. A female student said that students ***"just wanna get out"*** because ***"they don't know what they're learning".*** She expressed her own frustration, saying:

> ***They expect me to just get a random piece of text I don't really understand,*** [and] ***I don't know anything about and start reading it.***

Another female student explained that ***"the ones that don't understand Arabic, don't like, don't have much interest in Arabic***". About herself, she said: ***"it's not easy for me to learn Arabic. I've tried it. It does not work!"*** When probed about having given up, she said: ***"yeah . . . 'cause I feel like if I try, it's not gonna . . . it's not gonna happen".***

A male student who expressed resistance said: ***"I wanted . . . I want to learn Arabic, and because that's what the Prophet used to speak, and that's what I should know as a Muslim."*** *When probed about the use of the word 'wanted'*, he said:

> ***I can't catch on to Arabic because I don't . . . I'm not sure why, but it's, like . . . a very hard language to learn, for me.***

Most students said Arabic was a hard language, and a minority directly linked difficulty to their language learning experiences. For instance, a male student said that: ***"the way they teach the language, makes it hard".***

This seemed to influence their feelings about Arabic lessons. For instance, a male student said: ***"when everyone finds out we have LOTE, it's like everyone's in a jazzy mood . . . drowsy, like, everyone just gets depressed".***

5.3.2. The Primacy of English in Australia

The primacy of English emerged as another important issue. The emphasis on English in students' lives influenced their perceptions of the value of Arabic learning. Some students were cognizant of the status of English locally and globally. For instance, a male student said:

> ***We go to school, and we live in like a world where English is a main language.***

A female student explained that:

> ***. . . growing up in this society. Like, I'm not saying the society is bad. But I feel like it affects us indirectly. So, like, we kind of lose that religious and Arabic link.***

One female student said of her Fijian parents, ***"they usually speak Australian. I mean English***", while another female student elaborated on her peers:

> ***they don't speak Arabic*** [at] ***home. They don't speak Arabic*** [at] ***school. So, they're like, 'I don't wanna' . . .***

Another female student explained that:

> ***English is like, the main language we all speak. So, I think like . . . I think like, for some of them they don't feel like Arabic would be as important to them as English.***

Additionally, English appeared to be perceived as more important than other languages, and Arabic specifically. For instance, a male student explained that ***"we have a subject: 'LOTE'***[2]***, and then we have: 'English'. LOTE is like, other languages. So, English is like . . . a more important subject. That's all***".

He also said:

you have to learn English, you know, to go through our school. But Arabic?

5.3.3. Future and Academic Planning

Irrespective of their future goal clarity, most students could not locate Arabic in their future or relate it to immediate academic plans. A female student explained that she had dropped Arabic because:

Maths, English, Science, Humanities, all those are the most important subjects. 'Cause, they're gonna help you later in life . . . I didn't see any connection that it [Arabic] ***would have to me in the future.***

When asked where Arabic might fit into his future, a male student said: "***I don't think anywhere . . . I'm not taking it.***" Another male student said: ***"no, it's gone, I didn't choose it".***

Another male student explained: ***"I think like, right now for me . . . the other subjects are more important".*** Similarly, when asked about pursuing Arabic further, a female said: ***"No. I think I'd focus more on what I need for my future."***

A female student suggested that curriculum structure implies that Arabic is not essential. She said:

I think that Arabic is there for a reason. But since it's not the main lesson, I'm pretty sure there's a reason to why that is. And that's because of . . . like English, Maths, and stuff like that, so you have more time [to study those subjects]**.**

A male student confirmed this, saying: ***"Arabic is not viewed as an important subject. Like the four main ones are: English, Maths, Science, and Humanities".*** Another male student concurred and added: ***"LOTE would be like, close to the end of that row".***

Nonetheless, a small minority left a door of possibility open, albeit noncommittally. For instance, one male student said: ***"I might learn it one day"***, but ***"I don't think it's gonna happen while I'm in school".***

5.3.4. Discouraging Parental Attitudes

Some parents' attitudes surfaced as a negative influence. One male student said: ***"I reckon most parents wouldn't care about your LOTE marks, so then if your parents don't care, then I think you wouldn't care, and you wouldn't, you know, try".***

Another female student stated: "***I don't think they*** [parents] ***would force me to*** [learn it] [because] ***as long as I know how to read Qur'an, I think that's practically all right with them . . . I don't think they really care, actually.***" This student also said that she and her peers ***"did muck around a lot"*** and made the ***"teacher's life miserable".***

Other parents prioritised the child's ethnic language. For instance, a female student related:

When I'm learning Arabic at home, like, if I say some . . . like, you know how ʾummī is 'mom'? So, when I say ʾummī, mom won't respond to me. 'Cause, she doesn't know what it is, and I tell her. And then she's like, 'but we speak Turkish at home, don't speak in Arabic to me!'

5.3.5. Emergence of Countercultures

Interviews revealed an emergent interest in European languages. One male student neither wanted to learn Arabic nor his home language (Urdu), he said: ***"I would like to do French or something, like those kinds of languages. I don't know why".***

These interests could be part of an emergent counterculture of opposition to Arabic. A female student stated that among girls: ***"French and Spanish is just trending"***. She elaborated: ***"it's more like, other schools are doing it, why can't we?"***

Another male student reflected on his interest in European languages. He said: ***"I wanna learn Arabic, but I'd like to try other subjects, uhh . . . other languages".*** He added:

"like, Italian" . . . "I feel like it would be more enjoyable to speak another language" rather than doing ***"the same thing every time".***

Another female student explained that ***"if you said . . . 'Oh, we're gonna change Arabic into French', they would be way happier."***

5.4. The Explanatory Power of the L2MSS

The L2MSS introduced by Dörnyei (2005, 2009, 2019b) helped explain some aspects of the a-MLA situation in AIS. The third component of the model, the L2LE, captures the motivational (or demotivational) impacts of the language learning context. For this cohort of participants, the L2LE was a great explainer of students' dissatisfaction with the quality of their Arabic learning experience and failure to acquire the language. Dissatisfaction with experiences made an ideal or ought-to 'Arabic self' appear implausible (Macintyre et al. 2009). This manifested in some students' hopeless statements about the acquisition of Arabic.

The IL2S and the OL2S are useful conceptual tools for capturing learners' motivational orientations, but vagueness surrounded the alignment of a-MLA orientations to these selves. This was not surprising, given recognition of vagueness in the alignment of instrumental motives, for instance, in (Dörnyei 2005; Kormos and Csizér 2008). Data were insufficient to determine the alignment of the subset of additional orientations but sufficient to determine that aligning these adolescent school students' religious orientations would be complicated.

Religious orientations can align with IL2S if they are internal aspirations pursued without obligation, with OL2S, if pursued due to a faith-induced sense of obligation, or perhaps both selves, if one aspires to be the best version of themselves as dictated by their faith. This complexity is compounded in the case of these a-MLA because, in addition to their poor learning experiences, choice was either eliminated or minimised by schools; they were influenced by and responded to their social environments and the national context in different ways. These complexities are elaborated on in the discussion.

Although it is acknowledged that a future self-image needs to be in harmony with a learner's social environment (Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie 2017), the swathe of undermining contextual influences in these learners' micro and macro contexts as well as learners' internalisation of, response to, and interaction with these influences are not fully explained by the L2MSS. That is, the 'self' components appear better placed to describe why students choose to learn a language than why they do not.

6. Discussion

The study explored the motivation and engagement of adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic (a-MLA) studying Arabic in Australian Islamic schools (AIS). The data revealed seven religious orientations to Arabic learning: *enlightenment, sacred text, ritual, obligation, preservation, transmission*, and *afterlife.* The overwhelming majority of participants' statements suggested a religious orientation to Arabic learning. The *sacred text* orientation (interest in reading the Qur'an primarily, but also Hadith) was the most prominent. This seems consistent with the findings of Ramezanzadeh (2015, 2021) Additionally, for a small minority of students, a subset of additional orientations emerged: *language/cultural, travel, friendship, instrumental*, and *recognition.*

Learners' religious orientations suggested a perception that one *should* acquire Arabic as a Muslim. These learners' religious orientations were suggestive of 'obligation'. Aside from the emergence of an *obligation* orientation that captures an expressed sense of duty, an external origin or dimension to other religious orientations is detectable in students' statements. For instance, one emphasised that Allah (SWT) had chosen Arabic when describing their desire to learn Arabic, another student referred to absorbing the Afterlife need from the teacher, and a third worried about disappointing the Prophet Muhammad *-peace be upon him*. However, this can also be surmised from a few students' resistance to the external pressures to learn Arabic.

The data suggested that most participants thought Arabic *was needed* to meet Allah's (SWT) expectations, understand scripture, fulfil ritual requirements (e.g., understand one's prayers), help the community, and navigate the Afterlife. Such *needs for Arabic* conveyed a measure of internalisation. Higgins (1998) identified that when obligations are potent, such as "biblical commandments, oughts can even function like necessities" (p. 5). Some of these a-MLA *wanted to* (or *needed* to) learn Arabic to perform religious duties, and some felt obliged to. Therefore, there is a need, as Al-Hoorie (2018) suggested, for the bifurcation of obligations into "obligations one would like to perform and obligations others expect one to perform" (p. 724).

Participants' orientations did not necessarily translate into engagement with Arabic learning. Disengagement was notable in this cohort, and explicit resistance to Arabic learning emerged in a small minority. It was as if most participants' interests in Arabic operated at a cognitive level only, rather than at both the cognitive and affective levels (Kim 2012), or as Dörnyei (2019b) explained, L2 motivation and engagement are markedly different, as L2 motivation "indicates a student's potential for actively pursuing learning" but not how potential is actualised (p. 25). Perhaps these learners' religious OL2S operated in terms of minimal goals (Higgins 1998). This is detectable in references to Arabic as a course one merely needed to pass. Minimal goals are "less likely to sustain engagement in learning and enthusiasm about it in the long run" (Al-Hoorie 2018, p. 737). This seemed pronounced when many factors either undermined the value of acquiring the OL2S or rendered its acquisition implausible.

The L2LE captured students' demotivation or disengagement as instigated by the experiences of Arabic learning. However, the L2MSS model, could not fully explain the situation of these a-MLA, as several other undermining contextual influences were interfering with their motivation and engagement. The other contextual influences were the primacy of English in Australia, future and academic planning, discouraging parental attitudes, and the emergence of peer countercultures.

English is considered the bedrock of the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture of Australia (Mansouri 2005), and the emphasis on English in all the contexts within which a-MLA are embedded undermined the need for Arabic. English was even equated with *Australianness* in one instance. The futility of Arabic learning was salient to some of these Australian a-MLA. This is consistent with the findings of Lanvers (2016) on other Anglophones. However, this salience was striking given its existence in Islamic schools, which are Muslim alternatives to the public school system.

These Australian Islamic Schools offered Arabic as a component of the Islamic educational alternative; however, a focus on attaining high pre-tertiary scores (Jones 2018), seemed to frame Arabic as optional or less valued (Curnow et al. 2014). It was clear that the participating a-MLA harboured attitudes about 'core' and 'optional' subjects (Curnow et al. 2014). This resonates with findings that preferences for Arabic and Islamic studies courses were low in Years 11–12 (Nathie and Abdalla 2020).

These issues were further complicated by some discouraging parental influences. Djigunović and Nikolov (2019) explained that when parents show interest in their child's language education, this impacts their motivation, self-concept, and language learning achievements (p. 520). More importantly, adolescents often seek indications as to who they *can become* from responses to their behaviour (Oyserman et al. 2004). Negative parental attitudes reinforced students' own negative attitudes or inhibited the pursuit of Arabic.

Peers were also influential. Peers and disruptive disengaged behaviours were part of the L2LE. The literature suggests, for instance, that negative classroom dynamics can change a cohort's motivation into demotivation or boredom (Ushioda 2003). In this cohort, it appeared that negative dynamics created fertile ground for the emergence of "countercultures defined by rejection of educational aims and values" (Ushioda 2003, p. 94). Countercultures transcended the boundaries of the classroom, with interest in learning languages other than Arabic described as 'trending'.

For a few of these learners, two selves outlined in the literature appeared pertinent. These are the *anti-ought-to self* (Thompson 2017) and the *rebellious self* (Lanvers 2016; Taylor 2013). The *anti-ought-to L2 Self* refers to one's "desires that are at odds with what the others expect from the individual" (Al-Hoorie 2018, p. 724). Lanvers (2016) explained that 'rebellious' attitudes or resisting social pressures "can push a learner away from learning, rather than towards it, especially in Anglophone learner contexts, where languages might be perceived as irrelevant" (p. 83).

The data suggested that another 'self' was needed to explain the sense of religious obligation and/or guilt that can prompt some non-Arab Muslim students' need to leave the door of future possibility open (e.g., statement about perhaps learning *one day* though not at school). Such a self might not have self-regulatory functions, as Oyserman et al. (2004) explained, but might exist to "facilitate optimism and belief that change is possible because they provide the sense that the current self is mutable"(p. 131). This could be labelled a *one-day self*.

These findings suggest that conceptualizing ALLM in terms of possible selves with a tentative capacity to motivate is useful. The 'ought-to Arabic self' was most probably the product of faith-related obligations. This self's motivational capacity was contingent upon perceptions of the affordances/constraints of the L2LE and the wider context/s within which a-MLA were embedded. The 'ought-to Arabic self' did not seem to sustain long-term engagement with Arabic learning and might have operated in terms of minimal goals. However, when the 'ought-to Arabic self' appeared unattainable and/or irrelevant, it was dropped or stripped of its self-regulatory function (one-day self). For some students, other selves emerged to resist pressures to learn Arabic (anti-ought to self, or rebellious self).

However, the interference of multiple contextual influences suggests that the L2MSS might need supplementation when used to examine the learning of more marginalised languages in English-dominant contexts. Dörnyei (2020) noted that accounting for motivational contexts challenges researchers and that the "person-in-context relational view' of language motivation introduced by Ushioda (2009) is an innovative means of doing this. According to Ushioda (2009), this means that "motivation as emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity" (p. 215). These data lend support to this idea.

7. Conclusions

This exploratory research pursued an understanding of the motivational orientations and the nature of engagement of adolescent non-Arab Muslim learners of Arabic (a-MLA) in Australian Islamic Schools (AIS). The findings of this exploratory study can assist educators working with a-MLA in AIS in gaining some understanding of this cohort of Arabic learners. The research identified the different motivational orientations. Using the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei 2005, 2009, 2019b) as a theoretical lens, the predominantly religious orientations of these students appeared to align with the *ought-to L2 self.*

The data revealed the presence of disengagement and even resistance in the cohort of participants, as well as several contextual influences on motivation and engagement. Influences of the L2 learning experience were captured by the model; however, the model could not fully explain other contextual influences or how a-MLA responded to them. The findings suggested the need for alternative 'self' components that can better capture the situation of learners learning minority languages in English-dominant contexts.

The study, of course, has its strengths and limitations. This was a small-scale exploratory study. Naturally, it uncovered many valuable insights about the learners and their context. However, data from 40 participants in three AIS cannot be representative of all students or an entire sector. It is left to readers of this research to determine the relevance of these findings to their contexts. Nonetheless, the findings emphasise the need for more research on the learning of Arabic in Australian Islamic schools, other EDMM contexts, as well as diversifying research and capturing the voices of different cohorts of Arabic learners.

Author Contributions: Data collection, analysis, writing, editing, N.S.; supervision, editing, M.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research paper draws on data generated in the context of PhD research. The PhD research was supported through a scholarship and a small research grant from the Centre for Islamic Thought and Education at the University of South Australia.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This research was approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics. Approval number 200067. Approval date 27 July 2017.

Data Availability Statement: Data is not available for the public.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

[1] The acronym L2 is used here to refer to learning a second (or an additional) language.

[2] LOTE, languages other than English.

References

Abdalla, Mohamad. 2018. Islamic studies in Islamic schools: Evidence-based renewal. In *Islamic Schooling in the West: Pathways to Renewal*. Edited by Mohamad Abdalla, Dylan Chown and Muhammad Abdullah. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 257–83.

Abdalla, Mohamad, Dylan Chown, and Nadeem Memon. 2020. Islamic studies in Australian Islamic schools: Learner voice. *Religions* 11: 404. [CrossRef]

Abdalla, Mohamad, Dylan Chown, and Nadeem Memon. 2022. Islamic Studies in Australian Islamic Schools: Educator Voice. *Journal of Religious Education* 70: 25–42. [CrossRef]

Abdelhadi, Mostefa. 2016. Arabic language maintenance among the Arabic-speaking community in the regional Queensland city of Toowoomba, Australia. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia. Available online: http://eprints.usq.edu.au/id/eprint/32727 (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Abdelhadi, Mostefa. 2017. The role of education in the maintenance of Arabic language among the Arabic-speaking community in the regional city of Toowoomba, Australia. Paper presented at the Fourth Asia Pacific Conference on Advanced Research, Melbourne, Australia, March 4–5.

M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans. 2005, *The Qur'an/a New*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Abdullah, Muhammad. 2018. A pedagogical framework for teacher discourse and practice in Islamic schools. In *Islamic Schooling in the West: Pathways to Renewal*. Edited by Mohamad Abdalla, Dylan Chown and Muhammad Abdullah. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 195–226.

Abdullah, Muhammad, Mohamad Abdalla, and Robyn Jorgensen. 2015. Towards the formulation of a pedagogical framework for Islamic schools in Australia. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR)* 6: 509–32. [CrossRef]

AlAeraini, Ahmad. 2004. Motivational Factors and the Language Proficiency of Learners of Arabic in Selected American Universities. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, Ann Arbor, Australia. ProQuest One Academic Database. (3141460). Available online: https://www.proquest.com/docview/305174099?pq-origsite=primo# (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Al-Hoorie, Ali H. 2018. The L2 motivational self system: A meta-analysis. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 8: 721–54. [CrossRef]

Al-Hoorie, Ali H., and Peter Macintyre. 2019. *Contemporary Language Motivation Theory: 60 Years Since Gardner and Lambert (1959)*, 1st ed. Edited by Sarah Mercer and Stephen Ryan. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Ali, Jan A. 2018. Muslim schools in Australia: Development and transition. In *Islamic Schooling in the West: Pathways to Renewal*. Edited by Mohamad Abdalla, Dylan Chown and Muhammad Abdullah. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 35–62.

Alkhateeb, Haitham M. 2014. Reading anxiety, classroom anxiety, language motivation, reader self-perception, and Arabic achievement of Arab-American students learning Arabic as a second language. *Psychological Reports* 115: 918–31. [CrossRef]

Belnap, R. Kirk. 1987. Who's taking Arabic and what on earth for? A survey of students in Arabic language programs. *Al-'Arabiyya* 20: 29–42.

Bouteldjoune, Abdelmohssen. 2012. Motivation in Foreign Language Learning Settings: The Case of Arabic in the USA. Master's thesis, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA. Available online: https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses/868/ (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Brooks, Melanie C., and Agus Mutohar. 2018. Islamic school leadership: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 50: 54–68. [CrossRef]

Brosh, Hezi. 2013. Motivation of American college students to study Arabic. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3: 27–38.

Caelli, Kate, Lynne Ray, and Judy Mill. 2003. 'Clear as mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2: 1–13. [CrossRef]

Campbell, Stuart, Bronwen Dyson, Sadika Karim, and Basima Rabie. 1993. *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential: Profiles of 9 Key Languages in Australia. Volume 1–Arabic*. Canberra: National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia Limited.

Clyne, Irene D. 2001. Educating Muslim children in Australia. In *Muslim Communities in Australia*. Edited by Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, pp. 116–37.

Cruickshank, Ken. 2008. Arabic-English bilingualism in Australia. In *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd ed. Edited by Jim Cummins and Nancy H. Hornberger. Boston: Springer, vol. 5, pp. 281–94.

Curnow, Timothy J., Michelle Kohler, Anthony J. Liddicoat, and Kate Loechel. 2014. *Review of Languages Retention From the Middle Years to the Senior Years of Schooling: Report to the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development*. Adelaide: University of South Australia, Available online: https://apo.org.au/node/70635 (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Djigunović, Jelena Mihaljević, and Marianne Nikolov. 2019. Motivation of young learners of foreign languages. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning*. Edited by Martin Lamb, Kata Csizér, Alastair Henry and Stephen Ryan. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 515–33.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2005. *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2009. The L2 motivational self system. In *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*. Edited by Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp. 9–42.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2010. Researching motivation: From integrativeness to the ideal L2 self. In *Introducing Applied Linguistics: Concepts and Skills*. Edited by Susan Hunston and David Oakey. London: Routledge, pp. 74–83.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2014. Future self-guides and vision. In *The Impact of Self-Concept on Language Learning*. Edited by Kata Csizér and Michael Magid. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp. 7–18.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2019a. From integrative motivation to directed motivational currents: The evolution of the understanding of L2 motivation over three decades. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning*. Edited by Martin Lamb, Kata Csizér, Alastair Henry and Stephen Ryan. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 39–69.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2019b. Towards a better understanding of the L2 learning experience, the Cinderella of the L2 motivational self system. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 9: 19–30. [CrossRef]

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2020. *Innovations and Challenges in Language Learning Motivation*. New York: Routledge.

Dörnyei, Zoltán, and Ali H. Al-Hoorie. 2017. The motivational foundation of learning languages other than global English: Theoretical issues and research directions. *The Modern Language Journal* 101: 455–68. [CrossRef]

Dörnyei, Zoltán, and István Ottó. 1998. Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics* 4: 43–69.

Dörnyei, Zoltán, and Stephen Ryan. 2015. *The Psychology of the Language Learner Revisited*. New York: Routledge.

Dörnyei, Zoltán, and Ema Ushioda. 2009. *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Dörnyei, Zoltán, and Ema Ushioda. 2011. *Teaching and Researching Motivation*, 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Dörnyei, Zoltán, Kata Csizér, and Nóra Németh. 2006. *Motivation, Language Attitudes and Globalisation: A Hungarian Perspective*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Erickson, Frederick, and Jeffrey Shultz. 1992. Students' experience of the curriculum. In *Handbook of Research on Curriculum: A Project of the American Educational Research Association*. Edited by Philip W. Jackson. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, pp. 465–85.

Hassan, Riaz, and Laurence Lester. 2018. *Australian Muslims: The Challenge of Islamophobia and Social Distance*. Adelaide: University of South Australia, Available online: https://www.unisa.edu.au/contentassets/4f85e84d01014997a99bb4f89ba32488/australian-muslims-final-report-927web-nov-26.pdf (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Heywood, Tim. 2015. Assessment. In *An Introduction to the Study of Education*, 4th ed. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 118–33.

Higgins, E. Tory. 1987. Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review* 94: 319–40. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Higgins, E. Tory. 1998. Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 30: 1–46. [CrossRef]

Husseinali, Ghassan. 2005. Why are you learning Arabic? Orientations, motivation and achievement. *Texas Papers on Foreign Language Education* 2005: 99–114.

Husseinali, Ghassan. 2006. Who is studying Arabic and why? A survey of Arabic students' orientations at a major university. *Foreign Language Annals* 39: 395–412. [CrossRef]

Husseinali, Ghassan. 2012. Arabic heritage language learners: Motivation, expectations, competence, and engagement in learning Arabic. *Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages* 11: 97–110.

Independent Schools Australia. 2022a. Independent Schools Snapshot 2022. Available online: https://isa.edu.au/snapshot-2022/ (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Independent Schools Australia. 2022b. Debunking Common Myths about Independent Schools. *Independent Schools Australia*. Available online: https://isa.edu.au/about-independent-schools/debunking-common-myths-independent-schools/ (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Independent Schools Australia. 2022c. Independent Schools Overview. *Independent Schools Australia*. Available online: https://isa.edu.au/about-independent-schools/about-independent-schools/independent-schools-overview/ (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Jones, Peter. 2012. Islamic schools in Australia. *The La Trobe Journal* 89: 36–47.

Jones, Peter. 2013. Islamic Schools in Australia: Muslims in Australia or Australian Muslims? Ph.D. dissertation, University of New England, Armidale, Australia. Available online: http://e-publications.une.edu.au/1959.11/13607 (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Jones, Peter. 2018. What else do they teach in an Islamic school? In *Islamic schooling in the West: Pathways to Renewal*. Edited by Mohamad Abdalla, Dylan Chown and Muhammad Abdullah. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 97–115.

Kahlke, Renate M. 2014. Generic qualitative approaches: Pitfalls and benefits of methodological mixology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 13: 37–52. [CrossRef]

Kenny, Dallas. 1992. Arab-Americans learning Arabic: Motivations and attitudes. In *The Arabic Language in America*. Edited by Aleya Rouchdy. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 119–61.

Kim, Tae-Young. 2012. The L2 motivational self system of Korean EFL students: Cross-grade survey analysis. *English Teaching* 67: 29–56. [CrossRef]

Kormos, Judit, and Kata Csizér. 2008. Age-related differences in the motivation of learning English as a foreign language: Attitudes, selves, and motivated learning behavior. *Language Learning* 58: 327–55. [CrossRef]

Lamb, Martin. 2012. A self system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in urban and rural settings. *Language Learning* 62: 997–1023. [CrossRef]

Lanvers, Ursula. 2016. Lots of selves, some rebellious: Developing the self discrepancy model for language learners. *System* 60: 79–92. [CrossRef]

Lawrence, Neuman W. 2014. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Pearson New International 7th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Liu, Lisha. 2016. Using generic inductive approach in qualitative educational research: A case study analysis. *Journal of Education and Learning* 5: 129–35. [CrossRef]

Lydon, Ghislaine. 2010. A thirst for knowledge: Arabic literacy, writing paper and Saharan bibliophiles in the Southwestern Sahara. In *The Trans-Saharan Book Trade: Manuscript Culture, Arabic Literacy and Intellectual History in Muslim Africa*. Edited by Graziano Krätli and Ghislaine Lydon. Leiden: Brill, pp. 35–72.

Maadad, Nina, and Judith Thomas. 2013. Learning the Arabic language in Australia's Arab communities: Perspectives of young Arabic-speaking Australians on informal and formal opportunities. Paper presented at the Second National LCNAU Colloquium, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, July 3–5.

Macintyre, Peter D., Sean P. Mackinnon, and Richard Clément. 2009. Toward the development of a scale to assess possible selves as a source of language learning motivation. In *Motivation, Language Identity and the l2 Self*. Edited by Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp. 193–214.

Macintyre, Peter D., Susan C. Baker, and Heather Sparling. 2017. Heritage passions, heritage convictions, and the rooted L2 self: Music and Gaelic language learning in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. *The Modern Language Journal* 101: 501–16. [CrossRef]

Mansouri, Fethi. 2005. Citizenship, identity and belonging in contemporary Australia. In *Islam and the West: Reflections from Australia*. Edited by Shahram Akbarzadeh and Samina Yasmeen. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, pp. 149–64.

Markus, Hazel, and Paula Nurius. 1986. Possible selves. *American Psychologist* 41: 954–69. [CrossRef]

Memon, Nadeem A., Mariam Alhashmi, and Mohamad Abdalla, eds. 2021. *Curriculum Renewal for Islamic Education: Critical Perspectives on Teaching Islam in Primary and Secondary Schools*. New York: Routledge.

Merriam, Sharan B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation: Revised and Expanded from Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, Sharan B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. 2015. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nathie, Mahmood, and Mohamad Abdalla. 2020. Courses Preferences and Occupational Aspirations of Students in Australian Islamic Schools. *Religions* 11: 663. [CrossRef]

Nichols, Jennifer. 2010. Motivation and Affective Variables in Arabic Language Learning for Iraq War Veterans: Language Learning Experiences Inside and Outside the Classroom. Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA. Available online: http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1274056937 (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Nichols, Jennifer. 2014. The Arabic language fog of war: Exploring Iraq war veterans' motivations to study Arabic language and culture post-deployment. *Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages* 15: 119–54.

Noels, Kimberly A., Nigel Mantou Lou, Dayuma I. Vargas Lascano, Kathryn E. Chaffee, Ali Dincer, Ying Shan Doris Zhang, and Xijia Zhang. 2019. Self-determination and motivated engagement in language learning. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Motivation for Language Learning*. Edited by Martin Lamb, Kata Csizér, Alastair Henry and Stephen Ryan. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 95–115.

Olsen, Max. 2017. Motivation, Learner Attrition, and the L2 Motivational Self System: A New Zealand Study of Heritage and Non-Heritage University Language Learners. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Available online: http://hdl.handle.net/10523/7557 (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Ortega, Lourdes. 2009. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. London: Hodder Education.

Oyserman, Daphna, Deborah Bybee, Kathy Terry, and Tamera Hart-Johnson. 2004. Possible selves as roadmaps. *Journal of Research in Personality* 38: 130–49. [CrossRef]

Oyserman, Daphna, and Stephanie Fryberg. 2006. The possible selves of diverse adolescents: Content and function across gender, race and national origin. In *Possible Selves: Theory, Research and Applications*. Edited by Curtis Dunkel and Jennifer Kerpelman. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Incorporated, pp. 17–39.

Ramezanzadeh, Anna-Maria. 2015. Exploring GCSE Arabic: An Analysis of Heritage and Non-Heritage Language Learner Performance. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

Ramezanzadeh, Anna-Maria. 2021. Motivation and Multiglossia: Exploring the Learning of Arabic in UK schools. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

Roshandel, Shadi, and Cynthia Hudley. 2018. Role of teachers in influencing the development of adolescents' possible selves. *Learning Environments Research* 21: 211–28. [CrossRef]

Saeed, Abdullah. 2004. *Muslim Australians: Their Beliefs, Practices And Institutions*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, and Australian Multicultural Foundation, in Association with the University of Melbourne.

Sai, Youcef. 2017. "Arabic is not my language . . . ": Debates over teaching of Arabic in Irish Muslim schools. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37: 442–53. [CrossRef]

Selim, Nadia. 2017a. Ibn Sahnun's ninth century framework: A guide for Arabic language curriculum writing. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR)* 8: 488–506. [CrossRef]

Selim, Nadia. 2017b. Muslim societies' ambivalence to Arabic: Reasons, manifestations and consequences. *International Journal of Islamic Thought (IJIT)* 11: 32–44. [CrossRef]

Selim, Nadia. 2018a. Arabic, grammar and teaching: An Islamic historical perspective. *International Journal of Islamic Thought (IJIT)* 13: 80–89. [CrossRef]

Selim, Nadia. 2018b. Arabic teaching at Australian Islamic schools: A CALL framework. In *Islamic Schooling in the West: Pathways to Renewal*. Edited by Mohamad Abdalla, Dylan Chown and Muhammad Abdullah. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 285–314.

Selim, Nadia. 2019a. Arabic should not be cast as heritage: Arabic lives. *Ulum Islamiyyah* 27: 18–25. [CrossRef]

Selim, Nadia. 2019b. Will Arabic survive in Australia? Participation and challenges. *Islam and Civilisational Renewal (ICR)* 10: 85–105. [CrossRef]

Selim, Nadia. 2022. Arabic Teaching at Australian Islamic Schools: Working with Student Diversity and Curriculum Challenges. In *Supporting Modern Teaching in Islamic Schools: Pedagogical Best Practice for Teachers*. Edited by Ismail Hussein Amzat. Singapore: Routledge, pp. 182–97.

Seymour-Jorn, Caroline. 2004. Arabic language learning among Arab immigrants in Milwaukee, Wisconsin: A study of attitudes and motivations. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24: 109–22. [CrossRef]

Shakeel, M. Danish. 2018. Islamic Schooling in the Cultural West: A Systematic Review of the Issues Concerning School Choice. *Religions* 9: 392. [CrossRef]

Sinatra, Gale M., Benjamin C. Heddy, and Doug Lombardi. 2015. The challenges of defining and measuring student engagement in Science. *Educational Psychologist* 50: 1–13. [CrossRef]

Succarie, Ayda, Wayne Fallon, and Gabriela Coronado. 2018. Towards a hybrid approach to the governance of Islamic schools in NSW. In *Islamic Schooling in the West: Pathways to Renewal*. Edited by Mohamad Abdalla, Dylan Chown and Muhammad Abdullah. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 63–96.

Taft, Ronald, and Desmond Cahill. 1989. Mother tongue maintenance in Lebanese immigrant families in Australia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 10: 129–43. [CrossRef]

Taha, T. A. 2007. Arabic as a "critical-need" foreign language in post-9/11 era: A study of students' attitudes and motivation. *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 34: 150–60.

Taylor, Florentina. 2013. *Self and Identity in Adolescent Foreign Language Learning*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Temples, Amanda L. 2010. Heritage motivation, identity, and the desire to learn Arabic in U.S. early adolescents. *Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages* 9: 103–32.

Temples, Amanda L. 2013. Constructing Arabic as Heritage: Investment in Language, Literacy, and Identity among Young U.S. Learners. Ph.D. dissertation, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA, USA. Available online: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=alesl_diss (accessed on 5 April 2022).

Thompson, Amy S. 2017. Don't tell me what to do! The anti-ought-to self and language learning motivation. *System* 67: 38–49. [CrossRef]

Ushioda, Ema. 2003. Motivation as a socially mediated process. In *Learner Autonomy in the Foreign Language Classroom: Teacher, Learner, Curriculum and Assessment*. Edited by David Little, Jennifer Ridley and Ema Ushioda. Dublin: Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd., pp. 90–102.

Ushioda, Ema. 2008. Motivation and good language learners. In *Lessons from Good Language Learners*. Edited by Carol Griffiths. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 19–34.

Ushioda, Ema. 2009. A person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity. In *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*. Edited by Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, pp. 215–28.

Winke, Paula M., and Heather D. Weger-Guntharp. 2006. Why students in the U.S. are learning Arabic: A study of motivation at the college level. *Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages* 3: 7–33.

Zarrinabadi, Nourollah, Saeed Ketabi, and Mansoor Tavakoli. 2019. *Directed Motivational Currents in L2: Exploring the Effects on Self and Communication*. Cham: Springer Nature.

Zentner, Marcel, and Olivier Renaud. 2007. Origins of adolescents' ideal self: An intergenerational perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 92: 557–74. [CrossRef]