Developing an Arabic Typography course for Visual Communication Design Students in the Middle East and North African Region

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Preface

Prior to choosing a thesis topic, I was very fortunate to assist Professor Jillian Coorey at Kent State University in one of her classes; the course was an introduction to typography for freshmen level. During that semester, I realized that I was not introduced to Arabic typography when I was an undergraduate student, so naturally I purchased all the available books about Arabic typography. What surprised me was the number of Latin typography books available in comparison to Arabic typography as I was only able to find one. The book I purchased did not have the basics of Arabic typography, which raised many questions: Is Arabic typography being taught in design schools? If yes, what is being taught? How can I learn Arabic typography basics outside of school settings if there are not any resources? I began asking Arabic designers about their experience with Arabic typography, and looking back at my own experience, realized that Arabic compositions were just an afterthought. Later, I learned Arabic typography is being taught based on personal experiences, with an emphasis on type design. After researching the topic, I developed a great interest in Arabic typography and decided to learn more about it through investigating Arabic typography as my thesis topic.

My professional goal is teaching Visual Communication Design in Kuwait University. My thesis research is directed towards creating a course that teaches the basics of Arabic typography to Visual Communication Design (VCD) students in the Middle East and North African region. The end goal is to document the practice academically, and contribute to the design industry in the region.
Chapter I

Introduction

The Current Issue

Visual Communication Design students are taught how to successfully deliver messages to a targeted audience in a creative manner; they are taught the basics of design, design principles and how to apply them to solve problems. Typography is one of the main elements of visual communication design (Heller, 2004, p. vii). Using typography properly can attract attention, enhance meaning and establish information hierarchy. This allows the audience to understand the message correctly and create legible and easy-to-read compositions (Lupton, 2004, p.146). Acquiring good typographical skills is crucial for designers to effectively convey information and meaning. These skills should be taught in schools by applying a proper typographic foundation and improving skills through experience, which ensures typographic fluency for students before graduation (Heller, 2004, p. 1).

Designers have to take into consideration the audience they are designing for, which is why Arabic typography needs to be part of the Visual Communication Design programs in the Middle East region. In the Middle East region, the most widely spoken and written language is Arabic. Although different dialects are used when speaking, the written language remains the same across all countries; the same set of letters is used to convey meaning in different contexts and dialects (The Middle East Council of the Carolinas, 2013).
Arabic typography as a subject has been introduced academically in school settings. Schools are focusing on typeface design to fulfill the growing demands of generating new legible Arabic typefaces in the market (Cole, 1998). However, no books or journals have been officially published that provide designers with the basics of Arabic typography, typographic rules and the principles of Arabic writing to be able to further enhance their typographic fluency. Teaching the basics of Arabic typography rely on the educators’ personal experience that vary from one educator to the next. This is why it is very important to start documenting the practice of Arabic typography in order to have a clear set of rules that students, professionals and educators can follow (Zoghbi, personal communication, August, 2013).

There are many books about Latin typography that address different perspectives, starting with the history, followed by the basics of typography and its applications and advancing into more intricate details. Arabic typography does not have the same privilege. The current books on Arabic typography emphasize typeface design while overlooking the basics of Arabic typography, which creates the need for academically documenting the practice of typography through various resources and teaching them to Visual Communication Design students.
Core Objectives

The core objective of this thesis is to develop an Arabic typography course for Visual Communication Design students in the Middle East and North African region with an emphasis on the basics. Students can learn the fundamentals of Arabic typography and gradually apply them throughout the course. It can be introduced at the sophomore level so that students can practice and experiment with Arabic typography throughout the program. The aim of this course is to teach students typographic fluency so that they can inform the current market practices and reform the typographic industry in the region after graduation. Arabic typography is a relatively new field. Creating a proper Arabic typography course for Arabic speaking countries will provide designers with the means to further explore and develop the Arabic typography field, which will fill the need in the market for Arabic typography specialists (Cole, 1998).
A glance at the history of the Arabic writing system, calligraphy and typography is needed in order to fully understand how Arabic typography was developed and why it is important to academically document Arabic typography and create a foundation course.

**The Arabic Writing System**

The Arabic writing language played a major role in documenting the Islamic teachings and the Holy Quran. After the death of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh), documenting the Quran was encouraged by scribes to be able to preserve the Islamic teachings and the holy Quran (Moginet, 2009, p. 23). Because the Quran is a holy book, the writers took extra care and attention to the way words are written to symbolize the Quran’s status. At that time, short vowels and diacritic marks were not needed because the Quran was in Arabic and it was prevalent only in regions where Arabic was the native language. (Al-Husaini, 2003, p. 22). There are a lot of similarities in Arabic letters and many letters bare a close resemblance to each other. Words like “tree” which is pronounced as “shajara” appear the same as the word “magicians” which is pronounced as “sahara” (Figure A). With the expansion of Islam amongst non-Arabic natives, the need for short vowels and diacritic marks was prevalent to save the original meaning of the Quranic verses. The Arabic writing system was then further developed to convey meaning more accurately. The current writing system that Arabs use today was a result of decades of

Table 1: An example of two words pre and post diacritic marks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pre diacritic marks</th>
<th>Post diacritic marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shajara – Tree</td>
<td>سحرة</td>
<td>شجرة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahara – Magicians</td>
<td>سحرة</td>
<td>سحرة</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current Arabic alphabets consist of twenty eight letters. The writing style is cursive and letters change shape depending on their location in a word. Letters have isolated shapes, initial, medial and final shapes. Diacritic marks and short vowels are used to distinguish letters and to correctly pronounce words.

**Arabic Calligraphy**

Calligraphy (*kalli. Fr. Gk. beautiful*) is defined in the dictionary as beautiful or elegant handwriting. Calligraphy started as a way to document and preserve the Word of God through the enhancement, beautification, and perfection of the shape of words. Everything had a meaning, starting with the relationship between letters and their measurements, how words are formed, how much weight is given to words and many other aspects of writing. Calligraphic styles were developed during the peak of the Islamic empire from the seventh century during the first Islamic empire and until the eighteenth century under the Ottoman Sultans (Abifares, 2001, p.14-28).

It is important to note that Ibn Muqla (894-950) was the first to analyze the form and proportions of Arabic writing. He created unified guidelines and proportions for the
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calligraphic styles through using Nitham Aldaira; the letter Alef (A,ا) was used as a
diameter of a circle and all the letters were measured through that circle to create unity.
The measuring points were also used as a unit to specify letter sizes and proportions.
They were referred to as Nitham Alnuqat. The measuring point was a rhomboid point that
was drawn to equal the width of the nib of the pen used for calligraphy. The change in
point size allowed calligraphers to have enough freedom and fluidity in their practice
while still maintaining a unified and proportionate look for calligraphy (Abifares, 2001,
p. 96-98) (Moginet, 2009, p.50-56)

The Undocumented Art of Arabic Calligraphy

The art of calligraphy has been passed from teacher to student from the beginning of
calligraphy through present time. Students are taught how to write in different styles
through practice. However, due to the lack of documentation, a lot of the aesthetics,
spiritual values, and principles of the formed words are lost. Numerous books have been
written to teach how letters are drawn, but none of the books mention the principles of
writing with different calligraphic styles. For example: the letter A (Alef ١) is the longest
vertical letter in Arabic. It is known through practice only that the leading or the spacing
between lines is measured by stacking two and a half to three alefs on top of each other
between two baselines. This practice is done to ensure legibility and to have a proper
space between the ascenders from the second line and the descenders of the first line.
Calligraphers in the recent years recognize the fact that these principles need to be
documented and they are trying to revive those lost practices and principles in order to be
able to use the proper form for the proper function when dealing with calligraphy.
The Shift Towards Typography and the Digital Era

The art of Arabic Calligraphy became one of the most important aspects of the Arabic and Islamic history. It continued to develop over the years, and it made its way to the design industry. The letterpress in the Middle East region was first introduced five hundred years ago and the need for typography became prevalent.

Arabic typography relied on hand-written scripts that kept the fluidity and artistic characteristics of calligraphy when print was first introduced in the tenth century in Samarqand. However, it was not widely recognized as a means to transcribe information. With the development of print technology and specifically the printing presses, Arabic printing and typography became more known. The first Arabic text that was composed by moveable type was printed in 1514 in Italy. Printing presses however only took off in different Arab countries in the eighteenth century. The delay was due to the fact that it was successfully slowed down by the powerful calligraphers’ guild in the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century. During that time, all the available tools and technologies were tailored to the configuration of the Latin alphabet, which created many technical problems. For example, the fluidity of Arabic calligraphy could not be preserved. Arabic letters are joined horizontally and due to the fact that each letter had a separate printing block, linear alignment is only possible if Arabic loses its fluidity and some of its aesthetic values. The other major problem is that since Arabic letters change
shape depending on their location in a word and with the addition of diacritic marks, it took between 300 to 600 characters to compose a text in Arabic. With this many characters, it took years to complete and print books. In 1933 Cairo Academy created a composition to reform Arabic script for printing. Many proposals were presented, and in 1958, a Moroccan linguist called Mohammed Ladkhar-Ghazal created a printing system that solved the excessive use of letters when printing using a printing press. His proposal was further developed and only 108 characters were needed to print a full text in Arabic, which was revolutionary at that time (Moginet, 2009, p.79-101).

The shift towards digital printing and designing type digitally in the 1990’s had solved the problems Arabic printing had faced previously (Moginet, 2009, p.103). During that time, Arabic design educators and professionals shifted towards teaching Arabic typeface design because there was a great need for newer and more typefaces that are compatible with the current needs in the market (personal communication, August, 2013) (Heller, 2004, p. 146). Due to the need for typefaces, all the available books in the market are geared toward typeface design and type generation.

**The Pressing Issue of the Present**

Typography in the present is defined as the considered arrangement of letters and words that conveys information and meaning. The purpose of typography is to inform, document, persuade, entertain, or elicit a response. The visual form of typography can help gain attention, make an impression, and signal intent (Heller, 2004, p.2). Now that Arabic typographers and designers no longer worry about the technical difficulties one
may encounter when printing, and with the vastly growing number of developed typefaces, a return to the basics and principles of this field is required when teaching Arabic typography to students. To be able to teach Arabic typography to visual design students and achieve typographic fluency, a deep understanding of the Arabic writing system, calligraphy and current typographic practices is needed.
A note on the process

Research methods and applied framework

The research methods used to define the issue at hand and develop the thesis further were secondary and primary research. Each methodology used has informed the development of the Arabic typography course.

Secondary research was done to better define the problem and determine the direction of the primary research. This phase involved a literature review on various related topics such as the development of the Arabic writing system, calligraphy, Arabic and Latin typography, design education, and curriculum development. The information was collected from academic resources such as published journals, books, articles and dissertations. However, due to the lack of resources in the field of Arabic typography, the thesis focused largely on the findings of the primary research phase.

The primary research phase focused on collecting information to determine the direction and the content of the developed course to fit the current market and academic needs. This phase included (1) interviews of professionals in the fields of Arabic typography, Calligraphy, Design, and curriculum development, (2) observational research and ethnographic research on the practice of calligraphy and typography were integrated through taking workshops and undertaking personal typographic studies, and (3) an online survey to define the level of typographic awareness and difficulties students are
facing when designing with Arabic. An analysis of the findings was completed for each phase to determine the content of the course and the direction of the thesis.

**Applying a Framework for Research Documentation**

Due to the nature of this thesis and the emphasis on primary research, a framework was developed to document the research findings and extract information from each research methodology separately. This framework has assisted in analyzing the information obtained from the primary research and helped to build the course.

When using the framework, the first step is to explain the primary research method used, then state the objectives of the phase to clarify the process and procedures for the phase; research findings are extracted and documented which can be used for developing the course content; the reflection part of the framework contains an analysis of the findings and how the information can help develop the course.

**The framework.**

1. Explain the methods and processes used
2. Define the objectives of the phase
3. Findings of each phase
4. Reflections (How can the findings inform the development of the course?)
Mental Model

In order to validate the research findings, another process was introduced to extract information from the existing research methodologies and develop course features. This method has been developed by Indi Young in order to extract product features from interviews and surveys. The course projects, exercises and outline can be determined from this phase.

Proposed User Testing

Preferably, after developing the course, user testing will be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the course content. Based on feedback received from students, the course will be further developed and tested again before finalizing the course content, outline and syllabus.
Chapter III

Documenting primary research findings

Overview

Due to the nature of this thesis, the need to document and extract information from primary research was necessary. The previously reviewed framework was developed to organize findings and help with research synthesis. The framework was applied for every primary research stage to aid with the development of the Arabic typography course.

Interviewing Visual Communication Design Professors

Method.

Professors teaching Visual Communication Design and Arabic typography in the Middle East and North African region were interviewed to learn more about existing Arabic typography courses and the targeted students. The progress of the thesis was also discussed to determine knowledge gaps and points to cover. A total of five professors were interviewed and the input has varied depending on the geographic location of the university and the professors’ experiences.

Objectives

1. Determine what students are being taught at the moment.
2. Determine gaps in teaching basics of Arabic typography.
3. Determine how students are being introduced to the basics of Arabic typography.
4. Determine when Arabic typography is introduced to students and in what way it is being introduced.
5. Understand the reason behind focusing on typeface design in design curricula.
6. Determine how students are treating Arabic type in compositions and whether they take into consideration writing system rules, typography rules, design principles, issues of legibility and how they use typography to enhance meaning.
7. Learn more about Arabic typography from a pedagogical perspective.

Findings.
1. The Arabic typography movement started in Lebanon in 1996 when the lack of Arabic typefaces became evident. Type design was introduced in curriculums as a solution to this problem. Many famous type designers have emerged from this phase.
2. Visual Communication Design students are being introduced to Arabic typography in their sophomore level. Classes are either bilingual or divided into two classes where students learn Latin typography and Arabic typography separately. Typography classes often expose students to typographic matchmaking/companions of both Latin and Arabic. Advanced Arabic typography classes are available for senior students where they are mainly exposed to type design.
3. Professors who do not have any personal or professional experience with Arabic typography do not teach Arabic typography. Their curriculums only include typography classes focusing on Latin, yet give students the choice to explore Arabic typography on their own. Students learn to apply design principles to type.
However, the course is lacking in examining typographic details, learning how to enhance meaning through typography and legibility issues involving type.

4. The market lacks Arabic typography books for design education. Professors teach Arabic typography based on their personal and professional experiences. The existing books in the market give examples of the use of Arabic typography in visual design through images but do not discuss the method, principles and rules. What designers and students need is a fully comprehensive academic book that studies the use of Arabic type, provides a proper basis to understand the Arabic script and how to typeset it.

5. The professors expressed their concern on having the MENA region as a targeted segment for the thesis. Students in the Middle East are not exposed enough to good type-based work as opposed to countries like Egypt and Lebanon where the market is saturated with raw typographic and calligraphic work. Students who are pre-exposed to typographic work should not be treated the same way as students who are not exposed to typography.

6. Typography is never independent and it should be included across the curriculum.

7. There are not any set typographic rules for Arabic. The methods and rules keep evolving because it is a fairly new subject in the region with less than twenty years to evolve.

8. Arabic type is very fluid. Designers can create their own rules for designing type if they understand the script properly. Type designers start with calligraphy and work instinctively to design typefaces, and then apply design aesthetics.
9. In the Arabic design world, we have two schools of thought: one that focuses on calligraphy, explores its aesthetics and applies it to typography; and one that explores Latin typography and applies it to Arabic typography. Both schools are needed and should be explored in a pedagogical context to expand students’ knowledge.

10. There are three different heights for short letters in Arabic as opposed to only one in Latin typography. The heights are loop height, eye height and tooth height. Short letters have different heights to maintain the fluidity of Arabic typeface.

**Reflection**

1. Narrowing down the audience to the Middle East will provide a more specific set of course features. The course can be further developed to cater to a bigger audience if needed.

2. The history of Arabic typography from script to type should be present in the course content for students to gain a better understanding of the Arabic script.

3. A course packet needs to be provided for professors to have all the content needed to convey to students. This packet can be a subject for a research topic on its own.

4. The designed course will be introduced in the sophomore year for students to be able to use the knowledge gained from this course throughout their sophomore, junior and senior years.

5. The designed course packet should come with examples of typographic details, rules and principles for students to use due to the lack of academic textbooks.
6. Projects should allow students to explore typography individually and expand their visual knowledge.

7. Including a bilingual project in the course will introduce students to typographic matchmaking/companions and how bilingual compositions could work.

8. Encouraging students to research Arabic calligraphy and typography along with Latin typography should be part of the course, to gradually expose them to good typographic references.

**Interviewing Visual Communication Design professionals**

**Method.**

Professionals in the field were interviewed to learn more about the Arabic typographic application in real life situations.

**Objectives.**

Gain a better understanding of the Arabic and bilingual typographic applications in real life situations.

**Findings.**

1. Clients behind big enterprises come with their already developed branding guidelines and a set of typefaces that designers can use. Small to medium enterprises and personal client projects require more typographic work.

2. For bilingual way-finding systems, Arabic is usually 10-15% bigger than the Latin counterparts due to legibility issues.
3. Experienced designers learned that open counter typefaces are more legible than closed counter typefaces. Open counter typefaces are usually used for headlines and outdoor signage boards.

4. When it comes to visual dominance, Arabic should always be a priority in bilingual compositions. Clients may not request Arabic to be the dominant language, but Arabic should always be the dominant language in Arabic-speaking countries.

5. When it comes to purchasing typefaces, designers prefer buying typefaces with preset Latin companions to steer away from spending time on typographic matchmaking.

6. Designing in Arabic poses as many challenges as Latin, but there are more challenges, such as: the scarcity of Arabic typefaces, not having good typographic visual references, and typographic experimentations are not as easy as Latin because the letters cannot be detached.

**Reflection.**

1. Including experimental typography in the course would minimize the intimidation of experimenting with Arabic typography and using Arabic as a sole element in compositions.

2. Bilingual compositions need to be introduced to students.
Interviewing Calligraphers

**Method.**

Calligraphers were interviewed to learn more about the practice of calligraphy and how calligraphers are being taught this practice.

**Objectives.**

1. Learn about the practice and process of calligraphy.
2. Learn more about the Arabic writing system.
3. Learn more about the structure of words and how Arabic calligraphy developed over the years.
4. Determine if Arabic typographic rules can be extracted from calligraphy.
5. Learn more about the development of the artistic style of Arabic typography and analyze its impact on visual communication design in the region.
6. Discuss type anatomy and terminologies used in the calligraphy practice.
7. Learn about different measurement tools and writing systems.

**Findings.**

1. The Arabic writing system uses ligatures. All the letters are attached in a horizontal line except for 6 letters.
2. Letters change shape depending on their location in a word. Each letter has four different glyphs or shapes (with the exception of 6 letters that have the same shape when they are placed in the middle of the end of a word):
   a. Isolated shape
b. Initial shape (beginning of a word)

c. Medial shape (in the middle of a word)

d. Final shape (at the end of a word)

3. All the letters are measured and drawn in several different ways. The most used way of measuring letters is the dotting system. Systems are used to ensure that letters and words formation are proportionate. Each calligraphy style has its own measurement. Type designers sometimes choose a certain calligraphic style and use its measurement to design proportionate glyphs.

4. Calligraphers measure the spacing between letters by dots. The dots are made with the stroke of the instrument they are writing with, and it has the same thickness as the horizontal line that attaches letters. The most used pen is the reed pen. The thickness of the nib differs from one reed pen to another, thus changing the size of the dot that calligraphers use to measure letters.

5. Spacing between words in calligraphy is also measured by 1 dot because words can be slightly elevated over the baseline and overlapped to distinguish the beginning of a new word. The measurement differs in typography because all the words fall on the baseline. Two dots can be used to determine the space between words.

6. The measurement between lines in a paragraph differs from one writing style to another, but as a general rule, leading is measured by stacking three alefs (the letter A in Arabic א) on top of each other from the first line’s baseline to the second line’s baseline, which leaves a space of one alef between the first line’s
descender and the second line’s ascender. Two and a half alefs can also be used. Proper leading can be chosen optically.

7. Calligraphers feel that there is a gap between calligraphy and typography and that a better transition needs to be done to ensure that the beauty and aesthetics of the Arabic writing system is not lost in the process of creating a new typeface library.

8. There is a great emphasis on symmetry in Islamic arts and calligraphy.

9. The six most famous calligraphy styles are: Thuluth, Nashkh, Diwani, Kufi, Faresi (Nasta’liq) and Ruqaa. Each writing style was developed for a specific function.

10. Calligraphers start with the calligraphy part of any artwork, and once the calligraphy is set properly, they hire an illuminator to add patterns. There is a great emphasis on form and function, however calligraphers follow a specific template for several of their works.

11. Calligraphers learn the trade from teachers to students. They practice isolated letters, how to hold pens, the motion of letters, how to use ink and the different letter shapes depending on their location in a word. Then they are given a sentence to practice with for 3 to 6 months. After completing this task, students are given bigger paragraphs or poems to practice. It takes years to perfect the writing styles. Students go through the same method to learn each writing style and are given certificates when they pass all the tests. Teaching often includes theory, observation of how the teacher holds the reed pen and draws the letters, words, and practice. Work critique is considered a very crucial part of the learning phase.
12. Calligraphy is an undocumented art. Rules are passed from teacher to student but some of the rules were lost with time.

13. Calligraphers talked about the form of letters and their spiritual connections. Each letter has a specific spiritual meaning. Calligraphy is called spiritual engineering because of focuses on the form and proportions while taking into consideration the spiritual aspect of calligraphy.

14. Ibn Muqla and Ibn Arabi are considered the main resource for learning the scientific and philosophical aspect of calligraphy. Ibn Muqla developed the dotting system and Ibn Arabi explained the spiritual side of calligraphy.

**Reflection.**

1. The essence of calligraphy can only be passed to typography course if students learn the history of calligraphy and the spiritual side of the practice. An introduction to Ibn Arabi is needed.

2. Students can be given exercises to optically estimate the proper spacing and leading, then measure the spacing based on the explained proportions by the calligraphers.

3. The dotting system to be introduced to students to allow them to understand how letters are formed.

4. Individual and group critiques are needed to engage students in the learning atmosphere and allow them to further explore typography through thinking about other students’ work and their own work.
Self-Ethnography and Observational Research

Method.

In order to properly understand the Arabic writing system and calligraphy, I participated in a workshop that introduced me to the science behind calligraphy and the spiritual aspects of the letters along with the six main calligraphic styles, and the reason behind their existence. The workshop included both theory and practice. In the practice section, students were introduced to the square Kufic style. It was a six-day workshop and I used the last day to observe how students interact with the calligrapher and their own work.

Objectives.

1. Learn more about the practice of calligraphy.
2. Gain an understanding of letters and words formation.
3. Experiment with calligraphic styles to learn more about the challenges.
5. Observe how students handle their own work, the type of questions they ask and the challenges they face.
6. Observe how different students interact with the practice part of the workshop to gain a better understanding of the future challenges students may face when learning Arabic typography.
Findings.

1. During the beginning of the workshop, the instructor explained the six main calligraphic styles, their spiritual connection, and how and why they were created. After fully understanding the beauty of calligraphy, the students and I were very interested in learning calligraphy. A new level of appreciation for Arabic and letterforms was gained after learning the history and the spiritual aspects of calligraphy.

2. During practice, there was a lot of frustration at the beginning because our hands and mind were not very acquainted with the style and it took me two exercises to fully understand how it works. Other students took them two days to understand the calligraphic style while others had more successful results from the very first exercise. Practicing started with one short word, which was repeated several times in different grids to create patterns out of it. More complex exercises were introduced in day two where we were given a sentence instead of one word and the grids have changed. The square Kufic style, which is considered the easiest, took me and the other students four days to master. Other calligraphic styles take years to master.

3. The Kufic style is very structured and requires a lot of spacing consideration. Sketching and visualizing while using a proper grid helped students with learning this new style. While sketching and experimenting, the instructor walked around and observed our progress while providing feedback and explaining how the sketches could improve. All students listened to the instructors’ feedback to other students and fixed their sketches accordingly.
4. After finishing the workshop, students took their experience and applied it to their own work.

**Reflection.**

1. Because Arabic typography is a new field, students need to be gradually introduced to it throughout the semester. The practice of calligraphy is a good indicator of how students interact with type.

2. Including class critiques will improve students’ outcomes.

3. There should be an emphasis on sketching. Learning Arabic typography is a tactile experience and students can learn more about how to interact with typography through exploring different compositions by sketching and examining their sketches.

4. Students learn at different paces. Adequate amount of time needs to be given to students for them experiment with typography and learn the basics at their own pace.

5. The designed course should be a foundation class where students can then take what they have learned and apply it in other design studios throughout their studies.
Students’ survey

Method.

An online survey was conducted to graphic design students and recent graduates in the Middle East to test their typography knowledge and learn more about their experience with Arabic typography.

Objectives.

1. Determine the existing level of typographic knowledge of students.
2. Determine some of the challenges students and designers face when designing Arabic and bilingual compositions.
3. Gain a better understanding of the targeted audience.

Findings

1. Twenty-two designers and design students have taken the survey.
2. 94% stated that English is the most comfortable language to design with as opposed to Arabic and other languages.
3. 94% of the participants have designed in Arabic before. However, when asked about the problems they have encountered when designing in Arabic, the majority of the responses were about the difficulty of finding proper typefaces to design with, while other responses mentioned typography.
4. 63% of the participants have designed bilingual compositions before and the main problem they have encountered was typographic matchmaking.
5. Students and designers understand the meaning of typography, however there is a slight confusion between typography and type design.

6. 63% of the participants were introduced to Arabic typography as students; however, students coming from different universities have a very different view of what Arabic typography is.

7. When asked to explain in their own words the job of a typographer, the majority of the responses were explaining what type designers do.

8. 44% of the participants have taken calligraphy classes to understand the Arabic script and apply their knowledge to designing Arabic compositions.

Reflection.

1. The jobs of typographers and type designers need to be explained during class to eliminate the confusion between typography and type design.

2. Type design can be introduced during the course to familiarize students with the process of designing typefaces. Giving students a basic understanding of the process allows them to explore type design later on in their studies.

3. Introduce students to designing bilingual compositions and typographic matchmaking in an exercise or a project. This will serve as an introduction to typographic companions or matchmaking. They can then take this knowledge and build upon it in other studio classes.
Chapter IV

Research Synthesis

Overview

While the developed framework has helped with organizing the primary research findings and providing a better direction to where the course is heading, a more detailed analysis of the feedback gained from all the research phases was needed to develop the course features and define the audience.

The chosen method for research synthesis is mental modeling. The method was developed by Indi Young as a means to guide researchers’ and designers’ decisions and gain better understanding of the products or services that are being analyzed. It can be used to analyze human behaviors and extract features and services for various aspects of design. The same method was used to cater to the course that is being developed.

Mental Model

The best way to design the course content is to look at the targeted audience and have a solid understanding of their needs. Mental models provide researchers with a deep understanding of participants’ motivations and thoughts to create a successful user centered design (Young, P3).

To simplify the mental models, researchers interview a certain audience chosen specifically to fulfill the researchers’ goal. Interviews have open-ended questions and the subjects are encouraged to talk about their behaviors, past experiences and how they
Developing an Arabic Typography course for Visual Communication Design Students in the MENA Region

approach a certain task. Interviews are recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Researchers should extract important quotes and feedback, look for patterns, group them and organize them into towers. Product features are then written underneath each tower. The existing product features should be placed underneath each tower that reflects the features, and they can be repeated to cover several towers. Researchers will then analyze the model, look for gaps in the mental models where towers are not supported by features and create new features. The result of the mental model is a diagram that shows the strategy of the researcher and how the product is going to be developed (Young, 2008, p. 5-10).

Following the explained method, interviewees and survey participants were chosen specifically to determine the new course features. The participants were design educators, typographers, design professionals and students. Interviews and surveys were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Important quotes and feedback that depict behaviors and motivations were selected.

Selected feedback for the mental model.

• I like to know who my students are, where they come from and where they are going.

• Know students’ entry level and exit level.

• We introduce typography to students in one semester and continue to include it in other studio classes.

• Focus on the starting point then think about how this knowledge is being carried through the curricula.
- Designing is both cerebral and visceral, both theory and practice.
- I start with teaching students the main calligraphic styles to let them understand the script and have an appreciation for the written language.
- Calligraphy is very spiritual. It is sad we do not see this reflected in typography.
- Type is not calligraphy.
- Hand lettering is like a freestyle calligraphy.
- Why is Arabic typography so difficult and so undeveloped?
- We only have twenty years of history versus hundreds of years for Latin typography to develop.
- I am not good with Arabic writing so I do not design in Arabic.
- We apply design principles and type principles.
- I felt confused. It was very hard to start with typography then I learned the basics.
- There are no specific rules for type design. It is an intuitive process. Each type designer understands the basics and start designing based on their own understanding of the script.
- Do not confuse design principles with typography principles.
- I did not even know what typography was.
- I have never heard of those terminologies before.
- We practice typesetting and applying type in compositions in other studio classes but we do not know if we are doing the right thing or not.
- Students need to learn the difference between type and other design elements.
- Typography means designing typefaces.
- Macro level is the soul of any design.
• We need rules. They guide us in creating new calligraphic artworks.

• How do I treat type to enhance the meaning?

• The Arabic script is very fluid and flexible. We can play with words shapes and lengths to come up with new design elements.

• I am afraid of experimenting with Arabic. All the letters are attached together.

• I try to match the style with the topic.

• My design feels visually balanced.

• If it looks nice and the client likes it, then I am fine.

• We focus on the function first, then think about the form it takes to reflect the function.

• I usually start with researching the topic then experimenting with compositions.

• I experiment a lot with compositions; changing the position of elements to make it more appealing.

• We did not think of type alone, we were more focused on the composition as a whole.

• Our eyes are not saturated enough with good typographic work and students do not have a proper frame of reference when it comes to Arabic typography.

• I usually follow branding guidelines. They tell me how to interact with type.

• Rules become second nature through practice.

• Not knowing typographic rules is frustrating! I was not introduced to them at school.

• I deal with type as any other element and apply design principles to it, but I never thought about the macro level and the typographic details.
• Matching Arabic and Latin typefaces is very hard.

• Arabic is not an independent topic. It is being taught with Latin in most curricula in the region.

• Latin letters are detached, ours are connected and we do not have caps! Changing the language changes how the visual is viewed.

• I usually look at counter space, stroke thickness and the terminal style of bilingual typefaces to determine if they are good companions or not.

• We lack academic textbooks about Arabic typography.

• We teach typography based on our own experience.

**Looking for patterns.**

After documenting the feedback from interviews and surveys, patterns and clusters of similar information began to emerge. Similar feedbacks were grouped together to form towers. Names were given to each tower to reflect its content.

**The towers.**

• Audience/Persona

• Learning strategy

• The history from script to type

• Typography rules, terminologies and the writing system

• Focusing on practice

• Bilingual compositions

• Content development
Developing course features.

After extracting feedback from interviews and surveys and grouping similar feedback to form towers, course features were developed so that they reflect all the towers. The goal of this phase is to design an Arabic typography course that falls in line with all the research findings that have been synthesized using the developed framework and mental model.

Figure 1: Mental Model
As shown in figure 1, course features were created to reflect the towers along with documenting all the needed information to be covered in the course. All the towers have been thought of when designing the course. It is important to note that the same feature can cover different towers. The reflection parts of the frameworks (chapter 3) were also visited to ensure that all the points are covered in the developed course.

**Persona development**

During the primary research phase, patterns and attributes of the targeted segment began to emerge and personas were created to have a clearer vision of the end user of the developed course. Those personas will help guide the development of a user-centered course and test how the course will be viewed from students’ perspectives.

**General overview.**

Guidelines were extracted from the primary research to help guide the creation of the personas and to accurately reflect the targeted segment. As a general overview of the personas, the course will be introduced to sophomore design students in the Middle East. Students will be introduced to design principles in a foundation class the previous semester. They are all bilingual. Their first language is Arabic and they were not exposed to good typographic and design compositions growing up.
The developed personas.

Maha is the first persona. She was born and raised in the Middle East and usually only travels in the region during the summer to visit extended families or for fun. She went to public segregated schools and learned English in school. All her classes are taught in Arabic. She has a passion for photography. She is pursuing a degree in visual communication design because she wants to explore her creativity. After graduation, she wants to work in a light government job. She represents the students who are not very exposed to other cultures, but is in touch with her own roots. She has a good point of reference in calligraphy.

Ahmed was born and raised in the Middle East and he and his family travel at least once a year to explore different countries. He went to public segregated schools growing up, after which he went to a private university to study visual communication design. Ahmed’s passion for design started in high school when he first began to explore the different photo-editing software available on the market. He then decided to pursue his passion in a more professional manner. Ahmed aspires to be a well-known designer in his region and wishes to work at an international creative agency when he graduates. He represents students who have basic knowledge in design and know the Arabic writing system. He is exposed to different cultures and has better visual literacy but he is not familiar with typography.
Nora was born in the Middle East. She spent her childhood traveling to different countries with her family. She attended private schools growing up where the primary language was English and became familiar with different cultures. She is passionate about printmaking and tactile arts. She wanted to work as a freelance designer when she graduates so she decided to attend a public university in her home country and earn a visual communication design degree. She represents students who speak, read, and write Arabic but are not familiar with the writing system and typography.
Chapter V
Course Development

Overview
The development of the course features went through several phases. The main features were extracted from the framework and the mental model. Experience models were then used to determine how students interact with the course and syllabus. A 15-week breakdown, projects, and learning materials were developed and tested to further refine the learning experience for students.

5 E’s experience model
The 5E’s experience model (Entice, Enter, Engage, Exit, Extend) is used to analyze activities to determine how the audience interacts with them. Ben Jacobson and colleagues at Conifer research firm developed this experience model. The experience model can be used to better understand the given activity or define the gaps in it to be able to remediate them. (Visocky O’Grady, 2013, p. 120-121).

Two 5E’s experience models were used for the development of this course. The first 5E’s model was created to determine how students go through the whole curriculum and how they take the information they will learn in the course throughout the curriculum. The second 5E’s model was used to anticipate students’ interaction with the course itself and the progress of the learning experience. The course is then further
developed to reflect this optimum learning experience. The created personas were used as an audience for the models.

**The program’s experience.**

*Entice*

Students with an interest in design apply to the school. Students are reviewed and accepted based on the school’s criteria. Accepted students are excited to join the school of design.

*Enter*

Students from different backgrounds enter the program. Foundation classes in visual communication design are taken in the first year to build a good base.

*Engage*

Students start taking more foundation classes in their sophomore level. They will take Arabic typography class as a requirement. More complex problems are introduced to them throughout their sophomore, junior and senior years. Students will take their gained knowledge from their foundation classes throughout the curriculum and practice designing in an academic setting.

*Exit*

Students finish taking all the required classes. They gain all the knowledge and experience they need to be successful designers.
Extend

Newly graduate designers are hired in different places in the market. Their gained knowledge will help reform the industry.

The course’s experience.

Entice

Students register for the class. They read the course description and they are excited to learn about Arabic typography.

Enter

Classes begin. Students are introduced to the course syllabus and schedule. They are also introduced to the history of typography and terminologies. Students start thinking about Arabic typography and begin exploring it.

Engage

Students start working on different projects that will provide them with proper typographic skills and build their knowledge throughout the course.

Exit

Class ends. Students now have a proper Arabic typography foundation that they have learned and practiced in the course.
Extend

Students will take their gained knowledge and experience and apply them throughout their sophomore, junior and senior years. Applying their knowledge throughout the curriculum will further enhance their Arabic typography skills and prepare them for future jobs.

Course syllabus and schedule

A proposed syllabus has been developed to define the course. It contains the course description, objectives, learning outcomes, and key concepts to be covered in class. After finalizing the syllabus, projects and exercises were developed to reflect the mental model findings and the 5 E’s model.

Course description.

This is an Arabic typography foundation course taken at the sophomore level for Visual Communication Design students. This course will provide students with the basics and principles of Arabic typography, and cover topics such as typographic contrast, hierarchy of information, history of type design, expressive typography, and applying them into design compositions while also reinforcing design principles. The main outcome of this course is to gain an understanding of Arabic typography to be used across the curriculum in the future.
Course objectives.

1. Gain an understanding of type as a design element.
2. Learn and use type vocabulary.
3. Demonstrate typographic understanding and apply gained knowledge through different compositions and mediums.
4. Build knowledge on Arabic typography as an element of design.
5. Gain a better understanding of bilingual compositions.
6. Apply research and self-exploration of typography through type studies.

Course outcome

Students will have a proper understanding of Arabic script, Arabic writing system and the uses of Arabic typography, which will allow them to build upon this knowledge throughout the curriculum.

Key concepts

• Typographic terminologies and anatomy.
• Typography principles.
• Arabic writing system.
• Applying typography and design principles to typographic compositions.
• Type studies and research.
• Typographic matchmaking/Companions.
Initial projects and exercises.

Exercise 1.

Identifying terminologies and typography exploration.

Pick a line of poetry or a quote of your choice and arrange the type in a way that enhances its meaning. Attach a tracing paper on top of the final composition and identify type anatomy and different type terminologies on it. You have a minimum of 10 terminologies to identify. Use type as the only design element. Colors are limited to black and white.

Objectives.

- Identify typographic terminologies through practice.
- Explore Arabic typography and its potential through visually translating a quote or a poetry line through the use of Arabic typography as a sole design element.

Project 1.

Designing with type

In this project, you are asked to explore hierarchy through organizing information in one document by using different weights, styles, and levels of information. Explore arranging type in different positions to create a clear, balanced, and legible poster. Use type as the only design element. Colors are limited to black and white.
Objectives.

- Gain a better understanding of the Arabic writing system and the use of typography to deliver clear and legible messages while implementing typography and design principles.

Project 2.

Designing for publications and websites.

This project explores designing for different mediums. It includes dealing with paragraphs and exploring how visually different typefaces are through type studies. You are required to pick 3-6 paragraphs from your favorite book/novel and create a visually appealing spread that reflects the content. Then use the same information to create two pages of a website dedicated to the author or book. You can use a maximum of two visuals in each medium and you can introduce a maximum of one color. (Black, white, and a color of your choice)

Objectives.

- Provide students with more complex information and elements to design with.
- Introduce students to designing for different mediums.
- Introduce students to designing with paragraphs and taking into consideration type as a visual element and the typographic details and principles (Gutters, rags).
Project 3.

Type exploration.

Research an Arabic or Persian designer of your choice. Analyze their work and style. Develop content about them and their work and create a poster or any other medium of your choice that reflect their style. A maximum of 1 color can be used in this project.

Objectives.

• Expose students to typographic work and learn how to analyze compositions and expand their visual references.

Exercise 2.

Hand lettering and creating logotype.

While taking into consideration the type anatomy that we have learned at the beginning of the semester, create a small logotype or a hand-lettered word. The form the word or logo takes should enhance its meaning.

Objectives.

• Introduce hand lettering and designing logotypes in Arabic.

• Allow students to experiment with Arabic.
Project4.

Bilingual compositions.

Go to an exhibition or a gallery and create a bilingual composition to reflect your experience. You are required to have a maximum of two paragraphs in both languages and a maximum of 1 color.

Objectives.

- Introduce students to designing bilingual compositions.
- Introduce students to typographic matchmaking/companions.

Self-Ethnography/User Testing

After developing the initial projects and exercises, self-ethnography was used to determine the projects’ needs and gaps. The projects were then further developed while taking into consideration students’ experiences and different levels of knowledge of Arabic typography. A 15 weeks schedule was also developed to establish a detailed timeframe for the course.

15 Weeks detailed schedule.

A schedule detailing the flow of the course on a day-to-day basis was created factoring in the time it takes to fully develop the projects.
*Course schedule:*

*Week 1*

Day 1

- Discuss course syllabus and schedule.
- Lecture: The history of Arabic writing, from script to type. Introduce type anatomy.
- Introduce Exercise 1.

Day 2

- Start sketching letters and words to learn more about word formation and pen flow. Start thinking about the visual treatment of the chosen quote.
- Bring 30 different visual treatments for the quote for next class.

*Week 2*

Day 1

- Continue sketching and refining your ideas for project 1 in class. 10 sketches will be chosen at the end of the class to refine further at home.

Day 2

- Choose the 5 most successful visual treatments for the group critique.
- Continue to refine sketches in class after critique.

*Week 3*

Day 1

- Choose the two most successful visual treatments for the group critique.
- Choose the most successful visual treatment and finalize it for submission next class.
• Introduce project 2 to students.

Day 2

• Submit project 1.

• Stark sketching 75 different compositions for project 2. The sketches are 5x7.5 cm. add as much details as possible to have a clear composition.

• Complete the 75 sketches for next class.

Week 4

Day 1

• Sketches will be critiqued during class. Continue to refine and develop the sketches further.

Day 2

• Group critique for the best 50 sketches.

• Continue to refine and develop the sketches after the critique session.

• Choose the best 10 sketches and make them bigger for next class (10x15 cm). Include more details.

Week 5

Day 1

• Group critique for the best 10 sketches.

• Further develop the sketches. Choose the three most successful compositions and transfer them to the computer for next class.

Day 2

• Individual critique for the three compositions.

• Continue refining the compositions during class.
Choose two compositions to refine them over the weekend.

**Week 6**

Day 1

- Group critique for the two compositions.
- Choose one composition to finalize.

Day 2

- Final critique and finalization of the chosen composition.

**Week 7**

Day 1

- Submit project 2.
- Introduce project 3 to students.

Day 2

- Bring two content options for class. (5-6 paragraphs from two of your favorite books and visuals that can go with it). Discuss choices with professor.
- Choose 1 option and start sketching spreads. You are required to sketch 75 different spread compositions for next class.

**Week 8**

Day 1

- Continue editing and refining sketches during class

Day 2

- Group critique for the best 50 sketches.
- Continue to refine and develop the sketches after the critique session.
Choose the best 10 sketches and make them bigger for next class (10x15 cm). Include more details.

**Week 9**

Day 1

- Group critique for the best 10 sketches.
- Continue to refine the sketches during class and choose 2 to transfer to the computer.

Day 2

- Individual critiques for transferred compositions.
- Continue refining the compositions for next class.

**Week 10**

Day 1

- Group critique for the two compositions.
- Choose one composition to finalize.

Day 2

- Final critique and finalization of the chosen composition.

**Week 11**

Day 1

- Submit project 3.
- Introduce project 4.
- Introduce Exercise 1 and present your findings at the end of class.

Day 2
• Submit an analysis paper for project 4. Discuss the chosen designer and your next steps with the professor.

• Start sketching 50 different compositions for next class.

**Week 12**

**Day 1**

• Continue editing and refining sketches during class.

**Day 2**

• Group critique for the best 40 sketches.

• Continue to refine and develop the sketches after the critique session.

• Choose the best 10 sketches and make them bigger for next class (10x15 cm). Include more details.

**Week 13**

**Day 1**

• Individual critique for the best 10 sketches.

• Choose the three most successful sketches and continue to refine them during class.

**Day 2**

• Individual critique for the refined sketches.

• Transfer two sketches to the computer.

**Week 14**

**Day 1**

• Group critique for the two compositions.
• Further develop the compositions and choose the most successful one to finalize.

• Lecture: Introduce bilingual compositions to students.

Day 2

• Group critique for the final compositions.

• Bilingual compositions study during class with group discussion.

Week 15

Day 1

• Final critique and finalization of the chosen composition.

Day 2

• Submit project 4.

• Have a final evaluation and discussion of what students have learned during the semester and how to move forward and further develop their Arabic typography skills.

Results of user testing and the detailed schedule.

• Exercise 1 (Identifying terminologies and typography exploration) was not taking into consideration the entry level of students and the intricate details of Arabic writing. An additional step needed to be included to let students practice the pen flow of Arabic writing and visualize the structure of words before being able to start working on the quote or poetry line. The exercise will be given more time and will be a project instead of an exercise.
• Project 1 (Designing with type) needed specific content for students to work with because developing content takes time from the 15 weeks planned schedule. Students at this stage should be more concerned about applying typographic and design principles rather than content development.

• Although the need to learn how to use typography in different mediums is necessary, project 2 (Designing for publications and websites) seemed too complex for students and needed to be simplified. The website design section of the project became a one day group exercise to introduce students to different mediums while still giving enough time for the project they are working on.

• Exercise 2 (logotype design) was eliminated because it interfered with the flow and sequence of the projects that are all focusing on the basics of typography. All the projects are gradually building typographic knowledge throughout the course. Referring back to the 5E’s model, the developed course is part of a whole curriculum and this project can be moved to any advanced studio course, such as a corporate identity course.

• Project 4 (bilingual compositions) was eliminated and transformed into two lectures introducing students to bilingual compositions and type studies with group analysis. The project needs at least 5 weeks to implement successfully and due to time constraints, an introduction to the problem will be given to students, and they will be encouraged to tackle it in advanced classes throughout the curriculum.
Updated Projects and Exercises

Project 1.

Identifying terminologies and typography exploration.

Pick a quote from the following list and treat the type in a way that enhances its meaning. Explore different treatments. Attach a tracing paper on top of the final composition and identify type anatomy and different type terminologies on it.

You have a minimum of 10 terminologies to identify. Use type as the only design element. Colors are limited to black and white.

Examples of terminologies: Baseline, tooth height, eye height, loop height, counter space, ascenders, descenders, terminals, keshida, bowl, stem, kerning, leading, isolated letter, initial letter, medial letter, final letter, etc.

Supplies: Tracing paper, pencils, Arabic calligraphy reed pen or a black marker, black ink, ruler, Sketchbook.

Document size: A4

Steps.

• Start with tracing Arabic letters on your tracing paper to become familiar with how the letters are formed and the movement of the pen. Use a pencil to imagine the overlapped pen strokes. Tip: hold two pens together and draw the letters with them. You can see how the strokes overlap to create different letters.

• Trace letters and words using a calligraphy pen or marker.
• Choose the sentence you wish to use and explore different treatments that enhance its meaning using pencil, reed pen or market and your sketchbook. You can try different writing styles to symbolize different meanings. Play with the spacing of words, word positions, and pen stroke thickness to enhance the meaning.

• Over the final sketch, place a tracing paper and identify a minimum of 10 terminologies.

![Figure 2: Examples of preliminary sketches for project 1](image)

*Final submission.*

• Final document.

• Sketches and tracing papers.

• Analysis paper detailing your experience in this project, and the process you have gone through.
Objectives.

- Study Arabic words formation, letters formation and the pen flow to learn how to draw Arabic letterforms.
- Identify typographic terminologies through practice.
- Explore Arabic typography and its potential through visually translating a quote or a poetry line through the use of Arabic typography as a sole design element.

Project 2.

Designing with type.

The school of visual communication design is hosting an Arabic typography conference. Create an advertisement poster detailing the name of the conference, location, dates, activities and speakers.

In this project, you are asked to explore hierarchy through organizing information in one document by using different weights, styles, and levels of information.

Exploring arranging type in different positions to have a clear, balanced and legible poster. Use type as the only design element. Colors are limited to black and white.

Supplies: Pencils, Sketchbook, Ruler, Canson board

Size: A3
Steps.

- Start with analyzing the poster content and thinking about which information should be highlighted and how to incorporate them in a composition.
- Sketch different compositions as a start then further develop the most successful ones.
- Transfer the three most successful compositions to the computer.
- Pick the most successful poster and further develop it.

Figure 3: Examples of preliminary sketches for project 2

Final submission.

- Final Printed project.
- All the sketches and the three final developed posters.
- Analysis paper detailing your experience in this project and the process you have gone through.
Objectives.

- Gain a good understanding of the Arabic writing system.
- Implement typography and design principles to deliver clear and legible messages.

Project 3.

Designing for publications.

This project introduces students to designing with paragraphs and understanding the visual difference of using different typefaces through type studies. You are required to pick 5-6 paragraphs from your favorite book/novel and create a visually appealing spread that reflects the content. You can use a maximum of two visuals and you can introduce a maximum of one color. (Black, white, and a color of your choice)

Supplies: Pencils, Sketchbook, Ruler, Canson board

Size: 1 spread in InDesign (two A4 pages facing each other)

Steps.

- Start by choosing two of your favorite books and extract two different options for the paragraphs and visuals. Discuss them in class and choose one to move forward.
- Sketch different compositions as a start then further develop the most successful ones.
- Transfer two of the successful spreads to the computer.
• Further develop the spreads and choose the most successful one for final submission.

Figure 4: Examples of preliminary sketches for project 3

Final submission.

• Final Printed project.
• All the sketches and the process you have gone through.
• Analysis paper detailing your experience in this project and the process you have gone through.

Objectives.

• Gain a better understanding of designing with more complex information and elements.
• Explore designing with paragraphs while taking into consideration type as a visual element and the typographic details and principles (Gutters, rags).
Exercise 1

Designing websites.

Break into groups, pick 1 website that you think is not visually appealing and redesign 2 pages of the website taking into consideration typographic and design principles. Present your findings at the end of the class.

Objectives.

- Learn how to design for different mediums.
- Improve in-class critiquing.

Final submission.

- A copy of the website will be submitted online.

Project 4.

Type exploration.

Choose an Arabic or Persian designer. Analyze their work and style. Develop content about them and their work and create a poster or any other medium of your choice that reflect their style.

Supplies: Pencils, Sketchbook, Ruler, Canson board

Steps.

- Start researching different designers and typographers in the region; choose a designer/typographer and study his/her style.
• Create content for the composition that reflects the designer/typographer.

• Sketch different compositions as a start then further develop the most successful ones.

• Transfer the three most successful compositions to the computer.

• Pick the most successful poster and further develop it.

Figure 5: Examples of preliminary sketches for project 4

Objectives.

• Learn to analyze design compositions

• Expand visual reference through being exposed to typographic work in the region

Final submission.

• Final Printed project

• All the sketches and the process you have gone through

• Analysis paper detailing your experience in this project and the process you have gone through.
Projects’ Assessment

The rubrics below can be used to assess students’ progress and provide them with a grade for each project. The rubrics can be given to students with the syllabus to know how their projects are being graded.

Table 2: Projects’ assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>1 poor</th>
<th>2 Below average</th>
<th>3 Average</th>
<th>4 Good</th>
<th>5 Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept and relevance</strong></td>
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<td>The overall concept of the project is clear and fits the given problem.</td>
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<td><strong>Composition</strong></td>
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<td>Utilization of space, flow or elements, easy read.</td>
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<td><strong>Creativity/Originality</strong></td>
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<td>Original ideas, layouts, and execution</td>
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<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
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<td>The overall development of the concept and visuals throughout the project timeframe</td>
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<td><strong>Typesetting</strong></td>
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<td>Typographic details are taken into consideration</td>
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<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final printed project and final presentation are clean and professionally executed</td>
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Chapter VI

Conclusion & closing remarks

The research for this thesis has led to the development of a user-centered Arabic typography foundation course targeting sophomore design students in the Middle East. The course was designed to equip students with typographic skills and knowledge that can be honed and improved throughout the visual communication design curriculum. The designed projects and exercises can be refined to fit the overall curriculum objectives of any design school in the region. The course can also be further refined and adapted to be taught in all Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and the North African region, while taking into consideration the mental model that led to the construction of the course features. The developed course can be suggested to universities that are in the process of refining their existing Arabic typography course or developing a new course.

The field of Arabic typography is relatively new. As educators, it is very critical to continue developing Arabic typography, and revisit the course to reflect new findings. The thesis research can be used to start investigating typographic principles and documenting the process. Additional related topics could be further explored to enhance Arabic typography.
Suggested topics

• The development of Arabic typeface generating software.

• The history of Arabic Calligraphy and the Arabic writing system and their relation to the development of Arabic typography.

Moving forward, the thesis findings will help the start of a bigger-scale research that will provide students with an academic textbook that they can use in school settings to learn the basics of Arabic typography.
Appendix A

Survey Questions and Answers
1. Sex

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Response</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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2. Age

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<td>14</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31-35</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

3. When designing for school projects, what language are you most comfortable with?

<table>
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<th>Answer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
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<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>French</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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4. Have you ever designed in Arabic?

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>94%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</table>

5. If yes, what were the major problems you can encountered when designing in Arabic?

Text Response

- Alignment, word spacing, fonts availability, legibility, composition
- Font types not always fits the layout
- Limited number of type faces
- Difficulty to find fonts
- Choosing the right typeface that looks neat and readable
- Most of the computerized arabic letters are rigid and not flexible
- Lack of arabic fonts, and lack of studies related to designing our own arabic font or at least arabic logo type.
- Integrating the limited available arabic typefaces into a layout
- Good fonts
- Typeface issues
- Typography
- Limited number of good typefaces
- Proper word choice and fonts
- The arabic typefaces are few
- Variety of typefaces. Software compatibility.
6. Have you ever designed bilingual compositions?

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<tbody>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38%</td>
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7. What were the major problems you have encountered when designing bilingual compositions?

- Finding the harmonious pair
- It is hard to find an Arabic and an English type that complement each other, or have the same style.
- Matchmaking typefaces
- Visual dynamic
- Hardships in choosing similar fonts in both languages to create unity, and some hardship in creating a nice layout.
- Depending on the composition & intention of the design message. For example, the visual dominance of one language over the other when trying to compose the design does not look equal.
- Matching style and design tools for type setting in the Arabic type
- Hard to find two typefaces (En/Ar) that match
- Matching typefaces.

8. What/How was your first experience with typography?

- Challenging
- Good
- In middle school, we were assigned to create an artwork using one Arabic word.
- Designing using one letter only as a basic class project, I loved it!
- It was hard
- Not to be mentioned!
- English typography, love. Arabic, not that much!
- It was fun actually as I didn't know about the rules of it that much
- First experience was really enjoyable exploring the rules of typography.
- Graphic design school
- Type class
- I learned how to design a complete type family
- Enjoyed it
- Type design. Was really bad I did not have enough knowledge to be able to make a whole typeface!
9. In your own words, what is typography?

**Text Response**
Letters, words, sentences arrangement & composition for any communication purposes. Creating a typeface to help show the message in the design. Writing beautifully, presenting a written language in an artistic form.

The art and design of arranging type
The art of playing with letters or numbers
Arranging type in a design
Soul engineering
It is about arranging the text in a way that serves the design (beautifies it), and it should be clear and easy to read. It is also about the spaces between the letters, between the words, between the text lines. Mixed process of science and art to create visuals for a language. The use of type in design or designing a typeface
The study of type/fonts/lettering
The art of type setting reflecting the content and presenting material in an easy read symbols or characters that come together to form words and sentences. Customizing letters to fit your concept.
The study of arranging type to achieve a balanced/visually pleasing outcomes.

10. Were you introduced to Arabic typography as a graphic design student?

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11. Mention the most memorable typographic principles, rules or terminologies that you have learned at school.

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<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I’ve learned the following: grid system .. rules .. etc. alignment, symmetry 1. The difference between Serif and Sans-Serif .. 2. Alignment .. 3. Contrast .. 4. Repetition .. 5. Tracking .. 6. White space .. 7. Size Hierarchy, legibility X box and meem box for arabic letters Font, Text size, leading, kerning most memorable term: x height Spacing/kern Widows, orphans, tracking, justified meem-box Unity in the shape Line spacing/ line width/ kerning/ learned about widows and orphans/ paragraph rags</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I didn’t learn any typographic principles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
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12. Were you introduced to type design (designing typefaces) as a student?

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13. In your own words, can you explain what you think that job of a “typographer” is?

Text Response
Compose type: select best font for specific purpose
draw, creat, design a different typefaces that serve different fields and graphics needs
designing typefaces to be used for professional or general uses.
A person who uses type to communicate his message
Make word appeal as in make words good looking!
I believe he/she would be someone highly experienced in choosing the right for for a design, arranging it, making it to it's best level. He would be someone knowing the science behind type making
designing typefaces
designing typefaces
Someone who designs fonts?
Designing an setting type
Design clear, readable, and aesthetically appealing typeface.
Creating ideas thro letters
Designing typefaces
Designing typefaces/ set type

14. Have you ever taken calligraphy workshops?

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15. What made you take the workshops?

Text Response
Research & design purposes
it was about cufice type face, and I took it because I am so curious and love to learn the arabic typographic rules
To help me create arabic based designs (identity design, typeface design...)
Need to develop my skills for myself first and then to match the market
Interest in arabic calligraphy as we haven't studied it in college and it has become like a trend these days
to understand the type rules of arabic typography
Interest
Appendix B

Mental Model
Figure 6: The mental model used for course development.
Figure 6.1: Part of the mental model.
Figure 6.2: Part of the mental model.
Figure 6.3: Part of the mental model
References


