**10 Reasons to Learn Arabic Language**

**Arabic is the 5th most commonly spoken native language in the world.** Arabic is the official language of over 22 countries and there are well over 300 million native speakers of the language.

**Arabic is the liturgical language of Islam.** In addition to the millions of native speakers, many more millions know Arabic as a foreign language, since as the language of the Qur’an, it is understood by Muslims throughout the world.

**The Arab-speaking world has a rich cultural heritage.** The Arab world has its own unique art, music, literature, cuisine, and way of life. Westerners know about belly dance, perhaps have read 1001 Nights, and may have tried some popular Middle Eastern dishes such as hummus or falafel, but Western exposure to the Arab way of life is generally limited. In exploring the Arabic world, you will learn to appreciate its distinct cultural products and practices and you will come to understand some of the values important to the Arabic people, such as honor, dignity, and hospitality.

**Arabic-speaking peoples have made significant contributions to world civilization.** Arabs contributed a great deal to the advancement of science, medicine, and philosophy. Much learning from the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine cultures was preserved for the world through the Arab libraries. Arabs have also made significant contributions in such areas as literature, mathematics, navigation, astrology, and architecture. Knowledge of Arabic enables the exploration of this vast body of knowledge in their original language.

**There is a high demand and low supply of Arabic-speakers in the Western world.** With the growing importance of the Middle East in international affairs, there is thus an extreme shortage of workers in the West who are versed in Arabic language and culture. Those who study Arabic can find careers in a variety of fields: journalism, business and industry, education, finance and banking, translation and interpretation, consulting, foreign service and intelligence, and many others.

**Arabic-speaking nations are a fast growing market for trade.** Initiatives to integrate the Arab world into the global economy are opening up numerous potential new business opportunities. With a GDP of over 600 billion dollars annually, the region also has much to offer the world market. In order to do business effectively, one must understand the language and culture of the people with whom one hopes to negotiate and conduct trade.

**Knowing Arabic can promote intercultural understanding.** In addition to having limited exposure to real Arabic culture, Westerners are presented with one-dimensional negative stereotypes of Arabic-speaking peoples through the news media, Hollywood films, and other sources. Those who learn Arabic gain deeper insights into the cultural, political, and religious values that motivate people in those cultures.

**Arabic influence is evident in many other languages.** The export of concepts, products, and cultural practices from Arabic-speaking peoples is evident in the vocabulary that Arabic has lent other languages. Numerous Arabic contributions are also discernible in Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Spanish, Swahili, Urdu, Tigrinya and other languages.

**There are financial incentives for learning Arabic.** The US government has designated Arabic as a language of strategic importance. The National Strategic Language Initiative instituted in 2006 promotes the learning of Arabic (and other languages deemed critical) among Americans through numerous scholarships and supported learning opportunities.

**The United States has a significant Arab-American population.** There are nearly 3.5 million people of Arab heritage residing in the United States. Even just a basic knowledge of the Arabic language and culture can improve understanding and acceptance of this often misunderstood and misrepresented group of Americans.