

## Arabic and Hebrew: Fraternal but not identical twins

David L. Share | University of Haifa, Israel

Elinor Saiegh-Haddad | Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Arabic and Hebrew are two non-European languages written in non-alphabetic writing systems. Our presentation will survey the similarities and differences in Arabic and Hebrew in linguistic and orthographic structure and the implications for literacy learning. Both are Semitic languages, the most distinct linguistic feature of which is non-concatenated root and word-pattern morphology (McCarthy, 1981). Arabic and Hebrew are also similar in other morphological and morpho-syntactic properties, including inflectional morphology and the use of clitics, even though Arabic is much richer than Hebrew in both morphological domains, and especially so in inflectional categories. The Arabic and Hebrew writing systems feature similarities and differences too; both are abjads (i.e., consonantal writing systems) in which consonants are fully represented in writing whereas vowels are represented in a subsidiary manner partly by regular (linear) letters and partly by (optional) non-linear diacritic-like signs. Arabic is a highly cursive (ligatured) script with extensive allography; Hebrew, on the other hand, is a non-cursive script with limited allography. In both languages, children learn to read the fully vocalized (and hence phonologically transparent) version of their script but later transition to a partly vocalized version which relies heavily on the reader's lexical and morphological knowledge. The divergence between spoken and written forms ("diglossia") is prominent in Arabic, but not Hebrew. These commonalities and differences result in patterns of literacy development and difficulties that are similar in the two languages but not identical.