Student teaches peers language

All eyes on **Sarrah El-Moumouhi**

"I speak Arabic, French, English, Berber and then I would say half of Spanish ."

BY MARIAH BOHANON
Staff Reporter

Until freshman Sarrah El-Moumouhi showed up last semester, the chance to learn a Middle Eastern language was non-existent on campus.

Originally from Alkhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, El-Moumouhi is a teacher's assistant for the University's newly founded course in Arabic.

"I speak Arabic, French, English, Berber and then I would say half of Spanish," she said. "I learned French when I was very young, but I learned English so late that I could think about the comparisons between English and Arabic. Once I started teaching, I could say this is the way Arabic is and this is the way English is."

Truman began participating in the U.S. Arabic Distance Learning Network last semester. El-Moumouhi said she went through the interview process and got picked for the T.A. position.

"I was nervous — I mean I didn't know exactly what this setting was going to be, or how old the students were going to be or how seriously they would take the class, but I was really nervous having to do it in English, and especially doing it for something that I take for granted," El-Moumouhi said. "I don't think about the Arabic language or how people take it — it just comes naturally to me — so I was nervous about how I was going to explain things to them, and having to do it in English with an American audience."

Two out of four days a week a professor in Berkeley, Calif., lectures through video conference, leaving El-Moumouhi to teach the other two days. El-Moumouhi manages the class on campus every day it meets.

El-Moumouhi said it can be challenging to be a full-time student and a teacher. It especially was hard at the end of last semester, she said, because she had to manage the assignments for her own classes and make sure that her students were prepared for final exams.

"It's not like going into a class," she said. "When you take a class, sometimes you're tired, and you just sit back and take it all in, but being an actual instructor you have to show up in front of the class and be fully prepared to do something because you have like 20 people waiting for something to be given to them or wanting to learn something new that day."

El-Moumouhi said it is easier to teach the course because the students are more interested in learning the language than earning required credits.

"It's not like a required class, but a lot of the students I had last semester and this semester are political science majors," she said. "Some history and philosophy majors, and a lot of them are linguistics, so I would say they are interested in languages."

The transition from English to Arabic can be very difficult and takes longer to learn than most other foreign languages, she said.

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>
> **Sarrah El-Moumouhi**
> Teacher's Assistant

"They're getting really invested in the language, so it's really positive to see that young of a group really ready to learn a language, and they're putting so much effort into it because it kind of takes a lot of you to learn a new alphabet, a new way of writing, a new everything," El-Moumouhi said.

El-Moumouhi said she will be returning to Morocco after the end of this semester and that she is uncertain about the future of Arabic classes at Truman.

"Since this is the first year, they are trying to experiment and see where the class is going, but what I kind of know is that they're kind of hesitant about continuing into the levels of Arabic, like higher classes," she said. "I think they are going to try to get another T.A. next year."

Some students are interested in continuing to learn the language after they complete Elementary Arabic 2, El-Moumouhi said.

"Some of them are really interested in carrying on the Arabic program, and some of them are actually already applying to exchange programs and studying abroad either for the summer or for next semester," she said.

El-Moumouhi is an international relations major who chose American studies as her concentration. She said she applied for the teacher's assistant position because she was interested in returning to America to study.

"I never thought about teaching before as something that I would do before I graduate or in grad school," El-Moumouhi said. "I mean, I enjoy it so much, but I never thought of it as a career."

She said she'll have many opportunities to use the skills she learned studying and teaching in America.

"Maybe I'll go to grad school in the U.S. or in Morocco," she said. "I want to work in the international studies or international law area and maybe use my ability to translate in Arabic or English or French. I look forward to actually working with the United Nations in the future, maybe, but that's still a long way away."

Mayank Dhungana/index
Freshman Sarrah El-Moumouhi is teaching Truman's first Arabic class as a teacher's assistant this semester.

Television switch catches students off guard

BY EMMA MUELLER
Staff Reporter

The switch is on, maybe.

Television stations were originally scheduled to begin broadcasting digital signals instead of analog waves Feb. 17. However, those who do not have a converter box, cable or a digital-ready television could see a big break coming from Washington, D.C. as the Senate is considering a bill that would postpone the switch until digital television to June 12.

Because of the confusion some people are having regarding the transition, there is a greater chance the date for the switch will be delayed. The delay would give people the chance to obtain the right equipment and buy the government more time. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration has had to deal with a shortage of coupons for the converter boxes and a budget that has run dry.

"I think [the delay is] a really good idea," sophomore Kevyn Wiskirchen said. "I can see how it's a problem, especially during [the] cold[est] season of the year for elderly people to go out and get one. I know for my grandmother — TV is everything for her. It will probably have a big effect on her. I don't know if she knows about it. So I think pushing it back is beneficial."

All of these concerns and many others are among the reasons why some senators would like to delay the switch to digital television. Wiskirchen said he only heard about the switch a week ago and his family is not ready either.

"I'm going to guess that my family is going to do nothing about the switch," Wiskirchen said. "We don't really watch that much TV, so I don't think it really will affect my house that much. I'd say the main source of local news is the Internet or the newspaper, so for us, TV was never really important."

The switch might not have a large effect on college students since all residence hall rooms are capable of high-definition broadcasting, according to the April 3 issue of the Index.

Students living in houses or apartments, however, might be affected, though maybe to their benefit. Senior Baillie Cloyd, who lives off campus, already has a converter box that allows her to receive one station: ABC.

"I don't fully understand why they are making the switch, because it seems rather inconvenient for a lot of people … but I also haven't really researched it," she said.

Cloyd said she expects to be able to receive Fox after the switch.

"I don't get to watch a lot of TV, but it would be nice to have options, so I would really like to have both channels," Cloyd said.

Source: dtv.gov
Design by Rose Runser/ Index

Since 2005, when Congress required broadcasters to switch to digital signals, the government and businesses have been gearing up to help customers transition with ease. George Barlow, owner of Rylos Electronics, has seen local customers' worries first hand.

"A few have had concerns about how to hook up the box," Barlow said. "And then there have been some concerns about whether or not they are going to actually get a strong enough signal."

People also are questioning whether or not they can use their original antenna to pick up the digital signals, he said.

"I don't think it is going to be a real issue for anybody," Barlow said. "Unless they're placing bets on when we would have digital, and they might be concerned."

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