



Bridging the Gap: Overcoming Medical Arabic Language Challenges in the Healthcare Setting

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Introduction

Effective communication is essential for quality healthcare, yet language barriers pose significant challenges for non-English-speaking communities. Limited English proficiency often leads to misdiagnosis, medication errors, and decreased patient satisfaction. Southeast Michigan, America’s largest Arab community, faces particular challenges due to limited English proficiency and overcoming these barriers is crucial¹.

Aims and Objectives

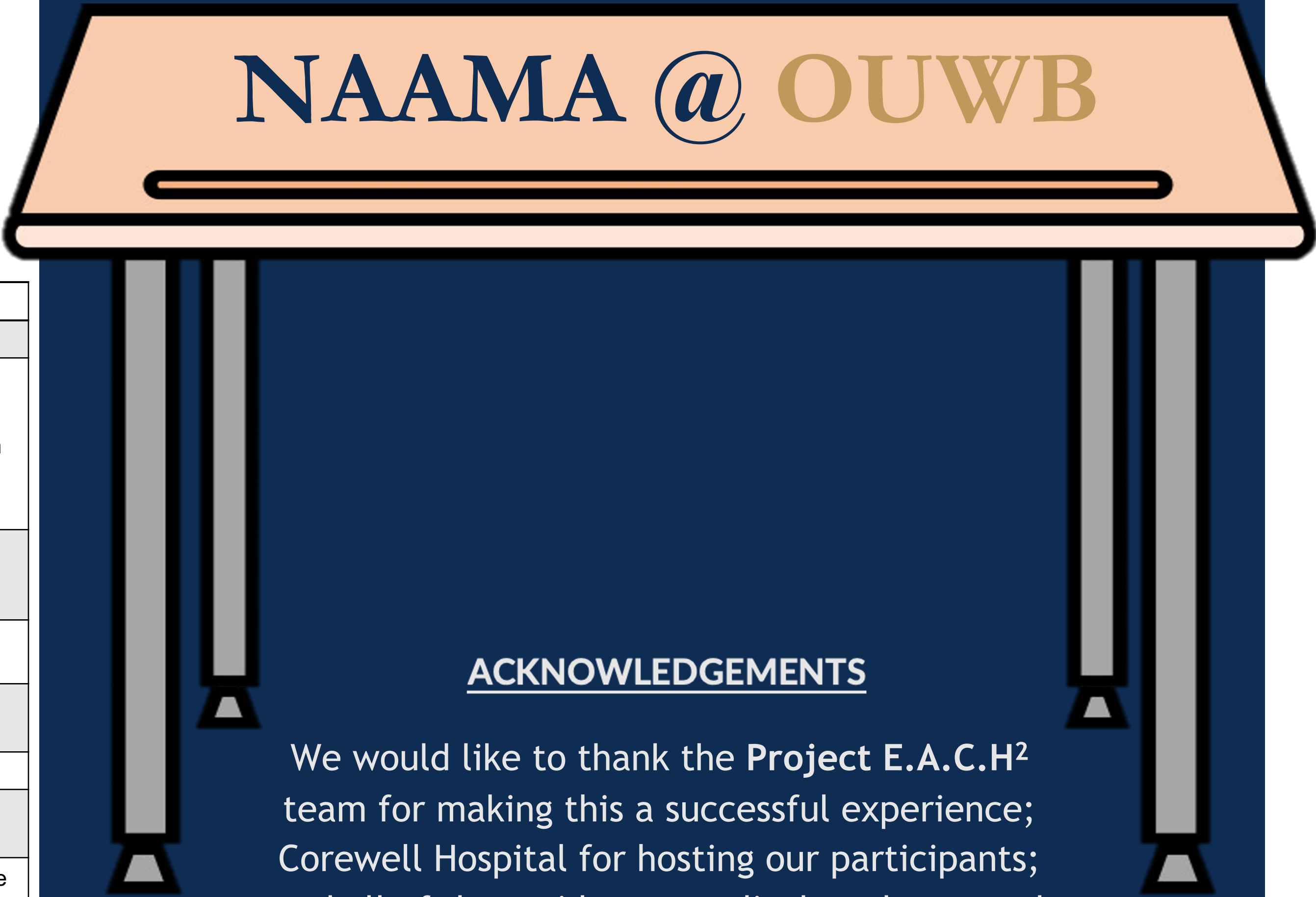
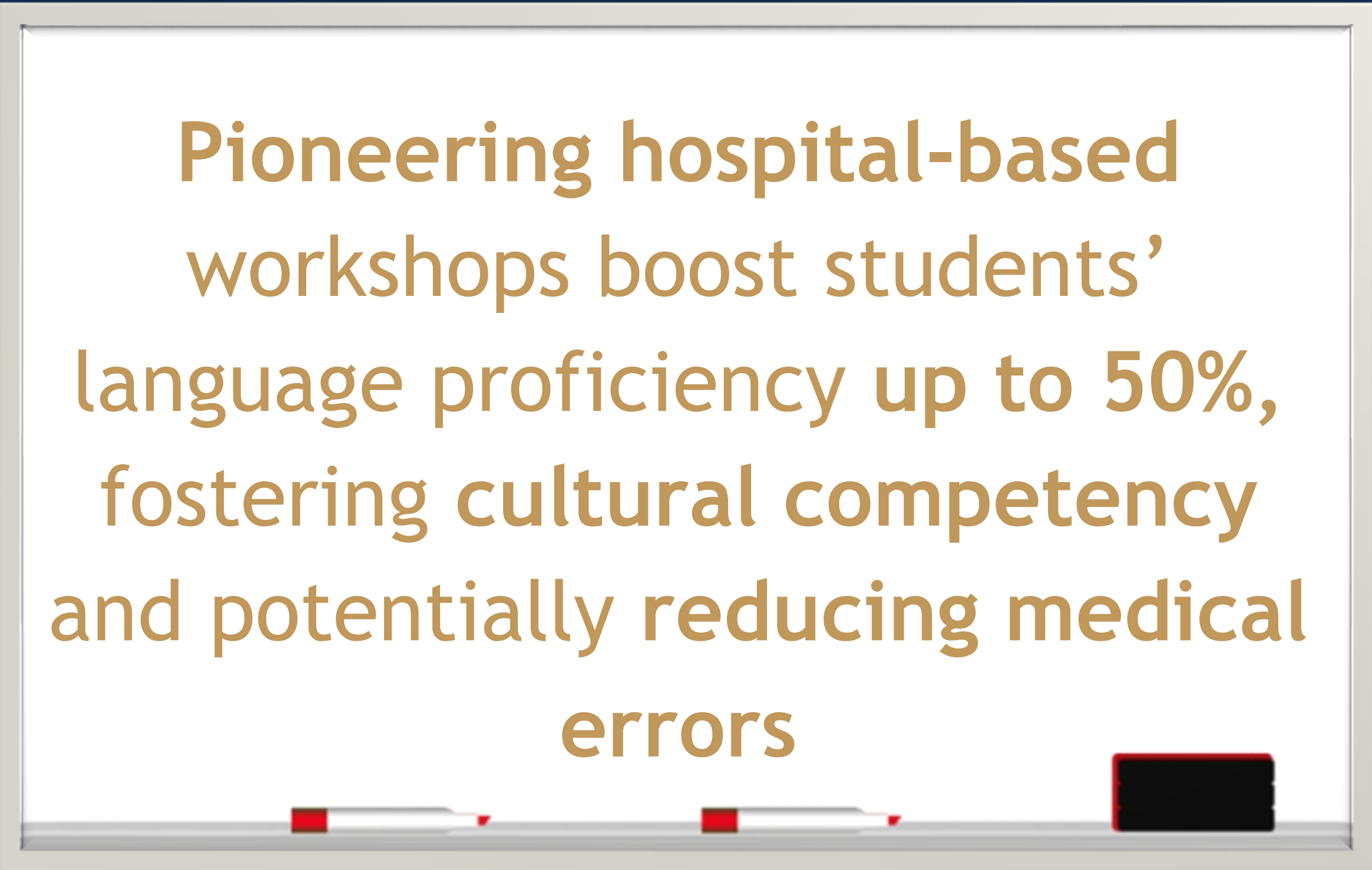
"Bridging The Gap" aims to empower healthcare students with medical Arabic skills, thus bridging cultural divides and enhancing care quality.

Methods

- Pre- & post-intervention study with structured medical Arabic workshops (topics: basics, vitals, history-taking, physical examination, surgical terminology, laboratory tests)
- Participants: Healthcare students (n=39 pre-test, n=7 post-test, n=6 completed both)
- Statistical analysis: Paired t-test for matched pre-post scores (n=6)

Results: Survey & Participant Testimonials

Theme	Quote
Career Influence	
Understanding and Appreciation	"Since taking the Bridging the Gap seminar, my understanding and appreciation for Arabic culture and language have grown tremendously. This newfound fluency has opened doors in my career path that weren't previously available. I feel more confident interacting with Arabic colleagues and clients, and even have the chance to pursue opportunities in Arabic-speaking countries. The communication skills I gained have been invaluable!"
New Opportunities	"I gained a deeper understanding of Arabic culture, leading to better working relationships. It opens doors to new career opportunities in the Middle East or with Arabic companies."
Medical Resources	"Able to have medical Arabic readily available from workbooks given after each session."
Cultural Understanding	
Cultural Values	"It allowed [me] to understand the importance of cultural values of different cultures."
	"Allowed me to realize the importance of language and culture competence to provide high quality health care."
Local Relevance	"There's a lot of people in southeast Michigan who speak Arabic, so this will be helpful when I rotate in the hospital and encounter patients of this background."
Considerate Transliteration	"Having transliteration was very considerate and helpful for non-native speakers."



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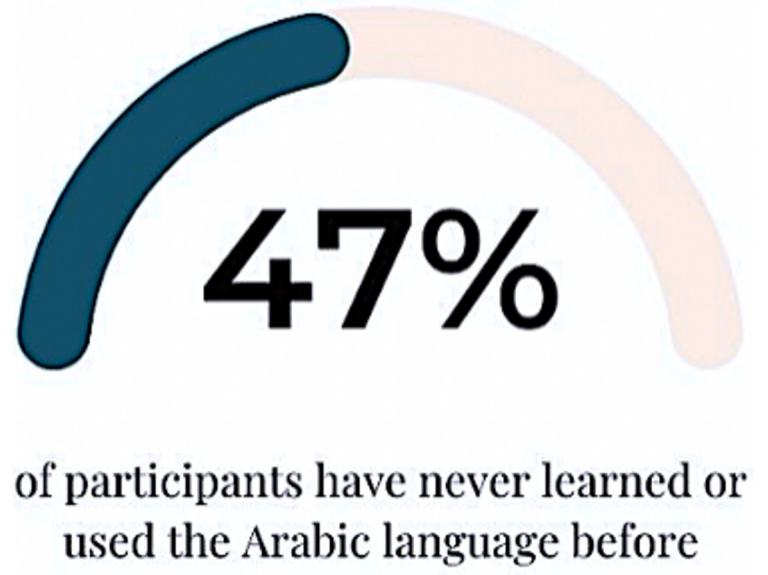
Results: Pre- & Post-Language Test

- Basic phrase recognition: 66.7% to 100% (p < 0.05)
- Complex phrase comprehension: 50% to 83.3% (p < 0.05)
- Medical terminology accuracy: 50% to 100% (p < 0.01)
- Basic phrase recognition: 66.7% to 100% (p < 0.05)

Question	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)
Ana ismee doktor Ahmad (introduce oneself: 'my name is Dr. Ahmad')	66.7	100.0
sa'abHath fee ithnak (articulate: 'I'm going to look in your ear')	50.0	83.3
batin (identify: 'abdomen')	50.0	100.0

Discussion

The workshops significantly enhanced participants’ understanding and retention of medical Arabic terminology.



The pilot study, beginning with Arabic, aims to expand to include other languages like Spanish and Hebrew amongst others. The 100% correctness in identifying basic phrases and significant improvements in understanding complex terms underscore the effectiveness of the educational intervention.

References

- Moslimani, M. (2023, May 18). *5 facts about Arabic speakers in the U.S.* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/18/5-facts-about-arabic-speakers-in-the-us/>
- Project E.A.C.H. - Enhancing Arab Communication in Health. <https://www.project-each.com>.

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