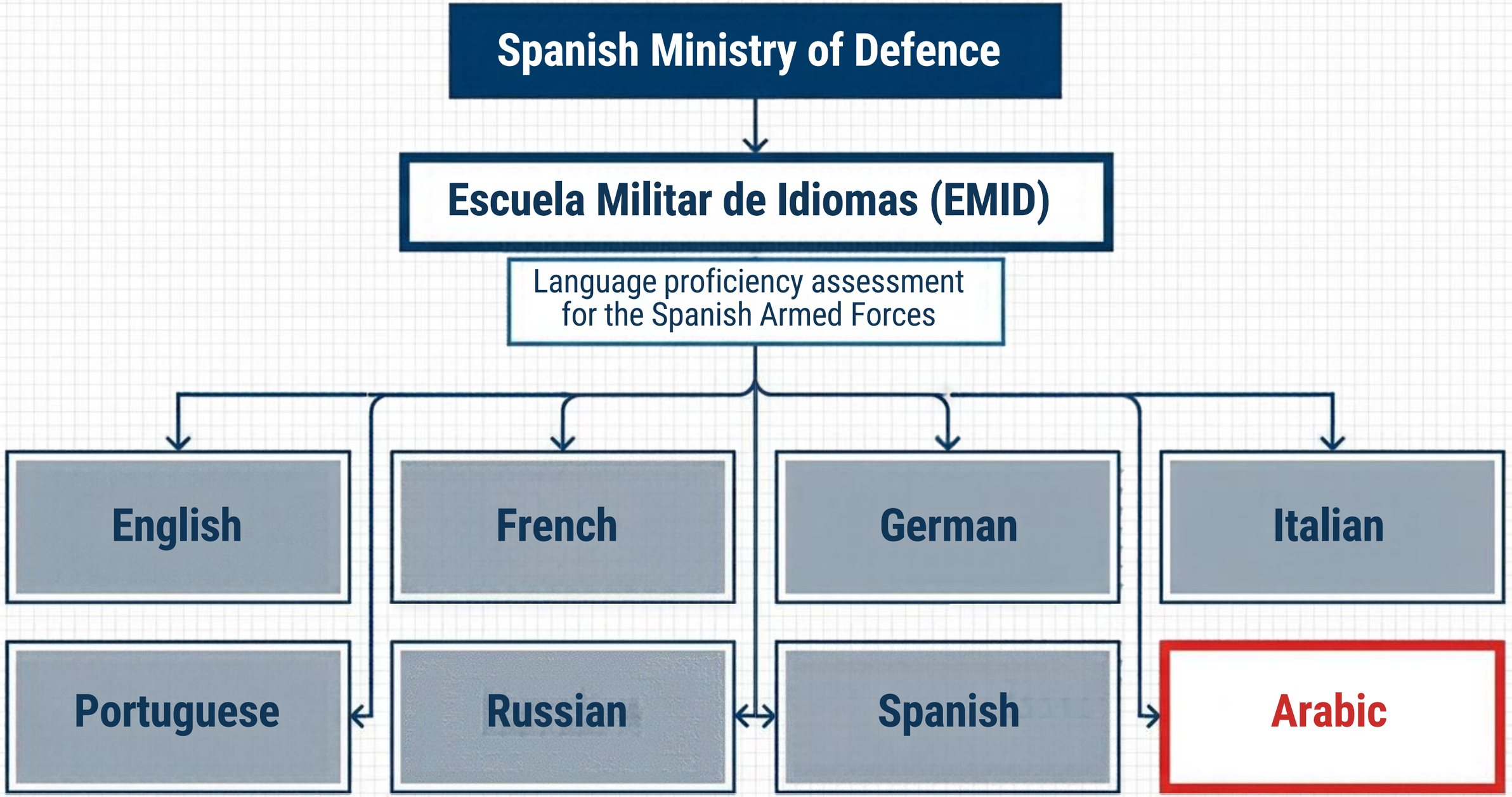
MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA (ESPAÑA)

Arabic Language Teaching at EMID within the NATO STANAG 6001 Framework

Linguistic Challenges, Assessment Realities, and Pedagogical Implications

Daniel Martín Barbero & Helio Islán Fernández

BILC Seminar • Sofia • 2026 | Spanish Military Language School (EMID)


Spanish Ministry of Defence
Escuela Militar de Idiomas (EMID)
Language proficiency assessment for the Spanish Armed Forces
English
French
German
Italian
Portuguese
Russian
Spanish
Arabic

STANAG 6001 Framework	LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING
SLP 4: EXPERT (High-level language use in demanding contexts)				
SLP 3: PROFESSIONAL (Effective use in complex work contexts)				
SLP 2: FUNCTIONAL (Functional use in familiar contexts)				

Key question:

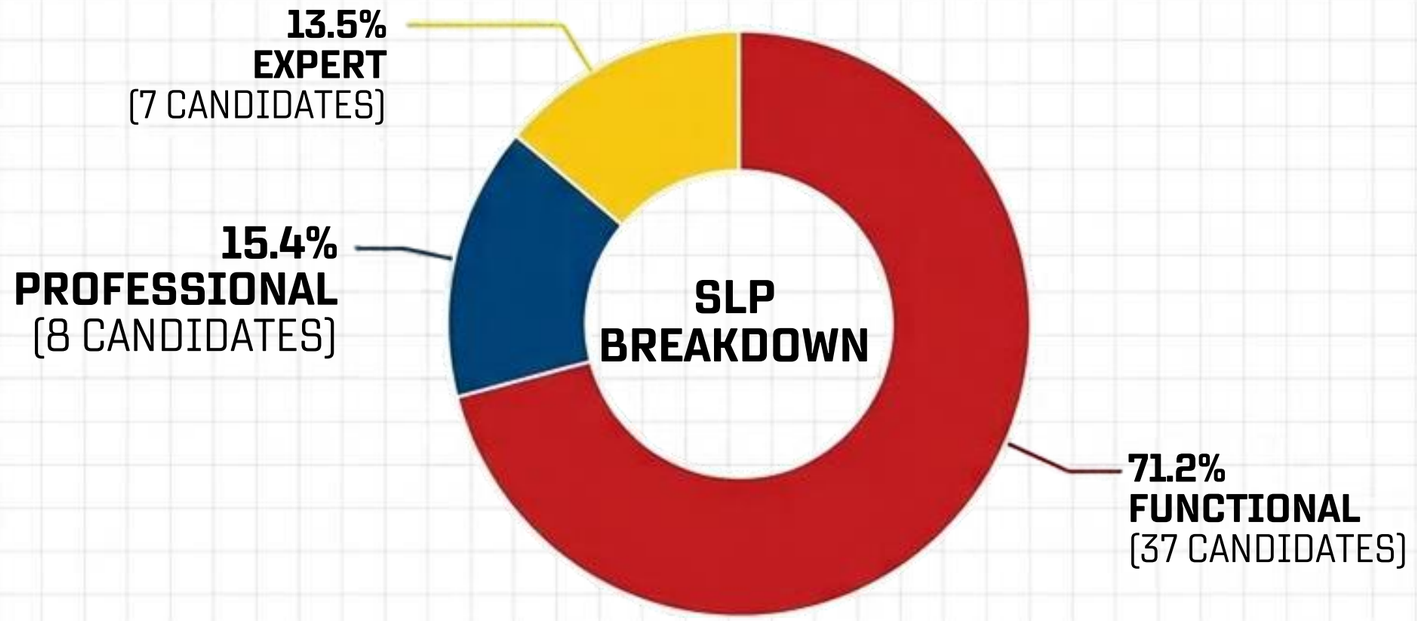
Which variety of Arabic does a proficiency result actually represent?

ESCUELA MILITAR DE IDIOMAS (EMID)

ARABIC LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW 2025

52

TOTAL CANDIDATES EXAMINED (2025)



21
EXAMINATION SESSIONS

23
EXECUTIVE EXAMINATIONS

29
EXTERNAL PERSONNEL

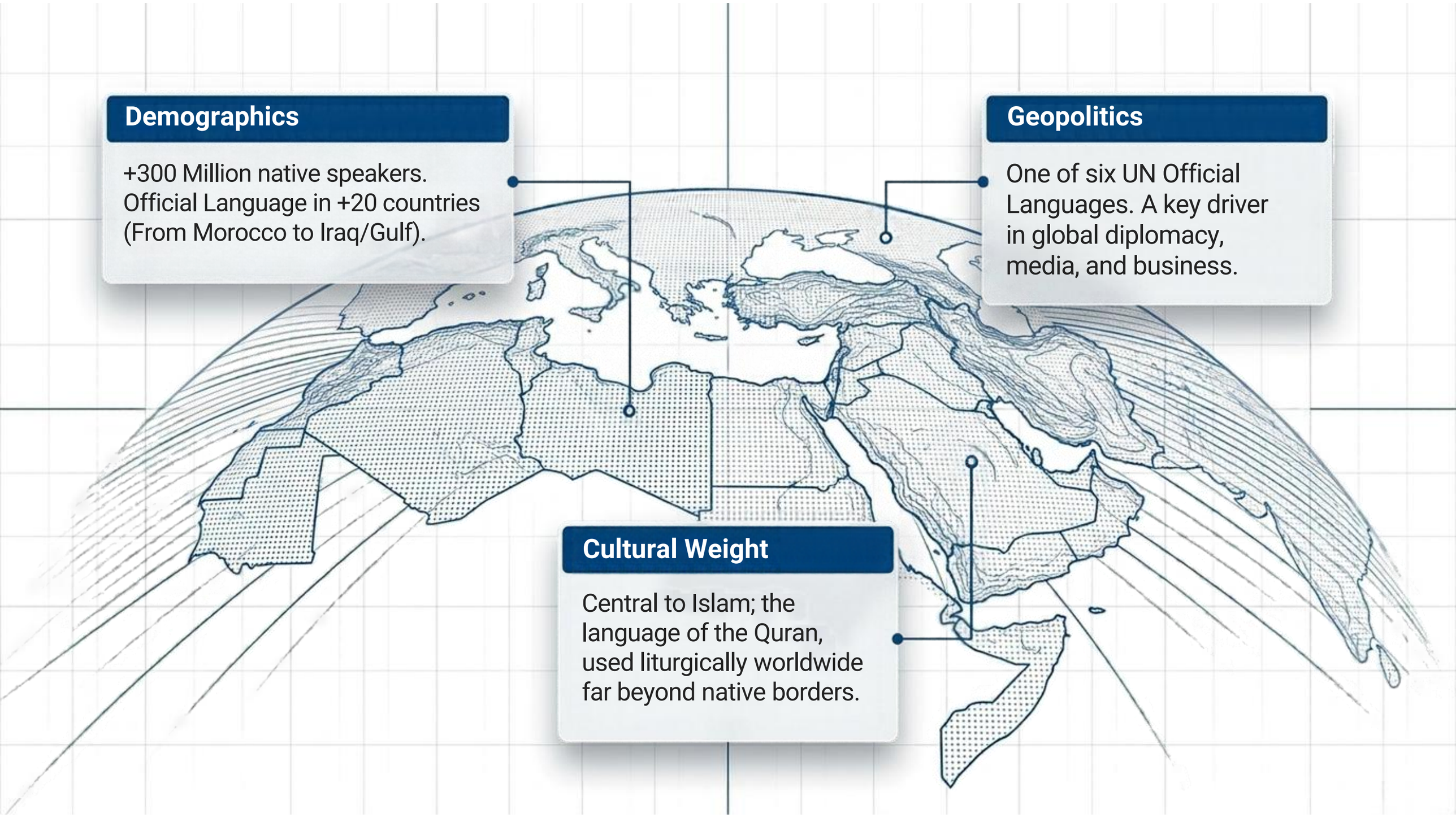
Source: EMID examination statistics, 2025.

Demographics

+300 Million native speakers. Official Language in +20 countries (From Morocco to Iraq/Gulf).

Geopolitics

One of six UN Official Languages. A key driver in global diplomacy, media, and business.



Cultural Weight

Central to Islam; the language of the Quran, used liturgically worldwide far beyond native borders.

The Diglossia Divide (Marçais 1930 / Ferguson 1959)

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

THE FORMAL REGISTER



Based on Classical Arabic. The "prestige" or "correct" variety.

Use Cases: Newspapers, books, official documents, formal speeches, education, news broadcasts.

Spoken Arabic Dialects

THE NATURAL REGISTER

Fluid, distinct systems with unique vocabulary and grammar. Not simply "incorrect" MSA.

Varieties: Egyptian, Levantine, Gulf, Iraqi, Maghrebi, Hassaniya.

Use Cases: Everyday life, family conversations, popular culture.



A single speaker may seamlessly shift between both varieties in the same day.

Source: Linguistic Analysis, 2025

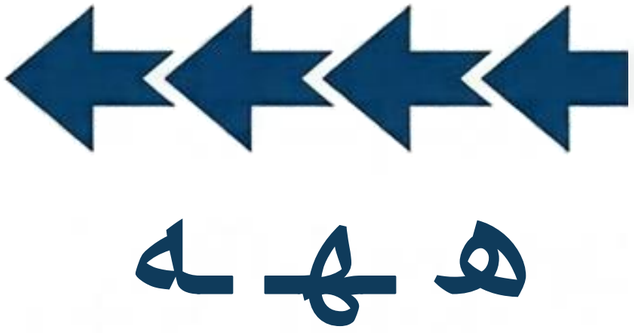
The Diglossia Matrix

	English	MSA	Levantine	Egyptian	Moroccan
Substantial Variation	What do you want to do?	Madha toreed an tafaal?	Shoo beddak taamel?	Aayez teemel eeh?	Shno bghiti ddir?
Phonetic Variation	The school is big	al-Madrasa kabira	il-Madrase kbire	il-Madrasa kibira	l-Mdrasa kbira

Dialects share features but can be mutually unintelligible.
The variation is both structural and phonetic.

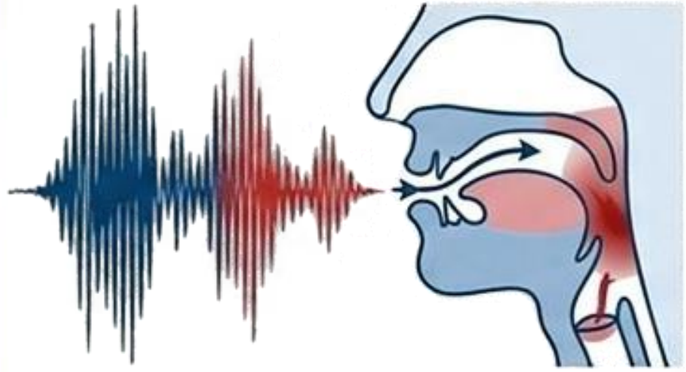
Linguistic Friction for Spanish Learners

The Writing System



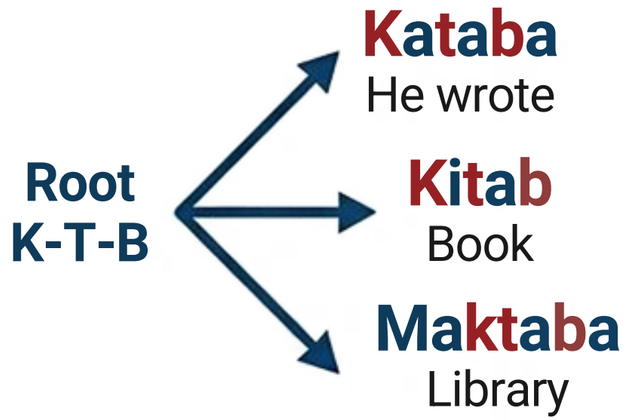
Right-to-left orientation. Contextual, shape-shifting letters. Absence of **short vowels** in everyday texts complicates beginner reading.

Phonetics & Prosody



Presence of **pharyngeal** and **emphatic consonants,** sounds that are entirely non-existent in the Spanish phonetic inventory.

Grammar & Vocabulary



The **Root-and-Pattern** system. Words are formed from consonantal roots, sharply distinct **roots**, unlike the morphological construction found in Romance languages.

The Learner Landscape

Learner Profile

Heritage Learners

Acquired a dialect (e.g., Moroccan) at home.

Learning MSA as a second language for professional/identity reasons.

Mother tongue is a dialect.

Learner Profile

Multilingual Learners

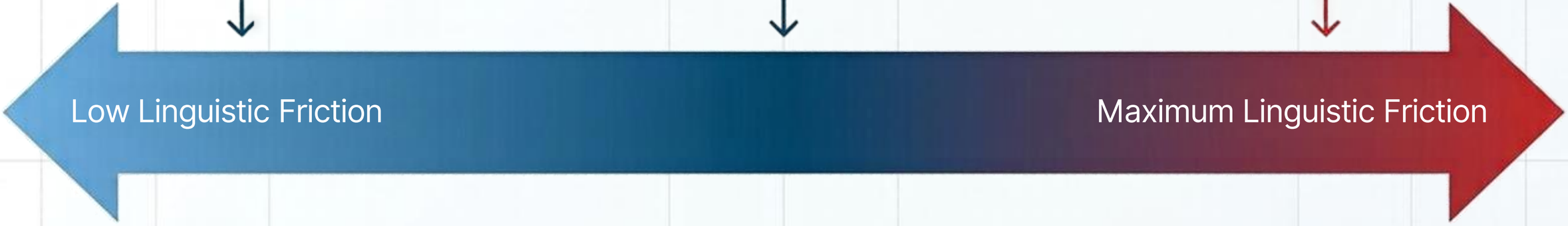
Possess proficiency in other foreign languages.

Can leverage previous language-acquisition frameworks to map Arabic more efficiently.

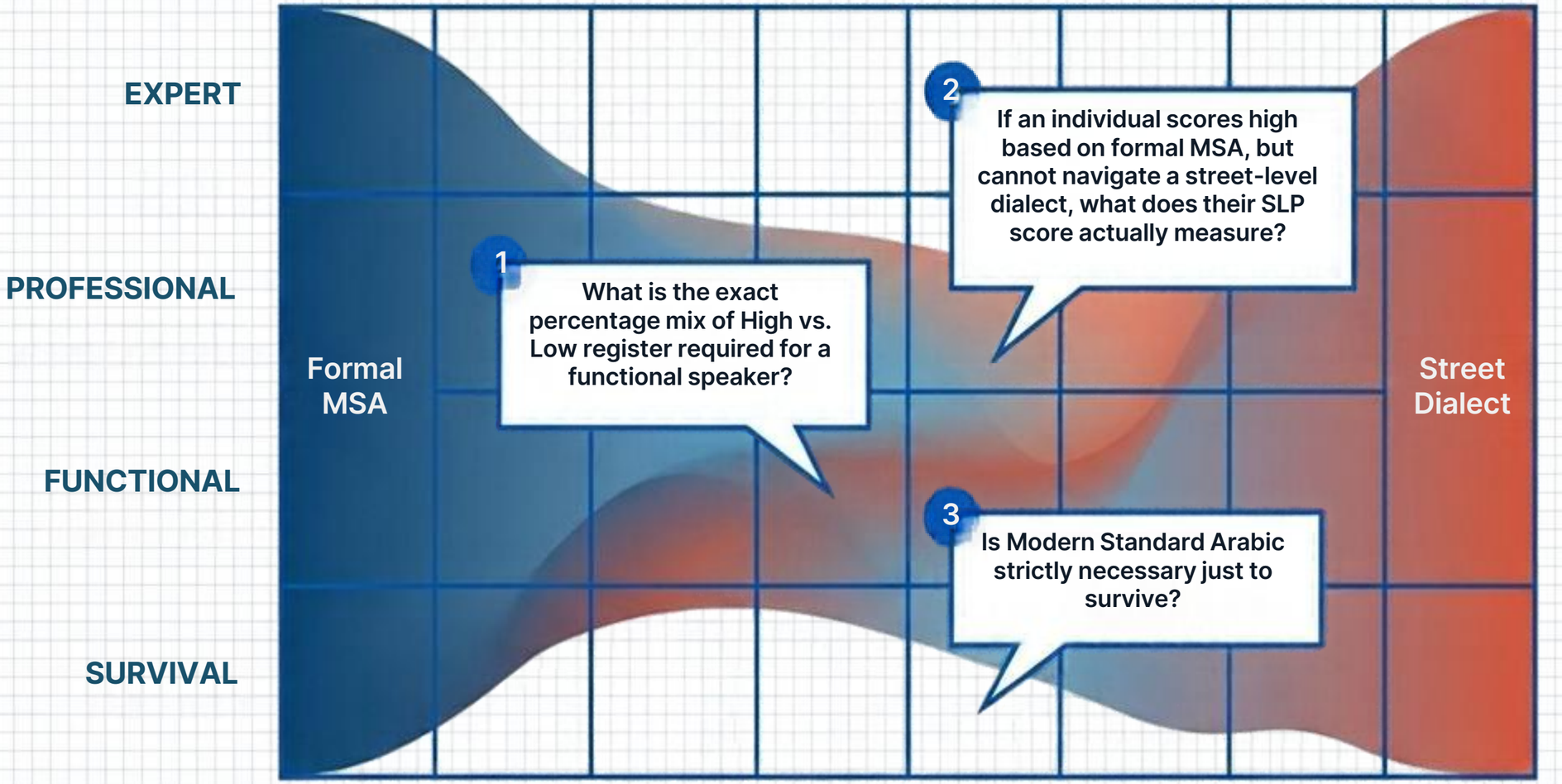
Learner Profile

Monolingual Spanish Speakers

Face the barrier of Arabic's unique writing system and structures without prior acquisition frameworks to rely on.



The Synthesis: Framework vs. Reality



Conclusion: We are measuring overall communicative ability, not just competence in a specific prestige variety.

Looking Ahead: The EMID Strategic Roadmap



Implementing AI tools into instructional design to build personalized learning pathways, scalable feedback, and interactive practice.

Expanding access to resources, promoting student engagement, and offering vital operational flexibility.

Formally integrating both Modern Standard Arabic and Dialects to reflect real-world linguistic diversity and ensure true operational readiness.

THANK YOU !

Capt. Daniel Martín Barbero | dmarba1@mde.es
Prof. Helio Islán Fernández | hislfer@mde.es
Spanish Military Language School
Ministry of Defence