

# Mobile resources for integration: how availability meets the needs of newly arrived Arabic-speaking migrants in Sweden

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**Abstract.** The paper reports on the availability and use of mobile resources by newly arrived Arabic migrants in Sweden, and how the resources meet migrants' integration needs. Analysis of websites and applications (hereafter apps) in combination with focus group interviews is used. Results show that though a variety of resources are available, translation and vocabulary apps are primarily used. Possible reasons are lack of connection in language training resources to migrants' immediate needs such as employment and education, accommodation, contact with locals and societal information (Ager & Strang, 2008). Cultural differences might be influential for Arabic-speakers' low use of chat apps for communication with locals.

**Keywords:** integration, Arabic, migrants, mobile learning, Sweden.

## 1. Introduction

During the past two years, about 200 000 people have sought asylum in Sweden, many coming from Arabic-speaking countries (Swedish Migration Agency, 2017). Host societies face challenges in supporting the migrants' integration (Sunderland, 2016). Many newly arrived migrants have smartphones (Bradley, Berbyuk Lindström, & Sofkova Hashemi, 2017), which are potential bridging tools to the host society (Collin & Karsenti, 2012). Though mobile learning “can

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**How to cite this article:** Berbyuk Lindström, N., Sofkova Hashemi, S., Bartram, L., & Bradley, L. (2017). Mobile resources for integration: how availability meets the needs of newly arrived Arabic-speaking migrants in Sweden. In K. Borthwick, L. Bradley & S. Thouéšny (Eds), *CALL in a climate of change: adapting to turbulent global conditions – short papers from EUROCALL 2017* (pp. 40-45). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2017.eurocall2017.686>

enhance, extend and enrich the concept and activity of learning itself” (Traxler, Barcena, & Laborda, 2015, p. 1236), existing resources are not always adapted to the needs of the users (Epp, 2017). Further, an overview of mobile resources, hereafter resources, consisting of mobile apps and mobile websites for integration is lacking.

The study investigates the availability of resources for integration purposes and how they are used in relation to the needs expressed by newly arrived Arabic-speaking migrants in Sweden. Research questions concern:

- What resources are available?
- How are they used?
- What integration needs do the migrants have?
- How are the available resources meeting these needs?

## 2. Method

The study is based on a combination of focus group interviews and analysis of available resources for integration. Six semi-structured interviews with 27 literate Arabic-speaking migrants (14 male and 13 female) enrolled in ‘Swedish for immigrants’ courses were conducted. The majority (23) were from Syria, three from Iraq, and one from Algeria.

Respondents were asked about their experiences and perceptions of necessary information to be integrated in Sweden and the use of resources. The focus group interviews were conducted in groups of four to six people. They were carried out in Arabic (four groups) and Swedish and English (two groups), and audio-recorded. Thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used for analysis.

The analysis of available resources comprised a search for websites and apps on the Swedish market through several media channels (newspapers, TV, the Internet) and via the App Store and Google Play Store (November 2016-April 2017). Both Swedish and Arabic search words were used, e.g. ‘nyanländ’ (newly arrived), ‘al-suwīd’ (Sweden). Criteria for inclusion were resources supporting Arabic-Swedish or only Swedish, analysed in terms of:

- primary function;
- accessibility (pricing, platform, user interface language);
- reliability (technical problems).

### 3. Results and discussion

We found 48 resources: 39 apps and nine websites adapted to mobile use. Table 1 presents examples of the resources<sup>5</sup>.

Table 1. Primary function and accessibility (platform)

Primary function	Accessibility (Platform/examples)						Total
	Android	iOS	Android/iOS	Web	Android/iOS/Web	iOS/Web	
Language training	11 Rādiyū ta'allam al-luġa l-suwīdiyya (Radio Learn Swedish 100)	3 Marhaba (Hello)	7 Språkkraft Läscoach (Language power Reading coach)	2 Akelius svenska (Akelius Swedish)	3 Hejssvenska (Hello Swedish)	1 Speakify	27
Translation & vocabulary	3 Qāmūs 'arabī suwīdī bidūn intarnit (Arabic-Swedish dictionary without Internet)	1 SayHi Translate	3 Språk i vården (Language in health care)		2 Lexin		9
Societal information	2 Sweden Arabs			3 Mobilearn	1 Information om Sverige (Information about Sweden)		6
Contact with locals			2 Welcome App	4 Kompis Sverige (Friend Sweden)			6
Total	16	4	12	9	6	1	48

5. A complete annotated list can be found at <https://research-publishing.box.com/s/ryr3andyr9ks1u6vgehrtf58v4y0ov70>

As to primary function, ‘language training’ represents the majority of the resources (56%), followed by ‘translation & vocabulary’ (19%), ‘societal information’ (12.5%), and ‘contact with locals’ (12.5%). Concerning accessibility, Android apps dominate (33%), followed by apps developed for both Android and iOS (25%) and Web (19%). Moreover, a high degree (92%), were available either as a whole or in part in Arabic. Only three websites and one of the cross-platform resources were entirely in Swedish. Regarding pricing, the vast majority (83%) of all apps were free of charge (including those free to download and use and those which were free but contained advertisements). Seven apps (15%) were paid services (paid to download and free apps with in-app purchases). At the time of the review, the majority of the resources indicated good *reliability*. Six resources (13%) exhibited reliability issues, such as incorrect representation of the Arabic orthography, freezing problems, and lengthy loading times. Four (8%) apps were considered inaccessible due to password requirements or partially missing content.

Concerning mobile usage in the focus group interviews, ‘translation & vocabulary’ resources *Google Translate* and *Lexin* were used on a daily basis, while only a few respondents mentioned using ‘language training’ resources, e.g. *Duolingo* and *Lingio*. Lack of time and motivation for using ‘language training’ apps as well as a wish for adding societal information to their content were expressed. None acknowledged using ‘societal information’ and ‘contacts with locals’.

In regard to integration needs and how the available resources meet these needs, the migrants mentioned learning Swedish as the key factor for integration together with employment, education, and getting accommodation. Validating one’s education and finding employment “to become financially secure” in order to “give back” to the Swedish society was prioritised. However, many participants experienced lack of knowledge about the job application process. Further, unconfirmed working experience from home countries and limited experience in Sweden were considered as having a detrimental effect on their job prospects. Contact with Swedes and learning about Sweden, its laws, culture, and health care were also emphasised. Many were concerned about little contact with Swedes, some experienced rejection, while others had positive experiences. The respondents described Syrians as “very social”, while Swedes were regarded as more reserved, which complicated initial contacts.

## 4. Conclusion

Successful integration is essential for both host societies and migrants, and mobile technologies have potential to support this process (Bobeth et al., 2013; Borkert,

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Cingolani, & Premazzi, 2009). Designing resources for migrants, understanding of target group characteristics and its immediate needs are essential to ensure usability. Our study shows that there are distinct discrepancies in relation to the available resources on the market, the use of resources by the newly arrived migrant's and their needs. Though most of the available resources are represented by reliable 'language training' apps and thus could meet the expressed linguistic needs (i.e. learning Swedish), primarily 'translation & vocabulary' resources for solving immediate communication needs rather than for systematic language training are used. A probable reason for low use of 'language training' apps could be their weak relation to the migrants' social and economic integration needs, i.e. managing employment, education, and accommodation (Ager & Strang, 2008), resulting in a lack of motivation for learners. Future studies should explore reasons for the low use of 'social information' and 'contact with locals' apps – possible explanations could be lack of knowledge about them as well as cultural factors, e.g. preferences of oral face-to-face communication (Zaharna, 1995) over written distance communication.

## 5. Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the support of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and to particularly thank all the respondents for their participation.

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**CALL in a climate of change: adapting to turbulent global conditions – short papers from EUROCALL 2017**  
Edited by Kate Borthwick, Linda Bradley, and Sylvie Thoušny

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ISBN13: 978-2-490057-04-7 (Ebook, PDF, colour)

ISBN13: 978-2-490057-05-4 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)

ISBN13: 978-2-490057-03-0 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)

Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never ‘out of stock’ or ‘out of print’.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.  
A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

**Legal deposit:** Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: décembre 2017.