Arabic reading types

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SUMMARY Greatly needed Arabic reading types for testing near visual acuity are suggested. They are based on reading types adopted by the Faculty of Ophthalmologists of the United Kingdom.

Testing near visual acuity has its place in the assessing of the macular function and prescribing a suitable addition for presbyopia. Some eye diseases affect reading acuity to a great extent such as posterior subcapsular cataract.¹ Hence its testing is an indispensable part of ophthalmic examination.

The first scientific attempt to test near visual acuity was made by Snellen in 1868,² who applied to the test the same principle as he applied to his distance types. Each letter is made as a square subtending an angle of 5' at the ordinary reading distance.³ The unfamiliar configuration of letters of that construction, however, is not reproduced in ordinary printer's founts.³

Jaeger's suggestions^{2,3} found more general acceptance because they consisted in ordinary printer's founts of that time. Jaeger's types persisted for a long time, though their uniformity was entirely lost mainly because the original founts from which the types were produced became obsolete.⁴

To overcome this difficulty the British Faculty of Ophthalmologists put forward the suggestions⁴ and then recommendations for standardisation⁵ of reading types. Times Roman type face is used with standard spacing. (Times refers to the print used by *The Times* newspaper.) The notation was based on the printer's point system, where specimens of printed materials are given in sizes of 5 pt, 6 pt, 8 pt, etc. (a point stands for 1/72 inch (0.35 mm) and indicates the size of the block on which individual letters are cast;² 5 point type is one in which each letter is cast on a block 5/72 inch (1.76 mm) tall. This test proved its adequacy for the examination of near visual acuity for more than 30 years.

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Arabic test types for distance visual acuity were standardised in 1968 by Emarah.⁶ Based on Snellen's

concept, they are inadequate for testing reading acuity for the same reason as made the Snellen reading test unpopular, namely the unusual configuration of the letters. Experience has shown that there is a need for suitable Arabic reading types for near visual acuity. Firstly, there are many people who read Arabic but not English. Secondly, there is a difference in size between Arabic and English letter blocks for the same size of printed material.⁷ Arabic letters are larger by 1 to 2 points than the same size in English letters owing to the frequency of punctuation over or under the line and the frequency of ascenders or descenders in Arabic print.⁸ The smallest available Arabic print is 6 point, which is comparable to 4.5 point in English print.^{7,8}

The following suggestions are made for the standardisation of Arabic reading types, and an example is provided in Fig. 1.

(1) The traditional monotype computer print type face should be used, as it is the commonest print in use in modern Arabic newspapers.

(2) 'Dark' monotype should be used for better contrast as opposed to 'light' monotype.

(3) The sizes of print recommended are 6 pt, 7 pt, 8 pt, 10 pt, 12 pt, 14 pt, 18 pt, 24 pt, 36 pt, and 48 pt, starting with the smallest size print.

(4) Suitable passages should be selected from Arabic literature and a different passage used for each print size. Isolated words can be used to eliminate the possibility of guessing the reading material from its general sense. In addition pieces from well known printed material can be provided in different sizes like a telephone directory.

(5) The test can be printed on a single sheet or in booklet of durable and cleanable material made of plastic or varnished white card.

(6) Near vision is recorded as the smallest type which the patient can comfortably read together with a note of the approximate distance at which the card is held, such as 'A 8, 30 cm', meaning a reading print size of 8 pt, in Arabic, at distance of 30 cm.

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بنط ٦

احضر الرشيد رجلا لوليه القهاء فقال له: انالا احسن القهاء ولا انا فيه. قال الرشيد: بك ثلاث خصال: لك شرف والشرف يمنع صاحبه من الداعة ولك حلم بحكمك من العجلة، ومن لم يحمل كل عطله وانت رجل تشاور في امرك ومن شاور كل صوابه واما اللغة فستعظم اليك من عطفه به. فمر في القهاء فما وجدوا فيه مطعا .

بنط ٧

يقال للخليفة المصمم «الخن» لانه ولد سنة ثمانين ومائة في ثامن شهر فيها وهو ثامن الخلفاء العباسيين وفتح ثمانية فروع: عمورية ومدينة بابل ومدينة الرط ولقعة الاحزان ومصر والمريجهان وديار ربيعة وارمنية واستخلف ثمانية سنين وثمانية اشهر وثمانية ايام وخلف ثمانية بنين وثمانية بنات .

بنط ٨

أفضل شيء فيه في حياته هو الصلح هو عدوك والصبر عن الحاجة خصمك والاحلاص لصديقك والقذرة الحسنه لطفلك والاحسان لوالدك والاحترام لنفسك والمحبة لجميع الناس .

بنط ١٠

في الحديث:

ثلاث منجيات: خشية الله في السر والعلانية والقصد في الفقر والغنى وكلمة الحق في الغضب والرضى. وثلاث مهلكات: شح مطاع وهوى متبع وإعجاب المرء بنفسه .

بنط ١٢

الكتاب عصارة الفكر النير والرأي السديد وذوب الفؤاد وخلاصة الوجدان الحي فلا الذهب بأثمن من الكتاب ولا الثروة ولا الغنى باقوى واخلد منه .

بنط ١٤

قال ابو عبدالله المغربي:

اعظم الناس ذلا فقير داهن غنيا او تواضع له واعظم الخلق عزا غني تذلل للفقراء وحفظ حرمتهم .

بنط ١٨

قال حكيم ساخر: رأيت اكثر الذين يرتقون الى المجد يسировون على اكتاف اصدقائهم وإما على جماجم اعدائهم .

بنط ٢٤

قال ملك حكيم: لا ملك الا بالجنود ولا جنود الا بالمال ولا مال الا بالرعية ولا رعية الا بالعدل .

بنط ٣٦

الويل للخزف إن سقط على الصخر والويل له إن سقط الصخر عليه .

Fig. 1 Different sizes of Arabic printing in a suggested set of Arabic reading types for near vision.

I am grateful to Mr Gazi Harak and his staff in *Al-Watan* newspaper for their technical assistance.

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Accepted for publication 30 July 1985.