

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USES, DIGLOSSIA AND ATTRITION OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ARAB YOUTH CASE

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ABSTRACT

Social media networking sites are considered as rich language environment. What is observed in the Arabic youth use of the language in social media is that there is a clear functional separation while using Arabic. They either use classical Arabic or a manipulated slang-form that arises from a locally spoken, country-specific dialect, with the domination of a second language in a manner reveals the loss of mother tongue, due to various factors. The study aims at investigating diglossia and language attrition prevailing in social media networking sites in Arab countries: Egypt and UAE. The study found that Local Arabic is the dominant language used online among a group of Arab youth, the Classical Arabic in Arabic Script use is not common among Arab youth. Most of youth who graduated from private school prefer using either foreign language or mix of languages or Arabizi, which features a new and unusual diglossia between a foreign language, English, and colloquial form of Arabic. The study also found correlations between most variables and adopting the idea of being a new generation who seeks for a new way of communication and using the language. Experts should carefully confront Arabizi and use mix of languages and start a renaissance of Arabic opposing Arabizi, considering its potentially harmful impact in future.

Introduction

The widespread adoption of Social Media in Arab societies as a method of communication, with over 150 million users, accompanied by a growth in smartphone penetration has resulted in a rapid evolution of online Arabic written language as posted by Arab youth.

Arab youth use language to communicate on Social Media with different styles and methods that reflect their social identities and their perceptions of language role in their life. They either use classical Arabic or a manipulated slang-form that arises from a locally spoken, country-specific dialect. Arabic local dialects posted on Social Media are often full of slang associated with, not only ethnicity, but also social groups. Moreover, the manipulated Arabic can be written using either Arabic or Latin characters (Basmah, 2011). There is also a portion of the Arab youth Social Media users who choose to communicate through foreign languages such as, English or French, instead of their native language. These habits of language usage on Social Media reflect a social identity that the Arab youth digital users create online and reveal at the same time the loss of their mother tongue, due to various factors e.g. affective, personal, educational levels and length of stay abroad. Since the use of language is a complex matter, there is also a portion of Arab youth users who customize their language habits on Social Media according to the social group, they are communicating with or the audience they want to reach.

In this respect, it is very important to find out, if this situation establishes diglossia and Language Attrition, or have an impacts on the youth's perceptions of their identity or it is merely a kind of temporary language shift. And if we are facing true diglossia and (LA), so what are the factors that influence the amount of diglossia and (LA) on Arab youth users of social media? And what are the aspects and characteristics of those phenomena.

The main goal of this research is to highlight the uses of mother tongue language and the reality of diglossia and (LA) as linguistic phenomena expressed on social networking by Arabic youth and its relation to their social identities. It tackles some linguistic questions such as: (1) whether the online use of English and local Arabic might reflect broader and more enduring social and linguistic shifts. (2) How social media is changing the identities and methods of using languages among Arab young people, and its impact on language learning and identity. Its anticipated outcomes include: (1) Drawing a clear image of how language and social media interlink and define the factors which influence the attrition of Arabic language in social media. (2) Understanding the dangerous linguistic phenomena that threaten Arabic use. (3) Contributing to the field of modern Arabic sociolinguistics and social media.

Social media and Languages used in The Arab World

- Arabic language faces various challenges that jeopardize its use all over the Arabic World. Many varieties of Arabic language are being used by most of Arabs. The most common languages are: the Classical Arabic and local Arabic. Classical Arabic is the literary dialect which is used in the Qur'an; in most print publications including books, magazines, and newspapers; and in formal spoken discourse. Local Arabic is the spoken dialect of the Arab people and is used in conversation, songs, films, and television advertisements. As for written forms, it is used in comic strips, messages, and occasionally, in novels and short stories. Both Classical Arabic and local Arabic use the same Arabic script. Both Classical Arabic and local Arabic have their own powerful symbolism for Arab world.
- However, many of Arab people are dazzled in foreign languages (English in particular) and long to express themselves using these languages instead of Arabic. In addition, the language used online among Arabs, while chatting and

socially networking, varied between Arabic and English. They used modern online English (numbers involved with letters, for example: B4, 2day...etc.) and 'modern online Arabic' (what is known as the Anglo-Arab, for ex. 'Wa7sh,7abebe....3la 3ene...') which have developed on Facebook. This Anglo-Arab language comprises the Arabic words written in English letters with numbers referring to certain Arabic letters (Basmah, 2011).

Diglossia & Language Attrition and its impacts on identity

- As a major new means of global communication, the social media is bound to have a great impact on language use. The social media would encourage global use of many languages especially English and dialects to such a degree that other languages would be crowded out (Crystal, 2001). Shifting from one language to another within the same conversation, signaling a change from one identity to another. However, there is a clear and important connection between the native, mother tongue, language and ethnic identity. (Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014).
- On the other side, using two or more varieties of the same language by some speakers may have great impacts on issues related to Diglossia and attrition. Diglossia refers to using two or more varieties of the same language by some speakers under different conditions. Language attrition refers to the loss of the first language elements seen in the inability to produce, perceive, or recognize particular rules, lexical items, or concepts distinctions due to influence or dominance of a second language. (Cailey Cron, 2016) Diglossia denotes a linguistic situation characterized by the side by side existence of spoken vernacular dialect(s) and a "very divergent, highly codified...superposed variety" (Ferguson in Bassiouney 2009, 10).

Code and Code-Switching (2)

- The concept of code refers to the shift from one language to another within a conversation or utterance, which shows solidarity with a social group, distinguish oneself, participate in social encounters, discuss a certain topic, express feelings and affections, or to impress and persuade the audience. It is any system of signals, such as numbers, words, signal, which carries concrete meaning.
- There have been many attempts to give a typological framework to the phenomenon of code-switching. Poplack (2013) identified three different types of switching which, more often than not, bilinguals will find themselves switching or mixing between languages that they are familiar with regularly while engaging in a conversation daily. Known as code-switching in linguistics, many bilinguals will utilize their ability to shift from one language to another to communicate with others in an unchanged setting and usually within the same utterance (Bullock & Toribio, 2009). Code-switching is traditionally assumed to be an indication of language knowledge deficiency in bilingual speakers. However, various researchers have proposed that code-switching is also commonly used by bilinguals to achieve particular interactional goals in a conversation with other speakers (Shin, 2010).

Arabizi (3)

- The famous term is Arabizi which means a mix Arabic-English language practice. It is also known as the Youth New Era Language (due to its distinguished and famed use among young people in particular (Ghazal, 2014). Arabizi has already been found not only in conversations among young Arabs but also in their written Arabic dailies.
- Spoken and written Arabizi has been used intentionally and unintentionally, in formal and informal daily use communication, entertainment, social media, signs and flyers, or even in students' writing books (Seraj, 2014). Experts have started to mark Arabizi as a rival language of Arabic, which is obviously threatening the Arabic language (Duwairi, et al., 2014). Although Arabizi is an important phenomenon in Arab world nowadays, its level of use has yet to be studied. Consequently, we have an incomplete picture of the phenomenon in reality.
- Ashwaq kenali and et al., (2016) found the level of spoken Arabizi use among Arab students is weak (2.18), which means the level of the seriousness is also still weak. It may be due to the fact that the spoken Arabizi is still developing itself and still spreading among students.
- Palfreyman & Al Khalil point out that Arabizi is not the first Arabic orthographic system that employs the Latin alphabet; (2003). This transcription, called Common Latinized Arabic (CLA), is mainly used to transcribe Arabic words for nonnative speakers. Arabizi, on the other hand, has not been used to translate Arabic texts into English for nonnative speakers of Arabic; instead, it is primarily used in communication between native Arabic speakers, yet another way that it represents a unique addition to Arabic's linguistic landscape.
- By its nature as a Latinized script, Arabizi requires that its users have a working knowledge of English phonology. Thus, from its inception, Arabizi has been a phenomenon rendered meaningful by its ties to a constellation of other language varieties. Indeed, every previous case study indicates that the main users of Arabizi have extensive exposure to English; Warschauer et. al (2002). Likewise, Haggan's Kuwaiti Arabizi using survey participants had been learning English since the second grade (Haggan 2007, 437). By extension, Arabizi users are often from upper middle class backgrounds. Scholars also note that the primary users of Arabizi are young and tech savvy (Warschauer (2002). In sum, according to existing scholarship, the main demographic of Arabizi users are young, relatively wealthy, well educated, native Arabic speakers.

Literature review

- Basmah Issa (2011) examined Facebook, as an example of an online community specifically aimed at encouraging communication between young people and how social media is affecting the identities and language of young people in Jordan. She found that English is the dominant language used online among a particular group of undergraduate students of Internet users in Jordan, and the written form of Romanized Jordanian Arabic is also widely used in informal communication by this group. However, the participants in the study made quite clear that their use of English does not signify an embrace of Western culture or an abandonment of Jordanian identity.
- (Abdel Tawwab, 2014) attempted to analyze the notion of code-switching in electronic contexts. He discussed the

code-switching functions performed by Arabic-English bilingual users in their Facebook interactions. Findings indicated that code switching occurs in online interaction to serve addressee specification, reiteration, message qualification, clarification, emphasis, checking, indicating emotions, availability, principle of economy and free switching functions.

- Al-Saleem (2011) examined how social media is affecting the identities and language of young people in Jordan. He explored the online written languages, facebook's new concepts, and facebook's impact on language and identity. Results revealed that English is the dominant language used online among a particular group of undergraduate students of internet users in Jordan. Study participants made quite clear that their use of English does not signify an embrace of Western culture or an abandonment of Jordanian identity. Perez-Sabater (2013) investigated the comments published on the official facebook sites of some universities to observe the level of formality/informality of online communication in English. The study revealed that non-native speakers of English display more formal traits than native speakers when communicating on social networking sites in the academic world.
- Lotfi Sayahi (2014) investigated diglossia in the Maghreb countries which have the same sociolinguistic profile. Sayahi stated that diglossia manifest itself in the coexistence of Standard Arabic and local Arabic varieties, and one of the clear aspects of this is the phenomenon of lexical borrowing prevailing in the Maghreb.
- Sayahi (2015) investigated challenges of literacy development in situations of diglossia and bilingualism. With a focus on Tunisia, where diglossia and bilingualism are parts of students' linguistic reality. Sayahi claimed that the initial marginalization of the native vernacular in favor of literacy in Standard Arabic does not seem to be enough for academic success. The study showed that heritage speakers of Arabic face more challenges for language maintenance than heritage speakers of other languages that are not in a diglossic situation.
- Albirini (2016) expanded the discussion of Arabic diglossia in conjunction with four interrelated areas: language attitudes, social identity, variation and codeswitching. Albirini overviewed and evaluated the major assumptions, approaches, theories, and methodologies used in research on these areas as well as the major empirical findings emerging from this research.
- Asgari & Mustapha (2010) investigated vocabulary attrition among adult English Persian learners. In this ex-post facto study, researchers used a 40-item vocabulary test to measure rate of vocabulary attrition of continuing and non-continuing Iranian male and female English language learners in one university. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between EFL attrition rate of abstract and concrete nouns among continuing students across different proficiency levels.
- Sebina (2014) investigated first language attrition in the native environment in Botswana, arguing that there is a L1 attrition in Botswana, especially in the field of phonetics/phonology due to the knowledge and dominant use of English as a second language.
- Ashwaq M. Salleh kenali and et al., (2016) identified the level of Arabizi consumption among Arab students. A total of 1454 students participated in the study and selected randomly from 16 public schools in Saudi Arabia. Findings have shown the level of spoken Arabizi consumption is low and written Arabizi is moderate. The study concluded even the Arabizi has experienced great expansion that it is still in the early age.

Framework for This Paper

- This paper depends on several frameworks; such as the frameworks which focus on code switching in a social network between speakers of Arabic and English Malik's (1994) review on ten reasons for code-switching will be used to discuss the occurrences of code-switching in online communication. The reasons are: lack of facility, lack of competence, mood of the speaker, to amplify and emphasize a point, habitual expressions, semantic significance, to show identity with a group, to address different audience, pragmatic reasons and to attract attention. (Abdel Tawwab, 2014). The study proposes more reasons such as: the stereotypes of the language, the perceptions of the new generation, etc. In addition, the study will build its conclusion on related results of language attrition and diglossia

Statement of the research problem

- Social media networking sites are considered as rich language environment. What is observed in the Arab youth use of the language in social media is that there is a clear functional separation while using Arabic, they either use classical Arabic or a manipulated slang-form that arises from a locally spoken, country-specific dialect, with the domination of a second language in a manner reveals the loss of mother tongue due to various factors e.g. affective, personal, educational levels and length of stay abroad. In this respect, it is very important to find out, if this situation establishes diglossia and Language Attrition, or have an impact on the youth's perceptions of their identity or it is merely a kind of temporary language shift. And if we are facing true diglossia and (LA), so what are the factors that influence the amount of diglossia and (LA) on Arab youth users of social media? And what are the aspects and characteristics of those phenomena.

Research methodology

- The purpose of this research is to investigate the uses of mother tongue language and the reality of diglossia and (LA) as expressed on social networking by Arabic youth and its relation to their social identities and define the factors which influence those phenomena of Arabic language in social media.
- Mainly, this research attempts to answer the following questions:
 1. What is the main language used by Arab youth on social media? Are the Arab youths communicating with each other in their own language?
 2. What are the main reasons behind preferring specific type of language on social media? Classical language, local language, foreign language or mixed language or Arabizi?
 3. To what extent do diglossia and (LA) appear among Arab youths who are using social media?

4. What factors influence diglossia and (LA) among Arab youths who are using social media?
5. What are the Arab youth's perceptions of social media on Arabic language and its impacts on their identity and the language itself?
6. To what extent are Arab youth aware of the impacts of using English and Arabizi on the perseverance of Arabic language?

- To achieve research purpose, a validated and reliable questionnaire has been distributed to a representative sample from some Arab countries. It has been posted on social media, seeking Arab youth's responses.
- The study was carried out among 55 Arab youths from different Arab countries; mainly for UAE and Egypt. In Egypt, most of the youths prefer to use Arabizi or local dialects. In UAE, the youths are communicating with a lot of nationalities by using different languages. The survey included four questions about language use online, the reasons behind preferring a style of language than another, the factors which influence the Arab youth's uses of specific styles and their attitudes towards the impacts of social media on Arabic language? .The survey was first pilot tested among a small group of people who were not in the final survey, and then finalized and posted on the Facebook and we received 55 responses.
- Survey data was analyzed to allow the examination of various types of online communication by language, dialect, and script and why the participants used a particular language, dialect, and script online. In addition, after the use of Arab youth was identified as occurring in online communication, a two-tailed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to investigate which factors were correlated with Arab youth's uses of social media (with alpha established at .05).

Results:

Table (1) Language used on social media by Arab youth

	much	Average	seldom	Gender	school	year	specialization	status	country
classic Arabic (MSA)	29.1	43.6	27.3	-.161	.253	-.154	-.089	.083	.054
Local language	89	5.5	5.5	-.032	.049	.063	.103	-.238	-.168
Foreign Language		45.5	54.5	-.014	- .378**	.032	-.262	-.151	-.215
Mix of MSA and another language	49.1	36.4	14.5	.075	-.322*	.61	-.147	-.226	-.049
Arabizi	29.1	20	50.9	.087	- .390**	.248	.022	-.272	-.179

- Table (1) shows that most of Arabic youth use local language on their posting and communicating on social media (89%), then use mix of Modern Standard Arabic and another foreign language (49.1%), then use the Arabizi language and the MSA, It also shows a correlation between the type of the participants' high schools (either they graduated from a private or public school), and their used style of the language. A significant difference between the participants' language styles in terms of using mix of languages (.019), adapting Arabizi (.004) and using classic Arabic (.005). Most of youth who graduated from private school prefer to use either foreign language or mix of languages or Arabizi, which features a new and unusual diglossia between a foreign language, English, and colloquial form of Arabic. However, we did not find any correlation between gender, the participants' specialization (enrolled in theoretical or practical field), their marital status and countries and using a specific language style. The Classical Arabic in Arabic Script use is not common among Arab youth. However, half of them said they seldom use Arabizi. It is very obvious that the majority either use the local Arabic and code-switch between English and Arabic. The survey data made it clear that the prominence of local Arabic and English in social media communication stems from a variety of social, economic, and technological factors that are closely related to the more general role of English among Arab youth and the challenges which they are facing when they communicate in classic Arabic, and their perceptions that it is easier to interact with their counterparts either in local Arabic or mix of Arabic with other language (especially English)

Table (2) Reasons for adopting specific language style

Reasons	Rank	%	Gender	school	year	status	country
Attracting attentions	1	75		.333	-.174		-.577
Practical method for communication	4	21.8					
Habit	2	40					
Fits with my mood	6	16.4					
Suitable for emphasizing a	7	12.7	.218	.378	.276	.857**	.488

pint or idea							
Fits with people who I communicate with	6	16.4					
To acquire new friends	11	3.6					
Better in expressing my ideas	3	23.6					
Cannot communicate using another method	11	3.6					
Other method are not helpful	9	7.3					
My colleagues use this method	7	12.7					
Easier and clearer	5	18.2					
Make me look more civilized	10	5.5	- 1.000**	.333	-.577	-.333	-.333
Arabic is abandoned language nowadays	8	9.1					
Represent our new generation	11	3.6	- 1.000**	.500	- 1.000**	-.500	- 1.000**

Table (2) shows that the reasons for using local language, and mixed languages and less use of modern standard Arabic are attracting the others' attention (75%), as a matter of habit (40%), helps my better in expressing my ideas (23.5%), a practical method of communication (21.8%), easier and clearer (18.2%), fits with my mood (16.4%), suitable when I want to emphasize on a point (12.7%), Arabic now is an abandoned language (9.1%), other methods are not helpful (7.3%), makes me look more civilized (5.5%), cannot communicate using another method (3.6%) and represent ours as a new generation (3.6%)

- Table also shows that there are correlations between most variables (gender, the educational level, and the country which they live in) and adopting the reason which the participants mentioned that they are a new generation and they seeking for a new way of communication and using the language. There is also a correlation between gender and adopting the reasons that using new way of communication make the participant looks more civilized. We found a significant difference between the participants who in or graduated from private and public schools and mention habits (.033) and fits with mood as reasons for adapting different styles. The same significant differences were observed between the level of education of the participants and mentions the same reasons and saying that the new styles help them in attracting the attention.(.011)

Table (3) Factors influencing adopting specific language style

Factors	Rank	%
Arabic language is not compatible with technology	3	18.2
Social surrounding requires new communicative language	1	52.7
Using MAS may embarrass me	3	18.2
New generation prefer different method	2	40
The new language is funnier and light in use	4	10.9

- Table (3) shows that the Arab youth consider that the social surrounding requires new communicative language, which led them to use different method of communication more than using the modern standard language (52.7%), and the second factor which influence their language choice is that they prefer, as a new generation, a different method of communication, (40%) and the third factor is the impacts of technology which does not totally support using the Arabic language (18.2%) and feeling embarrassed when they use the modern standard Arabic (18.2%) , while 10.9% said that switching the code of language is funnier and lighter in use

Table (4) Attitudes of Arab youth towards the impacts of using different styles

Attitudes	Disagree	Neutral	agree	Gender	school	year	specialization	status	country
Switch code and mixed language is common now	14.5	41.8	43.7	.148	-.223	-.052	-.067	-.087	1
Language used on the new devices has negative impact on Arabic	1.8	27.3	69.1	-.076	-.044	-.191	-.148	.051	-.071
Arabizi helps me in expressing my ideas	61.8	20	14.5	.089	-.296*	.268*	-.036	-.215	.313*
People use Arabizi consider themselves more smarter	36.4	34.5	27.3	.222	-.262	.162	.121	-.113	-.057
Arabic words used in social media fit with the spirit of our time	21.8	47.3	30.9	.012	-.230	-.161	-.109	-.192	.177
New language does not destroy Arabic Language	63.6	21.8	14.5	-.86	-.153	.192	.195	-.146	-.008
We should teach the new language “Arabizi”	54.5	14.5	30.9	.087	.016	.090	-.115	-.128	.267
The new language has an impact on the Arabic identity	16.4	20	63.6	.135	-.32	-.139	-.289*	-.087	.228
Arabizi could by an international language	12.7	21.8	65.5	.040	-.011	-.271	.052	-.190	.111

- Table (4) shows that the Arab youth agree on using mixed language and Arabizi has negative impact on Arabic language (69.1%), however they consider that switch coding and using mixed language are common now (43.7%), and Arabizi could by an international language (65.5%).
- On the other side, (63.6%) did not agree on saying that it has an impact on the Arabic identity, or that it will destroy the Arabic language (63.6%). However, they did not agree on saying that Arabizi help them in expressing their ideas 61.8%, and 54.5% did not agree on Arabizi should be taught. The table also shows that there is a significant correlation between the type of the participants’ high school, their level of education, and their country with the saying that “Arabizi helps me in expressing my ideas”, the participants’ who graduated from private school prefer using Arabizi to express their ideas. There is also a significant correlation between the type of the participants’ specializations and saying that the new language has an impact on the Arabic identity.

Conclusion and Discussion

- Some interesting findings have emerged from this study: first, that Local Arabic is the dominant language used online among a group of Arab youth, then the use of mix of Modern Standard Arabic and another foreign language. Arab youth justified the use of local language, and mixed languages and less use of modern standard Arabic to their desire to attract

the others', as a matter of habit, because it helps them in expressing their ideas, and they considered as a practical method of communication. Secondly, the Classical Arabic in Arabic Script use is not common among Arab youth and half of them said they seldom use Arabizi. They also made clear that their own local language, is a particularly powerful vehicle for expressing their most personal thoughts and feelings. Thirdly, Most of youth who graduated from private school prefer using either foreign language or mix of languages or Arabizi, which features a new and unusual diglossia between a foreign language, English, and colloquial form of Arabic. Fourthly, there are correlations between most variables and adopting the idea of being a new generation who seeks for a new way of communication and using the language. Fifthly, a significant difference between the participants who in or graduated from private and public schools and referring to the habits and their moods as reasons for adapting different styles. Six, most of the Arab youth see that the social surrounding requires new communicative language, and being a new generation lead them to use different method of communication more than using the modern standard language.

- The main variables which discern Arab youth's uses of different language styles on social media are the type of their high school (private or public) and their level of education not gender or their specializations or their countries or their marital status. The youth who graduated from private schools prefer Arabizi and using mix of languages. They embrace different opinions regarding the factors which influence the use of language and its impacts on their identity. They do not consider that code switching has an impact on the Arabic identity, or it could destroy the Arabic language.
- While Arab youth consider that using mixed language and Arabizi has negative impact on Arabic language, and Arabizi does not help them in expressing their ideas or it should be taught, however they see that switch coding and using mixed language are common now, and Arabizi could be an international language.
- Findings indicated that code switching occurs in online interaction to serve addressee's desire to attract the attention, practicality, and message clarification, emphasis, indicating moods, the habitual expressions and sharing other's styles.
- The study made it clear that the prominence of local Arabic and English in social media communication stems from a variety of social, economic, linguistic and technological factors that are closely related to the more general role of English among Arab youth and the challenges which they are facing when they communicate in classic Arabic. While they see that most of them abounded using the classic Arabic, and it is easier for them to interact with their counterparts either in local Arabic or mix of Arabic with other language (especially English). The most surprising results that they do not consider that adopting new language style will have a great impact on their identity or it may destroy the Arabic language, which show a real need for launching awareness campaigns among the Arab youth of the dangers of adopting these new language style and convince them to use the Modern Standard Arabic in their communication with each other, and reduce the amount of using the local Arabic as social media is regional and international tool of communication and because of Arabic is consider the common language among the whole Arabs and it deserve to preserve it and be proud of using it. Experts should, however, carefully confront Arabizi and use mix of languages and start a renaissance of Arabic opposing Arabizi starting today, considering its potentially harmful impact in future.
- Finally, it is important to point out the limitations of this study. The sample size is small. It covers wide varieties of linguistic phenomena. Future studies should increase its samples and focus on specific linguistic issues

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