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Arabic Language and Language Teaching:
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Arabo e didattica dell'arabo:
politiche, politica e ideologia

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Which Arabic and Why? Policies, Politics, and Teaching

Marco Aurelio Golfetto, Letizia Osti, and Brabim Chakrani

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[One day, the famous grammarian] al-Farrā' made several mistakes while speaking in the presence of Hārūn al-Rašīd. [The vizier] Ja'far b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī pointed this out to the caliph, who said: "Al-Farrā', are you speaking incorrectly?". "Commander of the Faithful", replied al-Farrā', "while it is natural for the Beduins to inflect words correctly, for city-dwellers [like me] it is not. When I prepare, I speak correctly; when I speak off the cuff, I make mistakes". Al-Rašīd appreciated al-Farrā's words. (Ibn Ḥallikān, 1968-72, vol. 6, 147)

Premodern biographical literature offers plenty of anecdotes like the above, where important grammarians such as Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā' (d. 822), one of the most prominent scholars of his generation, are shown making mistakes in the inflection of words (*i'rāb*). These stories are meant to reassure the reader: incorrect inflection, the narrator seems to imply, is not a terrible fault – even a great grammarian can get away with it with the caliph's blessing. Ultimately, Arabic may only be mastered completely by the original Bedouin Arabs, who are seen as living repositories of the purest form of language and the largest vocabulary. City-dwellers, no matter how learned, are bound to make mistakes.

While these anecdotes have specific literary purposes in their original context, they also illustrate an important point for the modern linguist: from very early on, there existed two contiguous ideas – an ideal *form* of Arabic on the one hand, and an acceptable *use* of Arabic on the other.

More than a millennium after al-Farrā', the issue is far from resolved – on the contrary, it has grown in complexity as well as implications. Indeed, to this day, the very concept of Arabic language can be understood differently in different domains. In its understanding as a sacred language, Arabic, for many of its speakers, represents a perfect

and refined language (*fūṣḥā*) with immutable rules, that conveys sacred contents and operates as an intermediary between the human and divine realms. In a non-religious context, Arabic acts as a communal code for formal and transnational communication (MSA, FSA), standardized and prescriptively homogeneous beyond the use of national or regional varieties that articulate country specific nuances. From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is an open, negotiable language (with varieties and variation devices) capable of satisfying intrinsic human needs, suitable for personal and daily communication, adaptable depending on social groups and geographical locations. This complexity of the Arabic language and its use poses a great challenge inside the classroom.

This special issue of *LCM* addresses some of the core problems generated by such complexity: How do we represent the variability of Arabic in the classroom and from which standpoint? Is there a conscious or unconscious relation between teaching practices and ideology? To what extent do language certifications exert influence on linguistic policies? And finally, how does the Arabic language convey political and ideological contents? Our working assumption in putting together this special issue was that the different perceptions of Arabic listed above depend on the ideological framework within which the language is spoken, studied, and taught.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of our investigation, we understand ideology in its broadest sense, devoid of negative connotations: a system of philosophical theories, social values, and religious beliefs providing a key to decoding existence and the universe. Indeed, the Arabic language has historically been used for different, at times conflicting ideological instances – it has been linked, for example, both to the Islamic identity and to the Arab identity. These, in turn, are connected to specific political objectives: “Islamic identity” refers to an ideal unity of the *Umma*; conversely, the discourse on “Arab identity” is linked to the birth of modern nationalist states, or the aspiration to a unitarian political subject of all Arab countries. Similarly, ideology has been at the basis of teaching policies by determining preference for one specific variety which is deemed more prestigious in a hierarchical perspective, or more appropriate in given sociocultural contexts. In short: throughout this issue, both “Arabic” and “ideology” are treated as multifaceted, porous concepts with many intersecting nodes. These nodes are the objects of our investigation.

Within this framework, our contributors explore two main issues: first, they look into the ways in which Arabic reflects ideological, politi-

cal or religiously oriented meaning, and how ideologies may influence the vision and expectations of its users, including learners and teachers. Secondly, they illustrate how different ideological approaches determine the practice of language teaching, with regards to the selection of varieties, curricula, and certifications.

Five of our contributors discuss issues related to teaching, both in general terms and with case studies. While Solimando and Golfetto discuss general issues within and outside the Arab world, Chakrani, Edres, and Columbu focus on specific countries – France, Jordan, and the US (and anglophone countries) respectively.

Cristina Solimando argues that language assessment can be (and in fact is) used as a tool for influencing language policies by establishing prestige, priorities, and hierarchies, and may ultimately lead to the suppression of diversity by presenting language as standardized and homogeneous. Solimando looks at the assessment systems recently developed by five academies across the Arab world in order to investigate potential ideological orientation in test objectives, content, and rationale.

Marco Aurelio Golfetto looks at corpus linguistics, another tool that has recently begun to be considered in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language. One of the greatest advantages of corpus analysis is that it bypasses users' personal bias, allowing them to base their work on what language is rather than on the intuition of what language ought to be. Golfetto explores advantages and disadvantages of corpus-based teaching, especially applied to the case of Arabic as a language of politics, arguing that it can be successfully used as a complementary tool to traditional teaching practices.

Brahim Chakrani analyses French language policies regarding the instruction of Arabic, considering the historical relationship with the Arabic language and its speakers, from the colonial to the postmodern era. Chakrani argues that the debate surrounding Arabic instruction in French schools is not primarily a discussion about minority linguistic rights, but rather, it is a byproduct of ideologically motivated educational policies that aim to maintain the prominence of French and marginalize the role of Arabic, both within the Arab world and in the French diaspora.

Nijmi Edres introduces an additional factor in her discussion of Jordanian linguistic policies. She investigates how Arabic language textbooks and curricula help to build a connection between a national identity and a religious – Islamic – one. Edres identifies pragmatic needs behind the teaching policies, pointing at the importance of the Arabic

language for the construction of identities in the contemporary Middle East and at its enduring politicization.

Alessandro Columbu looks at teaching material developed outside the Arab world, and in particular in the United States, to respond to the increasing demand for Arabic instruction at university level. Columbu employs decolonisation and post-colonial theory to look at the ideological implications of the political agendas implicit in popular and widely adopted textbooks and their proposed content for teaching Arabic as a foreign language. He argues that current widely used teaching materials risk perpetuating patterns of European and North American cultural hegemony.

In the second part of this issue, four contributors discuss linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects such as variation, the relations between standard language and local varieties, and between Arabic and other languages. Again, while Al-Zaghir and Reda, as well as Lachkar, examine general issues connected to the use of language, Daniëls and De Angelis focus on Lebanon and Egypt respectively.

Helge Daniëls analyses the political and ideological motivations for the use of the Lebanese dialect in some Media outlets. She discusses a small corpus of news bulletins by the Lebanese radio Voice of the South which, contrary to the linguistic metanorm for ‘serious programmes’, broadcasted the news both in MSA and in Lebanese dialect. Daniëls argues that the choice to breach the metapragmatic norms, while framing the language use in the news bulletins explicitly as ‘the Lebanese language’, can be implicitly interpreted as a comment on Lebanese national identity.

Zainab Al-Zaghir and Ghsoon Reda examine a case study in variation and its potential implications for teaching Arabic as a foreign language. They explore and compare relativisation strategies in the standard and dialectal varieties and argue that a middle language such as FSA, while useful for native speakers, is not an ideal solution for teaching students at beginner levels.

Francesco De Angelis looks at how the growing corpus of prose literature written in an Arabic dialect is still not part of the literary canon, unlike poetry, which in the past decades has managed to carve its own small space in the manuals of history of Arabic literature. Concentrating on the case of Egypt, De Angelis argues that, with the growing opportunities afforded by social media, prose in dialect is destined to become increasingly widespread, which will make it impossible to ignore.

Finally, Abdenbi Lachkar discusses the status of Arabic and its varieties in the Arab world, focussing on Morocco and Lebanon in par-

ticular. Lachkar examines aspects of the relation between Arabic and other post-colonial languages and concludes by reflecting on the future development of Arabic, especially in connection with new technologies.

Despite our contributors' different approaches, some keywords emerge across the board. Two such keywords are colonialism and identity: on the one hand, the legacy of colonialism still has an impact on language policies and teaching curricula. On the other, the Arabic language, or at least one of its varieties, is fundamental for both Arab and Muslim identity. Indeed, variation and local varieties are two more key issues which, over the past century, have become impossible to ignore: using and/or teaching a vernacular Arabic may (or may not) be an ideological choice, but it does have ideological and political implications. A final issue is innovation in teaching: some of our contributors highlight the importance of using tools such as corpora for retrieving unbiased chunks of language, as well as a means of familiarizing students to the natural use of language.

None of these issues is unique to Arabic – on the contrary, they are found in other widely used languages, albeit in different combinations. The case of Chinese is particularly interesting: in the People's Republic of China, centralised language policies function as a tool for cementing national cohesion around the official language and have strongly influenced the status and use of local varieties. We believe that this special issue's research questions may be asked fruitfully from a comparative/contrastive perspective, where they may yield wildly different results but may also shed light on parallel mechanisms and suggest further new paths for investigation.

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Language Tests in the Arabic-speaking World: Between Ideology and Language Policy

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ABSTRACT

A system of language assessment may be used as a mechanism for affecting language policy. Language tests convey messages and ideologies that regard prestige, priorities and hierarchies, and they generally lead to the suppression of diversity (Shohamy 2007). The relationship between tests and language policy, based mainly on the criteria used for judging language quality through rating scales, guidelines and other frameworks, leads to a view of language as standardized and homogenous. From this perspective, language tests can serve as tools that negotiate and mediate between ideology and practice. In the Arabic-speaking world language tests have only recently been introduced, although very few Arab countries have shown an interest in developing the necessary means to evaluate language performance levels. In this paper the language tests developed by the Arab Academy, the UAE National Center for Assessment (*Markaz al-Waṭānī li-l-Qiyās*), the Mother Tongue Center (*Markaz al-Lisān al-Umm*), the Jordan al-Nağāḥ National University (*Ġāmi'at al-Nağāḥ al-Waṭāniyya*) and the King Sa'ūd University will be taken into consideration in order to determine any ideological orientation in test objectives, content and rationale. Particular attention will be paid to communicative skills within a general framework of linguistic variation in the Arabic-speaking world.

Keywords: Arabic language policy; language assessment; language test; linguistic identity; teaching Arabic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between national identity and language policy is an extremely complex issue. Whenever we talk about identity, we need to

differentiate between two types of identities that do not often coincide: the “achieved” or “inhabited” identity – the one that people claim for themselves – and an “attributed” identity – the identity that others bestow on them (Blommaert 2006). The importance a language is given, and how it is promoted, both in and outside an individual state, is central to the process of nation-building (Anderson 1983; Greenfeld 1992) and the historical self-awareness of a linguistic community. Language policy is invariably based on linguistic ideologies, on the belief in desirable forms of language use and on the “ideal” linguistic image of a society. A Nation’s central institutions often seem to be guardians of a monoglot idealization of the “language-people-country” nexus and offer their citizens a specific ethnolinguistic identity. In the present case, language policy is testimony to the ideologization of language in the Arabic-speaking world (Suleiman 2013; Bassiouney 2014): in the Arabic setting, language is not value-neutral, but is always a target of making meaning in accordance with attitudes, position and views. These conceptions of language are ideological, and they constitute the body of insider, indigenous views about Arabs, their language and the world in which they live. In this context, Arabic language academies play an important role: they are part of the apparatus of modern Arab states, with the aim of bringing intellectuals with cultural and political influence under the aegis of the state. This state patronage leads to agendas and ideologies that concern language and its role in politics and society (Lian 2020). This factor often underlies the lack of coordination between the various academies, and the lack of incisive common linguistic planning. Despite the existence of specific agendas and priorities, the discourse of the academies tends towards pan-Arabic, stressing the need to preserve the integrity of Arabic, while attempting to make it compatible with modern civilization. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the academies have failed to transform their discourse into concrete language policies, thus showing that there is a certain disconnect between discourse and implementation as regards language planning. The “short circuit” situation that exists between language views and applying a set of actions aimed at encouraging Arabic to adapt to modernity does much confirm the general idea of immobility on the part of Arabic language academies towards language policy.

A system of language assessment may be used as a mechanism for affecting language policy. The introduction of language tests delivers messages and ideologies about the prestige, priorities and hierarchies that often lead to the suppression of diversity (Shohamy 2007). In her

article Shohamy refers to minor languages that are generally not considered in teaching practice. Likewise, dialects are often ignored in curriculum planning and in the selection of teaching materials. While language testing comes at the final stage of the whole learning process, it typically reflects curriculum planning and teaching procedures. The relationship between tests and language policy, based mainly on the criteria used for judging language quality via rating scales, guidelines and frameworks, leads to a view of language as standardized and homogenous. From this perspective, language tests can serve as tools that negotiate and mediate between ideology and practice. In the Arabic-speaking world the introduction of language tests is very recent and very few Arab countries have shown interest in developing the means to measure and evaluate language performance levels. The present article discusses language testing texts created by the Arab Academy, the UAE National Center for Assessment (*al-Markaz al-Waṭani li-l-Qiyās*), the Mother Tongue Center (*Markaz al-Lisān al-Umm*), the Jordan al-Naḡāḥ National University (*Ġāmi'at al-Naḡāḥ al-Waṭaniyya*) and the King Sa'ūd University. The ideological orientation behind the tests' objectives, content and rationale will be considered, with particular focus on communicative skills within a more general framework of linguistic variation in the Arabic-speaking world.

2. THE ARABIC LANGUAGE: BETWEEN REALITY AND IDEALIZATION

In recent years the idea of Arabic as a monolithic language has largely been overcome in studies conducted in the west, and the issue of multiglossia has become the basis of any discussion regarding actual proficiency in Arabic. The presence of many varieties, each used in accordance with their own function and regional collocation, conveys an idea of a language that is far from being monolithic. Arabic is a typical example of what Ferguson (1959) stated regarding diglossia: on the one hand, we have the Standard variety, studied and taught in schools, which is considered the sole admissible means of formal Pan-Arab communication, while on the other, there are the vernaculars spoken by Arabs in their daily lives. The status of the Standard form, strongly linked to tradition and to religious identity, is, however, continuously challenged by internal and external influences. These influences, which comprise elements of linguistic adaptation to necessary modernization,

are signs that Arab societies are rapidly becoming westernized, urbanized and industrialized (Chejne 1969), and still far from any linguistic and sociopolitical stability. Despite the Standard being considered the only admissible means of written and, in certain situations, of oral communication, the Arabic-speaking world is witnessing the emergence of various attempts to affirm local varieties, such as in the field of literature (Solimando 2017). Lian (2020, 202) provides an in-depth analysis of the discourse of the Arabic academies, their praise of the beauty of *fushḥā* and their complaints regarding colloquial Arabic in the classroom and in the media. The existence of these internal influences is perceived as an element that can create political fragmentation, cause rifts in social cohesion and endanger pan-Arab solidarity. This resistance has a clearly symbolic importance that has managed to assure the survival of these institutions in that they appear to be the guardians of an ideal linguistic heritage. Nevertheless, these attitudes towards the ‘dangerous’ role of the dialects are not universally shared: Suleiman and Lucas (2012) highlight divergent and convergent debate on the status of the language and its supposed weakness due to the presence of dialects other than Standard Arabic. Their analysis of debates on the al-Jazeera¹ network regarding the status of *fushḥā* provides contrasting views: if, on the one hand, the *‘āmmiyyāt* are an obstacle to the process of Arabization, on the other, it has to be accepted that 300 million Arabs speak a particular dialect, and that *fushḥā* is neither spoken nor always understood by the ordinary person on the street. This opinion leads to the conclusion that the whole process of language modernization should consider dialects with the general aim of integrating the Standard and vernaculars on an institutional level. In addition to this stance, which can be considered more progressive if compared to the widespread defense of the integrity of *fushḥā*, most of the interviewees claim that any weakness of Arabic due to presence of dialects is a clear reflection of political weakness, i.e., the weakness is reflected in linguistic fragmentation. In these debates, the influence of religion is clear, since *fushḥā* is seen as the glue that holds the *umma* together, and knowledge of it is necessary for a deeper understanding of the *Qur’ān* (Suleiman and Lucas 2012, 197-198).

The other element of weakness is to be found in the widespread use of English as a language of globalization. This also implies a discussion of the place of Arabic within the globalizing world, the issue of

¹ Suleiman and Lucas’s paper explores the data from eight programs aired between 1998 and 2010 that specifically dealt with Arabic.

the linguistic identity of Arabs and the role of institutions that should strengthen the language through well-honed language planning. Arabic is perceived as being challenged by an incompatibility between inherited linguistic tradition and imported linguistic modernity. This general feeling extends to the more complex issue of modernity in the Arab world. Modernity has always been tainted with European colonialism and Western imperialism, and it remains a potentially threatening sociopolitical situation imposed on Arab society by Western industrial powers. By associating modernization with the invasive presence of the West, the question of the modernization of the language has significant symbolic consequences: modernizing Arabic is always seen in terms of imported modernity, in stark contrast to the “Golden Age” of the Arabic linguistic tradition. It is therefore perceived as dangerous for the integrity of Arabic. English in the Arab world can be analyzed from two different perspectives: an educational perspective and a more specifically linguistic one. In the first case, Arab countries have until recently witnessed a proliferation of foreign educational institutions, schools and universities, the result of various colonial phases. English, and to a lesser extent French, were the languages of innovation, and the only means of communicating in the sciences. This was the state of affairs in the colonial period, and it undermined the role of Arabic by illustrating its inadequacy in the face of modernity. With the emergence of nationalist movements, the issue of the dignity of Arabic came to the fore, initiating debate and language planning proposals, as we will see in the next section.

3. LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING CONTEXT

Language policy comprises two main issues: Arabization that involves the process of promoting Arabic as the only language used in the community, and the issue of multilingualism, which signifies diglossia and linguistic minorities posing challenges to local policies. The promotion of Arabic is strongly linked to the traditional opposition to foreign intervention that characterized nationalist movements after colonial occupation. The monolithic linguistic policies of today are inherited mainly from a narrow concept of nationalism where Arabic is the dominant ideological model. Despite the close connection between Arabism and Islamism in the nationalist discourse on language policy, it appears that Islam, as a religion, provided an ideological justification for those

policies, but did not play a decisive role; any linguistic and cultural orientation in favor of Arabization was promoted by the secular state (Miller 2003, 149). As Miller posits (*ibid.*, 155):

Language became a crucial means of identification [...]. In this conflict between Arabism and non-Arab minorities, Islam or Muslim references are sometimes used to justify the hegemony of the Arabic language. The sanctity, the holiness and the superiority of Arabic are evoked to justify the marginalization of non-prestigious languages.

It is, therefore, a combination of secular nationalism and modern political Islamism that motivated linguistic reforms, and that played a crucial role in the creation of a national, and consequently linguistic, identity. In this context, multilingualism is a threat to national unity, both regarding the diglossic status of the Arabic language and the linguistic minorities present in Arab countries. Arabic dialects are viewed as corrupt linguistic forms that should be eliminated through proper education. Colloquial Arabic and non-Arab vernaculars are not accepted by institutions and are not formally recognized. From an ideological viewpoint, while foreign languages, which were/are imposed by colonialism, globalization and a vague sense of modernity, are perceived as extraneous entities, Standard Arabic not only has emotive and cultural roots, but also symbolizes a glorious past and a crucial means of establishing Arab identity.

Some proposals for a simplification of *fushḥā* structures have been made (Suleiman 2013), but in terms of language ideology, this is seen as a backward step and contrary to the affirmation and revival of an inherited linguistic tradition. Despite the influence exerted by *fushḥā* in the Arab world, however, recent years have witnessed a more widespread use of the colloquial in informal texts, such as on social networks, in commercials and text messages, as well as in various literary works in which the use of the vernacular is adopted for stylistic reasons. Nevertheless, any sign of a change in the relationship between Standard and colloquial has not led institutions to rethink language policy: the promotion of Standard Arabic remains the linguistic goal in schools in most countries, and even in countries where Arabization is promoted without evident success, as in Lebanon. Here English and French are still perceived as symbols of modernization and high-quality education and, to some extent, of religious identity too (Solimando 2020).

Educational systems, like economic and political systems, were based on British or French models during the colonial period, and became the object of debate and change after independence. Arabization is at the

core of this process of reappropriating a country's history. Each country had its own Arabization experience (Bassiouney 2009), which was not always completely successful. In order to be incisive, language policy needs to respond to the symbolic and instrumental functions of the language: in this respect, if on the one hand Arabic undoubtedly responds to the ideology of national unity and religious identity, on the other it is fighting an unequal battle, not only against foreign languages, particularly English, on a strategic and instrumental level, but also against colloquial and minority languages in terms of actual practice. These practices correspond to a speaker's choice of linguistic code within her/his linguistic repertoire (Spolsky 2004). Language practice is sometimes more important than language policy or, in any case, underpins the chance of achieving the latter, since the community, and its habits, are what makes a policy successful. The Arab community, albeit recognizing the Standard as the symbol of a glorious past, prefers the colloquial as the common means of communication. In this context, widespread illiteracy also plays a significant role: limited access to high-quality education, and the lack of a professional teaching body, leaves compulsory education at a very low level (Or, 4. Akkari 2004) impeding the success of a standardized language policy.

Following independence, Arabization in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa faced several obstacles: among them was the lack of teaching materials, resources and trained teachers. In Algeria, for instance, the government retained the French educational system (Benrabah 2007), but introduced Arabic, which became the official language in primary and secondary schools and in many university humanities faculties. However, graduates in Arabized degree programs were disadvantaged in the job market (Holt 1994), being unable to compete with graduates educated in bilingual French/Arabic private schools, where students acquired full competence in French. In fact, French remained the language of administration, and was required in order to obtain public or private employment. In the Eighties, the disconnect between language policy and linguistic reality became clear. While Algeria might be a particular case given its 132 years of colonialization, a general discrepancy emerged between the instrumental and the symbolic use of language. Despite a new sense of national identity, accompanied by a post-independence linguistic revival, French remained the language of the élite and of high-quality educational institutions, enjoying social prestige in countries like Morocco and Tunisia. Moreover, the socio-economic environment in North African countries encourages the use of

French, since trade is mainly with France. To varying degrees, these elements have been common to all Arab countries, making the Arabization process difficult to accomplish.

4. LANGUAGE TESTS AS INSTRUMENTS OF LANGUAGE POLICY: A COMPARISON WITH THE EUROPEAN MODEL

As we have seen in previous sections, a discussion of language policy requires consideration of the language practices of a speech community and its linguistic beliefs. These are decisive factors in the varieties that are selected by the community from its linguistic repertoire and give actual form to the ideology associated with a specific dialect. Language policies must consider these aspects whenever there is the intention to modify language habits. Educational reforms involved a debate on the institutionalization of pedagogical concepts and how adequate linguistic competence could be defined. For this reason, education became the domain of a cultural and political struggle in which languages became symbols. At the same time, it provided a testing ground for a thorough rethinking of pedagogical strategies and an opportunity to reconsider a pragmatic approach to language teaching.

Albeit in different ways, every country or geo-linguistic area is moving towards the same goal, that is, promoting the variety that responds to its ideological, historical and practical needs. As pointed out by Barni (2012), three main aspects are involved in linguistic policies found in Europe: migratory mobility linked to the challenges of multiculturalism and multilingualism; the 2001 publication of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages, which has become the most important point of reference in the field of language learning and teaching, and the shifts that have occurred in how the functions, status and role of language tests are perceived. The EU approach aims to encourage multilingualism as a resource that can facilitate social inclusiveness:

Multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication. Beyond this, the plurilingual approach emphasizes the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language

of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. (Council of the European Union, CEFR, 4)

Despite this position, no country has included plurilingualism in its language policy: on the contrary, it is seen as a problem, particularly in the case of migrants (Barni 2012). The publication of a common framework of reference for languages was undoubtedly an event that very much influenced language policies and language teaching in European countries by designating the levels defining competence and providing the impetus for producing new teaching materials. The very idea of the language learner has also been affected: the learner is now seen as a social agent whose role is to interact in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular domain of action. This approach focuses on communicative language competence. In fact, the need to develop communicative skills has been strongly felt in recent years. Communicative competence involves various factors, including sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects that are closely related to the knowledge of, and sensitivity towards, social conventions and specific linguistic traits. Sociolinguistic competence requires skills that deal with the sociocultural dimension of language use, and it is the basic requisite for being aware of the linguistic markers of social relations, such as politeness conventions, that are indispensable in speaker interaction.

Regarding the issue of dialects, one of the communicative skills mentioned for the C2 level is the ability to understand and to adjust to non-standard dialects. Specific markers, such as phonological, lexical and syntactic features, make it possible to identify the geographical provenance of a speaker, as well as various sociolinguistic markers such as social class, country of birth and ethnicity. In this sense, every European language community has its own diverse features, as stated in the Council of Europe document:

No European language communities are entirely homogenous. Different regions have their peculiarities in language and culture. These are usually most marked in those who live purely local lives and therefore correlate with social class, occupation and educational level. Recognition of such dialectal features therefore gives significant clues as to the interlocutor's characteristics. Stereotyping plays a large role in this process. It can be reduced by the development of intercultural skills. Learners will in the

course of time also come into contact with speakers of various provenances. Before themselves adopting dialect forms they should be aware of their social connotations and of the need for coherence and consistency.

As highlighted by Facchin (2017, 197), the teaching approach adopted in Europe has also affected TAFI (Teaching Arabic as Foreign Language) in the Arab world in terms of the skills, assessment methods, language levels and descriptors that should be adopted. Indeed, the Threshold Level has influenced perspectives on the teaching of Arabic and has become the subject of much debate. As discussed above, the relationship between the Standard and dialect is different in the Arabic speaking world, and the dialects themselves convey different sociolinguistic features than dialects in the European context. For example, Arab politicians, university professors etc. use dialect in day-to-day communication and this is not perceived as a social marker since it represents their mother tongue. The Standard is used, however, on formal occasions such as for speeches and lectures. This signifies a completely different approach to language testing, especially when aimed at non-native speakers. Indeed, the situation is different for native speakers since the Standard can be required, for instance, for employment in the public sector. Moreover, language tests in this context are instruments that are capable of changing the educational system and its processes. They function as policy instruments, which, in some cases, fill in for the absence of educational reform.

5. LANGUAGE TESTS IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING WORLD

5.1. *General context: Arabic language tests for Arabic L1*

The attention given to language tests in Arab countries is recent and is not homogeneous, and even the institutions that might promote a common policy of language testing do not exert this role. Although Rušdī Ḥāṭir successfully introduced Arabic L1 testing in Egypt in the 1950s², Arabic language academies and other organizations such as ALECSO did not establish any authoritative language assessment policy.

² Rušdī Ḥāṭir introduced a series of Arabic language tests aimed at illiterate Egyptian learners. This venture was “exported” to other Arab countries by the following decade. See Facchin 2017.

In analyzing the language testing solutions adopted in Arabic-speaking countries, we will distinguish between tests designed for native Arabic speakers and those for non-native speakers. Regarding tests for Arabic L1 speakers, the main problem is the absence of a standardized model for language assessment. The educational system is extremely heterogeneous in Arab countries, and schools and teachers follow different guidelines, so the skills implemented can vary considerably from one institution to another. Schools do not have a comprehensive classification of the standards, benchmarks, performance indicators or assessment methods to be used. The general approach remains largely textbook-based and teacher-centered, especially in public schools (Taha-Thomure 2008). This system has obviously affected the entire assessment practice in schools: in fact, final exams lack any standard homogeneity both in content and overall organization. In these exams, grammar is privileged, since syllabuses, and teaching in general, remain grammar oriented. The common practice is to adopt tests that are suited to the specific context in which students learn, and for this reason it is very rare for listening and speaking skills to be assessed (Gebril and Taha-Thomure 2013, 5). Until recently, there were no standardized proficiency tests for native Arabic speakers. Gebril and Taha-Thomure's review of various Arabic language tests evidenced a range of assessment procedures used for different academic purposes, e.g., admission, placement, and exit tests. In the non-academic domain, testing may be for teachers, lawyers and judges or journalists and translators, and in particular it can be used as a criterion for hiring and promoting staff in the public sector. One test for the assessment of Arabic L1 was proposed by the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) in 2012. This test, called the Alain Test of Arabic Proficiency (ATAP)³ and endorsed in particular by the Continuing Education Center (*Markaz al-Ta'lim al-Mustamirr*) at the UAEU, provides a different approach that is unlike the grammar-oriented model. Not being linked to a specific curriculum or teaching context, it is more focused on assessing communicative skills. This feature makes it very flexible to apply since it can be used in different domains in which the assessment of Arabic, and MSA specifically, is needed. The features of the Alain approach are:

- to organize and carry out the Alain Test to measure proficiency in Arabic for Arabic speakers, UAEU students and any others who may require it;

³ <https://cec.uaeu.ac.ae/ar/arabiclanguage.shtml> [22/06/2021].

- to organize courses to develop Arabic language skills for Arabic speakers, featuring, for example, functional writing, effective oral communication and speed reading;
- to provide scientific consultation and workshops, to undertake scientific research into Arabic and related teaching methods, and to design curricula for organizations to meet their specific needs.

As remarked by al-Shatter (2019), the Alain Test aims at measuring the competence of *abnā' al-'arabiyya* 'Arabic sons' in communicating *bi-l-luġa al-faṣiḥa (al-luġa al-umm)* 'in the pure language (mother tongue)'. The test does not seem to have any particular rivals at the moment, and it boasts various academic and private sponsors⁴. It also appears to be the test that is most likely to encourage other institutions to work on other assessment methods in an L1 context in order to measure general proficiency in Arabic. This could also respond to the needs of specific subjects and fields that require instruments of evaluation.

5.2. Arabic language tests for L2 Arabic

Arab countries appear to be more active with regard to tests designed for non-native speakers: there are now language tests and online courses for non-native Arabic speakers run by private Arab institutions such as the Arab Academy, the Saudi National Center for Assessment (*al-Markaz al-Waṭanī li-l-Qiyās*), the Mother Tongue Center (*Markaz al-Lisān al-Umm*) of the UAEU, the Jordan al-Naġāḥ National University (*Ġāmi'at al-Naġāḥ al-Waṭaniyya*) and the Arabic Linguistics Institute of the King Sa'ūd University (KSU). Obviously, the main challenge that needs to be faced is the diglossic situation. In their analysis of the different tasks described in the ACTFL Arabic Proficiency Guidelines, Elgibali and Taha (1995) state the need for the use of a dialect, rather than MSA, for listening and speaking skills at intermediate and advanced levels. From this perspective, ACTFL testing programs have recently come to recognize the specific linguistic context of Arabic⁵:

ACTFL recognizes that the situation for testing Arabic is a special situation and therefore must be dealt with in a special manner. In the ACTFL test protocol, Arabic is considered to be one language represented by a

⁴ <https://cec.uaeu.ac.ae/en/partners.shtml> [22/06/2021].

⁵ <https://www.actfl.org/resources/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/arabic/arabic-consensus-project/speaking> [22/06/2021].

continuum from all colloquial to all MSA, and a combination of mixes along the continuum. During ACTFL OPI testing, testers accommodate to the variety of language that the test taker is producing and accept Arabic language produced anywhere along the continuum. An ACTFL OPI rating recognizes a speaker's overall functional ability in Arabic.

This declaration does not, however, appear to have had an effect on the system of language testing: despite the importance that should be given to linguistic variation, in the language tests analyzed here we rarely find sections devoted to assessing listening or speaking skills in colloquial Arabic. An exception is the KSU Arabic Linguistics Institute, whose website states that:

The language used is neither classic nor colloquial Arabic, it is the simple and clear language used today in education, the press and the electronic media such as Aljazeera and Al-Arabiya. A combination of the project and utilization of contemporary modes of communication has a significant chance of enhancing the participants' communicative skills.

Evidently, the main problem in assessing oral skills (comprehension and production) is the issue of authenticity. Arabic language centers are obviously aware of this, but, as we stated above, the emphasis is less on improving pedagogical strategies in language teaching and more on fostering the correct ideological perspective.

Moreover, if on the one hand academic institutions, such as the al-Nağāḥ National University and the KSU Arabic Linguistics Institute, declare that they follow the language levels established by the CEFR⁶ and the ACTFL Guidelines, on the other hand, level descriptors seem to be ignored. In fact, in the descriptors that define listening and speaking skills at A1 and A2 levels, communication in everyday contexts is supposed to be privileged. As highlighted above, the language used in informal everyday communication is colloquial Arabic and not MSA. Despite this, it is clear to anyone who has experience with Arabic speaking activities that the emphasis of current language tests is on assessing the communicative structures and lexicon of MSA. This is apparent in the transcripts of the following listening extracts produced by the

⁶ In the strategies adopted by the al-Nağāḥ National University, it is explicitly stated that "the exam depends on common European reference framework for languages as a basic to test applicants", and that "the exam divides language levels into six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2", <https://learnarabic.najah.edu/ar/registration/arabic-international-proficiency-exam/> [22/06/2021].

National Center of Assessment⁷ (a) and in the listening exercises of the al-Nağāḥ National University⁸ A2 test (b):

(a)

- مرحباً، أنا مستعجل. أرجو أن تحاسبني بسرعة فلدي دواء أريد أن أخذه في موعده
- لا بأس عليك يا أخي. هل تريد أن تدفع نقداً أم تريد بالبطاقة؟
- بالبطاقة لو سمحت.
- أوووو! للأسف... لقد تعطلت الشبكة قبل قليل.
- أممم! بكن معي مبلغ غير كافٍ وأريد أن أحتفظ به لسيارة الأجرة.

The oral component of the text only emerges in the interjections, while the phraseological structures and the lexis are those of communicative Standard usage. Moreover, the final endings are vocalized. Correspondingly, the exercises for oralized texts are vocalized as in the following extracts:

(b)

كَيْفَ كَانَتْ الرَّحْلَةُ إِلَى الْيُونَانِ؟

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| أ | مُنْعِبَةً جِدًّا |
| ب | قَصِيرَةً جِدًّا |
| ت | لَا تُنْسَى |

مَاذَا فَعَلُوا فِي الْعَاصِمَةِ؟

- | | |
|---|---|
| أ | زَارُوا الْأَكْرُوبُولَ وَالْمُطْحَفَ وَالجَبَلَ |
| ب | زَارُوا الْأَكْرُوبُولَ وَالْبَحْرَ وَالجَبَلَ |
| ت | زَارُوا الْأَكْرُوبُولَ وَالْمُطْحَفَ وَالْمَسْرَحَ |

- سَيَصْنَعُ أَشْيَاءَ الْخَاصَّةِ فِي وَرَقِيَّةِ.
- سَيَبْتَدِئُ جَدِيحَةً.
- سَيَأْخُذُ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ.
- سَيَبْحَثُ عَنْ وَسَائِلِ الَّتِي سَيَذْهَبُ بِهَا إِلَى عَمَلِهِ.
- سَيُنْقَلُ الْمَاءِ وَالْكَهْرَبَاءِ وَالْهَاتِفِ إِلَى إِسْمِهِ

The fact that case endings are marked reflects educational practices in the Arab world. Ibrahim (1983, 511) states that the system of grammat-

⁷ <https://www.etc.gov.sa/ar/About/Centers/Pages/qiyas.aspx> [22/06/2021].

⁸ <https://learnarabic.najah.edu/en/registration/arabic-international-proficiency-exam/> [22/06/2021].

ical inflection is of the greatest importance in the teaching and learning of Arabic. Moreover, Maamouri (1998) underlines that activities involving identifying case endings have become central to classroom activities. The importance given to these practices shows how the idea of linguistic correctness is firmly based on knowledge of the morphology of the language. In the Arabic tradition, case endings are regarded as a sign of the beauty of the language and are seen as indispensable for coherence. There is, however, no strict correlation between linguistic proficiency and knowledge of case endings. In fact, Khaldieh's study (2001) found no correlation between reading comprehension and the ability to add case endings correctly, indicating that one can still be a proficient reader while having scant knowledge of the case system. Wahba (2006) underlines the shift towards oral proficiency in teaching Arabic L2 outside the Arab world, and the lack of such a change in teaching Arabic L1. Indeed, while language tests on the CEFR model emphasize oral skills and propose everyday communicative contexts, the tests of the Arab institutions seem more focused on assessing reading and writing. This is at the expense of oral skills, which are limited to stereotyped conversations.

These elements, which seem connected to a wider educational tradition, reflect the strong ideological attitude towards Arabic and the difficulties in rethinking pedagogical methods. This general approach is apparent in how the tests, and the courses held by the aforementioned institutions and universities, are presented. Here attention is more focused on the topics dealt with (restaurants, hotels, etc.) without any consideration of linguistic varieties. This gives the idea of a monolithic language, as if the Arabic used for conversation is the same as that used for other skills like reading and writing. This approach is confirmed in all the documents that have been analyzed in the present study, including the following, which was published on the Al-Nağāḥ website:

First and foremost, we teach students how to articulate, read, and write Arabic sounds (phonemes) along with the lexicon, grammar, and structure necessary to develop the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Furthermore, we emphasize cultural competence in our students by introducing them to the Palestinian community, its customs, traditions, geography, and cultural and intellectual formation. These opportunities also provide students with useful information on Arab heritage and its literary, historical, and ethical elements. Our Institute aims to produce students who are able to use their language skills in a variety of personal and professional settings, and as such we equip students with

a strong background in contemporary political, economic, and ecological terminology. In addition, we emphasize the vocabulary necessary to understand Arabic language sciences: *ilm al-nahw* ('the science of syntax'), *ilm al-sarf* ('the science of morphology'), literature, rhetoric, and criticism.

Excluding dialects and choosing to teach only MSA reflects the belief, which is widespread both in and beyond the Arab world, that MSA is the only legitimate language, and that dialects are degenerate and corrupt versions of it. MSA is viewed as the variety that is indispensable for learners who want an insight into the cultural and religious situation in Arab countries, and the only variety that is useful for communication in any Arab country where the use of local dialect might well pose problems (Ryding 1995). As argued by many scholars (Ryding 1995; Alesh 1997; Wahba 2006), this approach has led to students finding there is a gap between their linguistic competence and their ability to integrate into Arab society linguistically and culturally. Such integration, based on the belief that oral ability is the principal means of 'getting into' the Arab world, is not possible if courses and tests identify MS as a means of accessing Arab history and culture. These different approaches are not strictly linguistic, but ideological, and are influenced by the image that Arab institutions want to project. Any tests that do not take the actual dynamics of oral communication into account inevitably lead to teaching programs that ignore the role of dialect in spoken communication.

6. CONCLUSION

In recent years there has been a shift in understanding the functions and the role of language tests in western countries. From instruments used to measure language knowledge, they are now seen as instruments linked to ideological and educational contexts. In line with this, we have reexamined the rationale behind language tests in the Arab world. The first observation to make regards the generally tardy response of Arab academic institutions to the issues involved in assessing linguistic competence. The few tests available seem more concerned with the promotion of language courses provided by individual language centers than with any homogeneous planning in terms of objectives. To have a beneficial effect on an educational level, tests need to provide the impetus for suitable pedagogical strategies, while new materials and methods are needed for the tests themselves. In addition, they must motivate policy

makers. The tests examined in this paper are examples produced by individual institutions working without any common guidelines regarding methods and content. Furthermore, while these tests seem lacking at the planning level, it also clearly emerges that the choice of the language variety tested is based on ideological rather than linguistic factors. Arabic tests contribute to affirming the status of the dominant language through choices that privilege the Standard variety. At the expense of spoken varieties, this is seen as the only legitimate linguistic gateway to Arab civilization. The exclusion of linguistic diversity confirms the common ideological view of Standard Arabic: it is still considered the only variety worthy of being taught, despite any pressure exerted by the CEFR model or the current debate regarding the linguistic competence required of learners. The relationship between language and political influence remains a lively topic in the Arab world, also due to the widespread emphasis on the importance of Standard Arabic in order to understand Arab history and culture. This approach, which sees the Standard as underpinning knowledge of Arab identity, also responds to the need to provide an image of political unity. Non-Standard varieties – mirroring wider political divisions – are regarded as impediments to such a vision.

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Arabic as a Language of Politics: A Case Study in Corpus-based Teaching

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ABSTRACT

In Arabic studies, corpus linguistics is still a fledgling discipline, but it is bound to become an unavoidable tool for specialists who seek to ground their research in actual language use. This article presents the preliminary results of an on-going research on Arabic applied linguistics. It offers a first approach to the possibility of matching Arabic as a language of politics with corpus-based teaching. The paper briefly introduces the concept of corpus-based teaching, its advantages and potential limits. It then reviews the most important Arabic corpora currently available for the language of politics, by also describing their extension, features, and limitations. Finally, it suggests some classroom activities based on arabiCorpus.

Keywords: Arabic corpora; Arabic language of politics; corpus-based teaching; corpus linguistics; TAFL.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, corpus linguistics has widely informed the practice of general linguists, syllabus planners, and teaching material designers, as it allows for the processing of a great amount of data in a short span of time and frees its users from personal bias on the language system, by allowing them to base their work on observation of what language actually *is* rather than on intuition on what language *should be*. Academic research on the use of corpora as a support for teaching activities and teaching tools has developed considerably for English as well as for other European language, especially since the late 1980s (for example Wichmann *et al.* 1997; Knowles *et al.* 1998; Bernardini 2000;

Hunston 2002; Sinclair 2004; Römer 2005; O’Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter 2007a; Harris and Jaén 2010; Jaén 2010; Reppen 2010; Flowerdew 2012; Friginal 2018; Zaki 2021¹). In this sense, specific attention has also subsequently been devoted to ESP (for example Bowker 2002; Gavioli 2005; O’Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter 2007b; Fuertes-Olivera 2008; Cortes 2012; Hou 2014; Legallois and Prunet 2015; Berber Sardinha 2016).

In the case of Arabic, the study of corpora is still a fledgling but promising discipline, currently “gaining both momentum and prominence within Arabic linguistics more generally” (McEnery, Hardie, and Younis 2019, 9). As such, it is bound to become an unavoidable tool for Arabic linguists and specialists of TAFL, who seek to ground their research in actual language use. Despite the technical challenges that undermined its initial development, it is worth noting that the use of corpora has already started informing the creation of teaching tools for Arabic, although at present this is limited to frequency dictionaries that are based on or cross-checked for frequency on Arabic corpora (see, for example, Buckwalter and Parkinson 2011; Kendall and Mohamed 2020; Abdelsayed 2021; Familiar 2021).

This article presents some results of an on-going research on Arabic applied linguistics. It offers a first approach to the possibility of matching Arabic as a language of politics with corpus-based teaching, by trying to answer the question whether this can be a fruitful match. The first section briefly introduces the concept of corpus-based teaching, its advantages and disadvantages. The second section reviews the most important Arabic corpora available that are relevant for the language field of politics, by also providing information on their extension, features, and limitations. The third section, after postulating and trying to test the existence of an Arabic language of politics, describes some classroom activities based on a specific corpus, i.e. arabiCorpus. The concluding remarks discuss the expected advantages and limits in the use of corpora for teaching this variety of Arabic.

¹ For a critical overview of research on corpus linguistics and data-driven learning, see Boulton and Tyne 2013. For a timeline of literature on experimented use of corpora in the classroom, see Boulton 2017. For a metadata analysis of the learning outcomes resulting from language learners’ use of the tools and techniques of corpus linguistics, see Boulton and Cobb 2017.

2. CORPUS-BASED TEACHING

Corpus-based teaching exploits different kinds of language corpora in developing study materials for beginner and advanced learners in, potentially, all language areas. Although “corpus-driven” was used as a common label until the end of the 20th century, Tognini-Bonelli (2001) introduced a fundamental methodological distinction from the level of language analysis, drawing a dividing line between the “corpus-driven” approach and the “corpus-based” approach. Corpus-based analyses use corpus data to explore a theory or hypothesis, aiming to validate it, refine it, or refute it. In this perspective, corpus linguistics is seen as a method. On the contrary, corpus-driven linguistics rejects all preconceived theories that are generated from outside the corpora and claims that the corpus itself should be the sole source of hypotheses about language. This perspective rejects the characterization of corpus linguistics as a method, in the sense that “the corpus itself embodies a theory of language” (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 84-85). The third section of this paper will illustrate activities grounded in the corpus-based method, where hypotheses on the language are authenticated through the corpus rather than being generated from it.

Developing teaching or learning materials from the corpora has undeniable advantages, but potential limits or difficulties should not be underestimated. As Gaskell and Cobb remark, “the various educational uses of concordancing are more talked about than tested with real users” (Gaskell and Cobb 2004, 317). Advantages and disadvantages of this method have been discussed at length over the past decades (see Reference section). The former can be summarized as follows:

1. corpora bypass the teacher’s subjectivity in answering questions on the language, thus avoiding their personal bias;
2. tagged corpora are resources for generating frequency lists, concordances, collocations, etc., of language for both general and specific purposes;
3. corpora avoid word isolation, showing vocabulary, lexis, and structures in real language context of use, also allowing to retrieve readily available sentences or whole texts that can be useful for linguistic and content-based teaching;
4. bi- or multilingual parallel corpora may be employed for translation studies and students’ training in translation;
5. working on corpora gets students active, by involving them in the practical exploration language;

6. it is possible for teachers, and even for students, to build their own personal, large or small corpus, whether general or focused on specific targets (linguistic areas, subjects, geographic regions, etc.).

At the same time, the limitations in the use of corpora for teaching purposes can be related to the excess of their constraints or, on the contrary, difficulties in managing the amount of data they make available:

1. corpora may have limitations in the use, or require paid subscription that not all educational institutions can afford;
2. the number of available corpora is limited, especially for Arabic on specific subjects and for specific purposes;
3. corpora for general purposes do not always offer the option to select, or even quantify, specific subcorpora and are therefore difficult to use for LSP;
4. using corpora can be time consuming for both teachers and students, as it requires technical knowledge and patience to get acquainted with it;
5. raw corpora (i.e. corpora that consist in simply raw texts, not equipped with concordancers or other tools), that are often specialized ones, are even more challenging;
6. corpora offer a huge amount of data, and dealing with them can be demanding in terms of proficiency level required to retrieve meaningful linguistic information (smaller corpora can be handled more easily, although they might appear less representative);
7. corpora are not always updated regularly, or at all, and especially those dealing with features of contemporary language can quickly become outdated.

3. A SURVEY OF EXISTING ARABIC CORPORA RELEVANT FOR THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICS

The number of Arabic corpora has grown dramatically over the last two decades. There are three main questions that should be considered when dealing with Arabic corpora. In the first place, one should consider their nature: whether they are general or specialized in a linguistic field, geographical area, or span of time; written or oral; learner corpora (i.e. made up of texts that consist in students' output, and that are aimed at being used for teaching purposes), or parallel corpora (made up of bi- or multilingual materials); raw corpora (i.e. only texts) or annotated

corpora (i.e. with grammatical, syntactic, and semantic information), that in turn can be equipped with an interface window and concordance tools. Other important issues to consider are their actual extension and representativeness: whether their size amounts to millions of words (medium or big corpora) or less (small corpora, that can still be useful for research on specific areas), and if they are balanced or not (concerning the types of texts and genres they contain and if these latter are represented in a proportionate way). Finally, one should consider the matters of their availability and usability: whether they are free of charge or require paid subscription; if they incorporate the appropriate kind of tools that the researcher can use; and to what extent they present the user with a level of technical difficulty or ease that he/she can feasibly sustain or learn in an allotted span of time.

Over 115 Arabic corpora of various nature have been surveyed over time, however the general problem is that they are scattered across the web, and thus the task of searching and finding the appropriate resources has long rested on the individual researcher. Recently, some more comprehensive and easily accessible listings of Arabic corpora and more in-dept critical description of the available materials have been made available (Zaghouni 2014; Whitcomb and Alansary 2018; McEnery, Hardie, and Younis 2019; and Eddakouri 2020 [web]²). Although they are not completely exhaustive in themselves, these listings integrate each other and enumerate and critically discuss a considerable amount of existing resources.

Zaghouni (2014) reviews 66 freely available Arabic corpora. Of these, 23 are raw text corpora that do not include any kind of annotations and consist of text files; 15 are either error, PoS, and/or syntactically and semantically annotated corpora; 16 are lexical databases or word lists; the remaining 12 are speech, handwriting, or miscellaneous corpora. Unfortunately, some of the links recorded in the article's notes are not updated, and the webpage where the list was originally stored³ no longer exists.

Whitcomb and Alansary (2018) select and critically discuss a group of seven Arabic corpora that are either free of charge or requires paid subscription. Their paper also provides a basic sketch of teaching activities based on material taken from corpora.

² <https://sites.google.com/a/aucegypt.edu/infoguistics/directory/Corpus-Linguistics/arabic-corpora>.

³ <https://www.qatar.cmu.edu/-wajdiz/corpora.html>.

The more comprehensive McEnery, Hardie, and Younis (2019) examines different issues related to the building of corpora and their use, also reviewing various noteworthy corpora. Although it provides a shorter list, the book chapters discuss the corpora in great details.

Finally, a helpful and comprehensive resource is the annotated online list of InfoGuistics (Addakouri 2020). It lists 38 corpora of different nature, that the compiler divides into “Web-based (Searchable) corpora” and “Textual corpora (Text Files)”. The webpage offers a grid with short descriptions of the corpora, mainly retrieved from their own webpages, and has the considerable advantage of allowing direct (and updated) access to the desired corpus by clicking on its name (hotword). It is worth noting that most of these resources are made available on websites that often offer both text collections and concordancing software combined.

While the majority of the existing corpora do not focus on one specific variety or language area, many are exclusively devoted to the text of the Qur’an. Thus, experts who want to research either the language of the Qur’an or general language, or work on the teaching of Arabic for general purposes, have at their disposal a good deal of tools offering a wide perspective on the natural use of language in an inclusive range of settings. However, they have fewer resources for the language of specialized domains, unless these general corpora have marked and searchable subcorpora. Luckily, some of the general corpora make it possible to search for more specific language target areas – typically, modern literature and the language of the Media.

Based both on the aforementioned works and personal research, it was possible to identify five resources which may be fruitfully used to research and devise teaching activities on Arabic as a language of politics.

The **International Corpus of Arabic**⁴ is a general corpus created by the Library of Alexandria. It requires registration, after which it is free to use. It contains 100 million words collected between 2006 and 2013, although, so far, it is only 70% completed. The corpus is comprehensive; the creators’ purpose is “to build a representative corpus of the Arabic language as it is used all over the Arab world, with the aim of supporting research on such language”. Indeed, it aims at reflecting usage of Arabic both inside and outside the Arab world, by selecting materials from every Arabic-speaking country and including texts (especially from

⁴ <http://www.bibalex.org/ica/ar/>.

newspapers) that are published in other countries but distributed also in the Arab world. In fact, however, Egyptian MSA currently has the lion's share in the composition of the corpus (13 Ml words), followed by Saudi Arabia (8 Ml words), Oman (6 Ml), Palestine and Kuwait (5 Ml each), and UAE and Syria (4,5 Ml each). This offers the opportunity of researching on specific sociolinguistic and regional patterns in the use of regional varieties (Withcomb and Alansary 2018). The corpus includes different types of texts in MSA from newspapers (29%), web articles (20%), books (43%), and academic publications (8%), and numerous genres of literature, strategic and social science, politics, sports and religion, which were collected according to balanced weighting.

The node word query can be carried out also based on lemma, root, and stem. The search options can be set with a very high number of words before and after (it had been tested up to 15 words for the purpose for the present paper) and can be refined by choosing a specific word class (name, verb, adjective, pronoun, particle, and conjunction). Subclasses such as proper names, interjections, adverbs of various types, specific verbal tenses, and stem patterns from a long list can also be selected as further filters, in addition to specifying the number, gender, definiteness, and the noun's collocation as the first word of an *idāfa* construct. Ad hoc queries can be submitted by choosing the specific subcorpus of a given country. As for the subcorpora, beside choosing one or more of the aforementioned types of texts, higher levels of specificity can be selected. For instance, the section on web articles offers a politics subcorpus. No information on the size of this specific subcorpus could be retrieved. The search results section displays the number of occurrences, but it does not supply any information on frequency. The search word is highlighted in the center of each result line, preceded or followed by portions of texts of the requested size. The textual context or the sentence that include the search words can be visualized through special commands. Further metadata information is also simultaneously displayed for each text, such as its genre, source, and the country where the text was written or published. Interaction with the users is allowed through the possibility of reporting errors for each single result.

Another relevant corpus is **arabiCorpus**⁵. It is a general corpus that allows free registration (used for statistical purpose). It contains 173.5 million words. Expectations about the didactic use of the corpus

⁵ <https://arabicorpus.byu.edu/>.

are expressed by the developer, Dilworth Parkinson, based at Brigham Young University:

This tool can be used to find citations and lexicographical and scholarly purposes, but it was also designed with the advanced students in mind. The hope is that teachers will be able to send students to this site with the instruction to find 5-10 good examples of a particular word, construction or idiom, and it will motivate the students to search about and discover the language in their own. (quoted in Whitcomb and Alansary 2018, 255)

This corpus is mainly based on MSA texts, with some additions of pre-modern Arabic and Egyptian Arabic. The most substantial part is made up of newswire from about 10 newspapers from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Morocco, and Kuwait, in addition to a pan-Arab newspaper (*Al-Ḥayāt*) that was published in the UK until 2020. For each newspaper, news is usually collected for a span of one or two years between 1996 and 2012. Additionally, there are four main categories or genres: Modern Literature (1 million words), Nonfiction (27.95 million words), Egyptian Colloquial (160k words), and Premodern texts (9 million words, divided into *Qurʾān*, *1001 Nights*, *adab* literature, grammarians, Medieval Philosophy and Science, and *ḥadīth* literature). Beside the newspapers, the most interesting part of the corpus is the Nonfiction category, which includes a large amount of material in the “Islamic Discourse” subcorpus (27.3 million words). It is based on material from the Islamic Discourse website www.Sayd.net (صيد الفوائد). The remaining part of the Nonfiction subcorpus consists of political speeches and some official UN and other diplomatic documents, beside additional heterogeneous material such as literary criticism, that could be better collected separately. Each subcorpus, as well as each single newspaper, can be selected and searched individually or combined with others, by using the Advanced Search mode. This is a very helpful function for navigating texts on politics and Islamic discourse.

While the corpus is not lemmatized or part-of-speech tagged, its results are accurate enough to allow manual wading-through on the part of the researcher (see Parkinson 2019). The query can be easily performed via the interface window, by using alternatively Arabic or Latin scripts (for the latter, the user is given a transliteration chart). A basic part of speech filter, based on morphology, is provided. The query window also allows for search by string, thus making idioms, formulaic expressions, and so forth, readily available. Different types of information can be visualized through the buttons in the top toolbar.

The first basic results displayed are the number of occurrences and frequency (no. of instances per 100k words). Through the citations tool, the user can visualize the search word highlighted in red within its textual context, i.e. surrounded by up to 10 words before/after. The results can be sorted according to the word that occurs immediately either before or after the word. A very helpful tool for prospective advanced teaching activities is offered by the possibility of retrieving the whole text in which the search word is contained by clicking on the number on the left side. Additional morphological information is provided by the word-forms button: this collects all the forms in which the word occurs, either definite or indefinite, conjugated, with clitics, with possessives or objective pronouns, and so forth. This is also helpful in spotting false hits (Parkinson 2019). Each instance is interactive and, by clicking on it, the user can view all the occurrences in their context again. The words-before-and-after button lists words occurring at least twice before and after the word, allowing to quickly visualize the most frequent closest collocations. Similarly, but with a wider breadth, the collocates command allows for viewing the most frequent word forms that appear up to four positions on either side of the search term. In this case, only collocates that appear at least four times are listed. In language teaching, collocations are important as they allow to learn and memorize chunks of language, instead of single words that are more difficult to memorize for learners. Finally, the tool also allows for downloading the complete list of found citations with 10 words before/after in a tab-delimited file.

Another relevant resource is **Sketch Engine** (see Alfaifi and Atwell 2016). This software is better known for languages other than Arabic. It is a widely used tool, although it provides a commercial service and requires a paid registration. As for the Arabic language, it includes the tagged Arabic web corpus AraTenTen, which contains 7.4 billion words retrieved from the web in 2012. The size of this corpus is obviously wide and appealing, but it must be noted that, despite its size, it has specific chronological limitations (for example, most of the Arab revolt and post-revolts output is excluded). Sketch Engine also allows users to create and manage their own corpus, from which they can extract concordances, word lists, collocates, and keywords.

Two Arabic corpora with a specifically political subject should be highlighted here. The first one, the **English-Arabic Political Parallel Corpus** (EAPPC) was presented as a case study in translation strategies by Al-Sayed Ahmad, Hammo, and Yagi (2017). The corpus size is 1 mil-

lion words and consists of 351 Arabic and English original documents, alternatively translated into the opposite language by anonymous translators in the Royal Hashemite Court. The corpus includes 189 speeches, 80 interviews, and 68 letters selected from Jordanian King Abd Allah II's official website. In addition to this, also the Sovereign's book *Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril* (2011) and its Arabic translation by Shukri Rahim (2011) were included. Provided that the Arabic part amounts to only 488k words, the corpus can be considered one of a small size. However, its interest lies in the fact that it is very specialized: not only does it focus on contemporary political issues and on a specific geographical area, i.e. Jordan, but it is also restricted to one top figure of the Middle Eastern politics, the King of Jordan. It is also a promising corpus as it is equipped with critical elaboration, such as meta-annotation, segmentation, tokenization, English-Arabic alignment, stemming, and PoS-tagging (Al-Sayed Ahmad, Hammo, and Yagi 2017). Furthermore, being a parallel corpus, it allows for comparison of vocabulary that is politically and culturally charged⁶.

The second relevant corpus is related to international politics, i.e. diplomacy within the United Nations. The **UN Parallel Corpus** is also a multilingual parallel corpus in the six official languages of UN. A first attempt at processing and aligning documents of this corpus is described in Rafalovitch and Dale (2009). The original corpus described here consists of 2100 UN General Assembly resolutions of about 3 million tokens in average per each of the six official languages extracted from 7 sessions (55 to 62), corresponding to the period 2000-2007⁷. In particular, the Arabic subcorpus consists of 2.7 million tokens, amounting to 17.2 million characters. The texts of this initial subcorpus were preprocessed, formatting-normalized, and aligned across multiple languages at the level of paragraphs. At the time of writing, the United Nations Parallel Corpus v1.0 is stored on a different website⁸ and has been considerably expanded. This freely available expanded corpus is now composed of official records and other parliamentary documents of the United Nations that are in the public domain and were produced

⁶ The corpus is not available for the public at present.

⁷ Among the 20 most frequent tokens reported for Arabic are: *al-umam*, *al-muttaḥida*, *al-duwal*, *al-mu'arrab*, *al-qirār*, and *kānūn* (Rafalovitch and Dale 2009, [5]).

⁸ <https://conferences.unite.un.org/UNCORPUS/en/DownloadOverview#download> [01/12/2021].

and manually translated between 1990 and 2014. The texts, most of which are available in all the six languages, are aligned at sentence level and are available in different formats, in plain text bitexts, and as a fully aligned subcorpus (Ziemski, Junczys-Dowmunt, and Pouliquen 2016). The Arabic texts are made up of roughly over 450 million tokens. Their value consists in both the quality of the translations, that serve as official resolutions with legal implications, and the broad range of the political topics covered.

4. POLITICAL KEYWORDS IN ARABICORPUS AND CORPUS-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

This section presents examples of classroom activities based on one of the corpora described above. For this purpose, the best option is to work on a freely available corpus, already equipped with a query window and tools for extraction. As mentioned above, arabiCorpus is already conceived of as a complete tool for teaching purposes. It is often discussed and positively evaluated in academic literature (for example, Zaki 2017; Whitcomb and Alansary 2018; Parkinson 2019). It also has the advantage of allowing a search for Media language in specific subcorpora, as well as single newspapers from different areas, and it offers the searchable specific subcorpus “Nonfiction”, consisting of an “Islamic Discourse” subcorpus and additional miscellaneous political texts. The Islamic Discourse is clearly a sensitive issue when dealing with the politics of most Arabic countries. All these factors make arabiCorpus a politically relevant and appropriate tool for language research and for devising specific teaching activities on the language of politics.

In order to ascertain if arabiCorpus can meet our expectations about the language, we shall now suggest some hypotheses related to the language of politics in terms of vocabulary frequency. To do so, existing tools and materials on the specialized language of politics and diplomacy have been exploited and lexical items have been selected for being tested in the corpus. The lexical items were chosen, in particular, from two specialized vocabularies (Kendall 2012, chapters 1, 2 and 3; Kendall and Mohamed 2020) and two textbooks (Ashtiany 1993, in particular chapter 6; Elgibali and Korica 2007, chapters 1, 2 and 3). The lexical items tested, both common nouns and nouns referring to political key-role figures can be visualized in *Tables 1* and *2*.

Table 1. – Frequency of search words relevant for politics and diplomacy in the subcorpora of Nonfiction, newspapers *Al-Maṣrī al-Yawm*, *Al-Ġād*, and *Al-Tawra*⁹, and Modern Literature. Occurrences are given on the first line, frequencies (i.e. instances of the word/100,000) are given in brackets below (w. = words).

Modern Literature (Novels; 1 Ml w.)	Newspaper <i>Al-Tawra</i> [2012?] (Syria; 16 Ml w.)	Newspaper <i>Al-Ġād</i> (02) 2010-11 (Jordan; 19 Ml w.)	Newspaper <i>Al-Maṣrī al-Yawm</i> 2010 (Egypt; 13 Ml w.)	Nonfiction (mainly Islamic Discourse, and other political texts; 27.9 Ml w.)	Sample search word
21 (2.05)	357 (2.21)	540 (2.75)	269 (1.94)	376 (1.31)	Socialism/اشتراكية (and related adj.)
24 (2.34)	1,958 (12.12)	6,313 (32.16)	4,423 (31.86)	1,064 (3.81)	Opposition/معارضة
59 (5.75)	6,800 (42.1)	12,013 (61.2)	7,765 (55.94)	8,592 (30.75)	Rights/حقوق
139 (13.55)	7,069 (34.76)	18,820 (98.88)	10,804 (77.83)	7,321 (26.2)	Regime/نظام
2 (0.19)	412 (2.55)	1,353 (6.89)	768 (5.53)	200 (0.72)	Reconciliation/مصالحة
3 (0.29)	1,856 (11.49)	5,224 (26.61)	3,834 (27.62)	345 (1.23)	Negotiations/مفاوضات
234 (22.8)	19,399 (120.09)	4,926 (25.1)	2,789 (20.09)	2,959 (10.59)	Revolution/ثورة
157 (15.3)	24,303 (150.45)	27,399 (139.59)	31,876 (229.64)	5,059 (18.1)	Council/مجلس
9 (0.88)	548 (3.39)	819 (4.17)	1,600 (11.53)	648 (2.45)	Propaganda/دعاية
6 (0.85)	989 (6.12)	1,662 (8.47)	149 (1.07)	925 (3.31)	Globalization/عولمة
0 (0)	209 (1.29)	418 (2.31)	65 (0.47)	174 (0.62)	Sectarianism/مذهبية (and related adj.)
1 (0.1)	538 (3.34)	1,548 (7.89)	834 (6.01)	356 (1.27)	Sectarianism/طائفية (and related adj.)
38 (3.7)	5,208 (32.24)	19,269 (98.17)	21,076 (151.84)	941 (3.37)	Elections/انتخابات
4 (0.39)	802 (4.96)	1,207 (6.15)	808 (5.82)	309 (1.11)	Referendum/استفتاء
0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	Fake news / أخبار مزيفة
0 (0)	1 (0.01)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	Fake news / أخبار زائفة
0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (0.03)	9 (0.06)	1 (0)	Fake news / أخبار كاذبة
0 (0)	5 (0.03)	68 (0.35)	6 (0.04)	71 (0.25)	Populism/شعبوية (and related adj.)

⁹ ArabiCorpus mostly consists of newspapers from the Eastern Arabic countries. An analysis of newspapers published in the Maghreb will certainly highlight further lexical (as well as grammatical) variation.

Table 1 shows the results for sample search words that were deemed relevant from the point of view of the language of politics and diplomacy in terms of occurrences and frequency (instances of the word/100k words) in five chosen subcorpora. Differences in their frequency have been queried in three newspaper subcorpora and the Nonfiction subcorpus, on one side, and the literary output subcorpus, on the other. Information on the subcorpora, such as their nature, consistency, geographical or intellectual provenience, and time of production, are reported in the table.

Despite their limited number, these preliminary results seem to confirm the core linguistic hypothesis. In particular, the corpora mainly confirm¹⁰ our initial expectations about the language; as predicted, the tested words have a higher frequency in the Nonfiction corpus and the newspaper corpora rather than in the one of modern literature. A noteworthy exception is the word *ṭawra* ثورة, which is more frequent in the Modern Literature subcorpus than in the Nonfiction / Islamic Discourse one.

The Islamic Discourse subcorpus has proved to have its peculiarities, since it is sensitive to some of the tested search words (i.e. *ḥuqūq* حقوق, *nizām* نظام, *di'āya* دعاية, *'awlama* عولمة), and by having, at the same time, distinctive frequencies from both the language of the Media and the language of the Modern Literature subcorpus. On the other hand, the language of the Media, i.e. the three corpora consisting in newspapers, contains most of the search words tested. In a way, our idea of language of politics, and especially of diplomacy, seems to be more based on and compliant with that attested in the subcorpora of newswire than any other subcorpus.

Political ideals, trends, or justifications can swiftly vary in modern and contemporary politics and the language is necessarily deeply influenced by this. The low frequency scored by by-now classical concepts such as *ištirākiyya* اشتراكية and *'awlama* عولمة and the absence or quasi-absence of recurrences for strictly contemporary (and sometime context-sensitive) expressions such as *madḥabiyya* مذهبية / *ṭā'ifiyya* طائفية, *šu'ūbiyya* شعوبية and *abbār kādiba* / *zā'ifa* / *muzayyafa* مزيفة / زائفة / أخبار كاذبة are but initial examples in this sense. Accordingly, the language of politics reflected in the Media seems deeply variable (more than may be expected in a specific ideological setting), and the results can appear accordingly inconsistent, on the basis not only of the specific period of time that is tested, but also, for example, of the form of government of the country where the newspapers are published.

¹⁰ But sometimes also surprisingly contradict, for example in the cases of *ištirākiyya* اشتراكية and *madḥabiyya* مذهبية / *ṭā'ifiyya* طائفية.

Table 2. – Frequency of relevant political key-role figure words in the subcorpora of Nonfiction, newspapers *Al-Maṣrī al-Yawm*, *Al-Gād*, and *Al-Tawra*, and Modern Literature. Occurrences are given on the above line, frequencies (i.e. instances of the word/100,000) are given in brackets below (w. = words).

Modern Literature (Novels; 1 Ml w.)	Newspaper <i>Al-Tawra</i> [2012?] (Syria; 16 Ml w.)	Newspaper <i>Al-Gād</i> (02) 2010-11 (Jordan; 19 Ml w.)	Newspaper <i>Al-Maṣrī al-Yawm</i> 2010 (Egypt; 13 Ml w.)	Nonfiction (mainly Islamic Discourse and other political texts; 27.9 Ml w.)	Sample key-role word
217 (21.15)	1,736 (10.75)	11,892 (60.59)	12,424 (89.5)	12,079 (43.22)	King/ملك
0 (0)	41 (0.25)	245 (1.25)	116 (0.84)	20 (0.07)	Monarch/عاهل
361 (35.18)	40,996 (253.78)	44,621 (227.33)	146,339 (1054.25)	84.77 (30.33)	President/ ¹¹ رئيس
4 (0.39)	2,279 (14.11)	6,169 (31.43)	2,435 (17.54)	307 (1.1)	Prime Minister / رئيس الوزراء ¹²
0 (0)	2,423 (15)	82 (0.42)	5.79 (4.17)	52 (0.19)	Prime Minister / رئيس مجلس الوزراء ¹³
0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	Prime Minister / وزير الوزراء ¹⁴
0 (0)	72 (0.45)	243 (1.24)	0 (0)	87 (0.31)	Crown Prince / ولي العهد ¹⁵
90 (8.77)	586 (3.63)	906 (4.62)	986 (7.1)	4,036 (14.44)	Sultan/سلطان
62 (6.04)	1,400 (8.67)	4,007 (20.41)	1,484 (10.69)	4.413 (15.79)	Prince/أمير

Table 2 shows the results on sample political key-role figures that are also relevant in the language of politics, given their visibility and decision-making responsibility. They are searched in the same five subcorpora used for Table 1.

Also in this case, the results should be treated as provisional. However, at first sight, our initial linguistic hypothesis on lexis provided less predictable results than in the case of Table 1. In particular, the specific query of synonyms or quasi-synonyms can confirm hypotheses beyond

¹¹ Without previous further specification.

¹² The query was performed by string as PoS.

¹³ The query was performed by string as PoS.

¹⁴ The query was performed by string as PoS.

¹⁵ The query was performed by string as PoS.

expectations: the alternative between *malik* ملك and *'āhil* عاهل shows how the former prevails on the latter in all subcorpora, thus testifying a greatly more general use. At the same time, there can be a great variability in the use of other synonyms or quasi-synonyms. Their use seemingly follows the preference of use of individual journals or the language in use in the countries where the journals are published. Both the Egyptian *Al-Maṣrī al-Yawm* and the Jordanian *Al-Gād* prefer *ra'īs al-wuzarā'* رئيس الوزراء instead of *ra'īs maġlis al-wuzarā'* رئيس مجلس الوزراء, whereas the Syrian *Al-Ṭawra* makes uses of both depending on the country it refers to. The expression *wazīr al-wuzarā'* وزير الوزراء appears to be entirely obsolete. The Islamic discourse seems to prefer traditional political figures (*malik* ملك, *sulṭān* سلطان, *amīr* أمير) to other modern ones. Finally, it is worth noting that the raw results concerning lexical items related to classical political key-role figures must be manually filtered, as some nouns describing an office can also serve as proper names (for example, *Sulṭān* سلطان).

4.1. *Corpus-based teaching activities*

The teaching activities described here are aimed at getting students acquainted with both the use of corpora and the language of politics they contain. Corpus literacy is *per se* a learning goal that can be useful for providing basic training for prospective linguists and teachers, who should be introduced to the use of this tool during their linguistic education. From a linguistic point of view, vocabulary building is the first and most natural objective to pursue through corpus-based activities. The activities suggested in what follows require that students have been previously – and at least theoretically – introduced to the scope, structure, and features of Arabic corpora. Therefore, the activities are more likely appropriate for intermediate students of Arabic.

4.2. *Teaching activity one: frequency*

Through this activity, the students will:

- get acquainted with the corpus, explore it, learn about its basic functions, and learn how to use it;
- learn about, and how to search for, occurrences, instances, and frequency;
- use the corpus to extract specific information on frequency of given words;
- expand or consolidate vocabulary.

The task consists in filling in a grid of five selected meaningful words (nouns, at an initial stage, as they are easier to deal with) by retrieving information on their total occurrences and frequency in a specific subcorpus. Each student can be instructed to search for the same word/s in a different subcorpus. Alternatively, students can look for different words in the same subcorpus. At the end of the activity, the retrieved frequencies will be shared in class, inserted in a comparative grid, and collectively discussed to formulate hypothesis on the use of the keywords. For homework, students will devise a frequency wordlist by using the findings from the class activity. The words will be organized according to semantic families in different sheets and in the form of word webs, rather than in simple alphabetical order. *Tables 3* and *4* show the instruction for students, as relates to the task of searching for five different words in a given subcorpus and the related results. See *Figure 1* for the summary of the results for *za'im*.

Table 3. – Task based on frequency.

TASK: Find the words listed below in the *Al-Tawra* subcorpus. Write down the number of their total occurrences and their frequency.

Frequency in <i>Al-Tawra</i>	No. of occurrences in <i>Al-Tawra</i>	Search word
		Leader/زعيم
		Sovereignty/سيادة
		Committee, Council / لجنة
		Authority/سلطة
		Delegate / (sing. نائب)

Table 4. – Results of the task based on frequency.

Frequency in <i>Al-Tawra</i>	No. of occurrences in <i>Al-Tawra</i>	Search word
5.68/100,000	918	Leader/زعيم
18.33/100,000	2,961	Sovereignty/سيادة
76.13/100,000	12,298	Committee, Council / لجنة
26.32/100,000	4,251	Authority/سلطة
8.52/100,000	1,377	Delegate / (sing. نائب)



Figure 1. – Summary of results for za'im.

4.3. Teaching activity two: occurrences and collocations

Through the second activity, students will:

- become familiar with key terms for offices, forms of government, and present and former political figures of the Arab countries;
- expand their vocabulary in the related domain;
- learn about collocations, both in the form of adjectives and names (apposition);
- explore the use of keywords in a natural and wider language context.

Students are assigned a word/expression for a political or administrative key-role office (keyword) to look up in a specific subcorpus (see task in *Tabs. 5 and 6*). They search for collocations in the form of adjectives of nationality or country names by using the “words before/after” function. Once they have retrieved the desired information, they record it on the grid provided by the teacher in order of frequency, by adding the number of occurrences in brackets. In the plenary session, students share the results of their queries and create a wordlist with all the political offices searched for and compare in which subcorpus they score the highest number of occurrences. For homework, students must complete the grid by adding the official names of the countries that they can search for independently. In addition, they will reuse the new vocabulary learned by utilizing the wordlist created in class and writing five sentences of their own. See *Figure 2* for results of the search word *ra'is*.

Table 5. – Task based on collocations.

*TASK: Find the word listed below in the subcorpus of **Nonfiction**. Then write down the adjectives of nationality (or the name of the countries) that come immediately after by using the “words before/after” function. Report in brackets the resulting number of occurrences.*

Official name of the country	Adjectives of nationality or country names (add no. of occurrences)	Key-role office and subcorpus for research
		رئيس

For homework, add the official name of the countries that the subcorpus displayed after the word ra'is. Then write five sentences of your own using different key-role political figures and new and old vocabulary.

Table 6. – Results of the task based on collocations.

Official name of the country	Adjectives of nationality or country names (add no. of occurrences)	Key-role office and subcorpus for research
	الأمريكي (297)	
	الفرنسي (44)	
	المصري (31)	
	العراقي (28)	
	الإيراني (22)	رئيس
	السوري (14)	
	الفلسطيني (10)	
	التونسي (7)	

word before	occurrences	word after	occurrences
شعب	607	الأمر بكى	750
من	527	الوزراء	607
توق	294	أي	534
أن	251	مجلس	374
السيد	172	الحرير	341
سيد	166	لم	325
كان	164	الوجه	297
الطاعة	145	وزراء	295
الي	141	موش	238
عد	141	عنة	202
مع	138	العم	179
أو	136	الدولة	170
على	118	المجلس	164
قال	89	السلك	151
بعد	82	الجمهورية	141
لها	81	الحرير	134
مجلس	79	من	133

Figure 2. – Results for “words before/after” the search word *ra'is* in the Nonfiction subcorpus (detail).

A more complex task, aimed at students already familiar with corpus-based activities, consists in searching for key political figures who hold or have held that specific office (see *Tabs. 7-8* and *Fig. 3* for a sample of the results). This may be carried out by using “citations”. With such a task, the students are directed to wading through whole lines of text, thus getting in direct contact with bigger amounts of text. This activity also offers the opportunity of exploring under the teacher’s guidance (and even before they are formally presented by him/her) the titles or formulas that are often linked to these offices, such as, for example, *ṣāḥib al-ḡalāla*, *ḡalālatu-hu*, *sumuwu*, *ḥādīm al-ḥaramayn al-ṣarīfayn*, *al-maḡfir*, etc. For homework, students are invited to relate the key-role political figures to their own countries. Alternatively, according to their level of proficiency, the students can choose a political figure among those listed and search for his/her short biography. This can be presented in class in the same form (i.e. as a biography, in the third person) or can be reworked in the form of an autobiography (i.e. in the first

person) or as an interview, that can be acted out in pairs by students. Additionally, after sharing the results of their queries in class, students are invited to report the complete official names of the Arabic counties also on a blank geographical map and to sketch a map of the forms of government of the Arab countries, by creating a legend and using different colours on the map.

Table 7. – Task based on collocations.

TASK: Now search through the citations of the key-role office “malik” in the *Al-Ġād* subcorpus and find six corresponding names of figures who hold or held that position. Then relate the six key-role figures to their own country by searching for “citations”.

Names of counties ruled by the key-role office	Personal name of the key-role figures who hold or held the office	Key-role office
		ملك

Table 8. – Results for the task based on collocations.

Names of counties ruled by the key-role office	Personal name of the key-role figures who hold or held the office	Key-role office
ملك المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية	عبدالله الثاني	
الملك الراحل للأردن	الحسين بن طلال	
ملك المملكة العربية السعودية	عبدالله بن عبدالعزيز آل سعود	ملك
ملك مملكة البحرين	حمد بن عيسى آل خليفة	
ملك المملكة المغربية	محمد السادس	
ثالث وآخر ملوك العراق (1935-1958)	الملك فيصل الثاني بن غازي	

word form	frequency	subcorpus	word forms	collocation
1	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
2	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
3	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
4	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
5	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
6	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
7	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
8	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
9	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
10	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
11	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
12	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
13	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...
14	1	Al-Ġād	al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā	...

Figure 3. – Results for collocations of *al-Malik Ḥamad b. 'Īsā* in the *Al-Ġād* subcorpus.

4.4. Teaching activity three: occurrences and collocations

Through the third activity, the students will:

- revise grammar rules (irregular verb conjugation);
- learn how to search a range of word forms through the dedicated application;
- build their vocabulary (both reinforce old vocabulary and expand it with new one) by wading through lines of collocations;
- explore the use of words in a natural and wider language context.

Students are divided into small groups and assigned an irregular verb in specific tenses, to revise the related rules of conjugation in context through the sub/corpus and reuse its forms. Students will look up the verb in the assigned sub/corpus by selecting “verb” in the PoS menu and then “word forms” in the upper menu. They will find and select the relevant forms of the basic verb (*wazn muğarrad*) or the augmented ones (*awzān mazīda*), such as, for example, conjugated forms of *tawallā* توَلَّى/take over, control; *algā* ألغى/abolish; *nammā* نَمَّى/develop, promote; and so forth. In the case of verbs, students should be aware that when searching the corpus, defective verbs need two stems, past and present, separated by a comma. The teacher might suggest using the whole corpus, or a specific subcorpus, to make the search meaningful but not dispersive in terms of quantity of results. Subsequently, students report the verb forms in a table handed out by the teacher (see *Tab. 9*). Should the students be in doubt about any of the verb forms, the teacher might suggest looking for

confirmation by clicking on the numbers next to the word and wading through the citations. Here, students can tell apart verb tenses using markers such as *mā*, *lā*, *lan*, or *lam*, or other more indirect hints, such as conjunctions *li-*, *in*, *law/la-*, *‘indamā*, *lammā*, and the like.

Table 9. – Task based on verbal PoS and word forms.

TASK: Search for the verb تولى ، يتولى and select “verb” from the PoS window in the Al-Maṣrī Al-Yawn 2010 subcorpus. Select the “word forms” facility to search for the maṣṣūb and maḡzūm forms. Use the forms retrieved to complete the grid. If you need, look for confirmation by exploring the citations of the single word form.

المجزوم	المنصوب
	أنا
	أنت
	أنت
	هو
	هي
	أنتما
	هما
	هما
	نحن
	أنتم
	أنتن
	هم
	هن

Additionally, once they complete the table, students can be invited to wade through the citations and try to work out as many meanings of the verb as possible, by using the old vocabulary they already know. Alternatively, when the meaning/s of the verbs is already known, students are invited to look for the relevant “words before/after” and wade through their citations, so to explore and learn the new vocabulary that surrounds the verbs in the assigned subcorpus. The use of the dictionary is recommended only as a final resource in case students cannot understand the words on their own. For homework, students will be given a gap-fill activity, with sentences extracted from the same subcorpus they have gone thorough in the classroom, to be filled with the appropriate forms of the verbs, or the surrounding high-frequency words that they will select from a list (Tabs. 10-11 and Fig. 4).

Table 10. – Gap-fill exercise based on collocations.

TASK: Complete the sentences with the words from the list. Egyptian typographic conventions are used here.

إدارة – الرئاسة – الهيئات – قيادة – مسؤوليتها – وزارة
1. تلك التصريحات جاءت بعد مرور عام على تولى ... أوباما.
2. وفي عهد الملك فؤاد تولت ... الأوقاف ... الحكومية إقامة البنايات.
3. وفي ذلك العام تولى ... الجيش العربي. بقي في منصب قيادته حتى 1947.
4. رئيس الوزراء هو الذي يحل محل رئيس مجلس الشعب في تولى ... مؤقتا.
5. وجهات النظر والأفكار تحولت إلى تشريعات دافعة للاقتصاد منذ تولى الحكومة الحالية

Table 11. – Results of gap-fill exercise based on collocations.

1. تلك التصريحات جاءت بعد مرور عام على تولى إدارة أوباما.
2. وفي عهد الملك فؤاد تولت وزارة الأوقاف والهيئات الحكومية إقامة البنايات.
3. وفي ذلك العام تولى قيادة الجيش العربي. بقي في منصب قيادته حتى 1947.
4. رئيس الوزراء هو الذي يحل محل رئيس مجلس الشعب في تولى الرئاسة مؤقتا.
5. وجهات النظر والأفكار تحولت إلى تشريعات دافعة للاقتصاد منذ تولى الحكومة الحالية مسؤوليتها.

word form	occurrences	word form	occurrences	word form	occurrences
تواولا	1,109	تواولا	1	تواولا	1
تواولي	270	تواولا	1	تواولا	1
تواول	423	تواولون	1	تواولا	1
تواولي	341	تواولان	1	تواولي	1
تواولت	119	تواولون	1	تواولا	1
تواولي	282	تواول	1	تواولي	1
تواولي	58	تواولا	4	تواولا	1
تواولت	58	تواولي	4	تواولي	1
تواول	51	تواولا	4	تواولا	1
تواولي	77	تواولت	4	تواولا	1
تواولي	64	تواولا	4	تواولا	1
تواولي	61	تواول	4	تواولت	1
تواولا	58	تواولي	4	تواولا	1
تواولون	36	تواول	4	تواولون	1
تواولت	38	تواولت	1	تواولا	1
تواول	27	تواولي	1	تواولت	1
تواول	27	تواول	1	تواولت	1
تواولت	19	تواولت	1	تواولت	1
تواولا	17	تواولا	1	تواولي	1
تواولا	16	تواول	1	تواولت	1

Figure 4. – Results for word forms of the verb *tawallā* in the *Al-Maṣrī al-Yawm 2010* subcorpus.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on our analysis and proposed activities, the preliminary answer to the question in the Introduction is positive, corpus-based teaching and Arabic as a language of politics may indeed be matched fruitfully. While this paper has focused on one specific corpus, similar positive results are expected from the use of other Arabic political corpora, as they can allow substantial information for linguists, syllabus designers, teachers, and students interested in the field of politics and diplomacy. They are useful for showing students natural usage of language and vocabulary in real context. They can be exploited for collecting information both *on* the language (how it works, its frequency, and other specific variations, thus determining teaching priorities) and *in* the language (selecting content-meaningful texts) of politics.

When used in the appropriate context and with consistent objectives, the deriving teaching activities can be highly motivating for learners. They can be used to encourage students to discover language information before being presented with it, thus activating learning-by-discovery processes, fostering their autonomy, and helping them develop skills of analysis and critical thinking. By offering task-based activities (Ellis *et al.* 2020), corpus-based teaching makes students play an active role in their own process of learning, avoiding automatic repetition and calling learners to search, find, reflect, organize, sequence, and reuse in a more stimulating way than classical teaching materials usually do.

However, at present, even more than in the case of corpora for general purposes (Zaki 2017), one should also admit that the use of Arabic political corpora for fully devised teaching materials is still to come. Some concurrent factors play a role in this: the limited number of Arabic political corpora available; the limitations inherent to some of these (fees required; unexpected unavailability; absence of built-in tools); their limited nature, as, on the one hand, they do not cover all the types of texts and genres in which politics and politicians, diplomacy and diplomats can express themselves and, on the other, they can be representative of only a restricted chronological period, i.e. the span of time in which the texts are collected, especially when we consider how fast the language of political trends and argumentations can change. In this sense, Arabic political corpora are apparently time sensitive and need to be constantly updated. For all these reasons, as a pragmatic choice, corpus-based activities are best thought of and used as complementary to existing textbook-based syllabi, especially those devised for Media Arabic. Additionally, given the

general complexity of use, these activities may be more wisely conceived for a specific target of students (i.e. MA students), preferably providing extra-curricular classes to allow a sufficient amount of time for familiarizing with and training on the target corpus and its concordancing tools.

Nevertheless, the teaching activities presented here illustrate the many possible prospective uses of corpora for the purpose of teaching Arabic of politics. The potential for this approach can grow in proportion to both the learners' level of proficiency and autonomy and the availability of appropriate and properly tagged corpora. More complex and refined research can be carried out, which will bring further teaching implications related to the discovery and acquisition of collocations, recognition of word chunks, automatization of frequently recurring structures and phrases, in the lexical, grammatical, and syntactic domains. Corpora consisting of official documents produced by political or administrative institutions can easily highlight standard formulaic expressions, whereas bi- or multilingual aligned official corpora (such as the UN Parallel Corpus) will certainly display recurrent translation solutions that can become a standard: all this will be fruitful for teaching students of Arabic and training future translators. When relevant corpora will become available, it will also be possible to finetune research in and teaching of Arabic political discourse, by investigating, for example, leaders' speeches and their ideological constructs and rhetoric. The door is wide open, but the task ahead is huge.

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Language Ideologies and Policies at Work: Obstructing Arabic Instruction from the French Colonial Era to the Present

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes France's language policies regarding Arabic instruction, considering the historical relationship with the Arabic language and its speakers, from colonial to postmodern eras. The polemic surrounding Arabic instruction in the schools of the republic is not a nascent political development regarding minority linguistic rights, but, rather, a byproduct of ideologically motivated educational policies that aim to marginalize the role of Arabic, both within the Arab world and the French diaspora. The debate demonstrates the centrality of language ideologies in shaping France's identities, both nationally and abroad, and the maintenance of French as well as Arabic, the language of France's largest minority. France has historically promoted the dominance of the French language, including Francophonie's inception (Kasuya 2001; Vigouroux 2013) in the post-independence era and *laïcité* in modern-day France (Tetreault 2021). Analyzing current political debates in France shows that the circulating ideologies that characterizes teaching Arabic is not born in a vacuum, but, rather, it continues a legacy of contention that has characterized France's relationship with the Arabic speaking world.

Keywords: Arabic; France; francophonie; ideology; *laïcité*; language policy; Maghreb; sociolinguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

From colonial to postmodern eras, France's historical relationship with the Arabic language and its speakers has influenced language policies

concerning Arabic instruction. The debate surrounding Arabic instruction in the schools of the republic has shed light on the role of language ideologies toward the Arabic speaking community, both within the Arabic world and in the French diaspora. I argue that the negative stance toward introducing Arabic in the educational domain is not a nascent political development regarding minority linguistic rights toward the language itself, but it is the byproduct of ideologically motivated educational policies that aim at marginalizing the role of Arabic abroad and at home.

France's polemic about Arabic instruction shows the centrality of the study of language ideologies in shaping France's conception of self, national identities, and how it positions itself *vis-à-vis* the Arab world. Of import to this study is that France has historically mobilized ideologies for the dominance of its language, including the inception of francophonie (Kasuya 2001; Vigouroux 2013) in the post-independence era and *laïcité* (secularism) in modern-day France, to articulate its position toward Arabic and its speakers. By analyzing current political debates in France, I show that the ideological battle that characterizes teaching Arabic is not born in a vacuum, but rather, stems from a continuation of a legacy of domination that characterized France's relationship with the Maghreb societies. In this section, I will focus the Moroccan situation, as a case example, and show how France has historically enacted laws and policies to undermine the teaching of Arabic.

2. FRENCH COLONIAL LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND POLICIES

France's language policy in Morocco had the aim of socially transforming Maghrebi society with the occupation of Algeria (1880), Tunisia (1881), and Morocco (1912), promoting a culturally oriented agenda and placing French education at its epicenter. The importance of French education within the colonial agenda is articulated by Bernard, who stated that, "Pour l'établissement durable de notre influence dans le pays, chaque école ouverte vaut mieux qu'une bataille gagnée" ("for the purpose of the permanent establishment of our influence in the country [Morocco], every school which is opened is worth more than a battle won", quoted in Bentahila 1983, 6). By enacting language policies where French is the primary language of instruction, France would leave a lasting imprint on Maghrebi societies. Bentahila (1983) further posits that French policy

motivated Moroccans to exchange their own customs, ethics, and social norms for new ones. While receiving an honorary degree from Harvard university in 1943, Winston Churchill expressed an imperialistic view of language stating, “the power to control language offers far better prizes than taking away people’s provinces or lands or grinding them down in exploitation” (quoted in Phillipson 2016, 134).

Modernizing Morocco called for instituting educational policies, the role of which was to promote a modern, secular society. The French nationalist vision of Morocco as a protectorate functioned as a means of reorganizing its social dynamics to serve France’s national prosperity (Segalla 2011). France established an economic system that was designed to operate, and could only function, in French (Gill 1999). The educational system was elitist in its nature (Bentahila 1983), the purpose of which was to first gain the allegiance of a group of “translators” from an elite group of Moroccans, whose function would be to “fill the lower ranks of the colonial governments and commercial establishments” (Mansour 1993, 77). These advocates played a gate-keeping role in limiting access to the French language and ensuring that its linguistic capital “received the greatest value and secured the greatest profit” (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991, 51). By implementing the above-mentioned laws, the French did not tolerate local languages and introduced a long tradition of publicly controlling language choice (Woolard 1988). France’s monolingual ideologies not only impacted local languages such as Breton, Catalan, and Alsatian German by the strict application of French in all its former colonies, but it also banned the use of local languages, which had a negative effect on education and the development of local languages. In fact, the ideology of “mission civilatrice” (Spolsky 2018) that France propagated in justifying using only French in education, according to Bokamba (1991), produced outcomes of mass illiteracy, mass withdrawals from high school, and rudimentary lingua francas.

Spolsky (2018) maintains that the French, much like the case in Portuguese colonial expansion, advocated the need for requisite mastery of the French language for attaining full citizenship status, assuming the superiority of the French language over the other languages of the occupied territories. The ideology of the civilizing mission stems from the conviction that French is the de facto language for universal reason (Kasuya 2001), and it has an inherent civilizing nature. Using the ideology of *la mission civilatrice*, the French mobilized their linguistic resources and continuously attempted to control the educational market,

which guarantees an exclusive dominance of French and thus, its ‘value’ in different linguistic markets. The goal of *la mission civilisatrice* was to rearrange the social order of Moroccan linguistic market to allow French to secure the accrual of enough economic and cultural capital to facilitate its nativization in the Moroccan milieu as a national language.

The French established their linguistic dominance through language policies, used as a “tool of ideological control” (Mansour 1993, 120), to inject French, as a newly transplanted code, with the highest value in the Moroccan linguistic market. The policies served to persuade the indigenous population, viewed as “passive objects of literacy” (Fabian 1986, 77), that their local languages are inherently deficient and inferior and, therefore, French language acquisition is necessary to embrace modernity and for global access. However, during the colonial era, Arabic came to these assumptions maintaining the continuation of Arabic as the language of erudition through the establishment of Arabic-taught schools, operating parallel to the French-taught schools, which gave wider educational access to the public and, consequently, gained a wider resonance among them (Payet 1957).

Following France’s contact with Arabic speaking populations in the Maghreb, Arabic was seen as a challenge to colonial expansion. France took measures to undermine Arabic and its speakers, maintaining the French language through creating the ideology of francophonie and developing an association with the francophone ruling elite in the former French colonies, thus increasing the visibility of French as an exogenous code and allowing it to maintain presence a century later.

3. FRENCH LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN POST-INDEPENDENCE MAGHREB

Following Morocco’s independence, although French colonials departed and Morocco instituted Arabization policies, Moroccans did not gain control over their destinies. On the contrary, a system of privileges, that was French in its engineering and Moroccan in its implementation, continued. The intention of the Arabization policy was to (1) balance the asymmetrical relationship between the former protectorate and France, (2) be a means of restoring Morocco’s pre-colonial linguistic structure and national identity, and (3) reverse linguistic and social asymmetries created by French colonization. The postcolonial government of Morocco was at odds with its postcolonial realities. While the prestige

of French is conferred on its speakers from the central political power in Paris and its use in the colonies, the prestige of Arabic is conferred on it by a global community and the twenty-two Arabic speaking states for which it serves as the official language. However, Morocco also expressed the need to maintain French as necessary for nation-building purposes and for promoting its image as a modern state.

The Moroccan government adopted the Arabization program as a nation-building tool, and the newly independent state used education as its epicenter to promote a modern and secularized Morocco and to attempt to compensate for its continued reliance on French. Morocco began “an ambitious ‘Arabisation’ program by gradually substituting Standard Arabic for French in areas where French speakers still had a monopoly” (Gill 1999, 125). The Arabization program’s goal was to restore the position of Arabic in Morocco’s post-colonial context, which was a political move that maintained class stratification by allowing the elite class the privilege of acquiring foreign languages (Grandguillaume 1983; Chakrani 2017).

In the post-independence era, France mobilized another form of ideology to sustain its influence in the Maghreb. This era marked France’s retooling its language ideology to sustain different type of relationship with the Arabic speaking community. Kasuya (2001) argues that the ideology of francophonie emerged due to the loss of Algeria and its colonies that France sought to make part of its undividable territory. The emergence of this ideology is driven by the same hegemony “not in the military and political sense, but the cultural and linguistic sense – and that France tries to compensate for its loss of international status with the *defense et illustration* of Francophonie” (Kasuya 2001, 247). The French language’s establishment and dominance have always been articulated in ideological terms of insecurity, giving rise to francophonie, through which France maintains the strength of its language against the backdrop of the increasing dominance of English (Vigouroux 2013). Against the mounting dominance of Anglophone countries around the world, this framing was carried out through political ties with and economic incentives for ruling elite in the Maghreb and elsewhere in France’s former colonies (*ibidem*). In fact, only affluent Moroccan families were allowed access to French taught schools since the colonial era. France sees in building loyalty with the ruling elite and a closed circle of families a guarantee for continuation its presence in the Maghreb. These economic incentives are maintained through the belief in belonging to a universally shared culture while it excludes who do not com-

mand the language from the decision power in Morocco (Cohen 2004; Chakrani 2021). France still engages in the production of an elite class in its school. In France, the Maghrebi foreign student population totaled 24,000 in 2015, or half of France's foreign student body at that time (Viguiet 2020, 156). The French government views them with ambivalence; while they are seen as desirable for French influence in countries such as Morocco, their permanent settlement in France is viewed unfavorably by the locals.

Studies on the elite class have hinged on establishing linguistic norms through "elite closure", a practice that diverges linguistic practices away from the masses and supports educational policies that reinforce the boundaries of social disparities between elites and the rest of the speech community (Myers-Scotton 1990). France fulfilled its linguistic hegemony through education by enacting policies aim to the acculturation of an elite class with socioeconomic ties and incentives to solidify French presence in the Maghreb. The current educational system reinforces linguistic asymmetries delimiting the majority of Arabic taught students and limiting their potential for socioeconomic mobility (Chakrani 2017).

By constructing Arabic taught schools, implementing Arabization challenged the colonial power, the French language, and its language ideologies. Throughout the Arab world, the Arabization process has reinstated Arabic in an attempt to reverse the impact of French domination in key social spheres. However, several factors inhibited efforts to modernize Arabic and its current role in the Arab world, such as (1) conflicts between neighboring countries such as Morocco/Algeria and Syria/Lebanon (Cheikh 2010), (2) the ideological miscalculations of Arabic language academies, and (3) prevalent regional linguistic ideologies (Shiri 2002; Chakrani 2015).

Viguiet (2020) argues that although the French educational system confined Moroccans' educational choices to France, French educational policies have deepened the reliance on the French language as "they shape knowledge, hopes, and belief systems, form enduring worldviews, and rely on durable stocks of human resources" (*ibid.*, 70). Through the forces of inertia, change can only occur on an incremental scale. English emerges as a strong contender in these countries, challenging the long-held assumption that global access can only be accomplished through the French language.

The beginning of independence also marked a new era of exploitation between France and its former colonies, this time in the diasporic

contexts. In the following section, we will discuss how language ideologies and policies affect language instruction in the French education system, placing language at the center of the ongoing ideological battle to define French society.

4. MODERN FRANCE'S POLICIES AND IDEOLOGIES TOWARD ARABIC

While Maghrebis' relationship with French colonialism dates to the 19th century, successive waves of Arabic speaking immigrants into France occurred in separate phases, starting with recruiting Arabs to participate in the French army in WWI and in the liberation of France in WWII. An increased demand for labor in France during post-WWII reconstruction intensified migration in the 1950s, reaching a peak in the mid-1970s (Ennaji 2010).

With the establishment of the Maghrebi community in France, the need to teach the Arabic language arose, given that Arabic speakers have become the largest minority group in France and that Arabic is the second most widely spoken language there. This new reality has given rise to new language ideologies of *laïcité* (secularism), *communautarisme* (communitarianism), and framing Arabic as a “literary language”. This gives us an introspection on the “metamorphosis of ‘colonial unconsciousness’” (Aldrich 2002) that reveals itself when considering Arabic institutionalization within the French educational system. The French language could not compete with Arabic in France's former colonies (Salhi 2002). However, two current developments have intensified linguistic insecurities, namely, the worldwide increase of Arabic instruction and the transformation of French denizens into bilingual French-English speakers by introducing English in primary education. This gives rise to polemics of teaching Arabic in school and debates about national identities.

Throughout French history, introducing Arabic in the school curriculum in France and the Arab territories is tied with expansionist ambitions, establishing dominance in the Maghreb and elsewhere. In the Algerian case, for instance, Messaoudi (2006) argues that Arabic instruction established its foothold with the Egyptian Expedition and was instrumental in the conquest and settlement in Algeria. Messaoudi (*ibidem*) further maintains that the interpreters recruited for the Algeria expedition comprised of Eastern Christians who served in Egypt from

1798-1801, French students enticed with the romantic idea of enlightening the East, and some Maghrebis, many from Jewish families and *Jeunes de langue* (children of consular families established in the Middle East).

Arabic instruction in the colonial enterprise was a means through which France sought to dominate Arabic speaking communities in the Mashreq (East) and the Maghreb (West). France's ambitions as an empire began with the *Institut National des Language et Civilizations Orientals* (INALCO; National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations), which was originally established in 1795 as the *École spéciale des langues orientales* (Special School for Oriental Languages). The Maghrebi move to France brought exigencies for Arabic language instruction. García-Sánchez and Tetreault (forthcoming) argue that that period saw the introduction of the national program *Enseignements en Langue et Culture d'Origine* (ELCO; Teaching the Language and Culture of Origin), which included languages such as Arabic, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Serbian, and Turkish. Considering this program, the French state articulated its need for Arabic instruction to address a temporary migration.

This vision was also supported by the Maghrebi states that sent Arabic instructors to help prepare children of immigrants to integrate back to their parents' countries of origin. Such policies were also implemented across the Mediterranean. In fact, the late Moroccan King Hassan II, who was often criticized in Morocco for carrying a pro-French agenda (Viguié 2020) and impeding the implementation of Arabization (Hammoud 1982), also articulated this vision of Arabic. King Hassan II stated that he discouraged Moroccans from political participation in France and saw in them a community bound to return. This, of course, does not match the reality, as most expatriates were bound for permanent immigration. Language policies and lack of political participation did not help to equitably address questions of language and identity in educational settings, nor the need to promote minority linguistic rights.

The politics of framing Arabic as a transitional language did not change course until the inception of the Francois Holland presidential election and the appointment of Najat Vallaud-Belkacem as the first woman to serve as the Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Research. Tetreault (2021) argues that the leftist and centrist parties pursued an assimilationist approach to Arabic language instruction. The Minister of Education saw a way to mainstream the presence of Arabic by institutionalizing its presence in education and allowing all students the option to pursue Arabic studies in secondary and high schools.

Socialists adopted a much more lenient approach than the right-wing parties. Yet, this approach was still guided by the ideology of *laïcité*.

According to Balibar (2004), *laïcité* and the neutrality of public education is expressed in contradictory terms. Inside the school, *laïcité* should be interpreted as a schools' neutrality in which the learners must suspend their private existences, identities, "social belonging, beliefs and ideologies in order to facilitate the entrance of individuals into the 'political' sphere, citizenship" (thus, identity of citizenship), a space which is itself not neutral. The ideology of *laïcité* serves

first, attempts by the French state to extend central control over peripheral spaces by promoting a nationally uniform standard for expressing minority identities. Second, the agency of the peripheries in this process. Rather than being passive recipients, they have been instrumental in struggling over how *laïcité* is to be practiced across space and over time. (Lizotte 2020, 2)

The school is asked to carry out a neutralization or constitute an additional neutrality between two *non-neutral* "spaces" – what we call "private" and "public" (Balibar 2004, 357). These private and public spaces are in a constant ideological tug of war. For Arabic heritage learners, Arabic is deprived of the very ethnic, cultural, and religious references embedded within language use; likewise, foreign language learners of Arabic are unable to understand and access the modes of reference represented in language use. The school then engages in decoupling the language and heritage learners from their cultural milieu.

This explains the policies' lack of appeal within the Arabic speaking community, who send their children to learn Arabic in mosques and cultural associations. Currently, there are only 14,900 students registered in Arabic class in the French secondary and high schools representing on 0.3% of students in secondary education (Galopin 2020). The Left defends Arabic instruction and its presence in the school system based on the need for learners to acquaint themselves with Arabic as a "literary language" (Bubola 2019). This demonstrates that Arabic is framed as belonging to the domain of the cultural (Chakrani 2013), which means that it is not designated to represent the modern construction of France. In fact, Jean-Michel Blanquer, the French Education Minister since 2017 from the new *La republic en marche* (LREM) party, which formed a coalition from the Left and the Right, states that by introducing Arabic in school, we inject prestige into the language.

Right-wing discourse propagates fears of introducing Arabic into education which are linked to the media discourse of propagandized

fear, similar to constructing the fear of the Russification or Chinafication of the French society. An anxiety is emerging within right wing French society that has resulted in the rise of what García-Sánchez and Tetrault (forthcoming) term ‘Islamolinguistic-phobia’, an increasing discourse that conflates radicalization with language instruction. This discourse has become part of quotidian French media that scapegoats the Muslim community and Arabic instruction for the societal ills, such as increasing unemployment and the prohibitive cost of living. This discourse, much like the political rhetoric in the US, has intensified in presidential campaigns and is being normalized among mounting socioeconomic anxieties. This threatens French social cohesion, as politicians view national plans to introduce Arabic in school with mistrust. France’s right wing, known for an extremist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim stance, presents Arabic as a language in terms of communitarianism. This means that Arabic should be viewed as the language of a minority and does not need to be introduced in school. At the heart of this stance is the institutionalization of Arabic as a code in the educational domain, which we see in the quote by the current Secretary of the Republican party:

La langue fait la nation. La langue de la République, c’est le français. Elle est belle, porteuse de liberté et d’émancipation. Apprendre à l’aimer, c’est apprendre à aimer la France. Institutionnaliser à l’école l’apprentissage de la langue arabe est une lâcheté et une faute. (Pradie 2020)

Translation: Language makes the nation. The language of the republic is French. It is beautiful and it represents freedom and emancipation. Learning to love it is learning to love France. Institutionalizing the learning of Arabic in school is a coward act and a mistake.

The ideology framing Arabic in terms of communitarianism aims to dislodge Arabic from its position as a global language making it, thus, a marginal language whose speakers do not deserve its introduction in school, a strategy to curb the maintenance of Arabic within France’s borders. The presence of Arabic and its institution in the educational domain is highly contested because it confers economic capital on the language and overt prestige on its speakers, making Arabic a marketable commodity in the French educational sector.

This debate is framed also in terms of the newly enacted law of supposed ‘Islamic separatism’ by France’s current president, Emanuel Macron, which is manufactured in relationship to the secession of the Muslim community from France. Macron ran on a presidential cam-

paign that conflated Arabic instruction and the need to dislodge it from mosques and neighborhood associations, claiming that the language has radicalizing forces upon French youth (Tetrault 2021). Current government policies aim to distract the international community from mounting calls for respecting minority linguistic rights and the possibility of declaring Arabic as a national language in France, given the sizeable population of its speakers.

What emerges from debates on language ideologies in France is a vision of a nation that is struggling to define itself and is marginalizing minority communities and their linguistic rights to access languages other than French. What is central to analyzing these debates is to historically deconstruct the ideological stances. From the colonial era to the present, we see educational policies portraying Arabic as a language to be dominated. Debates surrounding Arabic language instruction in the French educational system show the importance of analyzing the ideological formation of policies and the critical role that they have played in maintaining the hegemony of the French language at home and abroad, thus undermining the cultural richness and linguistic profile of its citizens.

5. CONCLUSION

This article analyzes the interface between French and Arabic speakers, highlighting how France's historical stance toward Arabic and its speakers has been that of domination, beginning with colonial policies that aimed to undermine the Arabic language and its speakers and targeting its influence in Africa, through cultural imperialism. These policies continued in post-independence Maghreb, through enacting francophonie as an ideological tool to continue the dominance of the French language, assisted by francophone elites and institutions. Educational policies in postcolonial (or ex-colonial) countries have been motivated by economic incentives and political alliances, with France delimiting access to education in Arabic, the local mother tongue. This served to control the language of scientific discovery while claiming that Arabic is inadequate for propelling modernity.

The ideological debates surrounding Arabic instruction reflect the multiple ways that it was and is utilized to serve the colonial enterprise in and exert influence on the Maghreb. Framing the Maghrebi com-

munity's presence in France as migrants allows France to claim that the presence of Arabic within France is temporary, avoiding its institutionalization as a national language. Accordingly, France's political debates do not promote linguistic minority rights, but through the ideology of *laïcité*, aim to absorb the Arab community culturally and linguistically within the French society and under state-sponsored nationalism.

The language debate in France has taken more dangerous tone, following the rise of France's right wing that casts Arabic and its introduction into society as a threat to the republic's stability, thus politicizing the language. The French state frames Arabic instruction in terms of communitarism, which aims to undercut Arabic the increase interest in Arabic instruction. The centrality of the debate around Arabic instruction allows us to see how it aims to delegitimize the need to include France's second most spoken national language in the educational system. In essence, obstructing the institutionalization of Arabic is aimed at undermining its presence in the educational domain, which would confer overt prestige on its speakers and legitimize its presence within France. The resistance to Arabic instruction and negative attitudes toward its speakers serve to maintain century-long efforts to undermine Arabic within France's mainland and abroad.

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Religion, Ideology, and Nation-building in Jordanian Textbooks and Curricula for the Teaching of Arabic Language

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ABSTRACT

This article looks at Jordan as a case study to investigate how the link between the national and Islamic identity is constructed through textbooks and curricula for the teaching of Arabic language. The first section of the article introduces the reader to the relevance of Arabic language in historical discourses on Islam, Islamism and Arabic nationalism. Then, the article looks at the specific case of Jordan, providing an historical overview on how nationalism, religion, and religious pluralism played a part in Jordanian educational and political strategies. The following section specifically focuses on the use of the Arabic language in the Islamic and national perspectives, providing a diachronic comparison between the 2013 Arabic Language Curriculum and the 2019 General Frame for Jordanian Curricula, integrated by references to textbook content materials. The article identifies pragmatic needs behind the highlighted teaching policies and contextualizes the analyses in the broader Jordanian historical and political frameworks, pointing at the relevance of the Arabic language for the construction of identities in the contemporary Middle East and at its enduring politicization. Comparison between the 2013 and the 2019 documents shows relevant changes between past and present formulations, namely in the reduced emphasis on the link between language and religion.

Keywords: Arabic language; education; Jordan; nationalism; religion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The years between 1916 and 1918 are known in the history textbooks of the Middle East as the years of *al-Tawra al-'Arabiyya*, the military

uprising of Arab forces in the region against the Ottoman Empire. The revolt, sparked by an agreement between al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Hāshimī (the Hashemite Sharif of Mecca) and the British government, aimed at the creation of a single unified and independent Arab state recognized by the British and stretching from Aleppo to Aden. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the territory was instead partitioned into British and French mandate territories. Nonetheless, the agreement laid the foundations for the establishment of the Hashemites leadership in several lands of the region. The colonial partition divided the territory into new nation-states that were shaped according to geo-political interests rather than naturally emerging from local demands. As a result, the new monarchies, and republics in the post-colonial periods, including the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan (officially renamed in 1949 as Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan), had to develop “discursive practices” of identity construction to define or promote legitimacy and national identities (Rajjal 2014). These discursive practices had to provide convincing narratives to connect the people to the lands bounded by the lines on the map and used education as the main ideological battlefield. Indeed, “history and historians have been recruited, both wittingly and unwittingly, into national projects all over the world, to delineate and simultaneously legitimate, the existence of new nation-states” (Anderson 2002, 5). If that was true in the case of history and historians, it is important to note that these processes of identity construction encompassed all educational subjects. In this framework, the teaching of the Arabic language had definitely an important role. In fact, Arabic language was not only ancillary to Islam but also constituted the medium of a cultural-national revival in Arabic speaking countries since the 19th century (Chejne 1965, 447).

This article looks at Jordan as a case study to investigate how the link between the national and Islamic identity is constructed through textbooks and curricula for the teaching of Arabic. The first section of the article introduces the reader to the relevance of Arabic language in historical discourses on Islam, Islamism and Arabic nationalism. Then, the article looks at the specific case of Jordan, providing a historical overview on how nationalism, religion, and religious pluralism played a part in Jordanian educational and political strategies. The following section specifically focuses on the use of Arabic language in the Islamic and national perspectives, providing a diachronic comparison between the 2013 Arabic Language Curriculum and the 2019 General Frame for Jordanian Curricula, integrated by references to textbook content materials.

The article identifies pragmatic needs behind the highlighted teaching policies and contextualizes the analyses in the broader Jordanian historical and political frameworks, pointing at the relevance of Arabic language for the construction of identities in the contemporary Middle East and at its enduring politicization.

2. THE RELEVANCE OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN HISTORICAL DISCOURSES ON ISLAM, ISLAMISM AND ARAB NATIONALISM

Arabic may be considered, first and foremost, the language of Islam. Indeed, all Muslims, no matter what their native language is, are expected to recite the *Qur'ān* in the original language and to pray in Arabic. It constitutes the common liturgical language of more than 1.9 billion people around the world (2021)¹. Multiple traces of the interplay and overlap between the Arabic language and Islam have been recorded through Arabic and Muslim history. In his account on the significance and place of Arabic for Arab-Muslim societies, Anwar G. Chejne (1965, 454) noted for example that the second Caliph 'Umar (634-644) instructed his governors to spread the knowledge of Arabic for "it rejuvenates the mind and increases virtue". According to the scholar, such a strong relation between language and religion was also constructed through the opinions of well-known grammarians, who equated the Arabic language to a religion itself (that was the case of the Basrawi grammarian Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā', d. 771), or even asserted the greater value of Arabic grammar over Muslim jurisprudence (*fiqh*) (the Kufan grammarian Ibn al-Farrā', d. 822).

This strong connection served as a unifying cultural factor in Muslim society when the Abbasid caliphate started to crumble, and even when Persian language broke through the monopoly of Arabic in the Muslim World. As noted by the non-Arab scholar and scientist al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048) who lived at the time of the Ghaznavid Empire (Sands 1961, in Chejne 1965, 456):

Our religion and our empire are Arabs and twins, one protected by the power of God, the other by the hand of Heaven. How often have tribes of subjects congregated together, in order to impart a non-Arabic character to

¹ See <https://countrymeters.info/en/World#religion> [26/10/2019], number of followers estimated by Countrymeters, January 2021.

the state. But they could not succeed in their aim, and as long as the call to worship continues to sound in their ears five times each day and the clear Arabic Koran is recited among the rows of worshippers ranged behind the Imam and its reforming message is preached to them in the mosques, they have got to submit, the bond of Islam is not broken, and its fortress is not breached.

After a period of decline between the 16th and the 18th centuries, Arabic became the language of Arab cultural and political renaissance in the 19th century. The preeminent role of Arabic language was highlighted by Fück (1955) who defined Arabic language as the symbol of the cultural unity of the Muslim world. Similarly, in the 1950s the Egyptian author Maḥmūd Taymūr described the strength of such a bond highlighting: “Arabic is the language of a revealed religion (*luḡbat din samawi*) and is here to stay as long as the *Qur’ān* and Islam exist” (Chejne 1965, 455).

Arabic language was a central element for Arabism first (understood as a sense of belonging and cultural awareness of Arab identity), and later on for Pan-Arabism (*qawmiyya ‘arabiyya*, the ideology advocating the unification of the Arabic speaking countries of North Africa, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea). According to Sati al-Husri, probably the best representative of the theorists of Pan-Arabism, Arabic language and Arabic history constituted the pillars of a sense of belonging overcoming geographic borders and uniting minorities and people adhering to multiple beliefs. In this sense, the doctrine of Pan-Arabism was perceived as pragmatically secular as it accentuated Arabness instead of Islam as a unifying factor. It is not a coincidence that some of the most important figures in the Pan-Arabic movement, such as George Antonius and Michel Aflaq, were Christians. Yet, as already noted by several scholars (among whom Lapidus 1988, 665; Gabrieli 1996, 164; Hourani 2010, 297), Arabic nationalistic ideology was not in direct contrast with Islam, as Islam still constituted an essential component of Arabism providing subsidiary strength to the relationship between Arabs. As highlighted by Manduchi (2017, 27):

to be specific, if the linguistic element, Arabic, is what identifies the Arab nation, it is just as true that Arabic was born as a written language and spread only with the *Qur’ān* and is therefore closely linked to the birth and development of Islam. Islam was thus at the base of the birth of the concept of nation and legitimised the birth of the post-colonial states. With few exceptions, for example Turkey, Islam has never been questioned by the nationalistic ideology.

Previously, the triangulation between Arabism, Islamism and nationalism had been recognized by some of the theorists of Pan-Islamism. Pan-Islam was developed as a political concept by the Young Ottomans in the second half of the nineteenth century, in an attempt to unify the Islamic community under the authority of the Ottoman sultan. Nevertheless, after the revolution of the Young Turks and especially after the abolition of the Caliphate by Atatürk in 1924, theorists such as Rashīd Riḍā (influenced by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, among others, and close himself to Pan-Islam) insisted upon the necessity of an Arab caliph to guide the Islamic community. In this vision Pan-Arabism was associated to Islamic reformism and Arabs were seen as superior from a religious point of view to other Muslims. In this framework, Islamism started to get closer to Arab nationalism. The same Rashīd Riḍā, for instance, became one of the supporters of the Saudi monarchy after the conquer of Mecca on the part of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman Āl Su‘ūd in 1924. Such Islamism, which was closely related to pan-Arab nationalism and was connected substantially to the Muslim Brotherhood, “died with Arab nationalism in the phase of globalization which accompanied the rise of a radical and transnational political Islam” (Dakhili 2009, 27, quoted in Manduchi 2017, 30). Indeed, while until the 1990s most Islamic movements contributed to the strengthening of nation-states, “becoming nationalist or at least nationalized” (Roy 2003, 53), violent Islamic radicalism such as *al-Qā’ida* identified with movements disconnected from any territory and in direct competition with the Arab governments of the Middle East (Manduchi 2017, 32).

3. NATIONALISM, RELIGION, AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN JORDANIAN TEXTBOOKS

When looking at the interplay between Arab nationalism and Islam and at reference to religion in national discourses and state narratives, the case of Jordan appears as particularly interesting. Indeed, the members of the royal family in Jordan based their legitimacy on both the link of ancestry of the Hashemite family to the Prophet and on their leadership in the Arab Revolt (*al-tawra al-‘arabiyya*). As already mentioned, the Arab Revolt dates back to the first World War period. At that time, al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Hāšimī, leader of the Banū Hāšim (the clan of the *Qurayš* tribe, to which the Islamic prophet Muhammad belonged) and

Emir of Mecca, supported the British efforts to defeat the forces of the Ottoman Empire, proclaiming the Arab revolt. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the region was divided according to the Sykes-Picot agreement, which frustrated the Hāšimī pan-Arabic aspirations of being the king of a unified Arab nation. The region was indeed divided into smaller new-nation states, controlled by British and French authorities. Contextually, the leadership of two of these newly created states, Transjordan and Iraq, was given by the British to the Hashemites sons of al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, Abd Allāh and Fayṣal.

In creating the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921 and the Hashemite State of Jordan in 1946, King Abd Allāh started constructing a national narrative for the new country, in part through the publication of school textbooks. In doing that, he had to consider the necessity of facing the main issue of conflict between the rulers and the ruled population. Indeed, the Hashemite family represented a foreign ruling dynasty originating from the Ḥijāz and attributed its power by a colonial authority. Moreover, the population living inside the borders defined by the British and French authorities was a mixture of different and divided ethnic, national, and religious groups (including Circassians, Chechens, Kurds, Armenians, and local settled nomadic tribes). Starting from the years immediately following the creation of the State of Jordan this situation was further complicated by the influx of thousands of Palestinian refugees who had to leave their homes in the context of the Israeli occupations in 1948 and 1967, and who were naturalized as Jordanian citizens (Anderson 2002).

In this framework the royal family shaped a national discourse based on a constitutional concept of legitimacy, relying on the image of Jordan as a modern state with a civil executive authority, an elected legislative authority and an independent judicial authority (Rajjal 2014). At the same time, it advocated both pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism discourses as forms of identification. While reference to pan-Islamism and pan-Arabism are and have always been important pillars in the narrative proposed by Jordanian textbooks, appeal to one or the other has been strengthened according to strategic political necessities over the years (Rajjal 2014). As noted by Anderson (2002, 9), in a study on nationalism in Jordanian history, literature and civic textbooks between 1950 and 1975:

as the leaders of the Arab Revolt in World War I, they [the Hashemite family] took on the mantle of Arab nationalist leadership, laying claim to the leadership of the whole Arab nationalism movement from that point

forward. Thus, Jordan was not just a separate state but one with Hashemite rule, standing at the epicenter of a potential reunion between the divided Arab states. The inhabitants of Jordan are thus linked to the history of the Arab world via their Hashemite leadership.

At that time, and according to the same strategy, Jordanians were presented as an integral part of the Arab collective and part of the universal Islamic *umma* (nation), while the political divisions of the Arab world into mini-states, separating one collective from another, were portrayed as artificial and temporary and as consequences of colonial powers' past intrusion in the region's affairs (Nasser 2019, 193-194). As highlighted by Nasser in a study on Jordanian textbooks used between 1948 and 1967, the textbooks also suggested that such a political division of the Arab world was associated with the project of implantation of Zionism into the heart of Palestine, which was an obstacle to Arab unity (*ibidem*)².

While pan-Arabism was a dominant discourse until the end of the 50s and the 60s, during the 70s it started to weaken. Indeed, the repression of Palestinians ordered by the Jordanian government during the events of Black September in 1970 and the signature of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, caused a substantial rupture in the pan-Arab front. As highlighted by Nasser (2004, 227):

in Jordan's case, during its formative era as a nation-state between the 1950s and mid-1970s, the state discourse sought its legitimacy by promoting multiple identifications such as pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism. At the same time, Jordan as a local identity was dialectically excluding the majority of Jordan's population by promoting these multiple identifications³. The appeal to the regional (pan-Arabism) and the universal (pan-Islamism) erases the particular of being a Palestinian.

These multiple strategies contributed to the construction of Jordanianism in the following era.

With growing emphasis after 1994 (when Jordan itself signed a peace treaty with Israel), the barycenter of Jordanian national discourse moved more towards Islam. As highlighted by Nasr (2008, in Castegnaro 2018), this directly reflected into educational policies. As Nasr notes

² On reference to Zionism see also Fruchter-Ronen 2018.

³ Support for this argument can be found also in Abu-Odeh 1999 and Massad 2001. Due to his position, Abu Odeh became subject and object of a contentious debate over Jordanian national identity. To know more about the Abu Odeh case, see Nanes 2010.

comparing the proceeding of the 1987 Jordanian Conference on Education with the 1991 Jordanian National Charter and the 1994 Jordanian Education Law (Law no. 3, 1994), the 1994 Law increased emphasis on Islam by defining Jordan as part of the “Arabic-Islamic nation”. Previous documents only referred to Jordan inclusion into the “Arab nation” and redefined the known hierarchic order of citizens’ submission to “the Nation, the State and the King” which, after 1994, was modified into “God, the Nation, the King”. Since the 90s the discourse developed by the Hashemite family strengthened the principle of “religious legitimacy” (defined by Rajjal 2014 as one of the three pillars or concepts of legitimacy shaped by the Hashemites). In this framework, the Hashemite family strategically highlighted its ancestor link to the family of the Prophet and Jordan’s role as “protector of the Holy shrines” (including Muslim and Christian sites). Such a reference to Islam supported the nationalist discourse created by the royal family, which was therefore able to resist the negative impact caused by the frustration of Palestinian requests in Jordan and in the region.

At the same time, it is worth noting that this discourse strategy went at the same pace with political reforms limiting the growing political role of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Front inside the country, which were traditionally connected to Palestinian refugees’ political forces in Jordan. With this regard, the Jordanian system has been defined by Kaye *et al.* (2008) as guided by a policy of limited inclusion of Islamist forces. The Muslim Brotherhood was recognized as a political party in 1992, as part of a process to strengthen civil rights in the country. Yet, the disbandment of the Jordanian parliament and the reform of the vote system in the following years significantly weakened the Islamist parties favoring the pro-Hashemite conservative right representing Jordanian native tribes. While this strategy served the goal of reducing the dissatisfaction of the indigenous citizens and countering Palestinian political power in the country, it created a political void that paved the way for increasing religious extremism in the following years (Kaye *et al.* 2008). This became visible in 2005, at the time of the *al-Qā’ida* hotel bombings in Amman, and in the following years, when several Jordanian citizens joined the ranks of Isis (Barret 2017).

At the political level, the monarchy promoted what has been defined by Abu Rumman as “conservative secularism”, namely the building of the Hashemite legitimacy on religious foundations but not on religious ideology, and the exploiting and containing of religious Muslim cur-

rents according to the needs of the political moment⁴. This led to the parallel emergence of “various manifestations of Westernization and of Islamization inside Jordanian society” (Abu Rumman and Abu Hanieh 2013, 35-37). At the same time, it fostered a policy of “religious neutrality”, not adopting any clear positions, either politically or culturally, with regard to any of the prevailing internal Sunni Islamic tendencies (*ibid.*, 37). This message of “religious neutrality” and tolerance came together in the Amman Message, delivered in 2004, which emphasized Islam’s core values of compassion and mutual respect between Muslim legal schools⁵.

As noted by Rajjal (2014), in the case of Jordan, such a process of strengthening and re-imagining of a complex and inclusive national Jordanian identity became a vital issue after 2001, with the launching of initiatives such as “Jordan First” and “We are all Jordan”, that gained critical significance against the backdrop of the increasing unrest in the Middle East.

Despite this tendency, in the last years relevant actors in the Jordanian educational sector such as Dūqān ‘Obīdāt (supervisor of Jordanian Curricula at the Congress on Education from 1991 to 1998) lamented a use of *Qur’ān* verses and *aḥādīth* in Jordanian textbooks (especially in the subject matter of history) leading to religious extremism, also pointing to the tendency to ignore non-Muslim communities in the country and female actors⁶. Similar critiques stimulated a process of textbook revision that started in 2016. As a result, the Jordanian Ministry of Education developed new didactic materials and curricula for the teaching of Islam, history, Arabic language and civics (De Francesco 2017; Castegnaro 2018).

⁴ The strategy of the monarchy has also been described as “monarchic pluralism” by Shryock who noted “Like the monarchs of Europe, Hussein juxtaposed images of tradition and modernity in artful ways. Yet because he ruled Jordan and did not merely preside over it, Hussein’s ability to fashion multiple Hashemite identities, or ‘royal personae’, was a crucial feature of his elaborate apparatus of power. To his subjects, he was a man of many guises: liberal democratizer, monarch, descendant of the Prophet, secularist, shaykh of all tribal shaykhs, and a refuge for the Palestinian people. Hussein’s manifestations were crafted in relation to constituencies (and political trends) he sought to influence or control” (Shryock 2000, 58).

⁵ See <https://ammanmessage.com/> [11/05/2021].

⁶ See <https://www.al-binaa.com/archives/article/55630> and <https://alghad.com/عيادات-المنهج-المدرسية-بحاجة-إصلاح> [11/05/2021]. On University curricula see Sowell 2017. To know more about gender bias in Jordanian textbooks before 2016 see Alayan and Al-Khalidi 2010.

Several changes characterize the new textbooks and curricula, which today offer a more nuanced portrayal of Jordanian society, paying more attention than in previous decades, to the representation of religious minorities (including Christians) and different approaches to religion and religious practices (Hadid 2016).

4. ISLAMIC AND NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE TEACHING OF ARABIC LANGUAGE

This section of the article focuses on references to Arabic language, in the Islamic and national perspectives, in two didactic tools used in the Jordanian Kingdom: the Arabic Language Curriculum published by the Jordanian Ministry of Education in 2013, and the 2019 General Frame for Jordanian Curricula. The latter document was drafted and published in 2019 by the National Center for Curriculum Development, and it defines the general goals of education, in line with the Educational Law (nr. 3) 1994, the Jordan Vision 2025, and the National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2015-2016. Content analysis of these documents is here integrated with content analysis of the textbook for the learning of Arabic language used in the year 2019 in secondary schools (12th class). All selected documents were available online in pdf form and in Arabic language. More in details, they were accessed through the platform of the Jordanian Ministry of Education, in the section assigned to “Curricula and Textbook Management Department”⁷.

What follows provides a diachronic comparison between the 2013 and the 2019 perspectives, showing recurring patterns as well as elements of inconsistency.

The Arabic Language Curriculum of 2013 (*natāğāt al-luğa al-‘arabiyya*) describes Arabic language, in its introductory passage of the document as follows:

whereas the Arabic language is closely related to Islam as a religion, being the language of the Holy *Qur’ān*, students need to learn it in order to be able to read it [the *Qur’ān*], understand the teachings of their religion and perform ritual acts of worship. It is, furthermore, a universal language due to the presence of a large number of Muslims in various parts of the world

⁷ See <https://moe.gov.jo/ar/node/58> [29/10/2021].

[...]. Arabic language is the key to Arab and Islamic culture in the various sciences and arts [...] it bears the legacy of the Arab *umma* in terms of civilization, representing the strongest tie between Arabs and Muslims and being one of the most important elements of Arab unity. It exemplifies the identity of the Arab *umma*, being the vessel of its thought and culture. (2013, 6; personal translation from Arabic)

In the description, the religious, historical, and cultural dimensions of Arabic and Islamic identities are tightly connected by the linguistic element. Arabic language is therefore presented as the keystone of “Arab unity”. It is noteworthy that this representation brings together both pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic elements (seen as relevant, with reference to the “Arab *umma*”) that, as highlighted in the previous section, have been used in the past to forge Jordanian nationalism through education. In such a discourse, sectarian divisions, and the particularities of the different communities inside Jordan are minimized. This idea is furthermore strengthened by references to the challenges faced by the official Arabic language (*fuṣḥā*), such as the prevalence of dialect (*‘āmmiyya*) and the interference of foreign languages in spoken communication and the media:

Arabic language faces many challenges such as the prevalence of dialect (*al-‘āmmiyya*) and the interference of foreign languages in our spoken communications and the media. This calls for activating the use of eloquent Arabic and for paying attention to its teaching and learning. It also highlights the importance of developing the four basic communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing [...]. It is furthermore necessary to pay attention to Arabic literature and its various issues. Indeed, Arabic literature expresses the Arab-Islamic values and students can benefit from it in knowing their past, forming their vision for the future, deepening their understanding of themselves, communicating with others around them, knowing, understanding, and respecting other cultures, in addition to developing their linguistic taste. (2013, 6; personal translation from Arabic)

The idea of such a strong connection between the religious and linguistic dimensions is reproduced in the following part of the document. Interestingly, the function of Arabic language as an instrument of religion appears as the very first point among the four pivotal learning outcomes envisioned in the Arabic Language Curriculum (even before the adequate use of the four communication skills mentioned in the introduction). As in the passage quoted above (and in line with the Message of Amman), attention is also paid to the international dimension as to the use of language as a form of mutual understanding between people.

As we read in the document, after completing the two elementary and high school cycles of the Curriculum, students should be able to:

1. employ the Arabic language to express feelings of faith in God Almighty, and attachment to Arab and Islamic values;
2. use the four communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) adequately, in order to face different life situations;
3. use the components of the Arabic language system: phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, syntax, and context, according to its eloquent form, in line with contemporary life;
4. enjoy the arts of literary creativity in Arabic language and types of literary creativity in other human languages leading to positive communication and common understanding between people. (2013, 7; personal translation from Arabic)

Comparing the 2013 Arabic Language Curriculum with the 2019 General Frame for Jordanian Curricula (including Arabic language and religious education) shows that emphasis on a direct connection between the religious and the linguistic elements is toned down. Nonetheless, Arabic language, Islam, and nationalism maintain their relevance as pillars of students' education and their envisioned identity:

The general goals of education [...] are exemplified in the formation of a citizen who believes in God Almighty, who is loyal to his *watan* [country, homeland] and his *umma*, who is endowed with virtues and complete in mental, spiritual, emotional and social personality, so that at the end of the educational stages he becomes a citizen able to: 1. use Arabic language to express himself and to easily communicate with others; 2. comprehend facts, concepts and connections related to the natural, geographical, demographic, social and cultural environment, locally and globally, using them effectively in public life; and 3. understand the elements of [his] heritage, drawing lessons to understand and develop the present; 4. be aware of Islam's doctrine and law, and consciously assimilate its values and instructions [...]. (2019, 8; personal translation from Arabic)

The relevance of the religious element is furthermore stressed in the following pages, which list the set of values which should be developed through education. In this framework, "belief in God" is listed first among eighteen items, followed by "sense of belonging to the homeland" and, third, "pluralism and diversity":

1. Belief in God, his Messengers, and his books is a basis for building the human personality and connecting all religions. This is essential in building the Curriculum, especially as Islam is a system of thought

and behaviour that respects each person regardless of his religion and belief, raises the status of the mind and encourages knowledge, work, and morals. The focus on the value of belief in God stems from the principles of Islam and other divine messages and is consistent with the principles of the Amman Message [...].

2. Belonging to the homeland [...] includes the individual's love for his homeland, his close connection with his land and people, and the reciprocal relationship between the citizens and the state (*dawla*) [...]. This value is also reflected in the learner's belief that the people of Jordan are an integrated unit, and that there is no place for intolerance and discrimination, be it motivated by racial, regional, sectarian, tribal, or ethnic elements, by social status or by the belonging to any of the Muslim juridical schools. This leads to harmony [...] and patriotic and civic behaviours. [...] The value also reflects the learner's commitment to the central Arab issues his homeland is concerned with, starting with the liberation of Palestine.
3. Pluralism and diversity: this value reflects recognition of the rich diversity of the Jordanian society, represented by a positive communication indicating acceptance, respect, and appreciation of the other, without abandoning private opinions and ideas but rather recognizing the right of the other to express himself and present his views in a climate of freedom, democracy, and respect. (2019, 25-26; personal translation from Arabic)

In the 2019 General Frame, the pivotal goals concerning the students' linguistic education are listed in detail. Noteworthy, concerns about the spread of dialect (*'ammiyya*) and the interference of foreign languages are reiterated (2019, 51). Both Islamic education and Arabic language are mentioned as examples of cross-curricular subjects that form the personality of the learner (*ibid.*, 40). It is also remarkable that, contrary to the 2013 curricula, the 2019 document does not explicitly mention the use of Arabic language to express religious feelings or attachment to Islamic values. The 2019 General Frame presents Arabic language as first "the language of the Arabs", second as "the language of the *Qur'ān*", and third as "the official language of the state" (*ibid.*, 51). This formulation shows a different perspective from the 2013 Curriculum, where Arabic was presented first and foremost as the language of Islam and, only in a second place, as the language of the "Arab *umma*" and of the state.

To conclude the analysis presented here, it is worth noting that the changes highlighted so far still did not appear in the content of textbooks for Arabic language education in use in academic year 2019-2020 (and, to the best my knowledge, still in use). An example is provided

by the Arabic language textbook used by the 12th class. Reference to the 12th class seems here particularly relevant as this is the last year of school for many Jordanian students and includes preparation for the *tawǧīh* (general secondary education certificate) examination. Moreover, at the time of attending the 12th class, students reach the majority age and the age of vote, set at 18 years in Jordan. This makes the teachings in the 12th class particularly important, especially when it comes to topics that could reflect on the student's attitudes and behaviors as active citizens of the State. In the introduction to the materials, the textbook, issued in 2017, and republished in a second edition in academic year 2018-2019, still mentions religion in the first place in terms of importance. Nonetheless, anticipating the recommendations of the 2019 General Frame and differently from the 2013 Curriculum (which emphasised the importance of the Arabic *umma* over the country), reference to Jordan (*waṭan*) precedes that to the Arabic nation, understood in the pan-Arabic sense as *qawm*:

Units are shaped with the aim of enabling the students to organize ideas and express them in a sound language [...]. The two books contain a rich content of various valuable texts [...] aiming at building the religious, patriotic (*waṭanī*), pan-Arabic (*qawmī*), social and educational skills in the hearts of our students. (2019, Introduction; personal translation from Arabic)

While the 2019 General Frame seems to set a distance from the use of Arabic in the religious perspective, the 2018-2019 Arabic textbook for the 12th class (last class before *tawǧīh*) is still very well endowed with religious references in the form of *Qur'ān* verses and *aḥādīth*. Remarkably, the reading passage in the first lesson focuses on verses 33-51 of *sūrat al-Imrān*, describing the figure of the Holy Mary. This unit provides a clear example showing how the textbook introduces information on Christianity and Judaism presenting them as religious traditions that paved the way to Islam and are therefore close to it, without distancing from the Muslim perspective which keep characterizing all lessons. As such, the textbook provides the students with references to a plural society and to other religions in the frame of an inclusive and almost univocal *Muslim* perspective⁸. Such an intertwining between

⁸ This echoes the reasoning of De Francesco (2017, 261) who, analyzing the 2016-2017 edition of textbooks for religious education, also noted that despite providing a balanced presentation of a plural society the textbooks consecrate little space “for ‘inter-Islamic diversity’ (Sunni, Shi’ite etc.) which is virtually absent”.

religion and language education also demonstrates the practical reality of religion being a cross-subject in Jordan. The textbook's content is also emblematic on the use of Arabic language in relation to the 'old' pattern: language-religion-nationalism. An example is provided in lesson 10 (titled "Jerusalem in the heart of the Hashemites"), which introduces the student to the poem *Risāla min bāb al-'amūd* by Haider Mahmoud. The poem is contextualized by the textbook in the frame of the Hashemites efforts towards the protection of the Holy sites and is described as having been recited by the poet in 1980 on the day of *isrā'* and *mi'rāj* to celebrate the role of the Jordanian armed forces, described in the textbook as the "Arab army that sacrificed itself on Jerusalem's walls" (2019, 144). Through the tasks in the lesson, the textbook asks the students to

explain how the poet alludes at the status of Jerusalem in King Ḥusayn b. Ṭalāl's opinion and at the status of Ḥusayn among his people; refer to the role of the Arab army in Jerusalem and highlight the religious (*dīnī*), pan-Arabic (*qawmī*) and patriotic (*waṭanī*) sentiments in the poet's conscience. (2019, Exercises, 144; personal translation from Arabic)

The importance of such religious, pan-Arabic, and patriotic sentiments and of the role of the Arab army is emphasised by several other exercises as follows:

التحدّث:
1-تحدّث إلى زملائك عن المعالم الدّينية التي تعرفها في مدينة القدس.
2-حاور زملاءك في التّضحيات والبطولات التي قدّمها الجيش العربيّ على أرض القدس.

Exercises no. 1 and 2, p. 142; personal translation. Translated as follows:

Speaking:

1. Talk to your colleagues about the religious landmarks you know in Jerusalem;
2. Talk to your colleagues about the sacrifices and heroic deeds of the Arab army on the soil of Jerusalem.

4-برزت العواطف الدّينية والقوميّة الوطنيّة واضحة في وجدان الشّاعر، مثلّ لهذه العواطف من النّصّ.

Exercise no. 4, p. 147. Translated as follows:

4. Religious, pan-Arabic, and patriotic sentiments emerged and were clear in the poet's conscience. Find examples of these sentiments in the text.

These examples show how Arabic language textbooks have been and are being used to support the national ideology crafted by the Hashemite leaders and to glorify the monarchy and the Jordanian army. Interestingly, while these examples from an Arabic language textbook show the role of the army introduced as a relevant element into the pattern 'language-religion-nationalism' and supporting the legitimization of the Hashemite monarchy in both pan-Islamic (the Hashemites as protectors of the Holy sites) and pan-Arabic terms (the Hashemites as leaders of the Arab army), the analysed passages in the Arabic Curriculum and the General Frame do not highlight direct reference to the army itself. In this case, textbook analysis provides therefore further elements for understanding.

5. CONCLUSION

Reference to Arabic language has been highly relevant in historical discourses on Islam, Islamism and Arabic nationalism in the Middle East. The case study of Jordan has illustrated how the Arabic language is still positioned at the core of institutional strategies for the building of contemporary national identities. Curricula and textbooks for the teaching of Arabic language are indeed used in Jordan to frame the national identity of students, together with sentiments of loyalty to the monarchy inspired and legitimized, among other elements, by connection to Islam. In didactic tools for the teaching of Arabic, the discourse on the importance of Arabic language is often linked to references to religion and the construction of the students' religious identity. Indeed, in the outlined discourses, religious (Muslim) identity often overlaps national identity, and the Hashemite monarchy is still legitimized to rule by its legacy to the Prophet's family and its role in the protection of Jerusalem's Holy Sites. Against this backdrop, reference to pluralism (including religious pluralism) as a positive value to be safeguarded through education, emphasised after 2016 and clearly enhanced by the 2019 General Frame, is brought up within the framework of an inclusive, Muslim, perspective. The diachronic analysis of the 2013 Arabic Language Curriculum and the 2019 General Frame for Jordanian Curricula (including Arabic language and religious education), contextualized in a broader historical framework, unveils differences and similarities between past and present attitudes concerning the politization of didactic tools for

the teaching of the Arabic language. While the 2013 Curriculum presents Arabic first and foremost as the language of Islam and as “the key to Arab and Islamic culture”, the 2019 General Frame tones down the emphasis on the connection between language and religion. Indeed, the General Frame remarkably presents Arabic language as “the language of the Arabs”, and only in a second place as the language of the *Qur’ān*. Furthermore, it does not describe Arabic language as a tool specifically suited to express or promote Islamic values. Nonetheless, the connection between language and religion still emerges strongly through the analysis of the Arabic language textbook for the 12th class used in year 2019, where the learning materials are aiming at building the “religious, patriotic (*waṭānī*), pan-Arabic (*qawmī*), social and educational skills in the hearts of our students”. As such, and despite the highlighted differences, the documents represent a coherent follow up with institutional strategies of nation-building identified by previous studies. Nasser (2019) in particular, has pointed at an “exclusive nature of nationalism”, demonstrating how the process of nation-building in Jordan entails processes of differentiation and exclusion on the one side, and appeal to “the universal” (pan-Arabic/pan-Islamic) on the other⁹. The findings show that Arabic language continues to play an important role in the construction of a modern Jordanian self-image and that this image is still centred on Arab and Islamic identity. Processes of nation-building show up in the analysed didactic tools not only in relation to religion, pan-Arabic and patriotic values promoted, but also through the appeal to the promotion of a standardized *‘Arabiyya Fuṣḥā* against local colloquial. Indeed, they agree in presenting the status of Arabic language as endangered by the interference not only of foreign languages but also of dialect (*‘ammiyya*), featuring the particularities of the hybrid identities of people under Jordan sovereignty. This finding echoes the reasoning of scholars who recently focused their research on the cross-subject of religious education, highlighting that textbooks still consecrate little space for inter-community differences such as inter-Islamic diversity (De Francesco 2017).

⁹ Indeed, according to Nasser, Jordanian textbooks advanced a discourse of identification with pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, making the internal particularism of one collective or another in Jordan irrelevant (as Jordan is acting to “achieve” Arab unity). In this framework, forms of particularism or factionalism are seen as an obstacle toward the desired unity, leading to the suppression of particular identities, such as those of the Palestinians (Nasser 2004).

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Decolonising Arabic Language Teaching: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Since the early 2000s Arabic has become an increasingly popular language at academic level across Europe and North America, with high numbers of students enrolling on a variety of programmes offering Modern Standard Arabic – as well as local varieties of Arabic, commonly known as *‘ammiyya* – as the target language (Dickins and Watson 2006, 108; Ryding 2006, 13; Mohamed 2021b, 59). The increasingly high demand for this language has resulted in unprecedented progress in the variety of learning materials available for both teachers and learners. Such developments have largely taken place in the United States, where most textbooks such as the *Al-Kitaab* series are designed and printed. This paper employs decolonisation and post-colonial theory to look at the ideological implications of the political agendas implicit in popular and widely adopted textbooks and their proposed content for teaching Arabic as a foreign language. Relevant examples from the *Al-Kitaab* series – one of the most successful and widely adopted textbooks at university level in the UK – show the role of Arabic language teaching materials in perpetuating patterns of European and North American cultural hegemony, making the case for rethinking Arabic language teaching at academic level.

Keywords: Arabic; decoloniality; neoliberalism; orientalism; teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

As Mariam Aboelezz argues in *The Arabic Language and Political Ideology*, drawing on Yasir Suleiman’s work, any language serves two main functions in society: an instrumental function and a symbolic one. The former refers to language as an effective means of communication, while

the latter concerns “the capacity of language to act both as a symbol and an index through the associations it invokes within the speech community” (Aboelezz 2018, 1). In addition, suggesting that language can frequently serve as a proxy for ideology, therefore linking the instrumental and symbolic functions of language, Aboelezz and Suleiman speak of language as a means “to express extra-linguistic views and anxieties, as well as to hint at the political orientations of a group or individual” (Suleiman 2013, 16).

In this sense the concept of language ideology as defined by Michael Silverstein, and of political language ideology, in Aboelezz’s definition – originally conceived and employed to deconstruct the ideology of standardised languages –, inform this analysis. The former refers to ideas and beliefs about language which rationalise and justify its structure and use (Silverstein 1979, 193); the latter concerns when language becomes politicised and is used as a proxy to maintain or challenge power relations, group identity, and (a particular) social order in society (Aboelezz 2018, 1). Arabic is no exception, and particularly since the 19th century this language has been associated with multiple agendas or purposes: the preservation of Islamic identity, the establishment of a pan-Arab supranational koine, colonisation, modernisation, and national independence. Based on these different purposes and the choices that they engender, the capital value of language changes and can be manipulated, organised, and presented through content and materials to serve specific worldviews.

The aim in this article is to expand these definitions to explore the politicised nature of Arabic language teaching materials within the framework of decolonisation, and to shed light on the Western approach to the Arabic language broadly speaking both as a medium as well as a symbol. In this vein, this paper addresses the underlying political vision of Arabic-language textbooks widely employed in anglophone higher education contexts, namely the UK and North America.

Since the early 1990s, a series of Arabic language textbooks such as *Al-Kitaab fii Ta’allum al-‘Arabiyya*, *Mastering Arabic*, *Ablan wa Sablan* and *‘Arabiyyat al-Naas* have brought a significant degree of novelty to a field that had hitherto remained virtually unaffected by the rise of communicative language learning (Block 2010). The most popular and widely used of this new current in Arabic language teaching textbooks, the *Al-Kitaab fii Ta’allum al-‘Arabiyya* series (from now on *Al-Kitaab*) was first published in 1996, followed by a second edition in the early 2000s and a third edition in 2011. This paper examines this book’s first

part (total beginners' level), drawing on an increasingly widespread approach to research/teaching to propose a decolonisation of Arabic language teaching, employing a broad definition of decolonisation as liberation from a colonial approach to knowledge, as avoiding and resisting the perpetuation of colonial or neo-colonial practices, as well as recognising and surpassing the living legacy of the colonial mindset particularly with regards to the Arab-Muslim universe. This also draws inspiration from Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism* (1978), to explore how and why the Arabic language is studied and the political significance of Arabic-language teaching materials originally designed and produced in the United States, and subsequently distributed and adopted in the rest of the world.

2. DECOLONISATION OF THE CURRICULUM

Triggered by the calls for the removal of Cecil Rhodes's statue from the Cape Town University campus, the movements for the decolonisation of universities which started in 2015 in South Africa have now spread to most parts of the English-speaking world and beyond. Apart from symbolic actions such as the felling of a coloniser's statue, the decolonisation of universities and their curricula has become a crucial and controversial point of discussion in the United Kingdom, particularly within the field of Middle Eastern studies. A growing number of universities have decolonising collectives or networks, and the 2020 annual conference of the British Society of Middle Eastern Studies BRISMES explicitly invited applicants to address the implications of this movement for the field of Middle Eastern Studies as well as "to reflect on the concept of decoloniality and practice of decolonization of knowledge and pedagogy in relation to the study and teaching of the Middle East" (BRISMES 2020). Such calls for the decolonisation of universities, their curricula and their symbols, emerged with the objective of working to address and make visible the legacies of colonialism, empire, racism in academic and knowledge production more broadly. This article brings Arabic-language teaching into this debate by illustrating the political significance of Arabic-language teaching materials and making the case for rethinking how Arabic language curricula are envisaged and prepared.

As Heller and McElhinny point out, positionality forms part of the wider approach to thinking about standpoint and represents a key aspect

for the decolonisation of research and university curricula (Heller and McElhinny 2017, 7). This involves reflecting on and exploring where the core ideas of our discipline come from and what kinds of conflicts they might flag, questioning the relationship between the location and the identity of the writer, what and where they write. In the same way as gender studies cannot be the exclusive realm of heterosexual White men, or the analysis of current global affairs that is funded and produced only in the United States and Europe is no longer credible, I argue that a process of questioning the positionality and hegemonic role of US-produced Arabic textbooks reveals an underlying political agenda that reinforces existing power relations. This relegates Arabic to perform a role that serves the interests of a specific profile of students, one that has an interest in language because it has value, and it has value because it is tied to how resources are produced, circulated, consumed, including how they are identified as resources at all.

In the past twenty years, Arabic language textbooks designed in the United States have played a significant role in shaping the profile of Arabic language graduates as well as in many ways the future of our field, or at least the challenges ahead. While this article's preamble on the symbolic role of language can be applied to a variety of contexts, its application to Arabic in particular seems appropriate and necessary. The reason for situating the innovation of the Arabic language curriculum within the framework of decolonisation, then, goes back to the colonial past and neo-colonial present that have traversed the Arab world, as well as to the political implications linked to knowledge of the Middle East and the Arab World produced in the West. This experience of colonialism – having involved most parts of the Arabic-speaking world – was built on assumptions that informed and justified colonial expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries and continues to inform neo-colonial practices. Such assumptions gave rise to a form of cultural and political hegemony that has shaped the past and present of the field of Middle Eastern studies (Said 1978). Therefore, decolonising the content and methodologies of the disciplines that make up what has crystallised as Middle Eastern studies, necessarily involves questioning these assumptions in order to change the future of the field.

After all, Arabic language programmes at university level represent a key part of degrees in Middle Eastern studies. Teaching Arabic plays a crucial role in introducing students often for the first time to a language and a variety of cultures whose importance to develop empathy as well as

a good understanding of the nuances of a different culture can hardly be overstated. So central is the role of this language in what is known as the Middle East, that for anyone curious about this part of the world receiving at least an introduction to this language is essential. This responsibility is particularly relevant today, as we are reminded of the work of Palestinian-American thinker Edward W. Said. As Said explained in *Orientalism*, Middle Eastern studies in the West has hardly been a field that produces value-free knowledge. In fact, Said argues, both at the time of the British and French Empires as well as in post WWII area studies in the United States, the study of the Middle East – and therefore of the Arabic language too – has frequently been policy oriented and imbued with colonial culture and attitudes (Keskin 2018, 1). This has contributed to crystallising the hegemonic role of a Eurocentric/American view of Arabic speaking countries, on the one hand, and their subordinate role on a global scale, on the other. Such a balance of power engenders a widespread perception of Arabs and Arabic speakers in the minds of the general population. Arabic language teachers have a choice, and a responsibility, to either reinforce or counter this perception, balancing this against the desires and ambitions that motivate students to learn Arabic.

As Heller and McElhinny have shown, quoting Bruce Cummings, the development of the field of Middle Eastern studies in the United States emerged in the Cold War period as a direct consequence of CIA involvement in driving academic research to serve specific US geopolitical interests (2017, 178). While Arabic and Middle Eastern studies during the Cold War were merely considered part of the efforts to study various areas of the world where “communists were perceived to be a threat” (Heller and McElhinny 2017, 178), after 1991 and particularly after the 9/11 attacks its role and its capital value has evolved dramatically. As Keskin (2018, 2) explains, in the post 9/11 era the tendency to establish closer relationships between universities and state institutions has increased as US academics have established closer links with government agencies, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations and institutions in order to receive funding for their research. After all, this process of commodification of knowledge to serve national security interests had already begun in the 1980s, with the emergence of neo-liberalism as the dominant global ideology (*ibid.*, 11). In this sense, the next sections demonstrate how Arabic language textbooks and courses have not represented a change to a tradition of state-department-driven area studies.

3. THE AL-KITAAB “REVOLUTION”

Contemporary textbooks have represented an innovation for Arabic pedagogy that surpassed the traditionally Eurocentric approaches to Arabic language teaching, in that they attempt to foster the integrated approach, i.e. a style of teaching that “does not consider *fuṣḥā* and the vernaculars as mutually exclusive” (Giolfo and Sinatora 2018, 96). This confirms how over the last several decades the study of Arabic has grown exponentially and dramatically – as Devin J. Stewart (2016) argues – offering a wider variety of pedagogical materials and making the situation for learners of Arabic much easier. However, again as Stewart, as well as Giolfo and Sinatora explain, Arabic pedagogy has retained a focus on politics and the language of newspapers reflecting a Western interest in Arabic dictated for the most part by political and economic agendas. This is perpetuated also by books whose aim and ambition is to surpass a traditional and outdated style of teaching in favour of teaching the spoken and written variety (i.e. *‘āmmiyya* and *fuṣḥā*) as one and integrated. As Ryding, Badawi and Ben Amor have revealed, the apparent progress in the designing of materials that these textbooks have achieved, has not resulted in higher levels of proficiency for Arabic students, due mostly to the nature of the content proposed (Ryding 2006; Badawi 2011; Ben Amor 2017, 97-99). In the case of the *Al-Kitaab* series specifically, vocabulary lists are varied but consistently introduce terms from the realm of political and public affairs since the very first pages. The reading materials presented usually bring together pieces from various sources, including outdated media articles with little or no relevance to the core vocabulary of each learning unit. As for the grammar lessons, English is the main language employed, which has resulted in foreign language terminology becoming a barrier between the (Arabic) language and the learners. Such practice turns books into talking *about* the language rather than talking *in* it (Badawi 2011, ix). The content of these textbooks and the developments that they have supposedly brought about is even more controversial if we consider the impact they have on the practical knowledge of the language and potential employability of Arabic-language graduates. As Ben Amor (2017, 99) argues, making the case for literary texts to be employed extensively in Arabic language teaching programmes, the diminished linguistic and cultural proficiency for the students is a product of the political pressure that area studies have exerted on Arabic language provision.

Published for the first time in the 1990s the *Al-Kitaab* series came out at a crucial time for Middle Eastern studies, when key US government agencies and institutions – such as the National Endowments for the Humanities, which funded the *Al-Kitaab* series (Brustad *et al.* 2011, xxix) – were being restructured to support area studies, including Middle Eastern studies, as fields that in turn served the dominant market-oriented, neo-orientalist American vision (Keskin 2018, 12). The following three sections provide relevant examples of the content proposed to total beginners in the first volume of the *Al-Kitaab* series. The examples presented are taken from vocabulary lists, reading texts, grammar explanations, as well as speaking activities and exercises. As these examples will show, the vocabulary proposed at beginners' level consistently introduces a great deal of terms from the domain of public life and current affairs in the vocabulary lists presented at the beginning of each unit, as well as in the reading-for-scanning and fill-in-the-gaps exercises throughout. This not only limits the capacity of young learners to use the language effectively regardless of their political orientations and personal ambitions, but it also results in a limited number of career choices. This is not incidental, and as the content will illustrate, it achieves the purpose of perpetuating a predominantly American vision of Arabic and the Arabic-speaking world, as the domain of news networks, government agencies, think tanks and NGOs (Keskin 2018, 2).

4. VOCABULARY LISTS

The nature of the vocabulary proposed by the *Al-Kitaab* series to students who are still often in the process of approaching the language at a very basic level shows that their focus is wide but inarticulate, as the terms at the beginning of each unit do not belong to a common and consistent domain. Particularly in the very first units, vocabulary lists provide students with useful Arabic terms to talk about themselves (always alongside their English equivalent)¹, but draw frequently from the language of politics, governmental agencies, international organisations, current affairs, alongside other more mundane topics. In the space of the very first two units in the first volume the *Al-Kitaab* series learners are exposed to terms such as:

¹ In the 3rd edition vocabulary lists also provide the colloquial (Egyptian and Levantine) equivalent of terms.

ARABIC	ENGLISH
الأمم المتحدة	the United Nations
جنسية	nationality
مترجم	translator
متخصص	expert
الشرق الأوسط	the Middle East
منطقة	region
موظف	employee
جيش	army
ضابط	officer
حقوق	law
دين	religion
العلوم السياسية	political science

By the last of the thirteen units that make up the first volume of the series in its 3rd edition, which is meant for total beginners with no prior knowledge of the language, such terms have been added.

ARABIC	ENGLISH
التجارة	commerce
إدارة الأعمال	business administration
الخارجية	foreign affairs
وزارة	ministry
الاقتصاد	economy
حكومة	government
دولة	nation-state
دولي	international
رئيس	president
رئيس الوزراء	prime minister
التحق	to join or enter (school, army, political party)
عُيِّنَت	I was appointed
السياسة المقارنة	comparative politics

Students are expected to engage in ask-your-colleague activities to practice this vocabulary through questions given in English, which the students have to then reformulate in Arabic. Speaking activities include a great variety of situations among which we find questions such as “Do you want to work for the United Nations?”, “Are you majoring in Middle Eastern studies?”, “Are you busy with your job?”, “Do you have a relative in the army? Is he or she an officer? Does he or she like working in the army?”, “Do you like politics? Do you watch the news every day?”, “How is the US economy doing as far as you are concerned?”, “Would you like to work for the State Department?”, “In your opinion who should be able to join the army?”, “What does a prime minister do? Do you know any governments that have a prime minister?”.

As they progress into the first eight units, in addition to such speaking activities, at the beginning of each unit students are expected to complete a series of fill-in-the-gaps exercises to practice this vocabulary in the context of sentences among which we find the following:

ARABIC	ENGLISH
ما رأيك في السياسية الاقتصادية للحكومة العراقية الجديدة؟	What do you think about the economic policies of the new Iraqi government?
ماذا تعمل والد مها؟ يعمل مترجم في الأمم المتحدة	What does Maha's father do? He works as a translator for the United Nations
والدها من القاهرة، وهو يعمل في قسم الترجمة في الأمم المتحدة	Her father is from Cairo, he works in the translation department at the United Nations
في الحقيقة، أحمد ابن عم والد مها، وهو متخصص في العلوم السياسية	Actually, Ahmad is Maha's father's cousin. He is a political science specialist
في الولايات المتحدة هناك وظيفة الرئيس وهناك الوزراء، ولكن ليس هناك وظيفة رئيس الوزراء كما في دول مثل بريطانيا وفرنسا	In the United States there is a president and ministers, however there isn't a prime minister like in countries (nation-states) such as Britain and France
حصلت على البكالوريوس في العلوم السياسية منذ سنتين، أدرس الآن للحصول على الماجستير في الدراسات الدولية في SIAS في جامعة جون هوبكنز	I obtained a BA in political science two years ago. Now I'm studying for my master's in international studies at SAIS, John Hopkins University
بعد التخرج أريد العمل في الحكومة أو في واحدة من الشركات الأمريكية من منطقة الخليج	After I graduate I want to work for the government or for an American company in the Gulf
جورج واشنطن كان الرئيس الأول للولايات المتحدة	George Washington was the first president of the United States

ARABIC	ENGLISH
زميلتي التحقت بالجيش منذ ٤ سنوات وأصبحت ضابطة، وهي سعيدة بحياتها لأن عندها وظيفة ممتازة ومرتب ممتاز	My colleague joined the army four years ago and became an officer, she's very happy with her life because she has a great job and a great salary
الصيف الماضي عملت متدربة في قسم العلاقات الدولية في وزارة الخارجية في واشنطن، وكانت هذه تجربة ممتازة لأنني تعرفت على موظفين كثيرين في الحكومة.	Last summer I worked as an intern in the IR section of the State Department. This was an amazing experience because I got to know a lot of government employees
انقطعت العلاقات الدبلوماسية بين إيران والولايات المتحدة لسنوات طويلة	Diplomatic relations between Iran and the United States were cut off for a long time
الدكتورة سعاد متخصصة في السياسة المقارنة وتدرس السياسة العربية-الأوروبية. وهي تتكلم باللغتين الإنكليزية والفرنسية إضافة إلى اللغة العربية. قبل سنتين حصلت على منحة فولبرايت للدراسة في الولايات المتحدة. وبعد عودتها عينت رئيسة لقسم العلوم السياسية في الجامعة	Dr Su'ad is a specialist in comparative politics. She studies Arab-European politics. She speaks English and French, as well as Arabic. Two years ago, she obtained a Fulbright scholarship to study in the United States and after coming back she was appointed as head of the department of political science at university

تمرين ١: كلمات جديدة وقواعد قديمة (في البيت)

اكتبوا كلمة من الكلمات الجديدة في كل جملة.

١. زميلتي التحقت بالجيش منذ ٤ سنوات و ضابطة ، وهي سعيدة بحياتها لأن عندها وظيفة ممتازة و ممتاز.

٢. أصحو في الساعة السادسة صباحاً ، ولكن اليوم صحت في الساعة والنصف لأنني ليلة أمس إلى الساعة الواحدة بسبب ورقة صف علم الإنسان.

٣. ما رأيكم أن كلنكم إلى بيتي للعشاء.

Figure 1. – A fill-in-the-gaps exercise from Al-Kitaab part 1, p. 204.

The choice of vocabulary, the themes, and the organisation of the contents in this series reveals how it is designed to direct the students towards specific career paths, effectively limiting the choices for Arabic graduates to a few: political analyst, news editor, foreign correspondent,

NGOs and governmental agencies, depriving a broader spectrum of students of the opportunity to receive an introduction to more rudimentary aspects of this language. This also reveals how, despite the progress it has witnessed, the field of Arabic language teaching still seems to suffer from what Karin Ryding defines as reverse privileging. Originally proposed by Heidi Byrnes (2002, 34-58), reverse privileging is useful to classify and differentiate between different discourse types that teaching materials employ. According to Ryding, the content of Arabic language teaching materials, unlike that of most commonly taught languages, privileges “secondary discourses of public life involving the professions, the academy, and civil society” over “primary discourses of familiarity”, leading to high drop-out rates among Arabic language students at university level (Ryding 2006, 16). In other words, whereas most language programmes at academic level build the foundations of interactional skills by focussing on familiar or at least highly predictable settings, the most widely adopted Arabic-language textbooks give prominence to the language of media and current affairs.

5. READING TEXTS

Reading texts are generally considered a crucial component of language course books for developing proficiency and among the most challenging for learners, especially of Arabic (Mohamed 2021b, 61). Unlike vocabulary lists, which remain to a very large degree consistent across the different editions, the reading texts proposed in the *Al-Kitaab* series vary depending on the edition. Yet, all editions consistently lack normative texts, i.e. texts which present the learners with the linguistic and communicative aspects which include the appropriate range of vocabulary and grammar that they are gradually expected to incorporate and reproduce at different proficiency levels (Natova 2019). Texts from the 2nd edition, published in 2004, present a significantly greater focus on the language of politics and current affairs if compared with the third and latest edition. The first fifteen units (the 2nd edition consists of twenty units) present numerous excerpts from Arabic newspapers such as the Saudi Okaz, with a focus on aspects of current affairs such as the Saudi health minister meeting with the Chinese ambassador, the Egyptian president’s visit to Ankara, PhD positions being advertised in a Saudi university, two French army officers gone missing in Kuwait, a female student obtaining a master’s degree in Islamic jurisprudence, the

Filipino president's visit to Abu Dhabi. In the 3rd edition, other texts include obituaries, job advertisements, a tv guide, the curriculum vitae of the newly appointed ministers in the Jordanian government and an excerpt from the biography of King Fuad of Egypt (which is included in the 2nd edition as well). Students are required to scan these texts to guess the meaning of specific terms and to identify specific grammatical structures, developing only a superficial and passive understanding of their content. An exception to this appears in the third and last edition of the series which was published in 2011, where at the end of each unit the authors have added short (but gradually longer in each chapter) reading passages about the everyday life of the units' protagonists and their friends. These texts however are again not correlated with comprehension exercises, and they are meant to be read aloud by the students, recorded and their recordings submitted to the teachers for feedback. Texts about local social and cultural aspects such as popular Arab musicians, secondary and higher education, familial relations and the Arabic dictionary are in English. In addition, the few literary texts (songs and short stories) the *Al-Kitaab* series proposes are never the main reading on which the grammar and lexical skills of the students are built, giving significantly more prominence to the secondary discourses of public life mentioned by Ryding. Such choices also reinforce an orientalist and mainstream depiction of Arab cultures in European and North American terms (Ben Amor 2017, 97). Other reading texts – which are again mostly authentic and meant for native speakers – include a list of Middle East studies centres in Arabic and English that students are asked to match, a list of faculties and departments at the universities of Beirut and Aleppo, the weather in New York City, a list of randomly grouped names with their respective hobbies, and obituaries. Some of these texts' focus on American and generally Western places is truly striking for a textbook meant to introduce students to Arabic. The setting of events is New York City, where the protagonist of the first few units as well as most of her friends and relatives live. The United States, with its most representative city and political institution (the UN), remain at the centre of the first five units as the protagonists of the reading texts in this part of 3rd edition live there. Cultural aspects that a wider range of students can more easily relate to and engage with, such as food or music, are presented in English. In the remaining seven units of the first book, as the location transitions from the United States to Egypt, elements of American culture remain ingrained in the various exercises and activities illustrated above.

6. GRAMMAR

In both the 2nd and the 3rd edition, from the very first units, long explanations in English – which begin by pointing to a similar aspect of English grammar – illustrate essential elements of Arabic grammar such as the definite article, plural nouns, plural agreement rules, the *idāfa*, object pronouns, the *maṣḍar* and, later on, basic connectors such as *anna* (أَنَّ) and *inna* (إِنَّ) – a fundamental syntactic tool employed in both standard and spoken Arabic to articulate even the most basic sentence – begins with a long explanation about the different functions of the word “that” as it is used in English (as a demonstrative, a relative pronoun, or a conjunction), which have several different equivalents in Arabic. Through a list of sentences in English that only later transitions to illustrating relevant examples in Arabic, the lesson proceeds to explain the similarity between one of the meanings of the word “that” in English on one hand and *anna* and *inna* on the other. The lesson on the *maṣḍar* – a verbal noun employed widely in Modern Standard Arabic and similar in its frequency, as well as its usage, to the infinitive in Romance languages such as French, Spanish and Italian – also involves a detailed explanation of the different ways in which such a concept can be expressed in English using the gerund and the infinitive. Therefore, through this textbook, students cannot approach Arabic for the first time without prior knowledge of English and, more relevantly, of English grammar, because indispensable syntactic tools, crucial to build the learners’ confidence in achieving communicative proficiency and fluency in reading, are consistently presented through the medium of English. In addition to the explanations, relevant examples employed to provide students with a basic understanding of the structure in question are presented in English first, then in Arabic. In a manner similar to that of reading texts and vocabulary lists, the way grammar is presented and explained to students in the *Al-Kitaab* series creates “a barrier between the learners and their target” (Badawi 2006, xii), forcing Arabic structures into a foreign linguistic framework.

7. PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE SKILLS

Such content that the series presents to students is consistent with the career paths towards which this series pushes them. The choice of vocabulary in the very first units is designed to make Arabic “market-

able” to students and to direct them towards specific fields in which their Arabic skills can be “sold”, but hardly to develop linguistic and cultural proficiency in the language. Significantly, this is achieved by presenting content *about* Arabic but *in English*, focusing on passive rather than active skills, through exercises designed to enhance the students’ passive understanding of the language, rather than their capacity to articulate their thoughts. The whole series has virtually no dialogues in Modern Standard Arabic, therefore students do not receive an exposure to the language in context and the content proposed does not seem to consider Modern Standard Arabic a language for interaction. The sophisticated, outdated vocabulary the series introduces as well as the barren language register it privileges, seems consistent with careers that have become particularly sought after in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (Keskin 2018, 2). Each unit revolves around a listening exercise – a story, or *qissa* in Arabic – where one of the protagonists illustrates an aspect of their life through a monologue. The content of these monologues is varied, the protagonists address aspects of their personal lives such as living in New York, having few friends, family and sentimental relationships, the feeling of estrangement and nostalgia for their homeland. The vocabulary of these monologues however returns in the abovementioned speaking activities and fill-in-the-gaps exercises to address topics such as career ambitions and political relations between different countries. By way of illustration, in the 11th unit of both the 2nd and 3rd edition some of the vocabulary proposed revolves around aspects of personal life and love relationships, yet its meaning and usages are expanded to address international relations between different countries. While in the listening monologue the protagonist Khalid speaks of a love relationship with an Egyptian girl that was cut off (انقطعت العلاقة), the speaking exercises in the same unit prompt students to ask each other questions (provided in English) such as “are the relations between Iran and the US better than last year? Do you think the relations between the US and any other country will be cut off?”.

8. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, despite its seemingly neutral and communicative attitude, situating the *Al-Kitaab* series within the framework of decoloniality reveals that it remains largely consistent with a career-oriented and Americentric system of beliefs and values. The content this series pre-

sents to beginner students shapes the users' perception of Arabic and of the domain to which it pertains. Its manner of perceiving the Arabic language and its value is deeply influenced by a market-oriented view of language learning and consistent with the "shopping list" orientation, to borrow El Said Badawi's definition, towards which Arabic language teaching is heading. This suggests that the vocabulary proposed is designed to either respond to the career ambitions of a specific student profile, one that conceives Arabic and the Arab World as a career, or to specifically direct students – regardless of their class, ethnicity, and gender – towards those same career paths. A process of decolonisation in this sense is imperative in a society marked by a variety of structural inequalities. If we are to provide students with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed, then such a narrow view of what one can or wishes to achieve by learning Arabic cannot be appropriate. The decolonising argument proposed in this paper highlights how the limited content of Arabic language textbooks, and their explicit insistence on specific career paths toward which to guide the students are some of the most crucial challenges that Arabic language teaching faces today. This is truer in universities with a varied student population – as is the case in most UK universities – and the decolonising process that Arabic language teaching must undergo passes through a process of aligning our field with common international standards – such as the one proposed by Soliman (2018) and Mohamed (2021a, 2021b). This will inevitably involve surpassing the commodification of Arabic that the success of the *Al-Kitaab* series has crystallised, as well as the narrow and US-centred view of this language as a marketable skill for a career in restricted sectors, which are often inaccessible for students from minority and lower-income groups (James 2020).

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News Broadcasts between *fusḥā* and Lebanese: Language Choice as an Implicit Comment on National Identity in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an analysis of the news bulletins broadcasted by South Lebanese radio station *Ṣawt al-Ġanūb* (SaJ, Voice of the South). SaJ broadcasted its news bulletins in *fusḥā* (Standard Arabic), as well as in Lebanese. This is interesting because most news bulletins tend to be broadcasted in the standard language, rather than in spoken varieties. This is definitely the case for so-called diglossic societies, such as Arabic-speaking societies, in which the linguistic metanorm for ‘serious programs’ is *fusḥā*. After presenting a brief linguistic description of a small corpus of news bulletins that were broadcasted in January 1998, this article focuses on how language (choice) functions symbolically in the extra-linguistic world. It argues that the choice to breach the metapragmatic norms, while framing the language use in the news bulletins explicitly as ‘the Lebanese language’ (*al-luġa al-lubnāniyya*) can be interpreted as an implicit comment on Lebanese national identity.

Keywords: identity construction; language ideology; language variability; Lebanon; nationalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2000, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from South Lebanon also meant the end of *Ṣawt al-Ġanūb*¹ (SaJ, Voice of the South). Because of

¹ In the transliteration, [ǧ] will be used for the voiced affricate alveolar in *fusḥā* as well as the phoneme /ǧ/, while [j] will be used for the fricative voiced palatal in

its ‘light programs’, such as ‘*a-drūb al-hawā* (On the paths of love) and the popular Arabic and Lebanese songs, this South Lebanese radio station was also listened to in surrounding Arab countries. SaJ broadcasted news bulletins, in *fushḥā* and Lebanese, the latter being considered by most speakers of Arabic a dialect (*lahǧa*, ‘*āmmiyya* or *dāriǧa*)². This is interesting for several reasons. For one, in most countries news bulletins tend to be broadcasted in the standard language, rather than in spoken or colloquial varieties. This is definitely the case for so-called diglossic societies, such as Arabic-speaking societies, in which the linguistic (meta)norm for ‘serious programs’ is the standard language, *fushḥā* or the High variety, to use Ferguson’s terminology (Ferguson 1959)³. In fact, in many countries the language use in news bulletins, especially when broadcasted by public channels, sets the norm for other language users. A label such as ‘BBC English’ illustrates this very well. The language use in sports news, interviews, and commentaries on news items recorded outside the studio is usually more diverse. Besides that, independent broadcasters tend to adhere less strictly to linguistic norms than public broadcasting services, but the newsreel usually remains the context in which the standard language is most strongly maintained. We can cautiously claim that deviations from the standard language, if any, can be situated mainly at the level of pronunciation⁴. The seriousness of the themes covered in a news broadcast and the fact that a news item is most often a written text that is read out aloud can be cited as the main reasons for this.

Lebanese. Other transliteration symbols used for the Lebanese data: [e] and [ē] for the /a/ and /ā/ pronounced with *imāla* and [ə] for /a/ in the definite article and /i/ in the clitic preposition *li-*, as well as for epenthetic vowels. Clitics (f.i. the definite article, prepositions, personal pronouns and conjunctions) are connected to verbs, nouns, and prepositions by a hyphen. Personal names and toponyms are transliterated between brackets when they are used for the first time. Thereafter the most common notation in Latin script will be used. The transliteration of written Arabic will not take the assimilation of the definite article by sun letters into account, while transcription of oral Arabic will, as well as the assimilation of the *waṣla* by the preceding vowel. Word-initial glottal stops will not be marked unless when referring to the allophone [ʔ] for /q/.

² For an analysis of these terms and their language ideological connotations see Daniëls 2018b.

³ For a critical analysis of the concept ‘diglossia’ and its language ideological dimensions see Daniëls 2018a.

⁴ I am grateful to Sara Van Hoof for briefly exchanging views on this issue.

Also in the Arabic linguistic community⁵, radio and TV news reports, recorded both inside the studio as well as on-location, rarely deviate from this metapragmatic norm, namely the use of *fuṣḥā*. However, Al Batal (2002) describes an exception to this pattern in news reports broadcasted by the popular Lebanese satellite channel LBCI (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International):

LBCI news broadcasts normally begin with the anchorperson reading the headlines in F [*fuṣḥā*], followed by the local (Lebanese) news briefs, also presented by the anchorperson in F. The local news stories normally contain on-location reports detailing the local briefs. However, as soon as the camera leaves the studio to air these reports, the language also shifts from pure F to a unique “mix” of F and LC [Lebanese colloquial] which is the focus of this study. This mix is only used during the Lebanese national news, not during Arab and international news, which are presented in F, and do not always include reports from correspondents in the field. (Al Batal 2002, 93)

Al Batal (2002, 93) also notes that he has no knowledge of news broadcasts of other Arabic channels in which *fuṣḥā* is combined with other varieties of Arabic. The fact that SaJ broadcasted daily a complete bulletin in Lebanese, namely at 10am, is therefore exceptional⁶. Unlike Al Batal’s data, which were broadcasted in about the same period (January to June 1999 for LBCI, January 1998 for SaJ), in the ten o’clock news Lebanese was not only used for local news items recorded outside the studio, but all news items read in the studio, including Arab and international news. As we will see in more detail below, unlike what we have noted above on news broadcasts in other parts of the world, the news bulletins in Lebanese differ from *fuṣḥā* on *all* linguistic levels, not just phonologically. However, Lebanese is not used in a completely consistent way⁷. Moreover, SaJ framed the language use in these newscasts explicitly as Lebanese. One of the customary opening phrases was:

⁵ I use the term here as defined by Suleiman (2013a, 269-270), namely as a group of speakers who in certain contexts focus on adhering to the ideologically articulated norms of the standard language. A speech community, on the other hand, is defined as a group of speakers characterized by actual language use.

⁶ However, the other newscasts I recorded at 8:30am, 11:30am, 12:30pm, 4:30pm and 5:30pm were in *fuṣḥā*.

⁷ Al Batal (2002, 96) notices the same pattern in his LBCI data and describes it “as a new language register that is neither F (in the way it is currently defined) nor LC”. However, this can also be described as an intensive pattern of codeswitching occurring not only between discourse stretches and sentences, but also within sentences (intrasentential

“*min šawt əl-janūb ni’addim il-kun našrit aḥbār əs-sē’a ‘ašara bi-l-luḡa l-libnēniye*” (‘from Voice of the South we present the 10 o’clock news in the Lebanese language’) and not in the Lebanese dialect (*əd-dēriḡ əl-libnēni* or *əl-lahḡe l-‘ammīye l-libnēniye*)⁸. The significance of this lexical choice will be analyzed and connected to how language choice and its framing can be interpreted as an implicit comment on Lebanese national identity by further exploring the relation between language and nationalism, however without taking the nationalism-language nexus for granted. My point of departure is that language and nationalism are mutually constitutive, meaning that nationalism is not just erected on the basis of a language (variety), but that language (varieties) themselves are (re-)constructed during the process of national identity construction (Joseph 2004, 92-131; Suleiman 2013b, 19). In the Lebanese context this also means that Lebanese cannot be uncritically connected with Lebanese exclusivism, and neither can *fušḥā* be exclusively connected with pan-Arab nationalism (see f.i. Suleiman 2003, 204-219). The data will be analyzed using ‘language symbolism’ and ‘language as proxy’ as basic analytical tools (Suleiman 2013b). This allows us to consider how language choice, approached as an implicit metalinguistic comment (and not only as an instrumental choice), is put into service to tackle social and political issues that are often too sensitive to deal with directly or to underscore political orientations: “[t]he use of language as proxy enables ideology brokers to do politics through language, in the sense that talk about language becomes talk about the extra-linguistic world [...]” (*ibid.*, 4-5).

2. DATA COLLECTION AND THE CORPUS

In what follows I will analyze a small corpus of bulletins broadcasted by SaJ in January 1998, focusing on the language ideological and symbolic

codeswitching) and even words (word-internal codeswitching) (see also Daniëls 2018a and below).

⁸ In the recordings I made on January 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10, the 10am news was always framed as “the news bulletin in the Lebanese language” (*našret əl-aḥbār bi-l-luḡa l-libnēniye*). Curiously enough in the last three recordings on 11, 12 and 13 January, as well as 6 January, other newsreaders present the news and use the term *əl-luḡa l-‘ammīye* (‘dialect’) and *lahḡat-nā l-‘ammīye* (‘our dialect’). It is not clear if this change in terminology is the personal choice of the other newsreaders or if it is due to inconsistency.

dimensions of language choice. I randomly tape-recorded the news bulletins during a field trip in Irbid (Jordan) out of a general interest in language variability, without having specific research intentions at the time. Many years later, I started using the recordings in my sociolinguistics course as a sample of Lebanese Arabic and as a critical counterexample to Ferguson's functional division in his influential article on diglossia (Ferguson 1959, 328-329). However, for a long time, I was not fully aware of the ideological dimensions of the bulletins, as I and my Jordanian friends with whom I listened to SaJ's broadcastings did not seem to realize that this station was administered by the South Lebanese Army (SLA, *ḡayṣ lubnān al-ḡanūbi*). This seems to have been the case for many of its listeners outside Lebanon⁹. Only when I started looking further than the micro-linguistic elements in the small corpus I realized that the contextualization of the data was at least as interesting as its 'purely linguistic' features. By delving into the political background of SaJ and the ideological background and networks of the SLA, I discovered that the choice to breach the metalinguistic norms by broadcasting news in Lebanese has political and ideological dimensions that go far beyond the linguistic scope of the functional dimensions of diglossia. Due to the political sensitivity of the close relations between the SLA and Israel, information about the radio station is scant and to my best knowledge no public archives are available. Therefore, my corpus is limited to my randomly recorded tapes. The total corpus consists of 28 newsreels of varying length which were broadcasted in 1998 between January 1 and January 14. The news bulletins at 8:30am (2), 11:30am (9), 12:30pm (5), 4:30pm (1) and 5:30pm (1) were broadcasted in *fuṣḥā*, while the news bulletins at 10:00am (10) were broadcasted in Lebanese. I was able to distinguish one male voice (MB1) and three different female voices (FB1, FB2, and FB3). The news bulletins in *fuṣḥā* were alternately read by male and female newsreaders, while all the bulletins in Lebanese were read by female newsreaders. However, none of the female broadcasters was assigned exclusively to reading the 10:00am news, meaning that all female newsreaders also read bulletins in *fuṣḥā*. Due to the randomness of the recording, it is hard to reconstruct at what time of the day SaJ started broadcasting the news and when the last

⁹ See <https://www.facebook.com/notes/10158550171990240/> for a testimony from an Egyptian listener and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Pg_AmMAbA: for the reaction of a Jordanian and a Saudi listener on the YouTube publication of the first broadcast by Ṣawt al-Ḡanūb.

bulletin was aired. Moreover, some of the bulletins were not completely recorded. This practical limitation is not necessarily a disadvantage, as an exhaustive statistical description of the news broadcasts by SaJ is not my purpose here, but rather a micro-analysis of a small data corpus of which the results can be extrapolated. More importantly, this paper does not focus on language structure alone, but rather on how language (choice) functions symbolically in the extra-linguistic world.

3. POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF SAJ: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

The SLA emerged in South Lebanon as a result of the disintegration of the Lebanese army at the beginning of the civil war in 1975 and was a proxy of the Israeli forces (IDF). From 1975 until 1978, the cooperation was secret, but after Menachim Begin became Prime Minister in 1977 it became public. With Operation Litani in 1978, the secession of the soldiers and officers who were until then still members of the Lebanese army, became final. When the founder of the SLA Major Saad Haddad (*Sa'd Ḥaddād*) refused to turn over the army barracks to UNIFIL in 1979 the rupture became official as Haddad at the same time announced the independence of 'Free Lebanon' (*libnān al-ḥurr*) in the zone under his control, hence the militia's initial name: Army of Free Lebanon (*ḡayš libnān al-ḥurr*) (Hamizrachi 1988). After Haddad died of cancer in 1984, Antoine Lahad (*Anṭwān Laḥad*) took over the leadership and changed the name of the militia into South Lebanese Army. The AFL/SLA de facto administered the Israeli 'security belt' or 'enclave' and their salaries and equipment were paid by Israel (Gordon 2002, 324). Locally, Palestinian militias and later Hezbollah (*ḥizb Allāb*)¹⁰, were its main

¹⁰ In the broadcasts Hezbollah is systematically referred to as "the Iranian Syrian enemy" (*al-'adu al-irānī as-sūrī*). This is the case on January 5 at 11:30am, January 6 at 10am, January 8 at 11:30am, and 12:30pm, January 9 at 10am, 11:30am and 12:30pm, January 11 at 10am and 12:30pm. This phrase refers to the Syrian and Iranian support, financial and otherwise, that Hezbollah received, but also frames Hezbollah as non-Lebanese outsiders who need to be fought, in contrast with Lebanese Muslims who should not be harmed. Hamizrachi (1988) and Nisan (2003) (the latter mainly referring to the Guardians of the Cedar Party) stress that the SLA did not hold anything against Muslims as such, as long as they were Lebanese. However, there was a tension between confessional inclusivism and anti-Muslim positions in the ideological network to which the SLA belonged and its political organs (Plonka 2006). Other terms that are used

opponents. When the IDF withdrew from South Lebanon in May 2000, the SLA was dismantled. Most of the militiamen and their families fled to Israel, many of them settling in other countries afterwards, while others stayed or returned to Lebanon. Many were tried and sentenced, some of them in absentia, for collaboration with Israel and human rights violations¹¹.

SaJ started broadcasting on 3 September 1991¹², two years after the signing of the Taif Agreement (*ittifāq al-tā'if*), which heralded the official end of the civil war (1975-1989). This means that the SLA did not have its own radio station during the civil war years. Hamizrachi (1988, 137) mentions that Haddad had asked Israel permission to establish a radio station as early as 1977. However, this request was dismissed because the Lebanese Forces (*al-quwwāt al-lubnāniya*)¹³, which also coordinated with Israel at the time, opposed to the idea arguing that this would give Haddad too strong a mouthpiece for political propaganda. In 1984 Etienne Sakr (*Ityān Saqr*, also known as Abū Arz), the leader of the Guardians of the Cedar Party (*ḥizb ḥurrās al-arz*) and its militia, which was a close ally of the SLA, also wanted to build a radio station in South Lebanon. He asked Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for permission, but this request was rejected (Nisan 2003, 70). Sakr's request in 1991 to Michel Aoun (*Miṣāl 'Awn*) to finance a radio station was rejected as well (*ibid.*, 100). I did not find any information about how the change of mind came about and in which circumstances SaJ eventually started broadcasting, but it is certain that it was financed by Israel and administered by Antoine Lahad as the radio station was also informally known as 'Lahad's radio' (*idā'at Lahad*). However, until

in the bulletins to refer to Hezbollah are "saboteurs" (*muḥarribīn*) and "subversive cell" (*ḥaliye taḥribiye*), while their military actions are described as "criminal" (*ijrāmī*) and "terrorist" (*irhābī*). In none of the news bulletins the name Hezbollah is used.

¹¹ For a detailed account of the period between 1975 and 1978 by an Israeli journalist and Haddad's former liaison officer, see Hamizrachi 1988. For the SLA and human rights violations, see Gordon 2002 and Bechara 2003. For a perspective on the status of former SLA members in Israel, see Herzog 2009. For a local perspective on the political situation in South Lebanon between 1975-2000, see Beydoun 1992.

¹² See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Pg_AmMAbA for the first minutes of SaJ's first broadcast.

¹³ The Lebanese Forces was a coalition of predominantly (Maronite) Christian right-wing parties and their military arms, such as the Phalange (*al-katā'ib*), the National Liberal Party (*ḥizb al-aḥrār al-waṭaniyyīn*) / Tiger militia (*al-numūr*), the Marada brigades (*tayār al-marada*) and the Guardians of the Cedar Party (*ḥizb ḥurrās al-arz*).

the foundation of SaJ in 1991, the AFL/SLA had access to the facilities of Voice of Hope. This radio station was built in South Lebanon by born again Christian George Otis in 1979 in close cooperation with the IDF, in the person of Colonel Yoram Hamizrachi and his wife Beate (Haddad's liaison officer), and the SLA. Later Otis also built a short wave radio station King of Hope and a television station Star of Hope, which was later donated to the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and became Middle East Television (METV). Apart from its English language programs, which consisted of a mix of country and western music and Bible readings, Voice of Hope also broadcasted in Arabic. The local Lebanese staff of Voice of Hope included technical engineer Charbel Younis (*Šarbal Yunis*) and broadcasters Francis Rizk (*Frānsīs Rizq*), Salma Johns (*Salmā Ġons*) and Nadia (*Nādyā*, no family name mentioned), as well as Ragi Ghanoum (*Rāġī Ġanūm*) who tape-recorded interviews for Voice of Hope (Otis 1983). I did not find confirmation if SaJ used Voice of Hope's studios and equipment in Marjayoun and if its Lebanese employees also worked for SaJ. One thing is certain, there was a close connection between Otis and Haddad, who became a born again Christian as well (Otis 1984). Prior to 1991 Haddad was regularly given the floor on Voice of Hope (Diamond 1990, 18)¹⁴.

4. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE DATA

In this section I will describe the main linguistic features of the corpus. First, I will compare two fragments of two different bulletins, one in *fusiḥā* broadcasted on 8 January 1998 at 12:30pm and one in Lebanese broadcasted on 9 January 1998 at 10:00am. The bulletins deal with the same topic, namely the media policy of the Lebanese government, and more specifically its ban on the broadcasting of news and political programs on satellite channels. This, together with the fact that the bulletins have more or less the same structure, facilitates their linguistic comparison. The fragments in *fusiḥā* and Lebanese contain many analogical sentences with many shared lexical items, but with some substantial differences qua syntax and phonology. The following example illustrates this:

¹⁴ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTcK7UDVdqk> for a speech given in English by Haddad in 1983 on Voice of Hope.

- (1) *tawālat al-yawma l-intiqādāt al-muwaḡḡaha ilā l-ḥukūma ‘alā ḥalfiyyat qarāri-hā ṣ-ṣādir ams wa-l-qādī bi-man’i l-aqniya l-fiḍā’iyya min batti l-abbār wa-l-barāmij as-siyāsiyya* (SaJ, 8 January 1998, 12:30pm, MB1)

Today the criticisms directed towards to government concerning its decision issued yesterday which prohibits satellite channels to broadcast news and political programs continues.

- (2) *əl-inti’ādāt əl-mwajjabe lə-l-ḥukūme ‘ala ḥalfiyet ‘arār-ā man’ əl-aqniye l-fiḍā’iye min batt əl-abbār wa-l-barāmij əs-siyāsiye mustamirra* (SaJ, 9 January 1998, 10:00am, FB1)

The criticisms directed towards the government regarding its decision to prohibit the satellite channels to broadcast news and political programs continues.

The first striking difference between (1) which is in *fushā* and (2) which is in Lebanese concerns the syntactic structure of the sentence. (1) is a verbal sentence with a VSO structure, while (2) is a nominal clause consisting of a topic and a nominal predicate. Another salient morpho-syntactical difference is the use of declensional endings in (1)¹⁵ and the lack hereof in (2). In (2) the adverbial referring to time (*al-yawma*) in (1) is deleted, because (2) was broadcasted the next day. However, *al-yawma* is not replaced by any adverbial referring to ‘yesterday’. On the lexical level we notice the use of the verb ‘to continue’: *tawāla* in (1) and the verb *istamarra* in (2), used here in the form of an active participle. While *istamarra* is a shared item, meaning that it is used both in *fushā* and in Lebanese, *tawāla* is a lexical item that is saliently *fushā*. Note also that in (1) the preposition *ilā* is used in combination with the active participle of the verb *waḡḡaha* and in (2) *lə-*. In *fushā* both *ilā* and *li-* can be used when *waḡḡaha* means ‘to aim at’, the use of *lə-* is more frequent in Lebanese and is often used in the corpus when only *ilā* would be used in *fushā*. On the phonological level we notice differences in the pronunciation, such as *imāla*¹⁶, the pronunciation of the voiced affricate alveolar /ḡ/ as a voiced fricative palatal [j] and the voiceless occlusive uvular /q/ as a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ], as well as the deletion of the unstressed vowel in *mwajjabe*, which are the most salient phonological markers of Lebanese in (2).

¹⁵ Actually, an alteration of pause and liaison pronunciation can be observed. It would be interesting to investigate whether this is patterned and if there are any differences with other news broadcasts in *fushā*.

¹⁶ Vowel fronting, mostly /ā/ pronounced as [ē] or [ī] and /a/ as [e] or [i] in combinations with front consonants (Levin 2006).

Due to lack of space, a more detailed comparison cannot be presented here, but I hope this example demonstrates the way in which I proceeded to compare the bulletins.

A close analysis of the news broadcasts reveals that, apart from how the news bulletins are framed and their broadcasting times, the language use in them can be easily recognized as respectively globally *fushā* or globally Lebanese. If we take a broadcasting day to be one discourse unit, the alternation between the *fushā* and Lebanese news bulletins can be considered codeswitches on discourse level. When we take a closer look, we observe that the language use in the *fushā* news broadcasts broadly adheres to *fushā* norms, with possibly some exceptions at the level of pronunciation. Salient *fushā* markers include declensional endings, internal passive verbs, VSO-sentences, as well as lexical items. However, the language use in the Lebanese news broadcasts is more complex. In addition to salient markers of Lebanese on the phonological¹⁷, morphological¹⁸, morpho-syntactic and syntactic¹⁹ levels, as well as lexical items²⁰, the broadcasts also contain many *fushā* items on all linguistic levels²¹. The occurrence of *fushā* items can partly be explained by the fact that *fushā* and non-*fushā* varieties of Arabic in fact do share many items on all linguistic levels. This can complicate the identification of different codes when analyzing data in terms of codeswitching (Bassiouny 2009; Daniëls 2018a, 190-193). The use of *fushā* items can also be explained by the fact that the discourse form (a news broadcast) tends, in line with metapragmatic norms, to attract loan words, expressions and syntactic structures from *fushā*, which in turn tend to attract a *fushā* phonology. However, some of the inconsistent combinations of Lebanese and *fushā* seem to be at least partially the result of improvisation. For example, some of the shared lexical items are alternately pronounced with a

¹⁷ These include the pronunciation of /q/ as a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ], /t/ as [t] or [s], /d/ as [d] or [z], /ḍ/ as [ḍ] or [z] and the deletion of /ʔ/ or its pronunciation as a long vowel or [w] or [y] (in Arabic: *talyīn al-hamza*).

¹⁸ These include derivational passive verbs (instead of internal passive verbs), the reduction of attributive demonstratives to the clitic *ba-* (instead of *hādā* and *hādībi*), or their pronunciation as *beydā* or *beydī* when used independently.

¹⁹ These include SVO-sentences and the use of modal and aspect particles to indicate tense, such as *bi-* (indicative), *am* (durative), *rāb* (future).

²⁰ These include *awwal imbēriḥ* ('the day before yesterday'), *šāf* ('to see'; here: 'to be of the opinion'), *bas* ('but'), *bidd* ('to want').

²¹ These include VSO-sentences, internal passive verbs, and lexical items, most often but not always with a *fushā* pronunciation.

fushā phonology and a Lebanese phonology within the same bulletin. The following example illustrate this:

- (3) *ər-rā'īs salīm əl-ḥuṣṣ 'āl innu qarār maǧlis əl-wuzarā bi-dall 'ala amrēyn*
(SaJ 9 January 1998, 10:00am, FB1)

Prime minister Salīm al-Ḥuṣṣ said that the decision by the Ministerial Council points at two issues.

In (2), which directly precedes (3) the word for 'decision' is pronounced 'arār (Lebanese phonology with a voiceless glottal stop ['] for /q/) while it is pronounced as qarār (*fushā* phonology with a voiceless occlusive uvular [q] for /q/) in (3), without this being triggered by a semantic shift. The phonetic shift might be explained because qarār is combined with the formal political term *maǧlis al-wuzarā* ('Ministerial Council'), which attracts a *fushā* pronunciation. However, we could wonder if *man' al-aqniye l-fidā'iye* ('prohibiting the satellite channels'), which is a complex *idāfa*-construction that consists of a *mašdar* referring to the verb *mana'a* ('to prohibit') and a technical compound *aqniye fidā'iye* ('satellite channels') is all that less formal. Moreover, *al-aqniye* ('channels'), being a technical loan from *fushā* also retains *fushā* phonology [q] for /q/, while *maǧlis al-wuzarā* is pronounced as *maǧlis əl-wuzarā* with [j] for /ǧ/ and the deletion of the final hamza. Throughout the Lebanese corpus qarār occurs 12 times with /q/ pronounced as [q] and 20 times as [']. Other peculiar combinations which combine a *fushā* morphological structure (internal passive) with a Lebanese pronunciation include *min al-mu'arrar* ('it is scheduled', internal passive participle with /q/ as [']), *yuzkar* ('it is mentioned', internal passive verb indicative with /d/ as [z]) and *zukur* ('it was mentioned', internal passive verb past tense with /d/ as [z]); combinations of internal passive verbs with Lebanese modal and aspect markers for tense, such as *rāḥ* (future tense): *rāḥ yuqarr* ('will be ratified'), *rāḥ yuṭraḥ* ('will be proposed'), *rāḥ yu'qad/tu'qad* ('will be held'), *rāḥ tujrā* ('will be carried out'), *rāḥ tunšar* ('will be deployed'), *bi-* (indicative): *bi-tuǧdar əl-išāra ilā* ('it is worth to point out'), *'am* (durative): *'am tuntakab* ('are being violated'), *'am turtakab* ('are being committed'); Lebanese negation particles, *mā*: *mā ustukmil* ('was not completed') and the Lebanese relative pronoun *illi* and its clitic form *l-*: *illi kullifāt* ('which was commissioned with') and *l-yu'tabar* ('which is considered').

In what follows, I will further describe the salient linguistic features of the bulletins in Lebanese, by highlighting one example of each of the categories of 'hybrid forms' mentioned above and analyzing it in the context of the sentence in which it was uttered.

- (4) *wa-yuzkar innu n-nā'ib əs-sābiq əl-maḥbūs [...] wa-ālāf əl-mawqūfīn bi-l-iḍāfe lə-l-maṭlūbīn bi-mudakkirāt tawqīf bi-stfīdū min ha-l-'ānūn.* (SaJ, 2 January 1998, 10:00am, FB1; emphasis mine)

It is mentioned that former deputy [...] who is in prison and thousands [others] under arrest, as well as fugitives benefit from this law.

Apart from the internal passive verb *yuzkar* being pronounced with a Lebanese phonology, this sentence combines *fuṣḥā* and Lebanese items. The sentence starts with a verb and contains political and juridical terms, which are mostly pronounced with a *fuṣḥā* phonology: *nā'ib sābiq* ('former deputy', with [ʔ] and [q]), *mawqūf* ('detainee', with [q]), *maṭlūb* ('fugitive'), *mudakkirāt tawqīf* ('arrest warrants', with [q]), with the exception of *'ānūn* ('law', with [ʔ] for /q/). The expression *bi-l-iḍāfe lə-* ('in addition to') is pronounced with *imāla* and combined with the preposition *lə-* (instead of *ilā* in *fuṣḥā*). The tense marker *bi-* is added to the verb *yistfīdū* ('they benefit from'), which is a shared lexical item, but morphologically saliently Lebanese with the conjugational prefix *yi-*, which is assimilated by *bi-*, vowel deletion of the unstressed vowel and the conjugational suffix *-ū* (instead of *-ūna* in *fuṣḥā*). Finally, the clitic demonstrative *ha-* is used in combination with *əl-'ānūn* ('the law').

- (5) *wa-bi-isrā'īl rāḥ tunṣar əl-yōwm quwwāt mu'azzaze min əš-šurṭa wa-ḥaras əl-ḥudūd bi-l-mudun əl-kubrā wa-l-amēkin əl-'āmma l-muktazza taḥassuban li-wuqū' 'amaliyāt irbābiye ḥilāl əl-ayyēm əl-muqbile. wa-kānt aḥbizet əl-amn talaqqat inzārāt bi-tšir lə-ibtimāl wu'ū'-hā.* (SaJ, 11 January 1998, 10:00am, FB3)

And in Israel strengthened forces of the police and border police will be deployed today in large cities and public spaces in anticipation of terrorist actions taking place during the coming days. The Security Services received warnings that indicate the possibility of [such actions] taking place.

The sentences in (5) again have many *fuṣḥā* characteristics: in both sentences the verb precedes the subject, all lexical items are *fuṣḥā* or shared items, some of which are pronounced with *fuṣḥā* phonology, and we can observe the use of the accusative of purpose (*maf'ūl li-aḡli-hi*): *taḥassuban* ('in anticipation of'). Markers of Lebanese are mainly situated on the phonological level, namely vowel fronting in the pronunciation of *tā' marbūta*: *mu'azzaze* ('strengthened'), *irbābiye* ('terrorist'), *muqbile* ('next'), *aḥbize* ('apparatuses') and /ā/: *ayyēm* ('days'), *amēkin* ('places'), pronunciation of /ǧ/ as [j]: *aḥbize*, /d/ as [z]: *inzārāt* ('warnings') and /q/ as [ʔ]: *wu'ū'* ('to take/taking place'), as well the deletion of

unstressed vowels: *kānt* ('they were')²², *bi-tšīr* ('they indicate'). However, in the preceding sentence /q/ in *wuqū'* is pronounced as [q]. On the syntactical level, we can observe the marker for the indicative *bi-*: *bi-tšīr*.

- (6) *wa bi-tujdar əl-išāra ilā annu sūriye wa irān bi-‘āriḍu bi-šidde ha-l-munāwarāt illi inta‘ad-ā wazīr əl-i‘lām əs-sūri muḥammad salmān wa waṣaf-ā bi-ann-ā isti‘rāḍ lə-l-‘uwwə wa ‘awde lə-ajwā l-ḥarb əl-bārīda wa muḥəwale lə-d-ḍaḡt ‘alā sūriye.* (SaJ, 6 January 1998, 10:00am, FB2)

It is worth pointing out that Syria and Iran vehemently oppose these military maneuvers which were criticized by the Syrian minister of media Muḥammad Salām, who described them as a display of power, a return to the climate of the Cold War, and an attempt to pressurize Syria.

Apart from *fuṣḥā* markers, on the syntactic (VSO), morphological and the lexical levels (*fuṣḥā* or shared lexical items), this sentence contains a lot of salient markers of Lebanese. These are the clitic marker for the indicative *bi-*: *bi-tujdar əl-išāra* ('it is worth mentioning'), *bi-‘āriḍu* ('they oppose'), with the Lebanese conjugational prefix *yi-* (assimilated by *bi-*) and conjugational ending *-ū* for the 3rd person plural (instead of the 3rd person feminine dual in *fuṣḥā*), the clitic demonstrative *ha-*: *ha-l-munāwarāt* ('these maneuvers'), the relative pronoun *illi*, the pronunciation of /q/ as [ʔ]: *inta‘ad* ('he criticized'), *‘uwwə* ('power'), deletion of *h* in the personal pronoun 3rd p. f. sing. *-hā*: *inta‘ad-ā* ('he criticized them'), *waṣaf-ā* ('he described them'), *bi-ann-ā* ('that they') and vowel fronting: *sūriye* ('Syria'), *šidde* ('vehemence'), *‘awde* ('return'), *muḥəwale* ('attempt'), and the deletion of final *hamza*: *ajwā* ('climate').

- (7) *wa abdā asaḥ-u l-kbīr lə-kōn ha-l-ḥu‘ū’ am tuntahak bi-aktar min maṭraḥ bi-l-‘ālam, maḥall mā fīh ḥurūb iḍṭihād wa rašwe.* (SaJ, 2 January 1998, 10:00, FB1)

He deplored very much the fact that these rights were being violated in several places in the world, places where there are wars, oppression and bribery.

Salient Lebanese markers in this sentence are the use of the grammaticalized form *fīh* ('there is/are') on the lexical level, the clitic demonstrative *ha-*: *ha-l-ḥu‘ū’* ('these rights'), the deletion of *h* in the personal pronoun *-hu*: *asaḥ-u* ('his regret'), deletion of the unstressed vowel: *kbīr* ('large, big'), [ʔ] for /q/: *ḥu‘ū’* ('rights'), [t] for /t/: *aktar* ('more') and

²² In Arabic, the plural of words not referring to human beings takes feminine singular agreement.

vowel fronting: *rašwe* ('bribery') on the phonological level. These markers occur in a sentence with VSO-order in which most lexical items are *fušḥā* or shared.

- (8) *wa bi-ha-l-iṭār, min əl-muqarrar an tajtami' yōm əl-arba'a l-muqbil əl-lajne l-wizāriye illi kullifat mu'abḥaran bi-taqwim əl-wad' əl-i'lāmi.* (SaJ, 11 January 1998, 10:00am, FB2)

In this context, it is scheduled that the Ministerial Commission that was recently commissioned with reforming the media situation will meet next Wednesday.

Salient Lebanese markers in this sentence are the clitic demonstrative *ha-*: *ha-l-iṭār* ('this context'), the relative pronoun *illi* on the morphological level and vowel fronting: *əl-lajne l-wizāriye* ('Ministerial Commission'), together with pronunciation of /ǧ/ as [j]. On the lexical level, all items are *fušḥā* or shared. Other markers of *fušḥā* are the pronunciation, with [q] for /q/: *min əl-muqarrar* ('it was scheduled'), *əl-muqbil* ('next'), *taqwim* ('to reform/reforming') and the time adverbial in the accusative case: *mu'abḥaran* ('recently') and the introductory observation *min əl-muqarrar* ('it was decided/scheduled').

As the analysis of the examples demonstrates, *fušḥā* and Lebanese elements are intricately combined on all linguistic levels and in ways that are not always consistent, resulting at times in idiosyncratic combinations such as the ones described above. Al Batal (2002) observes similar combinations between Lebanese and *fušḥā* and describes them as hybrid or mixed forms, but I think they can also be approached as intrasentential and word-internal codeswitches. I hope to develop this idea in another article. A further in-depth exploration of the whole corpus in terms of codeswitching would also give us the opportunity to chart the complex dynamics between *fušḥā* and Lebanese in the news bulletins and discover eventual patterns.

5. LANGUAGE CHOICE: FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC DIMENSIONS

Several motivations can be forwarded to account for SaJ's choice to alternate between *fušḥā* and Lebanese. The reasons for broadcasting the news in *fušḥā* are obvious. For one, it conforms to the metapragmatic norm of news bulletins being broadcasted in the standard language. Moreo-

ver, while being an independent radio, SaJ was also listened to in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Therefore, the use of *fushā* can also be seen as a way to accommodate a wider non-Lebanese audience. What needs further explanation then is the choice to broadcast the news in Lebanese. First, it is possible to argue that the choice for Lebanese is triggered by a wish to bring the news bulletins closer to an audience that may not fully understand its content in *fushā*. That would bring the news bulletins in Lebanese in line with other discourse forms in which the metapragmatic norm that dictates the use of *fushā* is breached by codeswitching to a non-*fushā* variety, such as political speeches (Mazraani 1997; Bassiouney 2006), sermons in mosques (Bassiouney 2006, 2013), university lectures (Bassiouney 2006) etc. For example, Mazraani (1997) explains in her analysis of speeches by Gamal Abdel Nasser (*Ġamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir*) that Nasser switches to Cairene Arabic when he wants to clarify the message to an audience which is partly illiterate, but also when he wants to concretize and personalize the more abstract aspects of his message. The codeswitches to Cairene Arabic are often accompanied by switches in person deixis from the more abstract 3rd person in the *fushā* stretches to the more personal 1st and 2nd persons in the Cairene stretches, which underscore a change from distance and abstractness to more personal involvement. However, the switches function at the same time as an act of identity construction. By using *fushā*, Nasser presents himself as an intellectual, a political leader, and the president of the Egyptian state and as a main proponent of pan-Arab nationalism. By using Cairene Arabic, on the other hand, he presents himself as a ‘common Egyptian’ (*ibn al-balad*) who is close to the broad layers of the Egyptian population (Mazraani 1997, 48-98, 229-232). This means that Nasser’s register choices, as exemplified in his codeswitches between *fushā* and Egyptian Arabic, are not merely functional, but also have an identity dimension.

Likewise, Al Batal (2002) argues that there is more to the choice to use Lebanese for outside studio reporting on local news than the official explanation given by LBCI, namely that this register is closer to life and more spontaneous. He maintains that LBCI’s choice of register also needs to be framed within the Lebanese socio-political landscape and that it has a strong identity dimension. Presenting the news entirely in *fushā*, as is common in the Arabic linguistic community, would underline the Arab character of Lebanon. Presenting the news entirely in Lebanese, however, would emphasize its exclusive Lebanese character. By intricately combining *fushā* and Lebanese, depending on the type of reporting (*fushā* in the studio and for international and Arab news and

Lebanese for the on-location reporting of local Lebanese news), but also by combining *fushā* and Lebanese items into sometimes idiosyncratic or hybrid forms in some of the reports, a compromise is reached which reconciles the Arab and Lebanese character of Lebanon. Al Batal (2002, 112) labels this new register wittily “[a language] with a Lebanese face” (*dāt waǧh lubnānī*). This pun alludes to the well-known phrase in the Lebanese constitution of 1943: “Lebanon is a country with an Arab face” (*lubnān dū waǧh ‘arabī*), which was an attempt to reach a compromise between the advocates of an Arab national identity for Lebanon, on the one hand, and the proponents of an exclusive Lebanese national identity on the other. Al Batal connects this to how LBCI came about. The television station LBC (Lebanon Broadcasting Station) was founded in 1985 by the Lebanese Forces, which previously in 1976 founded the radio station *Ṣawt Lubnān* (Voice of Lebanon). After the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989, LBC evolved from a political mouthpiece to the most important commercial channel in Lebanon. During this period a satellite channel was added and its name was changed to LBCI. The popularity and commercial character of the channel in the 1990s, as well as its international scope, undoubtedly contributed to its attempts to implicitly reconcile the Lebanese and Arab character of Lebanon via the language and register choices in the news (Al Batal 2002, 92).

I would like to develop the identity dimension of Al Batal’s analysis further with regard to the news bulletins of SaJ. First of all, it must be noticed that there are a number of striking similarities between LBCI and SaJ news broadcasts. In both cases, the language use in some (stretches) of the news bulletins deliberately deviates from the metapragmatic standard for news coverage by using Lebanese along *fushā*. In both cases, the discourse stretches that can be described as ‘globally Lebanese’ are characterized by the use of mixed or hybrid forms (to use Al Batal’s terminology) or the occurrence of intra-sentential and word-internal codeswitches between *fushā* and Lebanese (to use mine). However, there are also a number of striking differences. LBCI is a popular satellite television channel with a broad international Arabophone audience. On the other hand, SaJ was a local free radio station that could only be received in a limited number of surrounding countries. In addition, the use of Lebanese in the LBCI news broadcasts is limited to local news items recorded outside the studio, while SaJ presented news bulletins, formally read in the studio that covered local, Arabic, and international news integrally in Lebanese, which is moreover explicitly framed as “the Lebanese language” (*əl-luǧa l-libnēniye*). This means that

SaJ takes giving ‘a Lebanese face’ to the news broadcasts (as is the case with LBCI) a step further, and quite explicitly as a matter of fact. As mentioned above, SaJ was not only administered by the SLA that was Israel’s proxy army, but was also broadcasted from Israel’s ‘security belt’ in South Lebanon. In the context of the reconciliation process after the end of the civil war, the SLA and SaJ were not only de facto, but also politically and ideologically isolated from the rest of Lebanon. While the Lebanese Forces (with whom the SLA had close connections earlier) gradually moved to the center and tried to reconcile the Lebanese and Arab dimensions of the Lebanese state, the SLA firmly rejected the Taif Agreement and retained its extreme Lebanese nationalist positions²³.

6. LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN LEBANON

In this section, I would like to explore how the SLA deployed via SaJ language as a proxy to underpin its political position in the immediate context of post-Taif Lebanon while implicitly commenting on Lebanon’s national identity on a broader ideological level. In this capacity, political processes and national identity and language construction are interconnected and mutually reinforce each other (Joseph 2004, 124). The point of departure of my analysis is the argument that both national identity and national languages are discursively constructed and that they are intertwined in a complex process: “[national languages] are as much variables, constructs, ‘imagined communities’ as the national identities they are invoked to explain. [...] National identities and languages arise in tandem, ‘dialectally’ if you like, in a complex process that ought to be our focus of interest and study” (*ibidem*)²⁴.

²³ See for instance the statement by Colonel Charbel Barakat (who was affiliated to the SLA and the Guardians of the Cedar Party) before the American Senate in June 2000: https://books.google.b/books?id=t-vUArXaPv4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:PcFCwTStkIC&hl=nl&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false. Also the Guardians of the Cedar Party rejected and still rejects the Taif Agreement and cites, among other things, the national identity of Lebanon as one of the reasons for their rejection: “The Taif [*sic*] accord puts Lebanon under the mandate of the Arabs and this constitutes a fraudulence to its true identity”. See <https://www.gotc.info/index.php/en/component/content/article/115-english-categories-non-mainmenu/the-guardians-of-the-cedars-position-on-the-taef-accord/987-the-guardians-of-the-cedars-position-on-the-taef-accord?Itemid=102>.

²⁴ In his chapter “Language in National Identities” Joseph (2004, 92-131) critically discusses acclaimed works on nationalism by Elie Kedouri, Ernest Gellner, Benedict

Direct reasons for the SLA to oppose the Taif Agreement were Article 3 “Liberating Lebanon from the Israeli Occupation” and Article 4 “The Lebanese-Syrian Relations”. In combination with the restoration of the authority of the Lebanese state over all Lebanese territories, including South Lebanon, and the general disarmament of the militias as stipulated in Article 2²⁵, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from South Lebanon as stipulated in Article 3 would mean the end of the SLA as it was directly financed by the IDF. This was indeed the case when the IDF actually withdrew on 24 May 2000. Article 4 describes the relation between Lebanon and Syria as “a special relationship that derives its strength from the roots of blood relationships, history, and joint fraternal interests”. Moreover, Article 4 touches upon the national identity of Lebanon. Its opening phrase “Lebanon, being Arab in identity and belonging is tied to all the Arab countries by true brotherly relations”, unambiguously embeds the ‘special relationship’ between Lebanon and Syria in Lebanon’s Arab identity, which is also stated as a main principle of the Taif Agreement in Article 1B: “Lebanon is Arab in identity and belonging” (*lubnān ‘arabī al-huwīyya wa al-intimā*)²⁶. As pointed out above, the Constitution of 1943 attempted to strike a balance between the Arab and Lebanese dimensions of Lebanon’s national identity with its reference to ‘the Arab face’ of Lebanon. In this vein Article 11 articulates in relation to language that Arabic is “the national and official language of Lebanon” (*al-luġa al-‘arabiyya hiya al-luġa al-waṭaniyya al-rasmiyya*). However, the Taif Agreement puts more emphasis on the Arab character of Lebanon in Article 1B, which was also added as a preamble to the Lebanese constitution (amended on 21 September 1990)²⁷.

On a broader ideological level, by broadcasting the 10am news bulletins in Lebanese the SLA underscored its adherence to an extreme form of exclusivist Lebanese nationalism, which was influenced by Lebanist thought as formulated by the Lebanese poet and intellectual

Anderson, Michael Billig, Eric Hobsbawm and Michael Silverstein, which I will not revisit here.

²⁵ Also the fact that the SLA’s main military opponent in South Lebanon, Hezbollah was allowed to keep its arms in its capacity as a ‘resistance force’ fighting Israel was a thorn in the eye of the SLA.

²⁶ PDF retrieved from <https://peacemaker.un.org/lebanon-taifaccords89> (English version) and https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_tauf_agreement_arabic_version_.pdf (Arabic version).

²⁷ PDF retrieved from <https://www.presidency.gov.lb/Arabic/LebaneseSystem/Pages/LebaneseConstitution.aspx>.

Said Akl (*Saʿīd ʿAql*)²⁸. Intellectually inspired by ideas formulated in early Syrianist and Phoenicianist circles to which also Charles Corm, Michel Chiha, Mai and Albert Murr belonged and who were themselves inspired by the ideas of Ernest Renan and Henri Lammens, Akl claimed that there was an eternal ‘Lebanese spirit’ that was the essence of Lebanon. Despite its affinities with Phoenicianism and early secular non-Arab Syrianism, Akl’s Lebanism differs from both in some crucial ways. For one, Akl did not consider contemporary Lebanon to be a direct continuation of Phoenicia, but rather conceived of both as being permeated by the same eternal Lebanese spirit (Salameh 2010). Before WWI Phoenicianism and Syrianism were not mutually exclusive but developed in parallel, as Phoenicianism did not imply Lebanese exclusivism and Syrianism often focused on Lebanon as its center of gravity with an autonomous status within a Greater Syrian entity. Only after WWI and the creation of the Lebanese state in 1926 did Syrianism and Phoenicianism become separate narratives, the latter underscoring Lebanon’s autonomy and unique national identity (Kaufman 2014). Syrianism evolved in the works of its main ideologue Anton Saadeh to include the whole of Greater Syria and even parts of Iraq and Cyprus (Yamak 1966, 82-85). Second, and more crucial for our purposes, Phoenicianism and Syrianism crystalized around geographical territory rather than language. Language is not completely neglected in these two forms of nationalism but is considered to be of a lesser importance. Akl’s Lebanism also concentrates on geographical and territorial elements in order to delimit Lebanon from the rest of the Arab world, but connects these firmly to language. Akl argues that Lebanese, albeit akin to Arabic, is not a variety of Arabic, but rather a separate Semitic language that finds its origins in Phoenician and Aramean²⁹. Akl thus fuses territorial and linguistic elements in his articulation of Lebanese nationalism. Because Lebanism competes in its linguistic dimensions directly with Arab nationalism, which also crystalizes around language, labeling becomes a very sensitive issue. What most would call ‘Lebanese dialect’ (*al-lahǧa*

²⁸ My discussion of Akl’s political and linguistic Lebanist ideas draws on Plonka (2006), Salameh (2010), Kaufman (2014) and Bawardi (2016). Suleiman (2003, 2004, 2013) briefly refers to Akl, but mainly in contrast with *fuṣḥā*-based linguistic nationalism.

²⁹ Whether this is linguistically accurate or not should not retain us here. What matters for our purposes here is rather how Akl ideologically deploys this argument in the context of language and national identity construction (Suleiman 2004, 55 and 2013b, 5, 19).

al-‘āmmiyya al-lubnāniyye) or a spoken variety of Arabic, is for Akl and his adherents a separate Lebanese language (*al-luġa al-lubnāniyya*)³⁰. Unlike most other advocates of standardizing spoken varieties of Arabic, and there have been many³¹, Akl not only formulated his ideas theoretically but also put them into practice. It was his conviction that the standardization of Lebanese and its eventual use as the official and national language of Lebanon should take place at the grass roots rather than being implemented via language policy. Akl, who was an acclaimed symbolist poet and published his most celebrated poems in *fushḥā*, also published poetry collections, such as *Yara*, and literary journals, such as *Lebnaan*, in Lebanese. Additionally, he founded the *Yara* publishing house for the publication of literary works in Lebanese and established literary awards to encourage authors to write in Lebanese. Initially Akl used for his writings in Lebanese the Arabic script, but later he developed a Romanized alphabet which he considered to be a modern incarnation of the Phoenician alphabet (Salameh 2010, 143). Romanization further enhanced the rupture between Lebanese and Arabic by making it visual (*ibid.*, 234)³². Aside from the Latinization of the script, Akl’s efforts entailed changing metalanguage (“Lebanese is a language, not a dialect”), the creation of a literary corpus, and the translation of literary masterpieces into Lebanese, lexical expansion by borrowing, mainly from *fushḥā* and French, as well as the popular dissemination of these ideas and this new language via mass popular culture³³ (Plonka 2006). These laborious activities also exemplify that national languages don’t just ‘exist’, ready to be picked up as a basis for (linguistic) nationalism, but rather undergo a (deliberate) process of (re)shaping, molding, and

³⁰ This argument can still be found on the official website of the Guardians of the Cedar Party: “The language of a nation is the essence of its national identity. Therefore, Lebanese is the national language of Lebanon. These Lebanese people who speak the Lebanese language today, *not dialect*, were the ones who invented the alphabet in the Phoenician era [...]”. See <https://www.gotc.info/index.php/en/component/content/article/133-english-categories-non-mainmenu/the-lebanese-language/1132-the-lebanese-language-soon?Itemid=102> (emphasis mine).

³¹ All proposals to use and/or standardize non-*fushḥā* varieties of Arabic have led to huge and often venomous debates since at least as early as the 19th century. These proposals are generally known as *al-da‘wa ilā al-‘āmmiyya* (the call for the use of ‘*āmmiyya*) or the *fushḥā-‘āmmiyya* debate (Daniëls 2002, 2018; Suleiman 2003, 2004).

³² For other examples of script indexicality, see Suleiman 2013b, 35–43.

³³ SaJ’s choice to broadcast the news in Lebanese and frame it as such can be seen as a way of popularizing and naturalizing the idea that Lebanese is a language and not a dialect, even if SaJ was not exactly a mass media channel.

labeling during the process of national identity construction, meaning that national identity and language are mutually constitutive, as pointed out above. On a political level, Akl gave shape to his ideas by founding the Lebanese Renewal Party (*ḥizb al-taǧaddud al-lubnānī*) and he was also the spiritual father of the Guardians of the Cedar Party founded by Sakr. Both parties were extremely Lebanese nationalistic and took pronounced anti-Palestinian, anti-Syrian and anti-pan-Arab positions (Salameh 2010; Bawardi 2016).

Most sources carefully state that in Lebanon, Muslims tend to stress its Arab identity, while (Maronite) Christians tend to stress its exclusive Lebanese identity (see f.i. Al Batal 2002; Bawardi 2016). While this accurately describes broad political and ideological tendencies, we have to be careful linking them to specific forms of nationalism or linguistic attitudes, as well as to specific cases. Identifying oneself with the Lebanese state does not necessarily preclude identification with a broader (pan)Arab identity and identification with an exclusive Lebanese identity does not necessarily mean a position in favor of the (exclusive) use of Lebanese or that one considers it to be a separate language rather than a variety of Arabic. Suleiman (2003, 204-219), for example, discusses two examples of Lebanese intellectuals of Maronite background who were staunch defenders of an exclusive Lebanese identity, but who considered *fushā* as the linguistic basis for Lebanese nationalism rather than Lebanese³⁴. Also Kaufman (2014) refers to several examples of proponents of a non-Arab Lebanese national identity who considered Arabic to be the national language of Lebanon. On the other hand, Arab nationalist sympathies or sentiment do not necessarily entail negative attitudes towards non-*fushā* varieties (Albirini 2016, 160). This being said, claiming that the SLA basically was a (Maronite) Christian militia to explain its choice to broadcast the news in Lebanese is not satisfactory for the following reasons. Even if most of its leadership indeed consisted of Christians, many of its soldiers actually were Shiites³⁵ (Herzog 2009). Some sources mention (Shiite) Muslim membership to underscore that the SLA was not essentially a Christian militia that envisioned a dominantly Christian Lebanon (Hamizrachi 1988; Nissan 2003). Others mention, however,

³⁴ However, we have to keep in mind that both examples discussed by Suleiman predate the Lebanese civil war.

³⁵ This probably explains why in my recordings, which coincided with Ramadan, the times marking the beginning (*imsāk*) and the ending (*ifṭār*) of the fast were announced at the end of the 12:30pm news broadcast.

coercion and financial necessity as factors for Shiite membership to the militia (Beydoun 1992). Moreover, there was a tension between confessional inclusiveness and anti-Muslim positions in the broader ideological network to which the SLA belonged (Plonka 2006). In what follows we will look closer into the SLA's political and ideological networks. A limited network analysis demonstrates that the SLA and the Guardians of the Cedar were closely connected and Sakr regularly supplied personnel to the SLA³⁶. In its turn, as mentioned above, Sakr's Guardians of the Cedar Party was closely connected to Akl's Lebanese Renewal Party and shared its political and ideological positions. Moreover, Sakr was a co-founder of *Lebnaan* (1975-1990). This journal was the political organ of the Guardians of the Cedar Party in which Akl's ideas on the Lebanese language and its orthography were published and applied³⁷, along the political and ideological viewpoints³⁸ of the party (Plonka 2006, 428-429). We can therefore claim that the SLA was, via the Guardians of the Cedars Party, ideologically connected to the Lebanese Renewal Party and that the SLA was ideologically inspired by Akl's Lebanist ideas. Moreover, Akl's ideas were well-known in Lebanon, as he often presented them via diverse media channels. On the basis of this, we can solidly claim that the linguistic choice made by SaJ was not (purely) functional, but also had strong symbolic dimensions. We can therefore consider the choice of broadcasting news items in Lebanese and framing them explicitly as newscasts "in the Lebanese language" as a powerful metalinguistic comment on Lebanon's national identity.

7. CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed the linguistic, functional, and symbolic dimensions of language use in news broadcasts by *Ṣawt al-Ġanūb*. The description of the main linguistic features of the news bulletins in Lebanese demonstrates that the 'Lebanese' data display complex combinations of *fushḥā* and Lebanese elements on all linguistic levels, which seem at

³⁶ Nisan (2003) mentions at least eight high ranking commanders who were affiliated to both the Guardians and the SLA.

³⁷ Between 25 March 1983 and 26 January 1990 the journal was published in Akl's Lebanese alphabet (Plonka 2006, 428-429).

³⁸ These consisted of Lebanese linguistic nationalistic positions, in combination with extreme anti-Palestinian and racist positions, as well as an ambiguous position towards Islam (Plonka 2006, 429).

times idiosyncratic. Rather than describing them as hybrid or mixed forms, they can also be described in terms of codeswitching. This latter approach, when systematically applied to the complete corpus of *fuṣḥā* and Lebanese bulletins, would allow for a more fine-grained description of the dynamics between *fuṣḥā* and Lebanese. This will be hopefully achieved in a follow-up paper. After exploring the functional and symbolic dimensions of SaJ's language choice, we directed our focus to the political and ideological underpinnings of language choice. By contextualizing the linguistic choices of the radio station and connecting them to the political and ideological affiliations and networks of its administrator, the SLA, they can be understood as a metalinguistic comment on Lebanon's national identity. However, by broadcasting the 10am news in Lebanese and labeling it as 'the news in the Lebanese language' the SLA not only underscores its adherence to Lebanese exclusivism, or Lebanonism as formulated by Said Akl, but also flags its opposition to the Taif Agreement, both on the level of the immediate political and practical implications it entailed for the SLA as well as its references to the Arab identity of Lebanon. In doing so, the proxy army of the IDF deployed via SaJ language as a proxy for their political and ideological position in the complex Lebanese post-Taif political landscape.

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Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language in Its Diglossic Situation: Is Formal Spoken Arabic an Ideal Solution?

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ABSTRACT

Due to the complex diglossic situation in Arabic, the question of what variety of the language to teach has always occupied a central position in work on teaching Arabic as a foreign language (AFL). Basic Standard Arabic may have been the most supported answer to the above question, but the field is not short of proposals for teaching dialectal varieties. Moreover, in quest of a way to help learners achieve full “Functionally Native Proficiency” (Ryding 1991, 216), Formal Spoken Arabic (FSA) was proposed as a bridge between a standard variety and a dialectal one. The present study argues against such a proposal at beginner levels on the following grounds: (1) FSA is different from the standard and dialectal varieties of Arabic and (2) FSA users can always shift to their dialectal varieties and employ features lying beyond AFL learners’ scope of competence. The argument is supported by examining variation in the use of the Arabic relative clause induced by the tendency toward different relativisation strategies (i.e. the pronoun retention strategy or the gap strategy) in different Arabic varieties. Considering that the relative clause can be embedded into any construction to modify a head noun, variation in its use can affect learners’ ability to make sense of the language input. This variation is demonstrated by examples selected from texts written in Classical Arabic, Modern Classical Arabic, and Iraqi Arabic. The study has implications for AFL course writers.

Keywords: AFL; Arabic language varieties; Arabic relative clause; diglossia; relativisation strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of the diglossic¹ situation in Arabic – a classical/dialectal dichotomy – may be introduced in terms of Prototype Theory (Taylor [1989] 1995). Two diachronic perspectives can be distinguished, as follows. From one perspective, all the varieties of Arabic, including Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), form a category that radiates out from Classical Arabic (CA). The more similar to CA a variety is (i.e. MSA), the more typical (and, hence, correct) it is perceived (Holes 2004). The second perspective, however, considers the prototype to be a koine dialect – a unified dialect that Arabs used for inter-communication during the Islamic conquests era (Ferguson 1959). This perspective rests on the fact that the dialectal varieties of Arabic differ from CA at all linguistic levels, including phonology, morphology and syntax (Holes 2004). For example, in most dialectal varieties, the voiceless uvular (*qāf*) is realised by the velar /g/ or the inter-vocalic glottal stop /ʔ/. In addition, the dual and feminine plural categories in verbs and pronouns are reduced to one non-gender specific plural (Ryding 1991, 216). Although the standard sentence structure and word order can be preserved in the dialectal varieties of Arabic, there are differences that are due to the deletion of grammatical elements, such as the deletion of subordinating conjunctions in the use of verb strings and the deletion of the desinential inflection – final short vowels – on all parts of speech (*ibidem*).

The linguistic similarities among the dialectal varieties of Arabic do not make them mutually intelligible. This fact may be said to have led to the emergence of Formal Spoken Arabic (FSA) – “a new form of widely intelligible spoken Arabic... used for inter-dialectal conversation by educated native speakers, for semiformal discussions, and on other social occasions when the colloquial is deemed too informal, and the literary, too stilted” (Ryding, 1991, 212). Hence, a synchronic categorisation of the current diglossic situation in Arabic would involve placing FSA, which can be described as a koineised form of the spoken varieties of Arabic (in Ferguson’s [1959] terminology), between the spoken varieties and MSA. This is because FSA, which is often described as a “middle language” (Ferguson 1960), draws on both MSA and the dialectal varie-

¹ The term *diglossia* was used by Ferguson (1959) to refer to a situation in which two or more distinct varieties of a language are used for distinct communicative purposes. Fishman (1965) and Gumperz (1966) used the term in a broader sense to include registers or functionally-differentiated language varieties.

ties of Arabic (Mitchell 1985, 1986). For example, FSA preserves the standard pronunciation of Arabic and relies on high frequency words and routine expressions. At the same time, it adopts morphological and syntactic features that characterise the dialectal varieties of Arabic, such as the above-mentioned ones (Ryding 1991, 214-216).

Proposals for the adoption of FSA norms in teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL) (for example, Ferguson 1959; Mansour 1960; Ryding 1991) may be said to be rooted in the idea of “Core English” – the area of basic English norms (e.g. prefabricated speech, high-frequency and culture-free words, basic grammar) that EFL course writers draw upon (West 1953; Carter and McCarthy 1988; Willis 1990; Reda 2003). Ryding, however, noted that FSA

is primarily a bridge enabling nonnative speakers to cross the ravine separating the literary language from the multifarious world of colloquial Arabic dialects. To achieve full “Functionally Native Proficiency” [...], a learner of Arabic as a foreign language must ultimately master at least the three Arabic language variants used by educated Arabs: MSA, FSA, and a regional vernacular. (Ryding 1991, 216)

Considering that the diglossic situation in Arabic is extreme, it needs to be said that mastering two varieties of Arabic through FSA – a variety that is meant for inter-communication among native Arabic speakers – is not as easy as mastering English through its Core norms. In addition, FSA is a spoken variety, which means that its norms are unlikely to be adopted as basic standard norms. In fact, AFL textbooks are very similar to EFL textbooks in the sense that they contain basic standard norms. Such textbooks are in use in the AFL classroom around the world (see, for example, Soliman, Towle, and Snowden 2016; Lewicka and Waszau 2017). Commenting on this fact in regard to teaching Arabic as a foreign language in the USA, Ryding (2006) noted that “We have privileged the secondary [i.e. the written or formal] discourses of literature and the academy over the primary discourses of familiarity [i.e. the spoken varieties]. I refer to this as ‘reverse privileging’, and I posit that it is the key issue facing teaching Arabic as a foreign language in America today” (*ibid.*, 16). However, one can argue that FSA cannot be seen as an ideal solution to AFL teaching and learning issues just because it is a middle language. Actually, being a middle language, FSA is neither familiar nor acceptable in everyday interactions, which suggests that AFL learners will not have enough input/output opportunities to learn the language variety. In addition, there are no hard and fast rules governing the use

of FSA, and, therefore, its users can shift to their dialectal varieties, which can be unintelligible to AFL learners, whenever they feel that it is appropriate for them to do so. On these grounds, it can be argued that FSA is not an ideal variety to expose AFL learners to at the beginner levels.

The argument against the employment of FSA at the beginner levels is supported below by the use of the relative clause in CA, MSA and Iraqi Arabic (IA). The relative clause is selected because it is essential for communication in the sense that it modifies the head of the noun phrase – a phrase that plays such important syntactic roles as the subject and object (Velupillai 2012; Alotaibi 2016). However, the use of the relative clause in the varieties of Arabic is affected by the tendency toward different relativisation strategies (i.e. the pronoun retention strategy or the gap strategy). FSA users can draw on the use of the relative clause in any dialectal variety, a possibility that can affect the ability of learners to make sense of the foreign language input. Relative clauses can be encountered in every stretch of language and, therefore, variation in their use is important to consider with AFL learners in mind.

The present paper is structured as follows. First, the relative clause is defined and relativisation strategies are introduced through work that examines these strategies in different varieties of Arabic. Then, the data collection method and findings are presented. The study ends with a discussion and suggestions for AFL course writers. The suggestions are based on the researchers' view that, due to the extremely complex diglossic situation in Arabic, AFL courses need to be tailored to individual learners' needs. However, regardless of these needs, the basics of Standard Arabic (rather than FSA) should be offered at the beginner levels. The basics can then be expanded to include the targeted written and/or spoken discourse(s) including FSA.

2. THE RELATIVE CLAUSE AND RELATIVISATION STRATEGIES

The focus of this study is on restrictive relative clauses. According to Givón (1993), these clauses are “used in grounding the referent noun to the knowledge-base that is already represented in the mind of the hearer” (*ibid.*, 108). In this way, restrictive relative clauses play an important role in effective communication in everyday life.

Two relativisation strategies are used in restrictive relative clauses: the pronoun retention strategy (or the use of resumptive pronouns (RPs)) and the gap strategy (the omission of RPs). The RP is co-referential with the head noun (Song 2001), as shown by the example below from FSA (note that there are no desinential inflections in the example sentences).

- (1) الرجل الذي رأيته معك
al-rağul alladī ra'aytu-**hu** ma'ak
The-man REL(3M.SG) saw-**him** with you
The man that I saw him with you.

In this example, *-hu* 'him' is a resumptive pronoun that is co-referential with the head of the noun phrase *al-rağul* 'the man'. The fact that 'him' occupies the direct object position in the relative clause indicates that 'the man' is the direct object of the relative clause.

Different studies have stated that, as a general rule, using an RP in a relative clause gives the sentence an interpretation that is different from one carried out by the same relative clause with a gap. For example, Doron (2011) and Sells (1984, 1987) showed that using an RP imposes a more specific interpretation, whereas the gap suggests a more broad or general interpretation. The following examples from FSA make the point.

- (2) سامي سيشتري السيارة التي يريد
sāmī sa-yaštārī l-sayyāra allatī yurid ∅
Sami will-buy the-car REL(3F.SG) he.needs
Sami will buy the car that he needs.
- (3) سامي سيشتري السيارة التي يريدھا
Sāmī sa-yaštārī l-sayyāra allatī yurīdu-**hā**
Sami will-buy the-car REL(3F.SG) he.needs-**it**
Sami will buy the car that he needs **it**.

Sentence (2) carries two interpretations: (1) there is no particular car in Sami's mind, but he is looking for a car with specific characteristics and (2) Sami is looking for a particular car. However, sentence (3) has only one interpretation due to the insertion of the RP *hā* 'her', which adds the indication that Sami seeks a particular car.

Sells (1984, 1987) noted that the gap strategy is used for modifying indefinite noun phrases, thus leading to a non-specific reading, or what the author calls 'the concept', whereas the RP is used for modifying definite noun phrases giving rise to a specific reading (Sells 1987, 288). Most Arabic varieties are similar to MSA in their ability to relativise definite as well as indefinite noun phrases, as in examples (4) and (5)

from IA. The relative pronoun *illī* is used with definite noun phrases only, as in example (4). In example (5), however, the resumptive pronoun *-ah* is an attached pronoun that refers back to an indefinite noun (*walad* ‘boy’) (see Brustad 2000).

- (4) دگ الباب الولد اللي أيده مكسورة
 dag al-bāb al-walad illī īd-ah maksūra
 knocked the-door the-boy REL hand-his broken
 The boy whose hand is broken knocked on the door.

- (5) دگ الباب ولد أيده مكسورة
 dag al-bāb walad īd-ah maksūra
 knocked the-door boy hand-his broken
 A boy whose hand is broken knocked on the door.

It should be noted at this point that the use of the PR or gap strategy in Arabic relative clauses is also determined by the rich verb gender and number inflection (Alotaibi and Borsley 2013, 10). MSA uses different kinds of relative markers, some of which are inflected for gender and number. However, relativisation markers in Arabic dialects are not inflected for these categories (Holes 2004, 284). All varieties use the invariable relative pronoun *illī* (refer back to example 4), or its variants (e.g. *ballī* or *yallī* in Syrian Arabic or sometimes the short form *ill*) for relativisation (Altoma 1969; Holes 1990, 2004; Brustad 2000).

With reference to examples from Egyptian Arabic, Eid (1983) showed that the insertion of pronouns in a subject relative clause imposes a disfavoured reading, which helps to disambiguate the meaning of the sentence. A case in point is example (6), which is used in Eid (1983, 289) to demonstrate that such a sentence can have two different interpretations, as shown by the translations.

- (6) علي كلم الولد اللي (هو) شتمه امبارح
 ‘alī kallam il-walad illī Ø (huwa) šatam-hu imbāriḥ
 Ali talked the-boy REL Ø (he) insulted-him yesterday
 Ali talked to the boy that insulted him (Ali) yesterday. (Favoured)
 Ali talked to the boy that he (Ali) insulted him (the boy) yesterday.
 (Less favoured)

In this example, as Eid (1983) explains, the verb of the relative clause agrees with the head *il-walad* ‘the-boy’ as well as with the subject of the main clause ‘Ali’. This makes it difficult to decide who the subject of the verb *šatam* ‘insult’ is. Thus, inserting *huwa* ‘he’ in the relative clause imposes the second reading whereby the pronoun is co-referential with the subject of the main clause. Eid (1983), Suaieh (1980), Hannouna

(2010) and Jassim (2011), among others, state that when the RP is used in the subject position of an Arabic relative clause, it is stressed for the purpose of emphasis.

The above examples demonstrate that different relativisation strategies in Arabic relative clauses serve different semantic and grammatical functions. However, as shown in the section to follow, the use of pronoun retention and gap strategies varies across the varieties of Arabic.

3. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The observation that the varieties of Arabic have different tendencies toward the use of relativisation strategies is based on the examination of a corpus of 2559 relative clauses. The clauses are collected from 14 texts written in three varieties of Arabic: CA, MSA and IA. Relative clauses in the corpus are collected manually due to the unavailability of a software that can detect indefinite relative clauses (i.e. relative clauses that do not contain relative markers). *Table 1* below provides a classification of the texts used for collecting data for this study according to the variety they are written in.

Table 1. – Data sources².

VARIETY	TITLE
CA	1. حي بن يقظان
	2. مقامات الحريري
	3. تاريخ الطبري
	4. تاريخ ابن الأثير
	5. تاريخ ابن خلدون
MSA	1. الطريق الي تل المطران
	2. تغريدة البجعة
	3. المنبوذ
	4. تاريخ العرب وحضاراتهم في الأندلس
	5. السيف والسياسة في الاسلام
	6. تاريخ العرب المعاصر
IA	1. الرجع البعيد
	2. النخلة والجيران
	3. رباعيات أبو كاطع

² Full bibliographic information of the texts is provided in the Appendix.

In-text reference to the tabulated books is made using the number assigned to it within the variety it falls under. For example, reference to an example from *حي بن يقظان* is made by the following abbreviation: [CA, 1]. This is followed by the page number, as in [CA, 1: 95].

4. FINDINGS

The results are presented in this section according to the grammatical position of the relativised noun phrase. The results show that the use of relativisation strategies varies across CA, MSA and IA. The variation is substantial such that it necessitates drawing AFL learners' attention to the possibility of encountering relative clauses with or without RPs, and to the fact that the presence or absence of the RPs may not be consistent with the use of the relative clause in the variety they are learning.

4.1. *SU relative clauses*

The data collected from CA, MSA, and IA showed that RPs do not appear in SU relative clauses, except for emphasis, as shown by examples (7), (8) and (9) below.

- (7) إن الأجسام التي تقبل الإضاءة...
inna l-ağsām allatī taqbal Ø al-iḏā'a
Indeed the-bodies REL(3F.SG) accept Ø the-light...
Indeed, the bodies which receive the light... [CA, 2: 10]
- (8) لا نريد حلمًا يكبلنا
lā nurīd ḥilman yukabbil-nā
not we.want dream tie up-us
We do not want a dream that ties us up. [MSA, 2: 249]
- (9) شفت اليوم واحد چان يشتغل وياي بالبنك
šifit l-yūm wāḥid ḡān yištuḡul wa-yāy bi-l-bank
saw-I the-day one was work with-me in-the- bank
I saw today one who was working with me in the bank. [IA, 1: 80]

Only 11 instances of SU relative clauses that include RPs could be found in CA texts. 1 instance was also found in MSA texts. Consider examples (10) and (11) below where the RP occurs as part of nominal sentences. No such instances could be found in the examples from IA texts used in this study.

- (10) وجد نصفها الذي هو في الجانب الواحد
wağada nişfa-hā alladī huwa fī l-ğānib al-wāhid
found(he) half-her REL.(3MS.G) he in the-side the-one
He found her half which is on one side. [CA, 1: 34]
- (11) والمواطن التي هي ديار العرب
wa-l-mawāṭin allatī hiya diyār al-‘arab
and the-places REL.(3F.SG) she home the-Arab
The places that belong to Arabs. [MSA, 4: 105]

In different instances, the RPs appear as attached pronouns in SU relative clauses. In this case, they cannot be omitted because they are attached to passive prepositional verbs, as shown by example (12) below.

- (12) كان في مسجد يُقال له مسجد صالح
kān fī masğid yuqāl la-hu masğid šāliḥ
was in mosque say(PASS) to-it mosque Salih
He was in a mosque which is called Salih's mosque. [CA, 3: 80]

In example (12), the RP *-hu* 'him' is attached to the preposition *la-* 'to' forming the prepositional verb *yuqāl la-hu* 'said to-it/him'. The use of an RP in this case is mandatory. Instances of this could only be found in CA (68 instances). The verb *yuqāl la-hu* له يُقال could not be found in MSA or IA texts; it is substituted by the passive *yusammā* يُسمى 'called' where no attached RPs are needed. Accordingly, AFL learners may encounter difficulties in identifying the functions of the RP in a prepositional verb if they are not previously introduced to them. In example (12), the RP in *yuqāl la-hu* can be misidentified as the object of the preposition (rather than the subject).

4.2. DO relative clauses

The pronoun retention strategy and the gap strategy are both used in DO relative clauses. In these instances, the RPs could be attached to a verb, as in examples (13) and (14) from CA and IA.

- (13) بالإسناد الذي ذكرته قبل
bi-l-isnād alladī dakartu-hu qabl
In-the-reference REL.(3M.SG) mentioned-I-it before
In the reference which I mentioned before.... [CA, 3: 106]
- (14) هاي يمكن فلسفة ما أعرفها
hāy yimkin falsafa mā a‘ruf-hā
This may be philosophy not I-know-it
This may be a philosophy which I do not know. [IA, 1: 60]

RPs can also be attached to prepositions if a prepositional verb is used in a relative clause, as in example (15) whereby the RP *-bi* is attached to the preposition *bi-*.

- (15) إني أرى الرجل الذي جئتم به ليس معه ثان
innī arā l-rağul alladī ġi'tum bi-hi
I see the-man REL(3M.SG) came-2.PL in-him
laysa ma'a-hu tāt
has no with-him second
I see that the man you brought has no one with him. [CA, 3: 119]

Only 27 DO relative clauses without RPs could be found in the corpus, of which 25 instances are in CA and 2 in MSA. No instances could be found in IA. This shows that the absence of RPs in DO relative clauses is acceptable in standard Arabic varieties. This is not the case in dialectal varieties. Examples (16) and (17) demonstrate the absence of the RPs in CA and MSA respectively.

- (16) فهلكوا في المجاعة التي صادفوا
fa-halakū fī l-mağā'a allatī šādafū
So-died-PL in-the famine REL(3F.SG) found-PL.MAS
So they died in the famine which they suffered from. [CA, 3: 1000]

- (17) تصرفني متى أردت وإلى المكان الذي ترغب
taşrif-nī matā aradta wa- ilā l-makān
you (dismiss-me) when want-you and to the-place
alladī tarğab- Ø
REL(3M.SG) want-you- Ø
You dismiss me whenever you want and to the place that you want.
[MSA, 3: 152]

Accordingly, for DO relative clauses, AFL learners need to learn when the gap strategy could be used instead of the pronoun retention strategy. This is because the misuse of the gap strategy in DO relative clauses could give rise to an ambiguous sentence like example (18).

- (18) الرجل الذي رأى [الملك] في حلمه جالساً في مجلسٍ رفيع
al-rağul alladī ra'a [l-malik] fī ḥulumī-hi
the-man REL(3M.SG) saw [the-king] in dream-his
ğālisun fī mağlis rafī
sitting in place high
The man that the king saw in his dream was sitting in a high place.
[CA, 3: 271]

The ambiguity in example sentence (18) is the result of the non-attachment of the resumptive pronoun *-hu* 'him' to the verb *ra'ā* 'saw'. This makes the sentence susceptible to the following two interpretations: 'the king saw the man in his dream' and 'the man saw the king in his dream'. This is not expected to occur in IA as the tendency to use the pronoun retention strategy in DO relative clauses is 100% (for the grammar of IA, see Erwin 2004).

4.3. OBL relative clauses

Similar to DO relative clauses, both relativisation strategies are used in OBL relative clauses. When the pronoun retention strategy is used, the RPs appear as attached to prepositions, as shown in example (19) whereby the RP *-hu* is attached to the preposition *ma'a*.

- (19) هلك الملك الذي كان معه الريان بن الوليد
halaka l-malik alladī kān ma'a-hu
died the-king REL(3M.SG) was with-him
l-rayān b. al-walid
Al-Rayān son Al-Waleed
The king who was with Al-Rayān son of Al-Waleed died. [CA, 3: 130]

Only 12 instances (3%) of OBL relative clauses that appear without RPs could be found in the corpus. The majority of these instances (7 clauses) were found in MSA. Only 3 instances were found in IA and 2 in CA. This result shows that the use of the gap strategy in OBL relative clauses is more common in MSA and IA than in CA.

When the gap strategy is used in OBL relative clauses, the whole prepositional phrase is omitted, not only the RP, as shown by examples (20), (21) and (22). The preposition can be deleted in OBL relative clauses because it is not semantically attached to the verb the way it is in SU or DO relative clauses.

- (20) في الوقت الذي قامت بالتعتيم على رواة القسم الثاني...
fī l-waqt alladī qāmat Ø-Ø bi-l-ta'tīm 'alā
in the time REL(3M.SG) did Ø-Ø in-the-hiding on
ruwāt al-qism al-tānī...
narrators the-part the-second...
The time at which they have hidden the narrators of the second part...
[MSA, 5: 168]

- (21) يوم اليجيك ولد
 yawm l-yiġġik Ø-Ø walad
 day REL-come-to you Ø-Ø boy
 (I hope) the day when you have a boy comes. [IA, 1: 100]
- (22) فناجزهم ساعة تلقاهم
 fa-nāġaz-hum sā'a Ø-Ø talaqqā-hum.
 Then-he.fought-them hour Ø-Ø met-them
 Then (he) fought them at the time he met them. [CA, 3: 1103]

It should be noted, however, that deleting the prepositional phrase is not grammatically correct in all types of OBL relative clauses. It was found that OBL relative clauses in which the gap strategy is used have time expressions as head nouns. Examples of these time expressions include *waqt* 'time', *yawm* 'day' and *sā'a* – refer back to examples (20), (21), and (22).

A wrong application of the gap strategy on the part of AFL learners might result in incomplete sentences or sentences with different meanings, as in examples (23) and (24) respectively.

- (23) هلك الملك الذي كان الريان بن الوليد
 halaka l-malik alladī kān al-rayān b. al-walīd
 died the-king REL(3M.SG) was Al-Rayan son Al-Waleed
 The king who was Al-Rayan son of Al-Waleed died. [CA, 3: 130]
- (24) ثمن الطعام الذي اشتروه به
 taman al-ṭa'ām alladī ištara-w-hu bi-hi
 price the food REL(3M.SG) bought.they-it in-it
 The price with which they bought the food. [CA, 3: 118]

Example (24) shows that deleting the prepositional phrase will make the relative clause a DO relative clause (modifying *al-ṭa'ām* 'the food') rather than an OBL relative clause that modifies *taman al-ṭa'ām* 'price of the food'.

The above examples demonstrate the different patterns of use of relativisation strategies in three varieties of Arabic. Such differences, which can affect AFL learners' interpretation and use of the relative clause in the variety they are in the process of learning, need to be pointed out to these learners considering that the relative clause can be encountered in every stretch of language.

5. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to show that a middle language like FSA is not an ideal solution for teaching Arabic as a foreign language at beginner levels. The main reason for this is that such a variety is different from both the standard and dialectal varieties and that native users can always shift to their dialectal variety employing features unknown to the FSA learner. The study demonstrated the difficulties that AFL students may encounter in learning a middle language by analysing the tendency toward different relativisation strategies in three different varieties of Arabic.

The complexity of the diglossic situation in Arabic is often addressed in work on AFL by proposing courses of Arabic that are tailored to the needs of individual foreign learners (e.g. Modern Standard Arabic, Classical Arabic, Media Arabic, Business Arabic, etc.). While such courses give learners the opportunity to learn the specific Arabic norms they need, they still cannot equip them with the competencies they need to communicate in the language in its both formal and informal contexts. The authors' opinion, however, is that AFL can only be taught as tailored to the specific needs of the learners due to the significant differences that exist among its varieties. AFL learners can be trained to function in formal and informal situations only if they start with a general Arabic course that exposes them to basic standard Arabic norms and then proceed to courses that meet their needs. Opportunities for them to deal with two formal and informal norms of the foreign language can always be created through supplementary materials. Examples of such opportunities are given below.

1. Including as supplementary course materials parts of movies or episodes of television series that are dubbed in the standard as well as the dialectal variety that the learners need to master. Dubbed movies or episodes can provide good language learning opportunities if matching the duration of the corresponding utterances in the original audio produces the effect of making dubbed speech slower and, therefore, clearer. An in-class discussion in which learners reflect on their learning experience can enhance the effectiveness of this experience.
2. Including listening activities in which the same topic is discussed in the targeted standard and dialectal varieties of Arabic. A follow up discussion of differences in vocabulary and grammar can be effective and interesting.
3. Including reading and writing activities in which learners first write example sentences or short paragraphs in standard Arabic and

then attempt to read them aloud using the norms of the targeted dialectal variety of Arabic. This activity can start by giving learners a list of words to use in the writing part of the activity. The reading part will require teacher's assistance.

4. Adding research activities requiring learners to select Arabic sentences from social media and then do an error analysis showing whether the errors are acceptable norms in the dialectal variety they are learning.

The above are only few suggestions to draw course writers' attention to the need to broaden the scope of AFL in a way that can help its learners gradually gain the ability to use and comprehend Arabic in the formal and informal situations they need to function in.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored the significant differences that exist among the standard and dialectal varieties of Arabic in order to support the claim that a middle language is not an ideal solution for starting to learn a language in a state of complex diglossia like Arabic. The linguistic differences highlighted are not simply due to the modification or deletion of grammatical elements, but may also be rooted in strategies of use that can affect the understanding of the language input on the part of AFL learners. The study provided specific examples (i.e. relativisation strategies) for pointing out the need for course writers to consider developing AFL materials that familiarise learners with the standard and dialectal Arabic norms they need to learn. This can make it possible for learners to use and understand the specific Arabic discourse they need to learn and, at the same time, communicate with Arabic speakers in formal and informal situations. FSA is likely to be acquired naturally once the standard Arabic norms and the targeted Arabic variety/discourse are learnt.

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Literature in Dialect: The Great Absentee

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ABSTRACT

Prose production in dialect is probably the big absentee in Arabic literature textbooks. While poetry in dialect has managed to carve its own small space in textbooks on the history of Arabic literature, the same does not go for novels or short stories written in *‘āmmiyya*. Most critics, especially Arabs, do not acknowledge their literary dignity. However, scholars of contemporary Arabic literature can no longer avoid seriously analysing Egyptian literature in *‘āmmiyya*. In fact, in the course of the last two decades, the number of novels and short stories in Egyptian dialect has significantly increased. Furthermore, writing in dialect is increasingly widespread thanks to personal blogs and websites. In light of this emerging panorama in Arabic literature, the question is whether something is changing in relation to the acceptance of dialect as a literary language and if the time has come for literature in dialect to find its own place in literary textbooks.

Keywords: dialect and literature; Egyptian dialect; *fushā* and *‘āmmiyya* in literature.

First of all, when I speak of “Arab literature in dialect”, I am exclusively referring to literary production in Egypt. Secondly, when one speaks of “Egyptian dialect”, this essentially consists in the dialect spoken in Cairo, unless otherwise indicated. Thirdly, it is necessary to specify that with the term “literary production”, I mainly mean prose that has been written in Egyptian dialect, thereby referring to short stories and novels, or anyhow to texts that are intended as literary by their authors. Nevertheless, it will not be possible to avoid occasional references to literary works in verse.

Artistic production in dialect has always existed in the Arab world but, given its oral tradition, it is very difficult to pinpoint its origins.

This entails that, at least at the beginning, most of it had not been written, but rather orally passed down from generation to generation, with all of the consequences that such a tradition implicates. However, it is clear that a dialectal production has always been present, even before the arrival of Islam (Beeston 1997, 287). Since the time in which classical Arabic was conserved and protected by the sacred nature of the Coran, *fuṣḥā* and *‘āmmiyya* have travelled along parallel paths. They represent the tools of two different and distinct types of literary production that have never truly competed against one another. As far writing in dialect is concerned, Doss maintains that “one should start observing that the trend of writing in colloquial has a very long tradition, dating back to the 15th century, and that it follows a rising and falling curve at different times according to social and historical factors” (Doss 2006, 54). For centuries, all knew the boundaries within which such tools could, or should, be used. Nevertheless, perhaps only in the course of the past twenty years have *fuṣḥā* and *‘āmmiyya* unexpectedly met and converged on some occasions, while in others dialect has substituted classical Arabic without really clashing with it, as we will see later on.

It is worth noting that Arab literary production in general, and Egyptian literary production in particular, does not only consist in works written exclusively in dialect or in *fuṣḥā*. Mixed varieties that combine features that are typical of *‘āmmiyya* and *fuṣḥā* have spread since ancient times: some authors have written in what is known as “Middle Arabic” because it is better suited for the content of their works, or simply because they did not master the use of standard language (Lentin 2012, 209). Other authors opted for a simplified form of *fuṣḥā*, whose words often derive from dialect, to add a touch of “Egyptianness” to their works, like in the case of Yūsuf Idrīs. It has been ascertained that in the premodern age numerous writers consciously used dialectal linguistic structures for artistic reasons and to better convey the work’s message to the less educated members of society. In fact, as Lentin observed, many authors wrote in both impeccable classical Arabic and Middle Arabic, so it is not possible to sustain that they did not master standard Arabic (Lentin 2006, 217).

In any case, this is not the place for further reflections on the various nuances of Arabic in Egyptian literary production for the present study intends to consider only works that were purposefully and exclusively written in Egyptian dialect for artistic reasons.

Tracing back the origins of dialectal tradition, it consisted of songs, commendations, love poems, adventure stories, and so on. Life in Egyp-

tian prisons, the songs of the *misabḥarātī*, songs sung during weddings, the suffering of farmers in the fields, the love pining of the Bedouins of the desert, the melancholy of a felucca driver, and the sadness for the loss of a loved one are all topics that have been orally transmitted to the present day. Only occasionally did someone – often in the form of notes – put such frequently defined folkloric tradition in writing, and in doing so made use of the language in which those songs, those stories, and those poems had been passed down.

In any case, the first written records in dialect are in verses. Arabic vernacular poetry is a centuries-old practice whose first evidence may be traced back to medieval Andalusia, and that has evolved according to well defined ways that differ from region to region. In Egypt, for example, written and oral colloquial poetry was known as *zağal* (Booth 1992, 421) until a new form of vernacular poetry emerged in the 1950s. Nevertheless, whatever was written in dialect has always been considered to be of low value, as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 1339) had already claimed in the XIV century in his *Al-‘Āṭil al-ḥālī wa-l-murabḥaṣ al-ğālī*. In this work, he introduced a sort of classification of poetry in which *mu‘raba*, exclusively written in *fusḥā*, is in first place and *zağal* and *mawwāl* (Allen 2000, 82-83) in the final positions. Such an attitude towards works in dialect has lasted for centuries, and even if this seems to be changing, vernacular production still seems to arouse some suspicion both in critics and in readers.

Upon following the history of literary production in dialect, some works of unexceptional artistic value are to be mentioned. Noteworthy ones among these include that of ‘Alī b. Sūdūn al-Bašbuğāwī (1407-1464), who in the middle of the XV century wrote *Nuzbat al-nufūs wa-mudḥik al-‘abūs*, a work alternating poetry and prose and whose topics range from grief for his mother’s death to sex. The collection *Hazz al-qubūf fī qaṣīd Abī Šadūf* by Yūsuf al-Širbīnī (d. 1687) is more famous and already denounced the hardships of farmers in the countryside at the end of the XVII century.

At times these works, which seem to be these writers’ spontaneous attempts to write in dialect with artistic awareness, are actually works in which the effort to insert dialectal elements is evident, and in which it is often possible to see the influence of classical language (Vrolijk 1998, 137).

One must wait until the end of the XIX century to find works of some importance in dialect or with dialectal elements, for instance when ‘Uṭmān Ğalāl (1829-1898) composed *Šayḥ matlūf*, an adaptation of

Moliere's *Tartuffe*. He also elaborated other works by the same author and Racine. It is noteworthy to point out that to translate these French writers' works 'Uṭmān Ġalāl made use of a popular Egyptian setting by introducing colloquial expressions, proverbs, and aphorisms from everyday language (Zakariyā 1964, 264). He also had the merit of being the first to use colloquial language to disseminate cultural products and literary works from Europe by translating theatrical texts (Macdonald 1901, 117), even if his works now seem to interest dialectologists in relation to the evolution of dialect rather than experts in literature.

An important turn, in terms of the use of dialect in prose, occurred with the invention of the printing press, and in particular with the first satirical magazines, where dialect appears for the first time in the history of Egyptian journalism. Precisely within such literary prose production in dialect, Sabry Hafez identified an embryonal form of narrative writing that was later employed in short stories and novels (Hafez 1993, 110-129). In particular, Hafez refers to the *fuṣūl taḥdībīyya* (instructive tales) by 'Abd Allāh al-Nadīm that were published in "Al-Tankīt wa-l-tabkīt" and "Al-Ustād". However, it is necessary to underline that tales written in dialect in newspapers were neither the result of a stylistic or artistic choice, nor was their intention that of proposing a greater use of dialect in literature or for other purposes. In this phase of Egyptian history between the XIX and XX centuries, writing in dialect was a functional choice with ideological aims. The magazine and newspaper owners seemed to have perceived that publishing in dialect could be an adequate educational – if not indoctrination – tool. In fact, the satirical newspapers of the time were generally nationalistic, and therefore opposed to the English occupants and the political class supporting them. To make their political action more consistent, the opposers therefore needed not only the help of small educated elites, but also the support of the masses. The stories that were published in dialect focused on stereotypes such as the amorality of the Western ways and issues that were familiar to the more unfortunate classes: the injustices of dealing with loan sharks, Egyptians' acritical admiration for European products, and the spread of alcohol. In this way, the reader – or rather the listener – recognised him or herself in the protagonists of the tales, in which the use of such a familiar language was also fundamental to emotionally identify with them. The humorous tone, moreover, made those tales even more appealing. In brief, in this phase, publishing in dialect represented a political act, and one of opportunism, and certainly not of sincere solidarity towards the less educated social classes. Writers like

‘Abd Allāh al-Nadīm or Ya‘qūb Ṣanū’, just to mention the most famous ones, went down in history as *iṣlāḥī fukābī* (humorous reformers). Significantly, both of their journals explained their position in relation to linguistic ideology. In actual fact, neither of the two had ever been in favour of a linguistic reform that entailed concessions for dialecticisms.

Only in the 1950s did scholars of Arabic begin to become passionate about their national cultural heritage. A new attitude towards working classes, the acceptance of dialect as a vehicle of an “other” culture, the admission of a “conception of the world” straying from the dominant culture, and the publication of the journal *Al-Funūn al-ša‘biyya* in Egypt were the consequences of this (Canova 1977, 212-215). Nevertheless, a speech that was delivered by an Egyptian high officer on the occasion of the publication of the first issue of the journal shows how endowing literary production in dialect with dignity is more a political act and a concession to the masses than a stylistic choice that matured in the wake of artistic awareness. The speech in fact implicitly includes the usual considerations: to write, and read, in dialect is something that concerns the masses, as if to say that it is inferior to classic literary production. But is it really true that the entire epic, poetic, humorous, etc. literary production has only enticed the less fortunate social classes, as is often claimed?

Perhaps it would be the case to quote some passages from the above-mentioned statement of the officer:

The publication of this journal has more than one meaning. Not only it is a cultural periodical specialised in a specific discipline; rather, it is a natural response to the sentiments of our socialist society [...], a sign of respect towards the people and of appreciation for their arts. (Ḥātīm 1965, 3)

Moreover, in *Difā‘ ‘an al-fūkulūr*, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus underscored the Arabs’ newfound awareness that their cultural heritage is not limited to the remnants of books and manuscripts, inscriptions, vestiges, religious and civil architecture, but also encompasses the popular art of the average man (Canova 1977, 215).

In my opinion, as much as it may seem to open towards literary production in dialect, the speech of the high officer, like ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Yūnus’ observed, actually conceals some of the main reasons for its failure.

As a matter of fact, the issue of the use of language in literature in the period from the end of the XIX to the middle of the XX century is often characterised by very ideologised connotations that have little to

do with the principles on which a stylistic and literary choice is based. This is precisely one of the fundamental reasons for the scarce use of *‘āmmiyya* in literature. For instance, it is difficult for a writer to use dialect in a work because it is considered a democratic language, as Salāma Mūsā argued (Mūsā 1956).

In investigating the linguistic choices of popular Egyptian bloggers, Teresa Pepe claimed that “the use of the vernacular sets the tone for intimacy, authenticity, honesty, liberal thought, accessibility, pragmatism, closeness to ordinary people, and a leftist and anti-traditional attitude; often it has a humorous effect” (Pepe 2019, 114).

Such a statement is exactly what has been argued by many scholars and writers in relation to the choice to use vernacular language in literature. Here, on the contrary, it is believed that these considerations were validated during a specific period of Egyptian political and literary history. ‘Abd Allāh al-Nadīm e Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘, as previously mentioned, wrote in dialect to approach the masses and obtain their consensus. Salāma Mūsā promoted dialect because he considered it more accessible to all, although he did not use it in his works. The ironic reformists, or *iṣlāḥī fukāḥī*, and humorous literature in general, mostly employed dialect because it was indeed more suitable for their aims. Nowadays, the quantity and variety of literary production in dialect (poems, short stories, novels, and obviously plays) enable us to claim that in general, when a writer chooses the linguistic register to use, he or she is guided by stylistic, and not political, considerations.

However, it is evident that an infinite number of works has been produced throughout the centuries in various dialectal variations, and that a precise classification is difficult. In general, as the title of the journal suggests, they are defined as *ša‘biyya* (popular). The use of dialect is the characterising element, as well as that which denies these works their *status* as literature.

As is known, the term *ša‘biyya* is a clear reference to a specific part of society, i.e. the lowliest, least well-off, and least sophisticated one. Whoever has been in Egypt, or in another Arab country for some time, has heard the words *maṭ‘am ša‘bī* (popular restaurant), *qahwā ša‘biyya* (popular café), *ḥayy ša‘bī* (working-class district), where the adjective *ša‘bī* encloses a series of implications that “popular” translations into other languages cannot completely convey. Suffice it to think of how rarely equivalent expressions are found in European languages. In fact, a *maṭ‘am ša‘bī* or a *qahwā ša‘biyya* lead to think of a noisy, cheap, not-so-clean, restaurant or café, where it is easy to socialise with those sitting at

nearby tables, waiters, etc. In the same manner, a *ḥayy ša'bī* conveys the idea of a district that is happily chaotic, dirty, sometimes disreputable, but warm and welcoming at the same time.

As a result, while referring to *adab ša'bī* (popular literature) or *funūn ša'biyya* (popular arts) leads one to think of a type of art that does not neglect less educated and fortunate social classes, it also implicates that one is referring to a sort of literature that is “dirty” and not “pure”.

In truth, even if it is often claimed that works in dialect address the less educated masses, it is evident that they were and are liked by all social classes. They may therefore be defined as popular in the sense that Peter Burke intended, i.e. they seek to target the widest audience possible: rich and poor, inhabitants of cities and the countryside, educated and uneducated people (Burke 1978, 28).

To confirm that works written in Egyptian dialect are appreciated by a heterogeneous audience without any distinction among social classes in terms of economic wealth or educational level, it is possible to consider a survey conducted by Kristian Takvam Kindt and Tewodros Aragie Kebede (2017). The survey demonstrated that more than two thirds of the population in Cairo writes in Egyptian dialect more than once a week. Moreover, a significant part of the population embraces dialect as a written language, although the extent of such appreciation decreases with the increase in the interviewees' educational level: 75% preparatory education, around 65% secondary education, 55% university education (Kindt and Kebede 2017, 30-31).

In the years in which the quarrel between the supporters of *fuṣḥā* and *'āmmiyya* raged, many *mudakkirāt* (memoirs) in dialect were produced. In most cases, these consisted in the autobiographies of people from very low social classes, as the titles often suggest. Since the protagonist is often illiterate, the *mudakkirāt* are presented as stories that were dictated to another person who transcribed them (Zack 2001, 194). This is not the time and place to discuss such works in detail, but suffice it to mention the most successful and famous *mudakkirāt*: *il-Sayyid wi mara'tub fī Baaris* and *il-Sayyid wi mara'tub fī Maṣr* published in 1925 by Maḥmūd Bayram al-Tūnīsī; *Mudakkirāt ṭālib ba'ta* by Luwīs 'Awaḍ, written in the 1940s but published only in 1965 due to difficulties in finding a publisher.

Only at the beginning of the 1940's was the first novel entirely in Egyptian dialect published, i.e. *Qanṭara alladī kafara* written by Muṣṭafā Muṣarrāfa, who is also the author of a collection of short stories in dialect and classical Arabic, entitled *Haḍayān wa-qīṣaṣ uḥrā*. It is worth

dwelling on this writer because I believe that we are in the presence of a literary phenomenon that has been guiltily neglected by historians and critics of Egyptian literature. In fact, *Qanṭara alladī kafara* is not only the first novel to be written in dialect, and not just a linguistic experiment, quite the contrary. Mušarrafa, in fact, is among the first – if not the absolute first – works in the history of Egyptian literature to make extensive use of the stream of consciousness technique, which was still in its embryonal stage in 1940s Egypt. Furthermore, he employed other little-experimented narrative techniques, such as interior monologue, association of ideas and differing points of view. The writer demonstrates being a skilled scrutineer of the characters' consciences, thus managing to sound their intimate world and project it onto the pages of the novel in a simple and flowing style. I believe that the fact that Mušarrafa does this at the beginning of the 1940s, and does so in dialect – a language that was supposedly reserved for *al-adab al-sābir* (irony) – is something revolutionary that cannot be left out of books on Arabic literature. Moreover, in *Haḍayān wa-qīṣaṣ ubrā*, Mušarrafa writes short stories in dialect on very diverse topics, thus demonstrating versatility in his use of *'āmmiyya*. These questions therefore follow: does a writer like Mušarrafa not deserve to be mentioned in a textbook on the history of Egyptian literature? And how many students of, and experts on, Arabic literature have ever heard of Mušarrafa and his novel?

In fact, *Qanṭara alladī kafara* is well known among dialectologists, who obviously have treated it as a source for studies on linguistic phenomena.

In general, the publication of *Qanṭara alladī kafara* did not spark great enthusiasm among critics and readers. The fact that it was written in dialect has always overshadowed all of its evident merits: one may claim that Mušarrafa was a pioneer of some narrative techniques in Egypt.

In following the chronicle of publications in dialect, it may be observed that they are not numerous until the end of the 1990s. However, it would be appropriate to leap forward in time to the new millennium, when new technologies and new historical-cultural events also change the way of creating literature. Thanks to the internet, for example, more people write, and this also highlights the idiomatic preferences of a potentially vast audience.

According to Gabriel Rosenbaum in fact, Egyptian dialect has not only become a written language but also a second literary language. Works in dialect are also written in other Arab countries, but only in

Egypt does this occur on a vast scale and in poetry, prose, theatrical texts, and even some journals (Rosenbaum 2011, 324). While it is true that up until a few years ago – and still today in some cases – it was sustained that *‘āmmiyya* is not a reliable linguistic system for writing because its spelling is not codified, the facts demonstrate that this is not the case. First of all, for decades it was believed that the alphabet of classical Arabic was not appropriate for writing in dialect, so many proposed to use the Latin alphabet. In truth, as Rosenbaum asserted, it is sufficient to understand that when one writes in dialect, the graphemes that are normally used in classical Arabic take on a different function (Rosenbaum 2004, 284). For instance, Rosenbaum actually describes what happens on an everyday basis when millions of Egyptians write text messages, e-mails, Facebook posts, tweets, as well as private letters and personal blog post, in dialect without much difficulty.

This proves, once again, that as much as language academies and experts seek to instate linguistic rules, it is always the speakers who actually determine them.

The publications in Egypt of the past two decades prove that there is increasing tolerance for the use of dialect in literature, even if the ranks of purists are still rather numerous. The fact that dialect enjoyed a certain degree of favour in poetry is demonstrated by the publication of *zağal* in the first centuries of Islam, and by the fact that two contemporary poets like Aḥmad Fu’ad Niğm and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī were among the most acclaimed, even more so than their colleagues who wrote in *fuṣḥā*. It is important to keep in mind though that for Egyptians, as for Arabs in general, poetry has always enjoyed a greater prestige compared to other forms of literary art.

The introduction of dialect in prose was more complex, although it had already appeared in the dialogues of *Zaynab* by the Egyptian Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, which was considered the first novel in the history of Arab literature. Today in Egypt, the use of *‘āmmiyya* in dialogues is widely tolerated – if not even preferred – because it more faithfully mirrors what happens in real life, i.e. that people of all social backgrounds speak with one another in dialect. Obviously, there are still purists who continue to write dialogues in classical Arabic: for instance, it is known that literature Nobel prize winner Nağīb Maḥfūz had always opposed the use of vernacular language in literature. Nevertheless, some scholars noticed that the writer had actually developed a code for such dialogical sections, which actually consists in the introduction of dialectal expressions in the classical language, with the aim of repre-

senting dialect for the reader. This is a style that has been defined as *colloquialized fuṣḥā* by Somekh (1991, 26-27), and as *camouflaged fuṣḥā*, or *fuṣḥāmmiyya*, by Rosenbaum (2000).

Furthermore, in recent years, numerous writers have adopted a style that also grants more concessions to dialect in narrative sections. In such a manner, their works result in a mix of *fuṣḥā* and *‘āmmiyya* that is intentionally sought in order to create specific narrative effects. Often internal monologues and streams of consciousness are written in dialect, or even more so when changing points of view, for instance from the author to the character (Rosenbaum 2008, 393-396). By changing the linguistic code, the reader immediately understands that that specific narrative part represents the thoughts of the character, who expresses them in the language in which he or she is used to formulating them, i.e. dialect.

For centuries, dialect was considered a language that could not even compete with the exceptional – not to mention the sacred – nature of *fuṣḥā*. It has been long thought – and still is by many – that the Egyptian language did not have the tools to express complex or “serious” concepts, as it was confined to humourism. On the contrary, *fuṣḥā* has been – and still is – considered pure, melodious, sweet, and better suited to express complicated concepts, although there are no scientific grounds to attribute it with these adjectives since they express subjective concepts but, as Mejdell sustains, “these values are central in shaping language ideology” (Mejdell 2017, 69). In this regard, Brustad refers to the ideology of diglossia that triggered a sociolinguistic process that made all texts written in dialect, or in a mix between dialect and standard Arabic, invisible. In other words, the ideology of diglossia induces the expectation that the texts will be written in the standard language, and that this will be the norm: in contrast, the texts that do not respect these alleged rules will be brushed off or – during the period of the *Nahḍa* and the XX century – physically erased, corrected, or unpublished. The idealisation of *fuṣḥā* as also being a morally sublime language, so that distancing oneself from it implies a sort of moral failure, must not be underestimated (Brustad 2017, 47). It is worth reminding that the institutions, and the Academy of Languages in particular, have done nothing to acknowledge the urges coming from society. They have been the bastion of standard Arabic and substantially worried about keeping it as intact as possible (*ibid.*, 48).

However, much has changed over the past two decades: the publication of poems and prose in dialect has escalated, and authors who

write in the vernacular language increasingly enjoy the esteem of critics and readers (just think, as previously mentioned, of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī and Aḥmad Fu’ād Niġm)¹.

Moreover, one cannot omit some considerations on writing on the internet: suffice it to think, for instance, of how many personal blogs host works by young writers: this, perhaps, is the phenomenon that most questions the rules not only of writing but also of Egyptian literary production. It is important to keep in mind, in fact, that works like *‘Aiza atgawwiz* by Ġāda ‘Abd al-‘Āl, *Urz bi-laban li-šahsen* by Riḥāb Bassām, and *Amma hādībi... fa raqṣatī anā* by Ġāda Muḥammad Maḥmūd were created for the web and successfully printed only later (Avallone 2011, 28). In particular, *‘Aiz atgawwiz* became a best seller, was translated into many European languages, and extensively read also in other Arab countries. The three mentioned works are part of the *mudawwan@š-šurūq* series that was introduced in 2008 by the publishing house Dār al-Šurūq. The fact that such a prestigious publishing house has accepted to publish works in dialect is a clear sign that something is changing, especially upon recalling writers like Mušarrafa and Luwīs ‘Awaḍ, whose novels were rejected simply based on the fact that they were written in dialect.

Internet writing itself, as mentioned, can truly question the exclusivity of standard Arabic as a literary language. Everything that is posted on personal blogs, social media, and other online channels is not subject to the control of the authorities or the proofreaders of publishing houses. The authors therefore feel free to express themselves without any restrictions, thus giving vent to their inclinations in terms of idiomatic preferences. This results in a sort of linguistic heterogeneity that is increasingly accepted by young generations but still contested by purists. What is truly interesting and could lead to imagine that works in dialect will be accepted like those written in standard Arabic in the future, is the fact that the language of those outlets also find its way to publishing houses and print media (Mejdell 2019, 82). This imply neither that dialect will be the only written language, nor that standard Arabic will be confined to having a role only in specific sectors: instead, it is possible to imagine that *‘āmmiyya* and *fuṣṣḥā* will coexist as two literary languages. Finally, as Brustad underlined, the “ideology of *fuṣṣḥā* is not threatened by writing in *‘āmmiyya*, but is threatened by mistakes in *fuṣṣḥā*” (Brustad 2019, 62).

¹ For a summary list on works written in dialect until 2004, see Rosenbaum 2004, 320-340.

Perhaps the strongest sign that something has truly changed emerged at the beginning of 2019, when two novels won the Sawiris Cultural Award *ex aequo*. It is also relevant to point out that the rewarded novels were not selected among young writers. *Al-Mawlūda* in fact, which was written entirely in dialect by Nādiya Kāmil, tied for first place with *Misk al-tall* by Saḥr Mūġī, which was written in a mix of dialect and classical Arabic.

In the significantly entitled article *Tatwīġ riwāya maktūba bi-l-‘āmmiyya... ṭayf Ṭāhā Ḥusayn wa-mustaqbal al-ṭaqāfa bi-miṣr*, ‘Umrān ‘Abd Allāh observed that the announcement of the victory of these novels was accompanied by the resumption of the debate on the use of dialect in literature. He begins by acknowledging that ‘*āmmiyya* has the right to be a true literary language, just as it has been the language of music and cinema for some time (‘Abd Allāh 2019).

In light of the present observations, it now seems inevitable to pay more attention to literary production in Egyptian dialect. I believe it has earned the right to a place of its own in the textbooks on the history of literature that we use at our universities, and not merely as a sporadic phenomenon of linguistic experimentation, but rather as literature in all respects.

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The Status and Future of Arabic Use amid Colonial Languages in the Arab World in Times of Globalization and Advanced Technology: A Political and Sociolinguistic Approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the languages and cultures that are commonly present in individual and collective practices of the Arab world, to understand the extent to which the identity and the linguistic approach in the region are affected by the historical and geographical context. It analyzes the status of Arabic and its future amid colonial languages, such as English and French, in the Arab world, specifically Morocco and Lebanon as case studies, in times of globalization and advanced technology. In a large and diversified arena, such as the Arab world, there is often a strong commitment and devotion to languages, such as Arabic, French, and English. Accordingly, this study further examines how Arabic can strengthen its practice and protect its status in an environment dominated by colonial languages. In this regard, the future of the Arabic language in the current ever-changing sociolinguistic context is subject to questioning and concerns for its official forthcoming evolution. Globalization, internet, social networks, digital technologies, and fast communication are no longer enabling linguistic authorities to provide a clear and accurate vision on the future of this language. Thus, addressing the question of languages in the future pushes researchers to consider and analyze the several linguistic strategies and policies implemented by the concerned authorities who are building and promoting an overall representation within and outside their original area.

Keywords: Arabic; ideology; language conflicts; language policies; sociolinguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

From a linguistic and cultural perspective, the focus here is on the study of the status and future of Arabic use in its original context (in countries where Arabic is the official language) rather than considering its position at a global level. Its future will not only depend on the strength and presence of the language in the areas of education, learning, and communication, but also on the ability of learners to become fluent in times of globalization, increased localization, information technology, and communication. Nowadays, Arabic speakers have to be able to communicate in multiple languages depending on their social and historical background legacy. Linguistic and cultural diversity has been imposed by both history and the will to achieve a psychological and sociological integration in the society and to nurture this cultural and political relationship. The examples below, representing the Arab reality, particularly in Lebanon and Morocco, will clarify this phenomenon.

More precisely, commercial advertisements for communication networks, mobile phones, and some food and consumer products in Lebanon and Morocco are used as access keys to the inter- and intra-linguistic dynamics in Arabic-speaking countries. Such countries are affected by either French or English. These have become the language of global communication, science, as well as technical and technological innovation. Considering here the relationship between the Arabic language and both French and English as a historical legacy left by colonialism does not mean that this analysis aims by any means to impose the Arabic language as a leading global language to seek new opportunities or additional speakers. Even though this is a recognizable right, this aspect is not part of the subject of this paper.

2. THE ARABIC LINGUISTIC REALITY: BETWEEN DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM

The Arabic linguistic and cultural reality is defined by a strong diversity and multiplicity. This leads linguists, as well as anthropologists and culturalists, to highlight the tension between languages and the overlap of cultures. This phenomenon appears in all types of communication produced by both the transmitter and the recipient in the Arabic language, and it is often characterized by confusion, metaphor, and hybridization. Indeed, the language varies so much that each region, each city, and

each tribe have developed their own dialect. It is usually associated with the pre-existence of a specific accent that distinguishes it from other dialects, which coexist and are in continuous interaction with the official or national language. Defined by Charles Ferguson in 1959 and 2020, diglossia (Mattey and Elmiger 2020)¹ a linguistic and social phenomenon confirming the existence of two levels of language. There is a high level or a higher state of written formal language: the language of state, administration, literature, religion, politics, media, and governments. It increases the force and authority of this language in its community and among the speakers. Then, we find a lower level or a minimum (low) level, dedicated to oral linguistic varieties that are derived from Arabic. Its forms and means empower and revive the daily dialogue between individuals and groups in a defined context to achieve continuous and lasting daily social communication. The levels contribute to maintaining a balance in the relationship between the individual and his/her social identity (Bright 1966). It also constitutes what we call a linguistic landscape (Gorter 2013, 2018; Van Mensel *et al.* 2016; Purschke 2017, 2018). Indeed, linguistic and sociolinguistic landscapes are the representation, by excellence, of social practices in discourse and constitute their basic foundation: an individual, who moves in the public space or in the media, is obliged to send or receive signs and exchange them with his/her interlocutors in a language and a level or register of languages that they master and share on a daily basis.

As defined by Ferguson, diglossia helps in the description of the characteristics of the Arab sociolinguistic landscape marked by the superposition of written and oral languages (Lachkar 2013). However, it does not take into account the existence of at least two high distinct varieties in use in linguistic and textual practices of the Arab world: Classical Arabic (CA; generally referring to the Arabic of the Koran and ancient and classical texts) and Standard Arabic (SA; with all its denominations: literary, literal, modern, modern literal, modern standard, etc.) together with Modern Spoken Arabic (MSA; mixing standard Arabic and regional dialect or local Arabic) which intellectuals use to ensure a transnational understanding of their expression and communi-

¹ The debate around the issue or the question of diglossia and bilingualism is recurrent in sociolinguistics. This is the reason why Marinette Mattey and Daniel Elmiger took up this question in issue 171 of the Journal *Langage et société* (2020). Lucy Garnier and Marinette Mattey have thus translated, among others, the text of Charles A. Ferguson (1991). See Ferguson 2020.

cation. It remains to be emphasized that Classical Arabic and Standard Arabic function in social practices and in sociolinguistic representations as two equivalents to a single language (the *fushā* language or eloquent language) alongside oral languages or dialects. Those supporting these dialects claim that they are the languages of the future, thus, asking the right to write and to teach them. In addition, this confusion between written and spoken languages has been adopted by the media, new information and communication technologies and marketing departments to attract more receivers. This takes place by using bilingualism, plurilingualism and translation to simplify as much as possible the syntactic and lexico-grammatical structures of the languages in use².

The social aspect of a language can contribute to transforming it into a social reality where linguistic, cultural, and social facets interlace, hence inevitably affecting the connotations and meanings of expressions and the behavior of its users (Meillet 1905). This dynamic, when applied to political, media and economic control, leads to the emergence of a struggle. It often ends with the subordination of weak languages to the real, strong, and dominant languages and cultures (Calvet 1974, 1981, 1996, 1999, 2002)³. This brings up the necessity of delineating the boundaries of language in order to balance with the actual limits of the permitted use in social groups by reviving, developing, and practicing it in daily communication to ensure its right to remain in the world of languages, cultures, and identities. A linguistic variety and its survival as a social reality, whether written or verbal, depend on the number of individuals and groups who speak it and the way in which they increase its position and reconstruction within the social and cultural system. This involves the protection and resistance of its unity and diversity in space and time; this can be done thanks to its written as well as oral use.

² To understand the sociolinguistic characteristics, in particular diglossia of Arabic, see Ryding 2005 and Bassiouney 2020.

³ Louis-Jean Calvet was one of the first Francophone researchers interested in the descriptions of the relationships between languages and their assumption of responsibility by politics. These relations can be exercised within the same linguistic family in the same space, in the same language and describes its relations with its linguistic variants (regional, national, local, etc.) or between several languages in the context of contact and conflicts of strong languages or languages of power, in other words, the languages of colonization. In addition to addressing this phenomenon within the framework of linguistic political science, Calvet manages to illustrate how glottophagy constitutes a double-edged sword that politicians use, within language markets, to weaken a language and make it taken over by another.

3. THE ARABIC LANGUAGE: FROM THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL STANDARDS TO GLOBALIZATION, INFORMATICS, AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS

A large number of Arabic speakers and other non-Arabic speakers ignore the linguistic diversity that characterizes the linguistic and social reality of the Arab world. It happens especially during the time of friction between languages. Few people can measure, describe, and evaluate this disparity, counting how many languages are spoken in the world and more precisely in the Arab community. At the international level, the numbers range from 6,000-7,000 languages for around 200 countries. The Chinese language remains the most used language in the world, while English represents the language of business and international communication. Arabic is the language of more than 430 million people. There are approximately 1.5 billion Muslims in the world, who actually use Classical Arabic for religious and ritual practices.

The Arab world is a multilingual space in which linguistic varieties and their users meet, communicate, mix, and continuously interact. This leads to borrowing, overlapping, and mixing phenomena that characterize linguistic practices. One will borrow a word or construction from at least two languages that are connected to build a new lexical structure with its own meaning. Instead of finding the correct word in their language, linguistic users borrow it from another language and adapt it to the phonetics and grammar of the local language. These interactions come in three forms: verbal, grammatical, and lexical. However, the result is collective, with all borrowed languages, from proximity languages, prestigious languages, and languages of strong prevalence, in a rather global way. The analysis of commercial advertisements for communication networks, mobile phones, and some food and consumer products in Lebanon and Morocco will clarify this linguistic phenomenon and its links with language policies in Arab countries.

4. THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

This sector represents the most important field for the use of linguistic varieties in Morocco as a means of communication among all segments of society that use phones, mobile phones, and the Internet. The media

employ these linguistic varieties to implement theories and strategies of communication, business, and ideology, supporting the definition of new models able to encourage the consumption of information and products without being burdened with their content, quantity, and quality (Lachkar 2014, translated from French).

As we can see in *Figures 1 and 2*, *Maroc Telecom* adopts formal Arabic and French for its written communication as a linguistic standard variety.



Figure 1. – Maroc Telecom commercial in Arabic.



Figure 2. – Maroc Telecom commercial in English.

The use of Modern Arabic in these advertisements may have at least three explanations:

1. Due to its position as the leading telecom network in Morocco, *Maroc Telecom* stands as a sponsor of the language authenticity used in the Arab media.
2. Hence, *Maroc Telecom* excludes the dialects spoken in Morocco.
3. Defending a high-ended product (in this example, the phone and Internet) requires using and presenting the product in a high-level language, which is the formal language. This type of media aims to transmit the written language that is used in the field of education and learning; thus, it is a correct language that is characterized by pure structure and is completely free of spoken and orality markers.

We can deduce from these announcements that the French language is still present in the commercial and marketing means of *Maroc Telecom*. The company prefers to produce ads in either French or Arabic, but it rarely mixes the two.

Maroc Telecom uses the standard language-high level, either in Arabic or in French. This means that *Maroc Telecom* is an institution that, like the family sphere, plays a key role in transmitting the “noble” language, preserving the “linguistic heritage”, and respecting laws and political practices which promote the *fushā* as the official and national language. Respect of and proficiency in written language rules can be interpreted as a message to the linguistic community to protect its heritage.

As for the *Inwi* Company, the first competitor to *Maroc Telecom* in the telephone, mobile phone, and Internet service, it will consider all the linguistic means necessary to reach profit goals (*Fig. 3*).



Figure 3. – Inwi commercial.

The adoption of the linguistic variety of Moroccan Arabic, which is a mixture of both Moroccan dialect and formal Arabic, is perceptible in the message. In general, the Arabic domain in the Arab world is distinguished by cases of bilingualism, trilingualism, multilingualism, and linguistic correspondence (Youssi 1992; Dichy 1994, 2007; Lachkar 2012, 2013, 2014, 2021).

On the other hand, some *Inwi* advertisements are either written in French mixed with the Moroccan dialect, Moroccan French as a linguistic variety, or written in Moroccan dialect using Latin characters (*Figs. 3-4*).



Figure 4. – Sample of commercial in Moroccan dialect.

The above commercial (*Fig. 4*) confirms the increase of oral Moroccan dialect adoption in the media (Miller 2017, 2015, 2011, 2012), as well as on the political scene. As Messoudi (2013) has shown, the current politicians and statesmen reply to their interlocutors colloquially, leaving the standard or unified Arabic language only as the official written language of the state. This reflects the current situation of Arabic in the official and governmental areas in the Arab world⁴. Indeed, the state activates

⁴There have been many discussions since 2011 about introducing dialect into school curricula. This reached the point of the Supreme Education Council, especially with the adoption of the new constitution that recognizes cultural and regional languages. It is well known that politicians used to prefer to use the Arabic language in their political statements to the press and audiovisual media, and they rarely used the Moroccan dialect. In 2011, after the new parliamentary elections in Morocco, where the Islamist Justice and Development Party won, Abdelilah Benkirane was appointed

the hidden theories and ideologies as defined by William Marçais's research (1930) limiting the use of Arabic to schools and transforming the Arabic dialects into official languages, since they are commonly used among members of the Arab community. It reflects the market interests and the latent ideological forces at work in the Maghreb.

Political officials and media specialists follow the same approach, illustrating that as Colin argues (1945, 240), ideological trends undermine the status of the formal language:

as is the case in the Arabic-speaking world, the Arabic language appears in Morocco under two aspects: the formal Arabic language and the dialect. The Arabic dialect remains the only spoken language. As for classical Arabic, known under one form or another only by literati, it is the only language that is usually written, but it is only a written language. (Colin 1945, 240)

The characterizing feature of the Arab linguistic reality, explaining the complementary relationship between the written language and the oral language is diglossia (Ferguson 1959) rather than bilingualism. Politicians, in Morocco, support the teaching of dialect and push for the replacement of Arabic. This is causing a division in the Moroccan society which, in turn, reflects a class struggle: the rich population empathizes with learning foreign languages, and the poor defend popular governmental education teaching Arabic and dialects.

The Lebanese linguistic situation is similar to that of Morocco (Abou 1962). The Lebanese society shines by the diversity of its cultural, religious, and linguistic background. Lebanon has experienced the emergence and practice of Aramaic, Syriac, Akkadian, and several diverse languages. Nowadays, the country belongs to the Arab world, and it has turned into a melting pot where many Mediterranean languages overlap while being dominated by the English language. The analysis of commercials for communication networks, banks, and restaurants shall illustrate this situation.

Prime Minister. The militants of his party and the majority of Moroccans were astonished when they saw Benkirane speak at his first official press conference on the Al-Oula channel, in the Moroccan language. Judging from the comments that followed, some considered it as an abandonment of the Arabic language, and the defenders of *dāriġa* saw it as a true sign of change. It appears that Benkirane used language as a tactic to gain more votes and supporters for his political and government program, as it can be considered a populist political revival that brings the politician at the top of the state hierarchy to al-Qaeda, that is, the people (Miller 2015).

4.1. *IDM Lebanese network: go inside with the language of the outside*

IDM network (IncoNet-Data Management) has been one of the major internet service providers in Lebanon since 1995. The company's strategy is to support new technologies and to improve the connection of individuals and organizations to the internal and global market. This may justify the adoption of linguistic hybridization in response to a society that tends to mix the local language with foreign languages in most forms of oral and written communication. Through time, the lack of national references has led to embracing alternative references because they symbolize power and belong to the strong economy.



Figure 5. – *IDM commercial.*

We note in *Figure 5* the use of 24 words in English and only two words in colloquial Arabic. The focus is on the association of official written language with another oral and social language. The Lebanese usually use the language of international presence (English) in opposition to the language of local social exchange (informal Arabic variety), thus moving away from classical Arabic. This phenomenon translates the change of social structure IDM takes into account: adapting social structure of a society whose members tend to be proud of using, learning, and teaching foreign languages at all levels (Lahcen 2010).

4.2. *The banking sector in Lebanon: the languages of power and authority*

What may come to mind when considering the banking, commercial, and professional sector is the competitiveness of the market in order to guarantee the survival in successfully establishing relationships based on strength, profit, competition, and mutual respect. The standards of commercial market apply to the field of “language market”. The term “language market” at the social level was originally introduced by Pierre Bourdieu (1982, 99), who believes that any linguistic situation can be compared to a market in which one displays his products according to product “price” expectation, in the sense that language is first a product, then a means:

Any linguistic situation that functions as a market in which something is exchanged. These things are of course words, but these words are not only intended to be understood. The communicative relationship is not a simple communication relationship, but rather an economic relationship that takes place where the value of the speaker is represented. (Bourdieu 1982, 99)

The same perception is found by Jean-Louis Calvet (2002), Ahmed Boukous (1995), Abdenbi Lachkar (2014, 2021) and several researchers who studied multilingualism and diversity in the Arab world. In fact, the Arabic language is often challenged by the English language.



Figure 6. – Bilingual commercial.

In the example shown in *Figure 6*, the Arabic language features first, and English comes second, exemplifying the sociolinguistic reality. In other words, the use of languages expresses the hierarchical relationship

that begins with the official language of the country followed by the language of global communication and international trade. The use that banks make of bilingualism has advantages and benefits for individuals and for institutions. Mastering the foreign language has a direct impact on income and employment opportunities (Al-Fassi 2013, 52-53).



Figure 7. – Commercial in English.

Despite a strong presence in the Arab and Francophone world, the complete absence of Arabic or colloquial Arabic and French and the exclusive use of English, in the two ads of *Figures 6 and 7* is worth noting.

4.3. Restaurant menus in Lebanon: where is French?



Figure 8. – Menu 1.



Figure 9. – Menu 2.

The above samples in *Figures 8* and *9* are key examples of the current status of language in the commercial field. They show that for printed language, only Arabic and English are used, not French, reflecting the history of conflict in the country: the linguistic scene witnesses the slow death of the French language in a traditionally francophone country. Until the end of the Lebanese war, it was the first foreign language used and taught. A shift is taking place: French is no longer predominant and vital, and English is becoming the professional language and the language preferred by the young generation.

5. AL-ARABIZIYA OR ARABIZI AS THE LINGUISTIC VARIETY OF THE NEW GENERATION

A “new” type of language used in the early 1990s has appeared on social media and digital communication platforms, particularly smart phones, known as Al-Arabiziya, Arabizi, or Aranglizi. This linguistic variety is a combination of or a reduction of words in Arabic and English (Lachkar 2021). Arabic speakers employ Latin letters and numbers, as an informal Arabic chat alphabet, in their communication via text messaging or chatting on social media platforms (see *Tab. 1*).

Table 1. – *Al-Arabiziya* characters.

ARABIC LETTERS	THE NUMBER OR THE EQUIVALENT LETTERS USED IN AL-ARABIZIYA
ء	2 (or nothing)
ح	7
خ	kh/5/7'
ذ	Dh
ش	ch/sh
ص	s / S / 9
ض	d / D / 9'
ط	t / T / 6
ظ	z / Z / 6'
ع	3
غ	gh / 3'
ق	q / 9 / 8

Indeed, this type of language users see in Arabizi a qualitative development of the Arabic language and a new way of writing. This writing is different, since it adopts an informal alphabet for words, and borrows structures of the Arabic language used in different regions of the Arabic-speaking world. As a mixed linguistic variety, Arabizi has contributed to strengthening the written use of dialects and promoting their presence in the most common social communication languages among members of Arab societies, instead of standard Arabic (see also *Fig. 10*).



Figure 10. – *Commercial in al-Arabiziya.*

Dialects, then, have moved from the secondary oral language level to becoming a standard written language. They have gained strength and

raising to the level of Internet languages. This space, whose users invent the third millennium language as a variety, does not believe in linguistic purity and the superiority of a particular language over others (Gonzales-Quijano 2012).

Many Arabic and non-Arabic speakers anticipate the Arabic language's demise and its disappearance from the language market. They use Arabizi as an alternative new written linguistic variety of Arabic, which is open to creativity in keeping with the innovations among the new Arab generation. This is how they informally get rid of the standard Arabic language's tyranny that is adopted by political regimes as a national and official language.

We find this type of situation in Said Akl's writings and poems, such as the one shown in *Tables 2* and *3*⁵.

Said Akl is a contemporary Lebanese poet (1912-2014) who has adopted controversial positions in the Lebanese and Arab scene. He describes Lebanon as a Phoenician state distinct from the Arabic world. His call for abandoning the classical Arabic language for the Lebanese dialect as the national Lebanese language (the Lebanese alphabet in Latin letters) is a clear indication of his strict ideological position.

Said Akl wrote several poems, which are by phonetically transcribing the Arabic linguistic system into the Latin system, much as Arabizi today operates. The alphabet is recognizable by its contradiction with the internationally known phonetic transcription, which makes its pronunciation very difficult and its meaning indecipherable for both Lebanese and non-Lebanese readers, Arabic or non-native speakers. Thus, also any attempt to translate the poem *Yara* into English or French would not render the meaning intended by the author. *Table 3* contains the same lines of poetry written in Arabizi with an interlinear attempted phonetic translation into Arabic. This latter is based on a standard interpretation of the Latin characters in which the original lines are written.

The poem is confusing because it blurs between the letters 'ayn and yā' (*ayni* / *yīni*), the letters *alif* and *qāf* (they ask / *isqlu*) and the letters *kāf* and *al-qāf*, the letter *ḡayn* and the sound /*g*/ (*ghammedhun* / *gammedhun*), the letters *šīn* and *kāf* (*shighl* / *kighl* / work), etc. It makes it very hard to understand the structure of the poem as a linguistic and literary product, letting alone its content and meaning, as shown in the *Table 4*.

⁵ The lines of poetry are retrieved from: <https://www.onefineart.com/internal-page/poet-said-akl/said-akl-yara> [04/12/2021].

Table 2. – Poetry lines written in Arabizi with phonetic transliteration into Arabic.

POETRY WRITTEN IN ARABIZI	PHONETIC TRANSLITERATION INTO ARABIC
Xettiq bi yinayyi... w gammedhun... w tir...	حطّك بي عينيّ ... و غمضهون ... و طير
Ya wayn? Laq mec ya l qamar...	عا وين؟ لأمش عالقمر
W la ya xelem xelmu bacar,	و لا عا جلم جلمو بشر
W la ya deni cegl el watar,	ولا عا دني شيغل الوتر
W la bestyir,	و لا بستعير،
La mne s snunu zawgeta,	لا من السنونو زو غتا
W la mne z znabiq cahqeta...	و لا من الزنابق شهقنا
Xelwi, ya genniyyit yemer,	حلوي يا غنية عمر
Ya caqrt el matu s semer	يا شقرة ال ماتو سمر
Men talleta...	من طلتنا ...
W ya wayn? Yebqu yesqalu	و عا وين؟ يبقو يسالو
Baydiq ya wayn...	بعدك عا وين
W laycun jwanexna tnayn:	و ليشن جوانخنا تنين
Ceyri w cayriq, ha l xelu,	شعري و شعرك هالحلو
Sawbu n njum byenzalu,	صوبو النجوم بينزلو
Biyqarrbu	بيقربو
W biygarrbu	و بيغزبو
B denyit yeter...	بي دنية عطر
Marrat fiqi byecrdu	مرّات فيكي بيشردو
W marrat betquli htadu	و مرّات بتقولي اهتدو
W haddu bi yinayqi l keder...	و هدو بي عينيكي الخضر
W mazal beqra w la xajar	و ما زال بكرا و لا حجر
Baqi, w la mkabbir kabar,	باقي و لا مخبر خبر
L biysir, ya xelwi, ysir...	ال ببصير. يا جلوي . بصير
Yhabbit w yebqa la l fana	يهبط و يبقى للفنا
Ha l qawn, ha l ma byenqana,	ها لكون هال ما بينأني
We mne l yemer qajmal qtir	و من العمر أجمل كثير
Yehdul ya kasriq ha l xarir,	يهذل عا خصرك هالحريير
W bawsi tyayyetli qana...	و بوسي تعيطلي أنا
W xettiq bui yinayyi...	و حطّك بي عينيّ ...
w gammedhun... w tir...	و غمضهون ... و طير

Table 3. – Poetry lines written in Arabizi with an attempted phonetic translation to Arabic.

POETRY WRITTEN IN ARABIZI	ATTEMPTED PHONETIC TRANSLATION INTO ARABIC
Xettiq bi yinayyi... w gammedhun... w tir...	خَطَّكَ بِيئِي... و كَمْضَهون ... و تير
Ya wayn? Laq mec ya lqamar...	يا وين؟ لَقْ مَكْ يَالْقَمَر
W la ya xelem xelmu bacar,	و لا يَخْلَمْ خَلْمُو بَكَر
W la ya deni cegl el watar,	و لا يا دِنِي كَعْلُ الوَتَر
W la bestyir,	و لا بَسْتِيير،
La mne s snunu zawgeta,	لا مِن السَنُونُو زَوَعَتَا
W la mne z znabiq cahqeta...	و لا مِن الزَّنَابِقِ كَهَقَتَا
Xelwi, ya genniyyit yemer,	خَلْوِي يا غَنِيَّةِ يَمَر
Ya caqrt el matu s semer	يا ثَقْرَةَ الِ مَاتُو سَمَر
Men talleta...	مِن تَلَتَا ...
W ya wayn? Yebqu yesqalu	ويا وين؟ يَبْقُو يَسْقَلُو
Baydiq ya wayn...	بِيْدِكْ يا وين
W laycun jwanexna tnayn:	و لَيْكُنْ جَوَانِخْنَا تَنَيْنِ
Ceyri w cayriq, ha l xelu,	شَعْرِي و شَعْرِكْ هَالْخَلُو
S sawbu n njum byenzalu,	صَوْبُو النُجُومِ بِيَنْزَلُو
Biyqarrbu	بِيَقَرَّبُو
W biygarrbu	و بِيغَرَّبُو
B denyit yeter...	بِي دَنِيَّةِ يَطَر
Marrat fiqi byecrdu	مَرَّاتِ فَيْكِي بِيَشْرُدُو
W marrat betquli htadu	و مَرَّاتِ بَتَقُولِي اهْتَدُو
W haddu bi yinayqi l keder...	و هَدُو بِي عَيْنِيكِي الكَضْر
W mazal beqra w la xajar	و ما زال بَقْرَا و لا خَجَر
Baqi, w la mkabbir kabar,	بَاقِي و لا مَكْبِيرِ كَبَر
L biysir, ya xelwi, ysir...	الِ بِيَسِيرِ، يا خَلْوِي، يَسِير
Yhabbit w yebqa la l fana	يَهَبِّطُ و يَبْقَى اللفنا
Ha l qawn, ha l ma byenqana,	هَالْقَوْنِ هَالِ ما بِيَنْقَتِي
We mne l yemer qajmal qtir	و مِن اليمِرِ قَجْمَلِ قَتِير
Yehdul ya kasriq ha l xarir,	يَهْدُلْ عَا كَصْرِكْ هَالْخَرِير
W bawsi tyayyetli qana...	و بَوَسِي تَبْطَلِي قَنَا
W xettiq bui yinayyi... w gammedhun... w tir...	و حَطَّقْ بِيئِي... و غَمْضَهون ... و طِير

Table 4. – Comparison of the attempted phonetic translation and the correct phonetic transcription of the poetry lines written in Latin script.

ATTEMPTED PHONETIC TRANSLATION	CORRECT PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION
حَطَّكَ بِيئِي ... وغمضهون ... و طير يا وين؟ لُقْ مَكْ يالقمر ولا يخلم خلمو بكر ولا يا دني شغل الوتر ولا بستعير، لا من السنونو زوغتا ولا من الزنايق شهقتا حلوي يا غنية عمر يا شفرة ال ماتو سمر من تلنا ... ويا وين؟ بيقو يسألو بيدك يا وين و ليكن جوانخنا تنين شعري و شعرك هالخلو صوبو النجوم بينزلو بيقربو و بيغربو بي دنية عطر مرات فيكي بيشردو و مرات بتقولي اهتدو و هدو بي عينكي الخضر و ما زال بكرا و لا حجر باقي و لا مخبر خبر ال ببصير، يا حلوي، بصير يهبط و يبقى للفنا هالكون هال ما بيناتي و من العمر أجمل كتير يهذل عا خصرك هالحرير و بوسي تعيطلي أنا و حطك بي عيني ... و غمضهون ... و طير	حَطَّكَ بِيئِي ... وغمضهون ... و طير عاوين؟ لا مش عالقمر ولا عا جلم جلمو بشر ولا عا دني شغل الوتر ولا بستعير، لا من السنونو زوغتا ولا من الزنايق شهقتا حلوي يا غنية عمر يا شفرة ال ماتو سمر من تلنا ... ويا وين؟ بيقو يسألو بعدك عا وين و ليكن جوانخنا تنين شعري و شعرك هالخلو صوبو النجوم بينزلو بيقربو و بيغربو بي دنية عطر مرات فيكي بيشردو و مرات بتقولي اهتدو و هدو بي عينكي الخضر و ما زال بكرا و لا حجر باقي و لا مخبر خبر ال ببصير، يا حلوي، بصير يهبط و يبقى للفنا هالكون هال ما بيناتي و من العمر أجمل كتير يهذل عا خصرك هالحرير و بوسي تعيطلي أنا و حطك بي عيني ... و غمضهون ... و طير

Indeed, language is a system based on phonemic symbols where individuals express their ideas and meanings (Ibn Jinnī, d. 392 H.; De Saussure 1916; Lyons 1968; Robins 1971). The social function of a language relies on conversation and the expression and transmission of ideas among individuals in a linguistic context. Indeed, the role of language in general is to facilitate the process of communication between members of a society, expressing joys and concerns, fulfilling desires and filling needs through a language and terms that they all understand easily, without any difficulty. Inspired by the works of Arabists and orientalist

who used the phonetic transcription of Arabic in Latin characters, Said Akl's written wording in Latin letters does not fulfill this communication function. It fails to facilitate the process of interaction in reflecting the Lebanese, Arabic, and finally Latin languages. Furthermore, it increases the isolation of the first type of linguistic users between themselves, resulting in a certain linguistic, psychological, and social reclusion. He turns them into a subject of study and open discussion. They practice their original language by trying to define its relationship with identity and feeling of belonging to a certain place and time. An individual should not have a separatist, hostile, fanatical, and antagonistic vision of a language or a culture in order to achieve personal and ideological goals with the risk of falling into the domain of linguistic insecurity. On the contrary, one should return to the history of language as a legacy of empowerment and adaptation to all types of fields (politics, economics, sociology, religion, anthropology, etc.) in order to overcome the crises that society has known and experienced. It should participate in building a civilization that contributes to the evolution of humanity. Therefore, discussing the structural characteristics of the Arabic language and its change in contrast with the political geography of languages and their geometry means that the Arabic language is no longer only related to specific situations and/or location, but it forces us to reconsider the past lived and coexisted ideologies in order to build the future of the language in particular during the time of technological isolation and artificial intelligence.

We observe here how all types of media and ideologies in diverse fields, such as trade, banks, and restaurants, contribute to creating different levels and types of languages used in daily communication. The outcomes can be translated as follows:

- There is an encounter between civilized languages that have contributed to the development of human exchanges without restrictions, conditions, or limits.
- There are contacts between languages: they cooperate using words and terms of a given language to express a specific phenomenon in another language which concerns society. It usually pertains to a specific field, such as modern science, technology, and informatics, which is well-known for its borrowed structures and the redefinition and change of semantic meanings. Thus, new words and terms appear, and they do not respect the rhythms recognized in the Arabic language, but rather respond to the new social and cultural requirements of individuals and groups. This facilitates the understanding of mean-

ing without compulsively referring to the dictionary. This challenge was often observed with the early orientalists who used to study the Arabo-Islamic heritage through dictionaries to capture the context (Dozy 1881). They consulted *Lisān al-‘arab*⁶, an Arab dictionary, but this one did not help to clarify meanings. The reason, despite the linguistic development that the Arab community has known, is that the *Lisān al-‘arab* dictionary relied heavily on the Bedouin language, or the Badia, instead of adopting the language that is common among people and the language used in the scientific and communicative fields.

- The Arabic language in particular suffered a strong pressure from the historical languages-cultures in the region, which attempted to isolate it from its original surroundings mainly due to stereotypes defending the idea of its inability to keep pace with the scientific and technological developments. The frequent use of words from foreign languages has become widespread among individuals since it facilitates the process of communication and removes barriers between them. In addition, Arab history gives value only to foreign languages in education, despite the major role that Arabic plays in opening up to the outside world and cultures. Nevertheless, it does not prevent the Arabic language from existing. There is a linguistic policy that raises the value of local languages (written Arabic, oral Arabic, and Berber) by framing their teaching and use in the administration and the different types of visual, written, and audio media.

This leads us to raise the following question: do Arab countries suffer from a language crisis expressed through the language policy, especially at the level of administrative, media, commercial, and political communication?

⁶ Ibn Manẓūr composed *Lisān al-‘arab* in the seventh century H. He collected his material from sources gathered before, that had a close relationship with the movement of language collection in the Bedouin world from the end of the first century to the beginning of the third century H. It is also common knowledge that Ibn Manẓūr took what was related to the Badia language from al-Azhari’s dictionary of language *Tabdīb*, which was compiled in the fourth century H. This means that it is difficult for non-native speakers to understand this language, as it is for the early orientalists such as Dozy, who developed a practical dictionary that collected the terms most frequently used in the Arab-Islamic civilization to facilitate understanding of the language. He did not collect words from the people of the Eastern part of the Arabic-speaking area and the Arabian Peninsula, but from the Andalusians and Moroccans, such as Ibn Ḥaldūn, al-Maqqarī, Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Idrissī, and others.

6. THE FIELD OF LANGUAGES IN THE ARAB WORLD
BETWEEN POLITICS AND LINGUISTIC PLANNING

Linguistic policy refers to the set of strategic choices and decisions made by political authorities to teach and transmit the official language through learning, teaching, and use in line with the social, economic, and geopolitical reality of society. As a result, the government adopts political plans, within the framework of what is known as linguistic planning, implying all the objective positions of the civil, educational, and political bodies and the collection of scientific studies that deal with the social and political aspects of languages and their role in developing societies, related to their human components. Because language is the primary means of communication between individuals and societies, a means of interaction with and between individuals, it constitutes a basis and a system which define the degree of the strength of the relationship between the language and its users and those who decide its implementation so that it answers their political orientations.

Authorities in Arab countries have often used the linguistic issue as a pretext to convey specific political messages to their opponents and allies, internally and internationally. Following the end of the Lebanese war and the Taif Agreement, the authorities have drawn a plan for a political and economic reform and social recovery. The educational reform plan was added in 1994 as well, covering the education related to the language itself; it ended with the identification and implementation of new educational programs in 1997. This reform imposed, especially in public schools, an equal distribution of teaching hours allocated to the language. Arabic (as an official language) is the first foreign language. The teaching of French or English as the second foreign language was preserved. This decision insisted on the need to instruct the Arabic language to the citizens, as a mother tongue, a national, and an official language. At the same time, this pedagogical reform requires the learner-citizen to master at least one foreign language in order to be positively exposed to foreign cultures.

For Morocco, preserving the national identity was an important factor. The challenge of teaching the Arabic language contributed to the division of the Moroccan political class from the first years of the country's independence. The law of Arabization of education was enacted and applied to preserve the national identity and to estrange local frameworks, especially in the 1980s, to be able to replace the foreign frameworks that symbolize the colonial forces and their cultural

remnants. Thus, the process of Arabizing education in Morocco went through gradual stages and crucial years contributing to the return of the Arabic language to its original medium:

- Arabization of primary education between 1965 and 1969;
- Arabization of the philosophy instruction in secondary education between 1973 and 1974;
- Arabization of the history and geography education between 1974 and 1975;
- Arabization of mathematics, natural sciences, physics, and chemistry in secondary education between 1982 and 1989.

However, teaching scientific subjects in Arabic soon led to severe complications, notably standing in the way of students' success in universities. Scientific and technical subjects are taught in Arabic in elementary school but in Arabic and French in middle and high schools and only in French at university. The consequence was a throwback on previous decisions by the rulers turning to teaching French and most of the majors and subjects at all education levels in schools and universities in French. It gave the French language strength and authority in the Moroccan society opening a wide door in the Moroccan languages market, mainly in the private local educational institutions partnering with French institutions, such as the Education Agency abroad or the French Agency Abroad (AEFE). Due to a high demand from the middle and rich classes, the French institutions have acquired a strong reputation and a gage of educational and social success.

In the minds of most Arabic-speakers and non-Arabic speakers, there is usually an overlapping framework and hence conflict of languages and cultures. They build and adopt the representation meaning that the Arabic language is unable to teach science in educational institutions in Arab countries, which leads it to be dwarfed and stereotyped as inferior despite the existence of several experiences showing the ability of the Arabic language to be used in science in Syria and other Arab countries (Al-Ḥanī 1932; Watik 2004). This goes beyond the difficulties encountered by teachers when translating the terminology of scientific disciplines from foreign languages into Arabic (Al-Ḥanī 1932, 253). This shows the opposite of statements made on conventional and unconventional media, which have perceived and perceive the Arabic language as the reason for the academic failure of pupils and students in the Arab area. In general, a student, and in particular an Arabic one, assimilates the lessons and scientific specializations in a better and broader way when taught in the mother tongue or the official language.

There is no doubt that the Arabization law has increased and strengthened the power of foreign languages, and especially French, in Moroccan educated circles. The number of class hours increased by a large percentage in order to develop the linguistic abilities of students, specifically of students specializing in science, before reaching higher education institutions. The French language level moved in the baccalaureate exam for scientific subjects from 1 to 4, whereas English and Arabic both have 2⁷.

With a goal of openness to foreign cultures and achieving greater success among secondary school pupils and in response to the new “linguistic adjustment” law for education, the government established in 2014 and recommended in 2019 the International Baccalaureate Division, specializing in English. To achieve this goal, nine secondary institutions were chosen, including six general secondary schools, which are teaching scientific subjects in English.

The law of “linguistic adjustment” in education contributed to the initiation and the consolidation of instruction in a different language from Arabic. The approach gave a new qualitative picture of Moroccan education as an open way to several languages instead of continuously relying on French for training and education. In response to an increased demand from the young generation, the English language became an alternative in the Moroccan languages market. Most Moroccans who are fluent in English believe it will provide them more opportunities at several levels (professional and social) despite the ambiguous status it has today.

The raising demand for English, in the domains of culture, religion, and historical ideologies and beliefs can be explained by the fact that many Moroccans view English as a language of an old culture and heritage introduced as a progressive language; it is easy to understand and

⁷ These factors show how the French language has turned into a strong language that takes the lion's share in the teaching of scientific subjects in secondary education, while the share of Arabic, as an official language, is equal to that of English. This suggests to the researcher that the French language plays indirectly, in the Moroccan linguistic and communicative reality, the role of the official or national language, although Moroccan law does not recognize it. This law was ratified by the current government headed by Ezzedine Ottomani in the name of the Islamic Party of Justice and Development. This led Abdelilah Benkirane, the prime minister of the previous government, to denounce the return of colonialism to Morocco, asking on his Facebook page: “How can a party with Islamic standards abandon the Arabic language to be replaced by the language of colonialism?”.

it is neutral, in addition to its being unrelated to the colonial past that characterizes their linguistic representations about the French language. Some Moroccans believe that French is the cause of the pain that the Arabic language is suffering from today. French colonialism reduced the learning of Arabic in favor of French imposed by force in education, incorporated and consolidated into the Moroccan reality.

The demand for the Arabic and French languages is constantly decreasing with the spread of English, mainly in private education. Most of students who do not master French abandon it because they were subjects to the policy of Arabization. Arabic is perceived as a language that is unable to keep pace with the progress and prosperity that humanity has known and knows mainly due to the prevailing ideologies and stereotypes which are brought about by globalization and social media technologies that are largely dominated by English. To meet the requirements, despite the presence of the American schools located in Fez, Tangiers, Rabat, Casablanca, and Marrakech, the number of Anglophone institutions teaching English in major cities in Morocco has increased. These includes, for example, the London Academy and the British International School in Casablanca, besides other private agents, such as International Baccalaureat (IB) and Cambridge Assessment.

Foreign languages are in competition with the official Arabic and Berber languages in Morocco and their original social and cultural reality. This can relate to the past rivalry that took place between the Spanish language (the Cervantes Institute) and the French language (the French Institute and the Agency for French Education Abroad – AEFÉ) and ended with the weakening of the first over the second despite a common geography and history. The existing demand for the Spanish language is growing in northern Morocco and the southern desert regions; however, there is less demand in the rest of the country. Nowadays, we are witnessing a sharp race between the network of French, American, and English schools. The Moroccan linguistic situation reminds us of the increasing competition in Lebanon between French and English on the one hand, and among French, English, and Arabic on the other hand.

The points discussed here provide a comprehensive view of the unbalanced Arab linguistic reality and politics in Lebanon and Morocco. It gives a symbolic view of the potential chronic political linguistic outcomes (Marcellesi 1986) of the so-called linguistic strategy in the Arab countries and the indulgence of their rulers while teaching languages inherited from colonial regimes. The significant increase of foreign

mission schools (especially French and English) can be explained by the spread of non-governmental educational institutions in the country that are specialized in foreign languages learning. Therefore, it becomes necessary to take effective political decisions to give a clear picture of the structure of general educational languages in order to build it and highlight the role of every factor in activating the country's linguistic policy. This should take into account several levels:

- The first level is political. The state carries this responsibility based on what is provided by specialized linguists who determine the required language level and target groups.
- The second is the linguistic and social level which represents linguists and specialists in applied linguistics, as they determine the type of subject to be taught, the number of teaching hours, the number of students required, and the type of level to which they are applied.
- The third level is educational and psycho-linguistic and represents educators and teachers.

The superposition of these levels contributes to the formation of a fixed vision, synchronized with the linguistic and educational reality and the political positions that can be taken to program and develop language planning. The strategy will contribute to restoring confidence between the languages used and their users and building a future in which these languages live and coexist in peace, far from conflict. An effective solution could be to define rules that codify the teaching of languages and regulate the relationships between them and their use for information, training and education at all levels, in order to ensure the survival of all of them and to protect the context plurality over time. This may initiate a fundamental shift in a market focused on struggle for survival, where the English language is the center and the backbone. Many studies and academic works emphasized the role of foreign languages, especially French and currently English, in the success or failure of students for the Faculties of Science and Technology in the Arab world and later, their contribution to their professional integration after graduation.

Nevertheless, the challenge of language education in the Arab world is the core of future policies and remains one of the most important factors of social, economic, and professional integration to avoid exclusion affecting many groups, especially the poor and vulnerable people. A perspective could be to evaluate the number of Arabic teaching hours in educational institutions, the number of foreign language hours, or the number of foreign language educational institutions in the Arab coun-

tries. These remain strong solutions to ensure linguistic stability and restore credibility and faith in the Arab identity that the citizen tends to see weakening day by day, facing a deep sense of hostility from other cultures and identities against what is defined as Arabic. By applying this standard (requiring teaching Arabic at all schools and university levels in France, for example, which is difficult to achieve politically), it is possible to reach linguistic democracy based on giving users the right to move away from political barriers and boundaries set by the market in order to protect some interests and to keep them under control.

7. ARABIC LANGUAGE, ADVANCED MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE ARABIC FIELD

Several countries in the Arab world, particularly the Gulf countries, organize their socio-economic future in connection with advanced media and artificial intelligences. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, political leaders are rallying, as part of Vision 2021, the deployment of new media and intelligent systems to that of societal regeneration and the consolidation of a visible linguistic strategy based on strengthening the application of the Arabic language to artificial intelligences. This is in order to influence or have a direct impact on culture and identity in the context. We note this in the “2021 Smart Dubai” strategy for the Emirate of Dubai which is preparing a reorganization of its community. Indeed, the government sees it as one of the best ways to reorganize and to build good relations between the government and the governed in preparation for a stable and intelligent future. This link between artificial intelligence and linguistic development strengthens social and even family cohesion and it helps to preserve a society that is united and unified first and foremost by language as an asset representing the past and the present, and allowing us to project ourselves into the future. The integration of the Arabic language within artificial intelligences and media contributes to the linguistic renewal in a changing and developing Arab society (Lachkar 2014, 2017, 2021). In this way, politicians make the citizens aware of the challenges of integrating the Arabic language as the language of communication of tomorrow’s society, a totally smart and intelligent society. It is also a part of this intelligent society which could exclude the non-intelligent communities or could be late in adopting this way of life and societal organization of the future.

Artificial intelligence, by combining linguistics and technicality, makes it possible to identify the past and present forms of the Arabic language and to generate other forms representing the new uses of the language by the new generations. This shows that the Arabic language is an intelligent language, a language of intelligence and development, an open and successful language. It also gives an approximate vision of the current identity that is connected to the screens and pushes for its adoption because it is part of the future or allows it to be part of it. This political and socio-cultural approach through intelligent systems is a renewal of identity that takes place at three levels: individual, personal, and collective (Lachkar 2010). This is understood by the 1 million Arab coders initiative:

</10^6> مبادرة مليون مبرمج عربي / 1 MILLION ARAB CODERS INITIATIVE.

This initiative presents itself as a digital gateway bringing closer culture, the Arabic language and computational programming to meet the challenges of this transformation in a society in which everything is becoming a subject of innovation, both from an individual and collective point of view. This is attributed to the fact that new information and communication technologies, especially those that guarantee high connectivity and connection in society, have completely disrupted the relationship between individuals and societies, between languages and discourses, and their relationship with language and other technical and digital forms (virtual interfaces and interactive applications, online courses, big data, online conferences, etc.). In other words, these new means of communication have reshaped the modes of production and transmission of ideas, values, and ways of perception of the world and its objects, especially linguistic ones and the modes of representing them to give them meaning. They are redefined in both Arabic and English.

This is also the case, at the level of research in lexematic, syntagmatic and phraseological innovation, which is inspired by work carried out within the framework of the comparative grammar, the generative grammar, and the transformational grammar (Harris 1972; Maurice Gross 1975; etc.) and in the context of the automatic and computerized processing of the Arabic language and the Machine Learning (El-Hannach 2001, 2019; Fehri *et al.* 2010; Habash 2010; Dichy 2013; Hamdani 2014). Much of this research, combining theory and practice, and therefore coming out of abstraction, has focused on the implementation of projects for the development of engineering applied to the Arabic language. These studies, often unpublished or unknown in the Arab

world, are related more to a personal investment than an institutional one; they participate in the emergence of a new scientific and technical approach of the Arabic language based on the selection, the calculation and the possibilities and incompatibilities of the distributions and the transformations of morphosyntactic and lexico-grammatical structures of Arabic. This done, the Arabic language is presented as a language which uses structures based on logic and a language which encourages subscription and deduction.

Other researchers have become involved in the field of translation and terminology where they try to identify borrowings and the new words, to define their lexical and morphosyntactic forms and their meanings and to code them separately or in groups of words forming fixed or stereotypical collocations or locutions (Lachkar 2007, 2010, 2014, 2019, 2021). This has given rise to a large number of research centres (SILAT-ICAR at Lyon2 University), companies (ARADIC in Lyon), and specialized associations in the field of translation and comparative digital dictionaries Arabic-English, Arabic-French, and other languages (Arab Scientific Community Organization; Arabisation Centre in Rabat, International Agency for Natural Languages Engineering, Union of Arab Translators, etc.). These centers and institutions are active players in the research, selection, and classification of new and old Arabic or Arabian language forms and in training in translation and linguistics.

New media enthusiasts and teachers in the Arab world today are equipped with knowledge which can help them develop media channels and interactive educational applications in teaching Arabic language and other disciplines in Arabic to help learners both at school and at university to develop knowledge and skills and a critical mind first in Arabic, as the language of its space, then in other languages of global communication, especially English and French. Thanks to linguistic engineering, artificial intelligence, and new information and communication technologies, teachers, learners, media professionals, politicians, and Arab citizens can collect data on any subject and support and process them. This technology allows them to fit surely into the global market for the construction of knowledge and the circulation of knowledge in an intelligent society in which Arabic, like other languages of power, has its say.

8. CONCLUSION

This study argues that the future of the Arabic language in its pre-global Arab environment is linked to the following:

1. The socio-linguistic future of the Arabic language is related to its daily use under all the “linguistic forms” that the Arab world assimilates, and it is also linked to the diverse geography, which is a distinguishing and unifying characteristic, despite the different locations of its speakers.
2. Language practices dominate deeply and largely the Arab media uses, which have become the first and unofficial legislator of language policies for most of the Arab world. New media have come to include borrowed linguistic elements from foreign languages, and even adopt the use of one language instead of another, especially foreign languages with global influence, such as French. The media use their influence to spread theories on the futility of studying and circulating Standard Arabic by encouraging campaigns that call for the teaching of colloquialism, which may weaken Arabic. They try to replace it with a competing language, as occurred in the French colonies in Africa (Niger, Ivory Coast, the countries of the Maghreb, etc.), Spanish in Latin America (Uruguay and Paraguay), and Dutch in Suriname and Indonesia in the Asian continent. This theory is an evolution of the traditional dichotomy between “necessary loan” and “excess loan”.

The samples and models considered earlier allow us to identify the successive repetitions of words used from foreign languages instead of written Arabic, as well as oral languages which are always intended to be written for ideological rather than educational needs. Here, use means linguistic borrowing, where the importance of words and terms, replacing Arabic, turn into a symbol against identity and physical location relationship in times of globalization and digital humanities. These linguistic borrowings, which are also considered to be “cultural borrowings” can contribute to creating a rift within society and among its components, undermining its cultural fundamentals (Myers-Scotton 2002).

Finally, we can understand how the association of languages in the media, together with linguistic borrowing and mixing, has turned somewhat closer to the conflict and struggle over identities in multicultural societies, especially those subject to colonialism. Along with the hidden or overt adoption of the prevailing ideology, this type of linguistic user is realizing the strategic value in using a word as a market value.

In the mass media, languages are transformed into commodities to be bought and sold. They contribute to increasing profit and perpetuating capital. Like the financial markets and commercial sectors, this codification of languages reveals how the media are trying to outbid the fate of languages, playing with the relationship between smaller and major languages, attributing additional respect and credibility to some languages over others in the Arab world. It is a settled and new reality which took time to adapt and enforce its cultural and identity components, specifically the language via replacing the local language (acclimatation) or absorbing it in the context of the so-called glottophagy⁸. Foreign language education clearly adopts the language policies implemented in the Arab countries, which may have a great impact on the classification of languages and on the process of building new perceptions about the Arabic language.

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⁸ Political and informational. This gives an overview of the extent to which foreign language education respects the language policies adopted in the Arab countries, and this may have a great impact on the classification of languages and building new perceptions about the Arabic language.

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