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CHOOSING ONE DIALECT FOR THE ARABIC SPEAKING WORLD: A STATUS PLANNING DILEMMA

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Collectively, Arabic is spoken by more than 400 million persons in nearly two dozen countries and holds the dual distinction of being the fifth most widely spoken as well as one of the fastest growing languages in the world. However, it also faces the challenge of being a diglossic language, one with two distinct forms, where Modern Standard Arabic [High] coexists with numerous national vernaculars [Low]. Haeri (2000) described the high variety as "the language of writing, education and administration," whereas the vernaculars are "the media of oral exchanges, non-print media, poetry and plays" (p. 63). Numerous studies (Abdulaziz, 1986; Abu-Absi, 1986; Alrabaa, 1986; Gully, 1993; Suleiman, 1994) have addressed this diglossic situation, identifying the wide linguistic distance, particularly on syntactical and morphological levels, between the two varieties, as well as the debate on whether or not the vernaculars should be considered Arabic at all or are simply manifestations of local national culture (Haeri, 2000. p.63). The most significant issue arises in the realm of education. According to Haeri (2000), there are two pressing questions: which form of the language should serve as the medium of instruction, and should the MSA form be modernized and in what manner (p. 70)? This paper will explore some of the factors affecting the feasibility of selecting a particular dialect of Arabic to serve the educational needs of the entire Arabic-speaking world, including the widespread use of colloquial Arabic and present-day national education policies. In addition, to learn how native-Arabic speakers perceive this diglossic state of affairs, the researcher interviewed 84 participants ranging in age from 17 to 48 living in Tucson, Arizona, or Madrid, Spain, to determine their views on the various vernacular dialects of Arabic and to obtain their opinion on the prospects of replacing MSA with one of these dialects.

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic language as it is used today can be separated into three distinct categories: classical Arabic as written in the Qur'an and centuries old literature; Modern Standard Arabic [MSA], also called Fus'ha, the language of

writing, education and administration; and colloquial or spoken Arabic, of which there are numerous varieties. The problem facing speakers of Arabic is that many of the local spoken dialects are not mutually comprehensible, often forcing speakers to code switch into a third, common language, or cease communicating with one another. For this reason, Suleiman (2003) wrote, "Arabs need a unified language which can in turn unify them, an instrument of fusion rather than fission" (p. 142-3). Al-Husri (1985) supported this idea nearly two decades earlier, stating that "the Arabs need a 'unified and unifying language', rather than a series of dialect-languages which will lead to further fragmentation" (as cited in Suleiman, 2003, p. 143). The predicament with these suggestions is that it will be challenging to reach a consensus regarding which colloquial dialect deserves the honor.

Arabic speakers must also deal with the reality of diglossia, first defined by Ferguson (1959) as

> a relatively stable language situation, in which in addition to the primary dialects of the language, which may include a standard or regional standards, there is a very divergent, highly codified, often grammatically more complex, superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written, literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (p. 336)

The spoken dialects of the Arab world, like those in Haiti, Greece and parts of Switzerland, portray a language situation in which there are two co-existing languages with local names, one High (H) and the other Low (L), each used for specific purposes in certain contexts (Haeri, 2000, p. 65). Ferguson (1996) described the unique situation with Arabic as follows:

> L is invariably learned by children in what may be regarded as the 'normal' way of learning one's mother tongue, whereas the actual learning of H is chiefly accomplished by the means of formal education, whether this be Qur'anic schools, modern government schools, or private tutors…The speaker is at home in L to a degree he almost never achieves in H. (as cited in Haeri, 2000, p.65)

Though considered to be the language of the common and often less educated population, these L varieties constitute the mother tongue of all Arabic speakers, whose numbers range from a few hundred among certain nomadic Bedouin tribes to more than 80 million speakers of Egyptian. Because MSA (H) is not learned until one enters school, more than 120 millions Arabs do not have the opportunity to learn the more prestigious H form, resulting in an overall literacy rate in North Africa and the Middle East of about 60%.[i]

To complicate matters further, there are also linguistic divisions on a macro level. "The main dialectal division is between the Maghreb dialects and those of the Middle East, followed by that between sedentary dialects and the much more conservative Bedouin dialects" (Arabic language, 2006, p. 3). Having so many distinct dialects makes the prospect of choosing and implementing a common Arabic-language both daunting and unlikely, for not only would the governments of more than 20 nations have to choose a particular

dialect to implement, but they would also have to convince their populations to adopt the chosen language.

This paper will explore some of the factors affecting the feasibility of selecting a particular dialect of Arabic to serve the educational needs of the entire Arabic-speaking world, including the widespread use of colloquial Arabic and present-day national education policies. In addition, to learn how native-Arabic speakers perceive this diglossic state of affairs, the researcher interviewed 84 participants ranging in age from 17 to 48 living in Tucson, Arizona, and Madrid, Spain, to determine their views on the various vernacular dialects of Arabic and to obtain their opinion on the prospects of replacing MSA with one of these dialects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abu-Absi (1986) wrote that language planners across the Arabic-speaking world were divided into two schools of thought as early as the late 1800's. The debate focused on whether Classical Arabic (CA) or one of the spoken dialects should be chosen as the literary language and the medium of instruction. Those who supported classical Arabic "pointed to the richness of Arabic as the language of poetry, religion, philosophy and science; moreover, they argued CA was the language of Islam" (Abu-Absi, 1986, p. 338). Proponents of vernacular dialects "argued that Classical Arabic was a dead language with a complex grammar and an archaic vocabulary which were not familiar to a modern speaker of Arabic" (Furayhah, 1955, as cited in Abu-Absi, 1986, p. 338-339).

For the first half of the 20th Century, national education policies and the expansion of state-sponsored mass education had the most significant impacts with respect to Arabic status planning, defined by Cooper (1989) as "deliberate efforts to influence the allocation of functions among a community's languages" (p. 99), and as a result, Classical Arabic developed into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Another shift began in earnest across the Arab world in the middle of the 20th Century when various regions gained independence from their colonizers. During this time, many nations saw the emergence of state schools, often based on French or British educational systems, which expanded their curricula to include non-religious subjects to be taught in MSA in addition to the reading, recitation and memorization of the Qu'ran, which was (and is) in Classical Arabic (Haeri, 2000, p. 70). Aroian (1983) wrote this dual instruction created numerous problems rooted in "the difficulty of the grammar and orthography of Classical Arabic" (as cited in Haeri, 2000, p. 71). Haeri (2000) further portrayed the predicament as follows:

For most Arabs, Classical Arabic had not been a language they had to learn to write in or take exams in, but one that belonged to readings of the Qur'an and their obligatory daily prayers. Little knowledge of its syntax or any of its intricacies, rhetorical styles, genres, and so on, was necessary for such ritual activities. (p. 71)

Despite its complexities to learn and use for non-religious purposes, literary or Classical Arabic, which functions "as a legally appropriate language for all politically and culturally representative purposes on a nationwide basis" (Cooper, 1989, p. 100), was delegated as the official language of all Arabic-speaking counties. Although "trans-forming Classical Arabic into a language for mass education to make pupils use it actively in writing and reading was considered a task of monumental magnitude given the differences between it and the spoken languages" (Haeri, 2000, p. 71), it has been carried out successfully for the most part, and is the form known today as MSA. MSA is the only Arabic taught in schools at all stages, resulting in overall literacy rates that range from a mere 40% in Mauritania to an admirable 87% in Qatar[ii]. In spite of its official status, MSA faces several major challenges, including "the development of a more efficient orthography, the modification of grammar to make modern Arabic a workable standard for most functions including education, and the elaboration of vocabulary to cover modern culture and learning" (Abdulaziz, 1986, p. 18).

The most significant threat to MSA, however, has little to do with the prescriptive rules of the language or status planning. More than 35 years ago, Altoma (1970) wrote that the language academies of Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad, which had played the greatest roles influencing the standardization of modern written and formal Arabic up to that time, "look[ed] upon the encroachment of the various colloquial forms of Arabic as the greatest hazard in the promotion of a single, standard variety, and therefore, all forms of colloquialism must be deliberately excluded" (as cited in Abdulaziz, 1986, pp. 17-18). Mahfouz (1965) believed that the vernacular dialects were obstacles to progress that needed to be overcome "exactly like poverty and disease" (as cited in Haeri, 2000, p. 63). Because of its complex structure, MSA will never develop as a spoken language; furthermore, it is no one's mother tongue, a fact which may be hindering the educational development of the Arab world in general. Abdulaziz (1986) explained the seriousness of the situation when he wrote:

> The gap between the colloquial forms, which are the true mother tongues of the speakers, and MSA causes many problems to educationalists and writers. Although it is assumed that in the education system only the standard form would be used, the fact is that it is used only for writing. The language of instruction in schools or university lectures is the colloquial in its various forms. Students are therefore faced with the problems of receiving their instruction in one form and reading and writing in the other. (p. 21)

Until a consensus can be reached regarding the validity of the vernaculars as worthy of being used as languages of instruction, little progress in education will be made.

Those opposed to the continuation of a diglossic language policy in the national education systems support the notion of delegating the different national languages as official and replacing MSA. Maamouri (1998) was very vocal in his criticism of this policy at the World Bank's Mediterranean Development Forum in Marrakech. He stated,

There is a growing awareness among some Arab education specialists that the low levels of educational achievement and high illiteracy (and low literacy) rates in most Arab countries are directly related to the complexities of the standard Arabic language used in formal schooling and in non-formal education. These complexities mostly relate to the diglossic situation of the Arabic language and make reading in Arabic and overly arduous process. (p. 5)

It is interesting to note that "University lectures, with the possible exception of those dealing with Arabic language and literature, are also in the urban form of colloquial…" (Abdulaziz, 1986, p. 22). This diglossic situation may in fact be delaying school age children's learning. Alrabaa (1986) believed that "The presence of a high variety with its social implications inhibits people in their writing activities **as** the learner is forced to emphasize form rather than content" (p. 74). Maamouri (1998) identified four areas that cause significant language interference when children attempt to make the transition from their vernacular to MSA. They are as follows:

1. Important lexical differences even in commonplace everyday words and functional terms;
2. Inflections denoting gender, number and tense, most of which have disappeared from all the colloquial Arabic dialects;
3. Important varying changes in phonological structure with sounds in writing which have dropped out of everyday usage;
4. A lack of unified Fus'ha Arabic scientific vocabulary at various levels of the curriculum. (p. 27-28)

If MSA is so complex that even university lecturers avoid it, it is curious as to why the language remains such a powerful force in determining national language policies, especially with respect to education. For the reasons mentioned above, it would be prudent for each country to adopt the following status planning approach: recognize the validity of its vernacular language and elevate it to official language status. This would help to maintain national language pride while simultaneously increasing literacy on a nation-to-nation basis.

The literature also identifies the predominance of MSA in the media, especially written media. According to Abdelali (2004), MSA is the language of the news media, including both radio and television, throughout the Arab world, and "in addition, books, newspapers, journal reports, and most other printed material are printed in Modern Standard Arabic" (p. 23). This would lead one to believe that MSA dominates the media world to the extent that a lack of fluency in MSA would prevent minimally literate persons from having access to daily information pertinent to their lives. Despite this, the mass media in its various forms - newspapers, magazines, and more importantly in the Arab world, radio and television - have played an important role in the spread and standardization of MSA. Abdulaziz (1986) reported, "These different forms of mass media have greatly helped to spread the knowledge of MSA and the urban forms of spoken Arabic to such an extent that it is claimed that even the peasants in places like Egypt, Syria and Iraq can 'comprehend' news in MSA, although this can hardly be true in all of its ramifications" (p. 16-17). Considering the challenges

mentioned by educators regarding the acquisition of MSA's orthography and phonology, the author finds this statement difficult to believe. If literate school children find learning MSA to be a lengthy and frustrating task, it would only be logical to assume that uneducated, illiterate adults would find the task nearly impossible. Abdulaziz admitted this discrepancy when he wrote, "Similar or worse problems are encountered in trying to teach adult literacy through MSA. Only where literacy is conducted in the mother tongue have there been significant results" (1989, p. 21).

All of these factors led the researcher to investigate how native Arabic speakers viewed the Arabic-speaking world's most widely-spoken dialects as well as the prospects of replacing MSA with one of the vernacular dialects.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The participants, numbering 83, consisted of native-Arabic speakers, male and female, ranging in age from 17 to 48 living either in Tucson, Arizona or Madrid, Spain. Approximately one third were students at the University of Arizona's Center for English as a Second Language (CESL), while almost half were students at Saint Louis University in Madrid. A third significant population consisted of degreed professionals in both locations. The Tucson data was collected in March and April 2006, while the Madrid data was obtained between March and May, 2009.

Participants were recruited in various ways. Some, who were speaking Arabic in public areas around The University of Arizona or Saint Louis University in Madrid, were simply approached in public areas and asked if they would be willing to complete a questionnaire about Arabic. Others heard about the questionnaire from friends and self-identified themselves to the researcher as willing to participate. A few were relatives of participants who thought it would be interesting to have someone hear their opinions about their native language and its numerous spoken dialects, and several were coworkers or colleagues of the researcher. Four, who completed the questionnaire without the researcher present, did not complete the biographical section.

In order to obtain general perceptions of language in the Pan-Arab region, each participant was given a map of the Arabic-speaking world [Appendix A] and asked to label one country with the letter B indicating where they believed the best Arabic was spoken. They were also instructed to label the same map with the letter W to show where they felt the worst Arabic was spoken. In addition, all participants were requested to state why they chose a particular location for each case.

Next, participants were given a list [Appendix B] of the five major Arabic dialect regions [Egyptian, Maghreb, Levantine/Sham, Iraqi and Gulf] listed in no special order and asked the following question: If the entire Arabic-speaking world were to chose one dialect to replace MSA/Fus'ha, please number the dialects from 1 to 5 for your choices, where 1 would be your first choice for the new common language and 5 would be your last choice. The reason for such a drastic change in policy, that is, replacing MSA with a vernacular, was

explained to the participants as being a necessity based on "the difficulties that Arabic speakers, even the well educated among them, have with the classical rules which have to be memorized and artificially adhered to" (Abu-Absi, 1984, p. 118).

The researcher also collected biographical information, including nationality, age, sex, religion and occupation [Appendix B]. All questionnaires were completed in English, and the interviews were conducted primarily in English. A few interviews were conducted in Arabic with the assistance of a bilingual English-Arabic translator in the presence of the researcher.

In order to detect any possible biases in the map markings or vernacular rankings, it is prudent to reveal the national background of the participants who self-identified:

Table 1: Total Participants [n = 80; 4 of the participants did not complete the bio section]

Birth Nation	Total Number	Males	Females
Saudi Arabia	37	30	7
Egypt	6	2	4
Lebanon	6	6	0
Morocco	6	4	2
Palestine	5	3	2
Jordan	3	2	1
Libya	3	1	2
Syria	3	1	2
Iraq	2	2	0
Oman	2	1	1
Algeria	1	0	1
Kuwait	1	1	0
Qatar	1	1	0
Spain	1	0	1
UAE	1	1	0
USA	1	1	1
Total	80	56	24

RESULTS

It is not surprising that Saudi Arabia was marked with the letter B the most number of times [Table 2] given the fact that Saudi nationals comprised nearly 50% of the participants. This large number was due to the Saudi government's study abroad scholarship program, ongoing post 9-11, that has sent large numbers of Saudi males to both the United States and Europe.

Table 2: Map Markings by All 84 Participants [Tucson n = 43, Madrid n = 41]

Country	Best	Worst	Country	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	**31**	1	Kuwait	1	0
Egypt	21	1	Libya	1	2
Jordan	8	0	Mauritania	0	8
Lebanon	6	1	Oman	1	0
Syria	7	1	Sudan	0	4
Palestine	1	0	Yemen	1	2
Morocco	**0**	**43**			
Algeria	0	14			
Tunisia	0	2			
Bahrain	1	0			
Iraq	2	0			

The researcher expected that the region marked B to be either Saudi Arabia, due to the number of participants from that region, or Egypt, because of that nation's domination of the Arab world's entertainment business. Though the sample size was relatively small, participants provided various reasons for choosing Saudi Arabia as the nation with the best vernacular Arabic, including geographical, historical, religious, or some combination of the three. Comments by Tucson respondents included: "It is the country of original Arabic and Islam" [Saudi female]; "The Quran was written down in the Arabian peninsula" [Saudi female]; "The Quran was founded there, and the Prophet Mohammed was born there" [Saudi male]; "Islam came out from there, and the Quran was written in Arabic" [Saudi male]; "All Arabic people believe the Saudi Arabia has the best spoken [language] and the Arabic come from Saudi Arabia for many hundred years" [Saudi male]; "It's the first Islamic country" [Jordanian female]; "There is a relationship between the wealth and religion of the country to the language spoken, so I believe Saudi Arabia has one of the best Arabic spoken" [Iraqi male] (personal communications, April & May, 2006). The Madrid respondents echoed similar reason, though one said, "The Arabic language started from there 1400 years ago" [Saudi male] (personal communication, April, 2009).

Participants who marked Egypt with a B on the map gave numerous different reasons, all unrelated to the ones mentioned by those whose chose Saudi Arabia. Responses from Tucson included: "It's popular" [Iraqi male]; "Because you can understand them quickly when they speak" [Saudi male]; "It is clear, and the accent can be understood in every country" [Saudi male] (personal communications, April 2006). In Madrid, the explanations were more reflective of the role of media, since European Arabs tend to have more exposure to Egyptian satellite and cable channels. Some comments were "It's the simplest and most available through the media" [Egyptian female]; "Egypt has an easy accent for Arabs, and in my view, everyone understands Egyptian people cos they are more successful in tv and radio" [Saudi male]; "They have the clearest accent and dialect." [Saudi male]; "I think this language is very

beautiful…and I like Egyptian movies." [Moroccan male] (personal communications, April 2009).

With respect to the letter W, Morocco overwhelmingly was chosen as having the worst vernacular Arabic, and Algeria was chosen second. The comments supporting this were primarily rooted in the lack of Arabic purity of the Maghreb dialects and the influence of non-Semitic, colonizer languages. Participants stated some of the reasons for choosing Morocco and Algeria as follows: "They use different languages like French" [Syrian female]; "They mix a lot of French with the Arabic, and that makes it hard to understand" [Palestinian female]; "I think their accent is difficult for us" [Saudi male]; "You can't understand them quickly" [two Saudi males]; "It is hard to understand because of the French language influence" [Syrian female]; "You cannot understand the people" [Saudi male] (personal communications, April & May 2006); "They don't speak Arabic fluently. They mix other languages with it, and we can't understand what they say" [Saudi male]; "More French than Arabic" [Saudi male]. Perhaps the Maghreb dialects have become so infiltrated with French that a new, hybrid language has emerged over time. Boucherit (1991) addressed this possibility when she wrote,

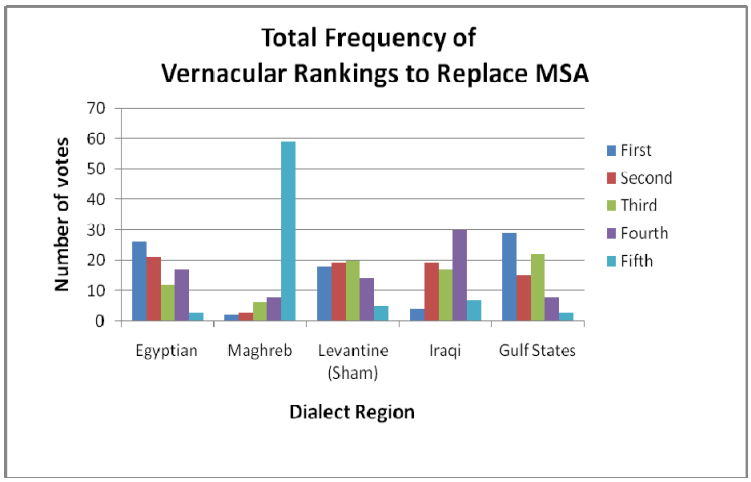
…il convient de prendre en considération, surtout dans les centers urbains du Maghreb, et donc à Alger, un autre type de produit linguistique, le 'mélange', résultat de la situation de contact prolongé entre arabe dialectal et français. On sait que ce contact a conduit à des emprunts massifs de l'arabe au francais. (pp. 57-58)

[…it must be taken into consideration, especially in the urban centers of the Maghreb, in particular Algiers, there is another type of linguistic product, a mixture/blending, resulting from the situation of prolonged contact between the Arab dialect and French. One knows that this contact has driven/caused a massive borrowing from Arabic to French.]

If such a situation has developed, which is quite possible considering France's colonial occupation of the region for nearly 150 years (Abdelali, 2004, p. 23), then perhaps the spoken Arabic of the Maghreb should be re-classified as a Creole, similar to the division between Haitian-Creole and continental French.

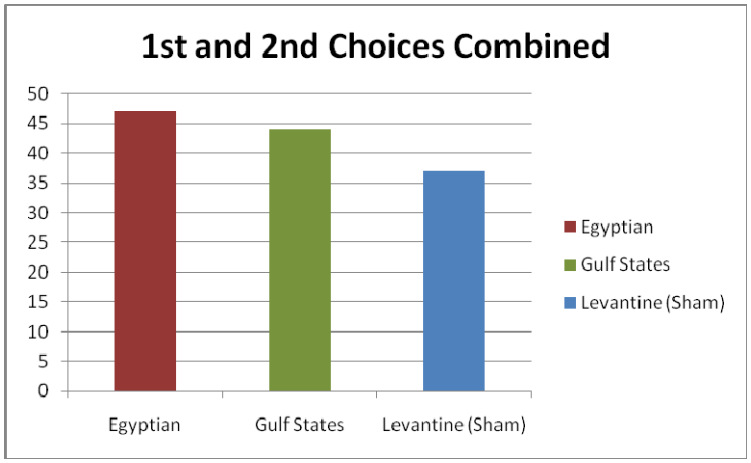
In response to the task requesting a ranking of the vernacular dialects to replace MSA, no country overwhelmingly dominated in the frequency rankings for preferred language. Gulf [29] and Egyptian [26] received nearly the same number of votes for first choice, while Maghreb [2] and Iraqi [4] received hardly any votes for first choice [Chart 1.1].

Chart 1.1



Combining the respondents' first and second choices, Egyptian [47] replaced Gulf [44] by a very narrow margin, while Levantine [37] placed a distant third [Chart 1.2].

Chart 1.2



The numbers do not portray the most interesting findings, which come from the comments regarding why certain choices were made. Surprisingly, only three respondents admitted their choice for an MSA replacement was based on national pride. One Palestinian woman stated, "I chose my own vernacular because to my ears, it is the easiest and most understandable because it is my own origin country" (personal communication, April 2006). A Lebanese man chose Beirut's dialect because "It has a mild accent, and I am familiar with it" (personal communication, April 2006). An Egyptian male stated, "I prefer

Egyptian because that is my Arabic." He then quickly added, "but I don't feel it is the best" (personal communication, April 2006). The majority of participants, however, based their choices on far less personal reasons.

The reasons supporting the Saudi vernacular in both locations included originality and language purity. Some Tucson responses included: "The accent is very very near to the real Arabic language – the Quranic language" [Saudi female]; "I think it has the least borrowed words" [Syrian female]; "The Arabic language is originally from Saudi Arabia" [Saudi male]; and "They speak near to Fus'ha" [Saudi male] (personal communications, April & May, 2006). In Madrid, one detailed comment was "KSA Arabic language is very clear and understood by all Arabs. They use the right Arabic words" [Emirati male], and another wrote, "Saudi Arabia is the best since it is near where it [Arabic] originated" [Moroccan male] (personal communications, April, 2009).

Participants in Tucson who chose Egyptian to replace MSA mentioned the following reasons: "It's easy to learn their accent" [Saudi male], and "It is clear, and the accent can be understood in every country" [Saudi male] (personal communications, April 2006); whereas in Madrid, responses included: "Their Arabic is very similar to the classical one written in the Qu'ran" [Spanish female], and "It's easy to understand, and it's still classical Arabic" [Moroccan female] (personal communications, April 2009).

The last two comments above by the Spanish and Moroccan females are worth further discussion. Both females seemed to have identified, whether consciously or not, two attempts at language planning that have only been briefly mentioned in the literature. Haeri (2000) wrote that state institutions of education in Egypt "have been the major sites of the reproduction of a transformed and renovated Classical Arabic" (p. 74) that has been created by combining elements of classical, literary Arabic with MSA and then applying it to situations found in every day educational and social situations. It is also possible that these two participants were alluding to a phenomenon identified by Parkinson (1991) in his fieldwork executed in Cairo on identifying a more modern fus'ha. He wrote the following:

There are language columns in Egyptian newspapers and magazines that continually blur the line between classical and modern fus'ha, on the assumption that any word, form, or structure sanctioned long ago is also fine today. Thus, one common theme of these articles is to take a colloquial word that writers avoid in modern fus'ha and show that it in fact exists in Classical Arabic, and therefore, could or should be used today. (as cited in Haeri, 2000, p. 75) Perhaps the Cairene Arabic of the 21st Century has been slowly transformed into a new dialect, one that mixes classical Arabic, MSA and vernacular Egyptian, a topic far beyond the range of this paper, but well worth further exploration nonetheless.

With respect to being chosen as a last choice to replace MSA, the dialects of the Maghreb ranked in the final position almost unanimously, receiving a total of 58 votes: the majority specifically for Morocco. The comments supporting this last place ranking are the previously mentioned Romance-Semitic hybrid of the regional dialects. The Maghrebi vernaculars

were described in Tucson as follows: “Far away from Arabic” [Syria male], and “The use of foreign language prevails” [Jordan male] (personal communications, April & May 2006). In Madrid, descriptions included “Their Arabic is influenced by French, Spanish and Berber” [Saudi male]; “The Arabic spoken in Morocco is far away from classical Arabic” [Qatari male]; “Morocco is considered an Arab country, but their language can barely be understood. Their language and culture is mixed with Berber” [Emirati male]; “Their accent and dialect is wrong, and they were colonized” [Saudi male]; and from a Moroccan-born male, “In Morocco, the Arabic is more like a slang – it is a mix between Arabic and French with a different pronunciation (personal communications, April, 2009. The literature (Abdulaziz, 1986; Elkhafaifi, 2002; Haeri, 2000) previously cited in this paper supports these perceptions.

CONCLUSION

The language dilemma facing the Arab world will not be resolved quickly or easily. The combination of the complexities of MSA, the perceptions of its numerous vernaculars, as well as national, cultural and religious prejudices make it unlikely that a common language will be chosen, regardless of the practicality of having one, standard language system. Abdulaziz (1986) proclaimed that one solution might be to promote a mixed urban dialect, like the one that has developed in Cairo, Egypt, to serve as the standard among the Arab nations. Described as “…a cultivated form of colloquial, incorporating features of the rural colloquial and those of MSA” (Abdulaziz, 1986, p. 22), this hybrid language, called *allugha alwusta* or Inter-Arabic, was further defined as

> a compromised, mixed usage, incorporating the grammatical structure of the colloquial and the lexicon and phraseology of MSA …which has greater usage prestige as it combines the emotional, affective down-to-earth and nationalistic characteristics of the colloquial and the standard, educated and formal nature of MSA. (Abdulaziz, 1986, p. 22)

Abu-Absi (1986) offered a similar solution – promoting Cultivated Spoken Arabic, a variety which is “characterized by the tendency to use literary vocabulary and colloquial grammar” (p. 342) and though at the time had yet to be codified or standardized, was “the oral medium used among educated Arabs who come from various dialectal backgrounds and who find it cumbersome or artificial to use the literary language” (p. 342). More than two decades have passed since, and unfortunately for students, neither has been adopted.

If no consensus can be made, as indicated by the survey, then it may not be possible for the Arabic-speaking world to decide on one vernacular dialect to serve all of its needs. In that case, each nation should move toward developing its own form of Arabic based on its national vernacular and that best fits the educational, business and social needs of its population. This would obviously be a significant challenge for nations with small populations and/or high rates of poverty. Aside from the petroleum-rich nations surrounding the Arabian Gulf, Haeri (2000) reported that “most regional governments have failed to invest a sufficient part of their national resources on public education”

(p. 71), a trend which if reversed could increase national literacy levels. It seems that until the complex relationship between Classical Arabic, MSA and each of the vernaculars is better understood, the Arabic-speaking world will continue to struggle with what Abdulaziz (1972) described as “a situation of triglossia…involving switching between all three forms”, a challenging task even for the most highly educated individual.

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Appendix A: Map

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Label one country with the letter B indicating where you believe the best Arabic is spoken.
Why did you choose this location?

Label another country with the letter W where you believe the worst Arabic is spoken.
Why did you choose this location?

Appendix B: Ranking and Biographical Survey

If the entire Arabic-speaking world were to choose one dialect to replace Fus'ha, please number the dialects below from 1 to 5 for your choices, where 1 would be your first choice for the new common language and 5 would be your last choice.

Egyptian _____
Maghreb _____
Levantine _____
Iraqi ____
Gulf ____

Please complete the following:

Nationality	
Sex	
Age	
Religion	
Occupation	

Appendix C: Map Markings

Map Markings by All 83 Participants [Tucson n = 43, Madrid n = 41]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	**31**	1
Egypt	21	1
All Levantine [Sham]	24	0
Jordan	8	0
Lebanon	6	1
Syria	6	1
Palestine	1	0
Morocco	**0**	**42**
Algeria	0	14
Tunisia	0	2
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**63**
Bahrain	1	0
Iraq	2	0
Kuwait	1	0
Libya	1	2
Mauritania	0	8
Oman	1	0
Sudan	0	4
Yemen	1	2

Map Markings by All Male Participants [n = 56]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	**25**	1
Egypt	12	1
All Levantine [Sham]	14	2
Jordan	4	0
Lebanon	3	1
Syria	4	1
Palestine	0	0
Morocco	**0**	**27**
Algeria	0	7
Tunisia	0	2
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**41**
Bahrain	1	0
Iraq	2	0
Kuwait	1	0
Libya	0	2
Mauritania	0	5

Oman	1	0
Sudan	0	3
Yemen	1	2

Map Markings by All Female Participants [n = 26]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Egypt	**9**	0
Saudi Arabia	5	0
All Levantine [Sham]	**11**	0
Jordan	4	0
Lebanon	3	0
Palestine	1	0
Syria	3	0
Libya	1	0
Morocco	**0**	**15**
Algeria	0	7
Tunisia	0	0
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**22**
Kuwait	0	0
Mauritania	0	3
Sudan	0	1
Yemen	0	0

Map Markings by Tucson Participants (n = 43)

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	**18**	0
Egypt	8	0
All Levantine [Sham]	15	0
Jordan	3	0
Lebanon	4	1
Syria	4	1
Palestine	1	0
Morocco	**0**	**16**
Algeria	0	7
Tunisia	0	1
TOTAL MAGHREB		**29**
Kuwait	1	0
Libya	0	2
Mauritania	0	6
Sudan	0	2
Yemen	1	2

Map Markings by Male Tucson Participants [n = 34]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	**17**	0
Egypt	5	0
All Levantine [Sham]	10	0
Jordan	2	0
Lebanon	3	1
Syria	2	1
Morocco	**0**	**11**
Algeria	0	5
Tunisia	0	1
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**22**
Kuwait	1	0
Libya	0	2
Mauritania	0	4
Sudan	0	2
Yemen	1	2

Map Markings by Female Tucson Participants [n = 9]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	1	0
Egypt	**3**	0
All Levantine [Sham]	4	0
Jordan	1	0
Lebanon	1	0
Syria	2	0
Palestine	1	0
Morocco	**0**	**5**
Algeria	0	2
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**7**
Mauritania	0	2

Map Markings by All Madrid Participants [n = 41]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Egypt	**13**	1
Saudi Arabia	**13**	1
All Levantine [Sham]	10	0
Jordan	5	0
Lebanon	2	0
Syria	3	0
Palestine	0	0
Morocco	**0**	**27**
Algeria	0	7
Tunisia	0	1
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**35**
Bahrain	1	0
Kuwait	0	0
Iraq	2	0
Libya	1	0
Mauritania	0	2
Oman	1	0
Sudan	0	2
Yemen	0	0

Map Markings by Male Madrid Participants [n = 24]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Saudi Arabia	**9**	1
Egypt	7	1
All Levantine [Sham]	4	0
Jordan	2	0
Lebanon	0	0
Syria	2	0
Morocco	**0**	**17**
Algeria	0	2
Tunisia	0	1
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**19**
Bahrain	1	0
Iraq	2	0
Kuwait	0	0
Libya	0	0
Mauritania	0	1
Oman	1	0
Sudan	0	1
Yemen	0	0

Map Markings by Female Madrid Participants [n = 17]

Dialect Nation or Region	Best	Worst
Egypt	**6**	0
Saudi Arabia	4	0
All Levantine [Sham]	**6**	0
Jordan	3	0
Lebanon	2	0
Syria	1	0
Libya	1	0
Morocco	**0**	**10**
Algeria	0	5
TOTAL MAGHREB	**0**	**15**
Mauritania	0	1
Sudan	0	1

Appendix D: Vernacular Rankings to Replace MSA

Total Frequency of Ranking

Dialect Region	Firs	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Egyptian	26	21	12	17	3
Maghreb	2	3	6	8	59
Levantine (Sham)	18	19	20	14	5
Iraqi	4	19	17	30	7
Gulf States	29	15	22	8	3

Total Frequency of Ranking Tucson

Dialect Region	Firs	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Egyptian	13	10	5	12	0
Maghreb	0	2	3	0	34
Levantine (Sham)	12	9	8	7	1
Iraqi	0	10	11	14	3
Gulf States	15	7	11	5	0

Total Frequency of Ranking Madrid

Dialect Region	Firs	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Egyptian	13	11	6	5	3
Maghreb	2	1	3	8	24
Levantine (Sham)	5	10	12	7	4
Iraqi	4	8	6	16	4
Gulf States	14	8	11	2	3

[i] http://www.uis.unesco.org/en/stats/statistics/ed/g_lit_arab.jpg
[ii] http://www.uis.unesco.org/en/stats/statistics/ed/g_lit_arab.jpg
[iii] Retrieved from http://looklex.com/e.o/atlas/mena.htm