

# Diglossia as a Result of Language Variation in Arabic: Possible Solutions in Light of Language Planning

Mahmoud A. Al-Sobh

Department of English Language and Literature, Ajloun National University, Ajloun, Jordan

Abdel-Rahman H. Abu-Melhim

Department of English Language and Literature, Irbid University College, Al-Balqa' Applied University, Irbid, Jordan

Nedal A. Bani-Hani

Department of English Language and Literature, Irbid University College, Al-Balqa' Applied University, Irbid, Jordan

**Abstract**—This study aims at investigating the nature of diglossia in Arabic, the different varieties of Arabic and the problems that cause diglossia. It discusses the current linguistic situation in the Arabic-speaking world and suggests a lingual plan for overcoming the problems caused by diglossia. The researchers survey what scholars and linguists claim about diglossia in Arabic and arrive at some conclusions and recommendations.

**Index Terms**—diglossia, language planning, Arabic language, Arabic socio-linguistics, Arabic varieties

## I. INTRODUCTION

The first problem in any study of 'Arabic' is for one to specify what is meant by 'Arabic', because a diglossic linguistic situation exists in that language. The term 'diglossia' was first used in 1930 by the French Arabist Marçais (*diglossie* in French), and introduced to English by Ferguson (1959) in reference to the situation in Arabic today as Ferguson explains it:

Diglossia in Arabic refers to the phenomenon of co-existence of two distinct language varieties in the same speech community each of which is used for specific linguistic and communicative purposes by its speakers. In the case of Arabic, the standard variety (classical Arabic) is used in formal speeches, university lectures and news media. In contrast, the colloquial variety is used in everyday speech in informal conversational situations by ordinary educated and uneducated Arabs alike.

## II. PURPOSE

The primary function of this paper is to discuss the nature of diglossia as it exists in Arabic today as a result of language variation, the researchers first discuss the phenomenon of diglossia and linguistic variation in Arabic dialects. Second, they explore the concept of diglossia in its historical context. Third, they explain the present linguistic situation in Arabic. Finally, they propose a lingual plan for using modern standard Arabic before arriving at several significant socio-linguistic conclusions regarding the phenomenon of diglossia in relation to language planning in the Arabic-speaking world today.

## III. METHODOLOGY

Since this study is theoretical and qualitative in nature, the researchers relied primarily on reviewing the already existing body of literature related to diglossia and the linguistic problems associated with it in various speech communities throughout the world. The diglossic situation in Arabic was compared and contrasted to similar diglossic situations in other speech communities taking in consideration how such communities and the governments in which they exist dealt with the linguistic problems that came as a result of diglossia. The researchers also conducted several personal and telephone interviews with linguistic scholars whose research mainly focused on the concept of diglossia in various speech communities both outside and inside the Arabic-speaking world. The interview questions concentrated mainly on issues related to the existence of diglossia and possible suggestions to tackle the problems caused by its existence with special focus on the Arabic-speaking world since diglossia in Arabic is the primary focus of this particular study.

## IV. LIMITATIONS