

**Beyond Lexical Variation
in Modern Standard Arabic**

Beyond Lexical Variation
in Modern Standard Arabic:
Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco

By

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SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

Beyond Lexical Variation in Modern Standard Arabic: Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco,
by Zeinab Ibrahim

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*I dedicate this book to my Mother,
With whom I shared most of my memorable days.
I hope I have fulfilled your dream mum.
Though you are not with us anymore,
You still are
And you still give*

You give but little when you give of your possessions.
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.
—Gubran Khalil Gubran, *The Prophet*

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TRANSCRIPTIONS AS USED IN THE RESEARCH

ʔ	Voiceless glottal stop	الهمزة
θ	Voiceless inter-dental fricative	ثاء
ʒ	Voiced palato-alveolar fricative	جيم /ʒjim/
g	Voiced velar stop	جيم/giim/
ħ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	حاء
χ	Voiceless velar fricative	حاء
ð	Voiced inter-dental fricative	ذال
ʃ	Voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	شين
ʂ	Voiceless dento-alveolar emphatic fricative	صاد
ɖ	Voiced dento-alveolar emphatic stop	ضاد
ɬ	Voiceless dento-alveolar emphatic stop	طاء
ʐ	Voiced inter-dental emphatic fricative	ظاء
ʕ	Voiced pharyngeal fricative	ع
ɣ	Voiced velar fricative	غ
q	Voiceless uvular stop	قاف
aa	Low front long vowel	ا
uu	High back long vowel	و
ii	High front long vowel	ي

Both [j] and [g] are the same phoneme in MSA but it is realized as [g] in Egypt (except in some foreign words) and as [j] in Lebanon

Short vowel counterparts will be written by one symbol only.

<i>a</i>	:	low front vowel
<i>u</i>	:	high back vowel
<i>i</i>	:	high front vowel

In case of gemination the letter will be written twice.

The *taaʔ marbuuʔa* is written between brackets to indicate its presence and that it is silent in this context.

Phonetic transcription will occur between brackets / / .

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this research arose in 1990 during a friendly conversation with a Lebanese engineer who mentioned that it was difficult for her to understand the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram*. She said that the Arabic used in *Al-Ahram* was definitely different from that used in Lebanon even though it is widely assumed that written Arabic is identical in all countries of the Arab world. This was not the first time the researcher had heard such a statement. Other Arabs made similar remarks in friendly conversations after having read newspapers from neighboring Arab countries. Such statements are very serious, as they raise the question of whether the varieties of written Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) used in newspapers in different Arab countries are mutually intelligible and identical or if there is variation, to an extent, that does not allow full comprehension. If they are not commonly intelligible, then this brings up the possibility of the existence of a drift occurring in written Modern Standard Arabic. Language drift is "the unconscious selection on the part of its speakers of those individual variations that are cumulative in some special direction." (Sapir 1921:165-166) In other words, when Egyptians find difficulty in understanding the Arabic used in Lebanese newspapers, it is an indication that the MSA used in each country may be following a different path and/or going through a process of language drift or some kind of change that might lead to a drift.

The best quotation that exemplifies this view is one that the famous Egyptian writer Tawfiq Al-Hakim wrote at the end of his play *الورطة / al-warṭa*, *The Dilemma*, which he composed in what he called the "third language." According to Al-Hakim this "third language" could be seen as either written in MSA or in the dialect depending on how the reader pronounces it. Al-Hakim (1966: 176) discussed the role of writers and the relationship between Modern Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic, and commented on what the true objective of these writers must be:

وإذا استمر الحال سنجد أنفسنا مضطرين إلى ترجمة الكتب والأفكار والفنون من لغة محلية إلى لغة محلية أخرى داخل نطاق العالم العربي وبذلك تتفتت ثقافتنا وينقطع اتصالنا الفكري، ونفقد ميزة لغة واسعة، واسعة الانتشار، كانت في يدنا وأضعناها.

If the situation continues, we will find ourselves obliged to translate books, ideas and art from one local language to another within the Arab World. This way, our culture will be fragmented, our intellectual contact with other Arab countries will be cut off, and the advantage of having a single and available widespread language will be lost. (Translation mine)

Work on this book started in 1992 and ended in 2007, those fifteen years had a substantial impact on the results of the study which are illustrated in the findings of the whole research. Work began with the hypothesis that written Modern Standard Arabic found in Lebanese newspapers was either difficult for Egyptians to understand or partially unintelligible to them. This difficulty is mainly due to the presence of lexical items, which are unfamiliar to readers.

Eighty Issues of the well-known Lebanese newspaper *Al-Hayaat* were collected (from December 1992 to February 1993) and a questionnaire was formulated using eighty headlines, in order to test intelligibility of Lebanese MSA among Egyptians. Since the main hypothesis dealt with lexical items and not syntactic variations, therefore, using headlines seemed feasible for the study. Thirty questionnaires were distributed among Egyptian Cairene graduates of Egyptian universities, and ten of the same questionnaire among Lebanese Beirut graduates of Lebanese universities. Graduates of non-national universities were excluded, as the medium of instruction in these universities was a language other than Arabic. This was in order to ensure that all participants had received maximum formal instruction in the Arabic language. The Lebanese group was the control group, formed to verify that the Lebanese headlines were easily understood by Lebanese native speakers, and to compare the intelligibility of both groups. Both groups came from their respective capital city to ensure that they all shared the capital city dialect to some extent. The results showed that Egyptians consistently found it difficult to understand fully and correctly the language used in *Al-Hayaat*, while the Lebanese had no such difficulty.

In 1998, the researcher expanded the scope of the work to include Morocco as well. The idea of covering these three countries was based on two notions. First, geographically Lebanon represents the Eastern linguistic area, Morocco the North African area and Egypt the midpoint. Second, "The first Arabic press is said to have been introduced by a

Maronite scholar in the 17th century. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Lebanon was in the vanguard the enlightenment movement, with its modern press producing all kinds of modern Arabic literary and scientific materials and specialized dictionaries. It was also in Lebanon and Egypt where modern schools of journalism, secular intellectualism, and modern Arabic literature began to emerge in the last decades of the 19th century” (Abdul Aziz 1986: 14). Therefore, these two countries are pioneers in the field of journalism in addition to being the centers of literary movements. The presence of the Arabization Bureau of the Arab League in Rabat also gives it an equal stand in the comparison.

Further two questionnaires were formulated in 1998 and tested among Egyptians and Moroccans to further assess mutual intelligibility between the two groups. Results indicated that both groups had difficulties with some lexical items, yet there was no difficulty whatsoever with any syntactic structure. But in general, the Egyptian group faced more complications. The questionnaire given to Egyptians consisted of seventy headlines collected from the Moroccan newspaper *Al-'Anbaa'* dating from May 9th, 1997, through to March 10th, 1998; while the questionnaire given to Moroccans included eighty headlines collected from the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* dating from December 1st, 1997 through to March 1st, 1998. All three questionnaires asked respondents a few questions about the meanings of certain words underlined in the headlines. Further investigations of lexical variation were made in order to monitor the trend of the spread of, as well as the source of, the lexical items. It is worth mentioning that all respondents in the different groups, as soon as they were given the meanings of the words they did not understand when filling out the questionnaires, immediately comprehended the headlines.

Chapter One consists of the literature review on variation in pre- and early Islamic eras, and all related issues such as diglossia, declensional endings, the emergence of Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and finally, the roles of the media and linguistic academies in the Arab world. Chapter Two introduces the variation theory and the position of the Arabic language within these theories. Chapter Three presents the research issues and the four syntactic categories causing lexical variations, whereas Chapter Four explores the rest of the causes of lexical variations that are unrelated to syntactic factors. Both Chapter Five and Six present the results and discussion of the research and Chapter Seven examines the orthographical, month, and number variations in these countries included in the study. Chapter Eight thoroughly discusses three main issues: First, native speakers' unconscious separation between the

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) lexemes and the dialectal ones; second, their uneasiness towards and fears of MSA; and third, the use of morphological analysis in an attempt to understand a difficult and unfamiliar word. Finally, Arabic native speakers keep their lexical domains for the two varieties separate, in other words, there are MSA words and there are dialect words; as a consequence, polysemy plays a further role in that it prevents a word used in a dialect, from being used in the MSA variety. Chapter Nine opens up more speculation about these variations and the factors attributed to them with an insight into the direction of future variation, and Chapter Ten concludes the work.

Most Arabs, and especially Arab linguists, refer to (written) Arabic as a language, which is identical throughout the Arab world. Recent definitions of MSA are: "It is the mutual official language in the Arab world today" (Aziz 1992: 11), and "It is the language uniting the Arab countries" (Al-Sayigh 1990: 20). According to Mahmoud (1982: 82), "One of the sociolinguistic problems that pre-occupies the Arab world today is how to make the Arabic language a functional, modern instrument of communication and education without jeopardizing its traditional, unifying, pan-Arab role." All these definitions allude to the Arabic language with no reference to the variation existing in it. It is nearly taboo to claim that Modern Standard Arabic is not identical throughout the Arab world; in other words, that there is indeed this bulk of variation.

This research also found that the variations existing in the Arabic dialects are all Arabic, and that the presence of variations has not yet been fully acknowledged. Moreover, as is illustrated under "Classical Arabic" (later in this chapter, page 11) several works are presented that exemplify variation. To date, no research has been done comparing lexical variation in the written MSA of one Arab country with another to analyze the causes of such variations. Al-Samaraa'ii (1966) first mentioned the differences between the written Arabic in various Arab countries in his book *التطور اللغوي التاريخي* /*ʔal-taʔawwur al-luḡawii al-tariixii*/, *Historical Linguistic Development*, noting that: "Each group has its own styles of expression about their affairs. Although these expressions are Arabic, they are characterized by local regionalisms."¹ (Al-Samaraa'ii, 1966: 209). Al-Saayigh added the following to Al-Samaraa'ii's words twenty-four years

¹ Ibrahim Al-Samaraa'ii, *The Historical Linguistic Development* /*ʔat-taʔawwur ʔal-luḡawii ʔal-tariixii*/ (The Institute of Research and Arabic Studies, 1966), p. 209:

"وللقوم أساليب خاصة في التعبير عن شئونهم وما يضطربون فيه، وهذه التعابير وإن كانت عربية فهي موسومة بإقليمية محلية."

later without further explanation: "It is not an exaggeration that if we read an article in a newspaper or a book, we sense that the writer is a Lebanese or Syrian or from North Africa."² (Al-Saayigh 1990: 19). In the second edition of the same book, Al-Samaraa'ii (1993: 192) gives the example of the word صلاحية /ṣalaafiyya(t)/ meaning "fitness, appropriateness, efficiency, competence" (Wehr 1980: 522). This word is found in many Arab countries, yet North Africans (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) prefer to use the same root but in a different pattern, صلوحية /ṣaluufiyya/. Although Al-Samaraa'ii mentioned this difference in 1966, only one study, by Parkinson and Ibrahim (1999), has been done since then to scientifically investigate this phenomenon; namely, the use of different lexical forms for the same word.

Previous Related Works

Van Mol (2003:1) wrote: "Until now there are, as far as we know, no empirical studies that prove the possible uniformity or regional variation within the MSA." This book is the first step towards proving empirically that regional variation exists within MSA. Although Van Mol's work can be considered as investigating the spoken varieties, it is actually not, since he investigated the news feeds, which are written and then read out by the announcers. He examined the use of certain complementary particles in different Arab countries' media and found no variation.

Abdelali (2004) presented an abbreviated version of this research. He utilized ten Arabic newspapers as a corpus for the computer search of localization (meaning the regional differences) in MSA. Consequently, he noticed the variation present among different Arab newspapers.

Parkinson carried out several studies on variation in MSA, whether syntactic, lexical, or orthographical. In 1990, he conducted research on how native speakers perceive the place of the letter /hamza/. In 1996, in his article "Variability in Standard Arabic Grammar Skills," Parkinson researched the grammatical skills of native speakers, and in 1999, based on the initial research of this book, he and Ibrahim investigated the corpus of several Arab newspapers to find out whether different words were used in different countries. They discovered that some countries only use their

² Maged Al-Sayigh, *The Common Mistakes and their Effect on the Development of Arabic Language* /ʔal -ʔaxʔaaʔ ʔal-saaʔiʔa(t) wa ʔaθaruha fii taʔawwur ʔal-luxa(t) ʔal-ʕarabiyya(t)/ (Beirut: Dar ʔal-fikr ʔal-lubnaanii, 1990), p.19:

"انه ليس مما نبالغ فيه أن نقرأ مقالة في صحيفة أو كتاب فنحس أن صاحب هذه أو ذاك لبناني أو سوري، وأن نقرأ شيئاً فنشعر أن صاحبه في الشمال الأفريقي."

coined words, and sometimes they use other Arab countries' words. In 2007, he examined the use of the future tense markers /sa/ and /sawfa/, some orthographical differences, and the usage of certain syntactic structures and lexical items in four newspapers, representing Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Morocco, and confirmed that variation exists across Arabic-speaking countries.

In 2008, Parkinson carried out another study, termed "Sentence Subject Agreement Variation in Arabic" using the [arabiCorpus.byu.edu](http://arabicorpus.byu.edu)³ and found that:

With every verb we have investigated, the Egyptian and Kuwaiti papers are on the relatively low end of using feminine agreement, and the *Hayat* is on the high end, with data from both years of the *Hayat* separately confirming this. Both at the bottom (with *ymkn*⁴, where all papers showed mainly masculine agreement) and at the top (with *yjdr*⁵, where all papers showed mainly feminine agreement) the percentages are fairly close together (even though the relative distinction is maintained), but in the middle of the continuum, with the other verbs (*yajib*⁶, *yanbaghi*⁷, *yaṣub*⁸, *yakfi*⁹) the difference between the two groups is striking. Data with this kind of consistency in variation are rare, and it almost demands that we not simply dismiss it as random variation.

There are other related works such as Kropfitch (1980), who wrote an article about the influence of French on the North African Arabic of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, while directing his focus on Morocco. Gully (1993) investigated the contemporary changes that occur in the Arabic language and researched newspapers from different Arab countries. His main concern was syntactic changes in MSA and how these changes differed from Classical Arabic.

Literature Review

Francis (1958) defines language as: "An arbitrary system of articulated sounds made use of by a group of humans as a means of carrying on the affairs of their society" (13). Leach (1974) extends this sole function into

³ <http://arabicorpus.byu.edu/>

⁴ Meaning "it should."

⁵ Meaning "to be worth it"

⁶ Meaning "it is necessary."

⁷ Meaning "must."

⁸ Meaning "to be difficult."

⁹ Meaning "to be sufficient."

five separate functions: "Informational" (to inform and be informed), "expressive" (to express feelings and attitudes), "directive" (to influence others' behavior and attitudes), "aesthetic" (to use language for the sake of the linguistic artifact itself), and finally the "phatic function" (to maintain good relationships and keep lines open for communication). Penalosa (1981) and Lyons (1977) state that communication is a crucial and fundamental function of language. Furthermore, the Arabic language plays a distinctive role inasmuch as it is perceived by most Arabs and Arab linguists to unite the Arab world.

In 1968 Fishman wrote, "Many more linguists have come to be concerned with variations that were formerly set aside as purportedly unsystematic and of little scientific account." (3). Larkin (1995) had stated earlier that "Individual words are just the logical starting point for the discussion" (63). Accordingly, differences in lexical items are the focus of this work.

Quine (1985) maintained that "Meanings, however, purport to be entities of a special sort: the meaning of an expression is the idea expressed" (48). When two readers who know the same language read a certain word, both readers should be able to understand its meaning. Quine refers to "speakers who know the same language," but as Ferguson (1959) stated, MSA is learned in schools, whereas the native spoken tongue of Arabs is their dialect (435). Therefore, a speaker's intuition about MSA is not as reliable as his/her intuition about his/her own dialect, a point, which was reiterated by Thalji (1986). In other words, native speakers of Arabic have more confidence in guessing the meanings of terms in their dialects than in Modern Standard Arabic.

The remainder of this chapter and all of the next shed light on Classical Arabic (CA), diglossia, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the emergence of Educated Spoken Arabic (ECA), the role of the media, and of Arabic language academies, and finally place all of the above within the framework of the variation theory. The relationship between all these points and lexical variation becomes clearer to the reader throughout the discussion.

Classical Arabic: Variation, Declensional Endings and Diglossia

Arabic is a Semitic language that belongs to the Afro-Asiatic family. According to Versteegh (1997), there is a checklist to identify a Semitic

language: "triradicalism, presence of empathic/glottalised consonants, verbal system with a prefix and suffix conjugation, as well as a large number of lexical correspondences" (11). Arabic morphology is both derivational and inflectional. Arabic has declensional endings as well. The three main points concerning Classical Arabic (CA) that are related to this research are the existence of variation, declensional endings and diglossia. The existence of variation is attested by many writers. "At the time of the Islamic revelation, the linguistic situation in Arabia can be summed up as follows: there seems to have been some degree of dialectal variation, with the main cleavage between the tribal groups living in the West (the Hijaz) on the one hand and those living in the central and eastern area (Najd) on the other" (Holes 1995: 14). Rabin (1951), in his book *Ancient West-Arabian*, discusses the major dialects existing in pre- and early Islamic times and relates them to Classical Arabic:

The Eastern dialect group comprising Tamiim, Rabiʿa, ʿasad, ʿuqail, Ghani and some other Qais tribes, has a considerable number of distinctive features. Upon closer consideration it appears that these are mostly comparatively recent linguistic developments, and that basically the Eastern dialects are the same as the Classical Arabic of poets. Not so the dialects that were spoken along the great watershed of the peninsula and on its western slope. The common features of these dialects are less obvious - most of them became clear to me only after I had studied the material for over five years - but affect much more deeply the structure of the language. If we give due weight to the fact that all we know about any Arabic dialect is only a dim reflection of some vague outlines, we shall admit that these dialects must have sounded to the Arab from Najd like a foreign language. (1-2)

Consequently, there were major dialectal differences between the tribes living in East and West Arabia. Both Anis (n.d.) and Hilaal (1990) explore the differences found in Arabic before and after Islam, and linguists such as Rabin and Versteegh (1997) attribute the lexical variation to dialectal variation between tribes. Many stories have been recounted concerning this point. One story relates that a knife fell from Prophet Muhammad's hand, so he told Abu Hurayra to hand him the knife, using the word */sikkiin/* for knife. Abu Hurayra did not understand, so he asked the Prophet to repeat what he had said three times. Finally Abu Hurayra said "is it the */mudya(t)/* 'knife' you want?" so the Prophet answered with "yes." Then Abu Hurayra inquired "is it called */sikkiin/* among your tribe?" and he continued "I have never heard it except that day" (Anis n.d.: 138-139).

Another story tells that when Ali Ibn ‘abi Taalib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, heard the Prophet speaking to a delegation from the tribe of Nahd /*banii nahd*/, he told the Prophet “we hear you speaking to the Arabs, and we are from the same father (meaning we speak the same language) but we do not understand much of what you say” (Attar 1958: 26).

There are many other similar stories, and there are also the Prophet’s words "نزل القرآن على سبعة أحرف" /*nazala al-qur’aan fala sab’ati laf’ruf*/, meaning, “the Qur’an was revealed in seven ‘letters’” (Nassar 1956:79). The seven letters are the seven different ways of reading the Qur’an. When summarizing his article "Arabic Sociolinguistics,” Owens (2001) indicates that in *Sibawayh’s* book *Kitaab* ”there are other segments of the Arabic grammatical tradition where variation was institutionalized by the grammarians themselves. Notable in this respect are the different Koranic reading traditions, the qira’āt." (422)

Nassar shares with Rabin and Versteegh the opinion that the lexical variations are due to dialectal differences among the tribes in pronunciation (1956: 79). The Qur’an includes dialectal words from the different tribes (Al-Mungid 1946: 8). For example, in the forty-fourth sura(t), سورة آل عمران /*surat taal ‘imraan*/, “*The Sura(t) of the family of ‘imraan*,” there are the following examples of lexical items from different tribes:

- 1) “As the family of the Pharaoh,” "كدأب آل فرعون" , /*Kada?b taal fir’sawn*/. The word دأب /*da?b*/, meaning “like, as,” derives from the dialect of the tribe of Jarham.
- 2) “a patient man,” "سيدا وحصورا" , /*sayyidan wa fja’suuran*/. The word حصور /*fja’suur*/ means “patient” for the tribe of Himyar, but in the tribe of Kinana(t) it signifies “a man who does not need women.”
- 3) “you were wounded,” "مسسكم فرح" , /*masaskum qar’fj*/. The word فرح /*qar’fj*/ meaning, “wound,” is used in the Hijaz. Yet the tribe of Tamiim pronounces it differently as /*qur’fj*/.

Nassar (1956) lists some examples concerning the variations in the languages of different tribes with syntax, morphology, phonology and semantics:

اختلاف لغات العرب من وجوه: احدها: الاختلاف في الحركات، كقولنا نستعين ونستعين، بفتح النون وكسرها. قال الفراء: هي مفتوحة في لغة قريش وأسد، وغيرهم يقولونها بكسر النون، والوجه الآخر: الاختلاف في الحركة والسكون، مثل قولهم معكم ومعكم... ووجه آخر وهو الاختلاف في إبدال الحروف، نحو اولئك واولالك، ومن ذلك الاختلاف في الهمزة والتلين، نحو مستهزئون ومستهزون، ومنها الاختلاف في التقديم والتأخير، نحو صاعقة وصاقعة. ومنها الاختلاف في الحذف والإثبات، نحو استحييت واستحييت، ومنها الاختلاف في الحرف الصحيح يبدل حرف معتلا، نحو أما زيد وأيما زيد، ومنها الاختلاف في التذكير والتأنيث، فإن من العرب من يقول هذه البقر، ومنهم من يقول هذا البقر، ومنها الاختلاف في الإدغام نحو مهتدون ومهدون، ومنها الاختلاف في صورة الجمع نحو أسرى وأسارى، ومنها الاختلاف في الزيادة نحو أنظر وأنظور... ومن الاختلاف اختلاف التضاد، وذلك كقول حمير للقائم: ثب أي اعد (77-78)

The languages of the Arabs differed in many ways. First there is a difference in short vowels¹⁰ such as */nastaʕiin/* and */nistaʕiin/* “we seek help”, with a *fatħa* after the */nuun/* and one with a *kasra*. Al-Farraa’ said that it is with a *fatħa* in the language of the tribes Qurayish (Muhammad’s tribe) and Asad, whereas other tribes say it with a *kasra*. Second, there is a difference in vowels and *sukuun* such as */maʕakum/* “with you” and */maʕkum/*. Third, there is a difference in changing letters (substitution) such as */ʔuulaʔika/* “those” and */ʔuulaalika/* and among these changes are the *hamza* and deglottalization of the *hamza* (omitting the *hamza*), such as */mustahziʔuun/* “those who ridicule” and */mustahzuun/*. Within that difference occurs forwarding and backwarding (he means metathesis) such as */ʕaaʕiqa(t)/* “thunderbolt” and */ʕaaqiʕa(t)/*. Moreover, within the same difference mentioned above is deletion (of vowel), such as */ʔistaʕyaytu/* “I was shy” and */ʔistaʕaytu/*, as well as changing a consonant with a vowel, such as */ʔamma Zayid/* “as for Zayid” and */ʔiima Zayid/*. Fourth, there is a difference in gender. For example, some Arabs say */haaḏhi ʔal-baaqar/*, “these (feminine) cows” and others say */haaḏa ʔal-baaqar/* “these (masculine) cows”. Fifth, there is a difference in assimilation, such as */muhtaduun/*, “those rightly guided” and */muhdawn/*. Sixth, there is a difference in plural forms, such as */ʔasraa/*, “prisoners of war” and */ʔasaaraa/*. Seventh, there is a difference in the increase of sound

¹⁰ There are three short vowels in Arabic which are:

- a) */fatha/* فتحة = low front vowel [a].
- b) */kasra/* كسرة = high front vowel [i].
- c) */damma/* ضمة = high back vowel [u].

These short vowels within a word (not at its end) denote the word’s meaning. In addition, there is also the *سكون/ sukuun/*, which is silence, and the *شدة/ shadda/*, which is gemination.

duration, such as /ʔunzur/, “look” and /ʔunzuur/. Eighth, there is a difference in using words for the opposite meaning, such as the tribe of Himyar when it says /θib/ meaning “sit down” when normally /θib means “rise” or “jump.” (Translation mine)

It should be noted that in old Arabic texts, differences in tribal dialects were referred to as differences in “language,” /luya(t)/. “In the Arabic grammatical tradition, the term *luḡa* (pl. *luḡāt*) means (i) ‘dialect’ (ii) ‘(dialectal) word,’ (iii) ‘word in a dictionary,’ and hence (iv) ‘lexicography’ and finally (v) ‘language’” (Iványi 2008: 88). The above stories and examples indicate that there were dialectal tribal differences in written as well as spoken Arabic; the exact features of these differences are still not fully known. Nassar’s examples and the following anecdote are instances of these variations.

A poet was reciting a poem and he used the word زين /zabn/, meaning “narrowness, tightness, closeness.” His friend told him: “This is not how you said it before, you used before the word ضيق /ḍiiq/.” The poet answered, “Don’t you know that ضيق /ḍiiq/ and زين /zabn/ are one” (meaning that they are synonyms) (Ibn Jinni 1952: 2: 467).

This variation existed in pre-Islamic times and is still present today. Ibn Jinni¹¹, born in Mosul before 913 AD, and described in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (1986: 3: 754) as the founder of the science of ethnology /ʔal-ʔʃtiqaaq ʔal ʔakbar/¹², tackled variation in the Arabic language in the tenth century. He wrote in his book الخصائص /ʔal-xaṣṣaaʔiṣ/, *Characteristics*, under the title باب - في الفصيح يجتمع في كلامه لغتان

¹¹ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique generale* (Paris: Payot, 1973) p. 112, wrote “La langue est pour nous le langage moins la parole. Elle est l’ensemble des habitudes linguistiques qui permettent un sujet de comprendre et de se faire comprendre.” The translation is “langue is language minus parole. The two together are linguistic habits that permit us to understand and be understood.” Charles-James Bailey, *Variation and Linguistic Theory* (Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1973) p.2, explains, “Saussure often spoke of *parole* as equivalent to individual execution or production. For him, the object of linguistic study was *langue*, which he likened to the score of a symphony, not *parole*, which he likened to the performance of that symphony by an orchestra—with all its unintended mistakes.”

¹² S.A. El-Hassan, “Variation in the Demonstrative System in Educated Spoken Arabic,” *Archivum linguisticum*, 9, no.1 (1978): p. 75, discussed the various ways demonstratives can be pronounced in Modern Standard Arabic. In *fusʔaa*, it should be هذا /haḏaa/. However, due to the influence of dialect and also the fact that both Lebanese and Egyptian view their dialects as prestigious, Lebanese pronounce it as هيدا /haydaa/ and Egyptians pronounce it as هزا /hazaal/.

فصاعدا /baab - fii ʔal- faʃiif ʔaʒtamiʕ fii kalaamihi luʔataan faʃaaʕidan/, “chapter: in the perfect language when a person has two dialects or more in his speech.” He gave an example of a person who says /baʔdaad/ “Baghdad” or /baʔdaan/ and even /miʔdaan/, and affirmed that all these variations are correct. Another example is the word “beard” لحيه /lifʔya/ which can also be /ʔaym/ أيم or /ʔayn/ أين (Ibn Jinni 1952: 1: 370).

It is important to mention that from the pre-Islamic era onwards, Arabs always made sure that the variational lexical items were Arabic words and not foreign ones (Abdul-Rahman 1969: 88). In other words, Arabs tried to minimize foreign lexical borrowing in the language. The dialectal variation among Arab tribes led to the creation of many words that bore the same meaning, but differed in form (Anis, n.d.: 138). Unfortunately, these variation studies have a gap of many centuries in which the phenomenon was not tackled. It is of relevance that, in all of the works cited, no linguist mentioned that this was incorrect Classical Arabic, although several works were devoted primarily to underlining the mistakes made when using Arabic after the Arab conquests. Consequently, the absence of such statements confirms the purity of all these dialectal variations.

The other related question, which has been the focus of heated discussion, is whether Arabs in pre- and early Islamic times used declensional endings in their ordinary speech. This concern remains, as linguists could only attest to variations found in the Qur’an and the *gahiliyya* (pre-Islamic) poems, yet no samples of the ordinary daily conversation were found. “Very few data on the oral use of either the Arabic or non-Arabic population are available for this early period in the written sources” (Miller 2008:59). However, many linguists believe that Arabs used declensional endings in their daily speech (Versteegh 1997, Fück 1980, Holes 1995). This assumption is related directly to the idea of diglossia. Both Fück (1980) and Versteegh (1997) maintain that diglossia was not present in early Arabic and that the differences between the forms found in the Qur’an and poems on the one hand, and those found in ordinary speech on the other hand are a matter of genre or style. However, other linguists such as Vollers claim that diglossia has always existed and that the differences between the “languages” were substantial to the point that “... the original text of revelation in the colloquial language of the prophet, during the period of the conquests, was transformed into the language of poetry” (Versteegh 1997:40-41). This is known as the “translation theory.” Fück (1980) and Versteegh (1997), on the other hand, think that diglossia started after the conquests. In his book *Pidginization and Creolization: The Case of Arabic* Versteegh conveys

how people in countries such as Egypt, Syria, etc. learned Arabic. He explains that a process of pidginization took place first, followed by another process of creolization and finally decreolization. Al-Sharkawi (2008), a follower of the group of linguists who support the idea of diglossia during the pre-Islamic era, refers to a third group of scholars who believe that the poetic and Qur'anic variety was spoken by Bedouins "at least in the western parts..." (689).

Diglossia

The diglossic situation of Arabic is hypothesized to go back to the pre-Islamic period. The historical existence of a High (H) variety for certain functions, including writing, and the existence of the various Arabic dialects make Arabic-speaking countries of interest in many studies. Ferguson (1959) defined diglossia 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. (435)

Ferguson (1959) discussed Arabic, Greek, Haitian and Swiss German cases and emphasized that both varieties have to be related to or belong to one language. Since then, diglossia has been the subject of heated debate in studies on linguistics. Fishman (1980) then questioned the relatedness of the two varieties of the code in the diglossic situation and introduced the notion of diglossia with/without bilingualism, because he based his definition on language function rather than on form.

Fasold (1984), grounding his definition of Broad Diglossia on both Ferguson's and Fishman's, wrote: "The reservation of highly valued segments of a community's linguistic repertoire (which are not the first to be learned, but are learned later and more consciously, usually through formal education), for situations perceived as more formal and guarded, and the reservation of less valued segments (which are learned first with little or no conscious effort), of any degree of linguistic relatedness to the higher valued segments, from stylistic differences to separate languages, informal and intimate." (53). A situation of Broad Diglossia is a situation in which, either a number of languages which can be related (High and

Low varieties), or completely different languages, are used. Thus Ferguson's definition of diglossia is referred to as "Classical Diglossia" while the other types involving more languages are referred to as "Broad Diglossia."

In his article "Outline of a theory of diglossia," Hudson (2002) reviews this term comprehensively and analyzes Ferguson's definition, indicating that "The position taken here is that the linguistic arrangement characterized by Ferguson for Greece, Switzerland, and the Arab world is fundamentally a sociological rather than a grammatical one, and that there is, therefore, no direct casual connection between linguistic distance between the component codes in such a code matrix and direction of eventual or potential shift" (15). Hudson further discusses the sociological impact of the H variety on both society and an individual's mobility, the possibility of relatedness of both codes (H & L), power, prestige, and other issues suggesting a "uniform use, whatever that may be, of the term 'diglossia' in sociolinguistic research and theory construction" (43). Hudson's suggestion is a valid one. His research treats diglossia as a situation whereby both H and L are varieties of the same code.

Ferguson's "Classical Diglossia" involves two points, the function of each variety and the relatedness of the varieties. The researcher believes that both factors need to be utilized when referring to a diglossic situation and not only one. That is because the researcher is a native speaker of colloquial Egyptian Arabic, and finds that the process of learning Modern Standard Arabic in school is not the same as learning English as a second language. It is a different learning process in which some modifications of the mother tongue take place. The main difficulty lies usually in the lexical items, and as soon as they are explained the process is facilitated. Looking back many centuries, this confirms Fück's (1980) and Versteegh's (1997) idea that the variety of Arabic used in the Qur'an and poetry was a spoken one but of a different genre. In line with this, Holes (1995) mentions that "What can not be in any doubt is that oral poetry, composed and recited by skilled poets, was an integral and important element in the tribal life, fully comprehensible to the ordinary bedouin of the time"(10). This raises the question of how ordinary people would have, at that time, valued the poetry or understood it if it were a remote or completely different variety from their mother tongue. Therefore, the researcher agrees with both Fück and Versteegh that it was simply a matter of different styles or genres. Moreover, this research actually confirms this point for a very simple reason, namely that none of the respondents ever asked about word order or syntactic structures, their main

problems were with lexical items. In linguistics, languages are considered different according to their syntax and yet none of the respondents ever questioned or had any difficulty with this aspect.

The importance of diglossia for this research is that the L variety, as the native language of the Arabs, and MSA, which is taught formally, both play an important role in the individual linguistic repertoire in both writing and understanding the MSA written in newspapers. The two varieties form a mixture with no clear boundaries, a matter that is expounded on in later chapters. As De Silva (1982) mentioned, "... it would be incorrect to assume that the two varieties are always distinctly kept apart according to the prescribed norms. A fair amount of hybridization takes place at both ends of the scale. Insufficient education and the natural influence of the major spoken variety often color the high variety with vernacularisms at all levels" (97).

The same idea is expressed by Ferguson (1991) in his article, "Diglossia Revisited" when he states that "There may of course be dialect variation in either the High variety or the Low variety (typically more in Low), and there may even be (regional and/or social) dialect variation in the patterns of use, the 'functional associations' of the respective varieties" (222).

To conclude this discussion, it is worth presenting the Linguistic situation in the Arab world as conveyed by Holes (1995):

[It]... is thus a complex one, although perhaps no more complex than the situation in earlier but less well-documented periods of its history. The concept of Arabic, a diglossic language, if it was ever accurate, is now an over simplification: the behavior of most Arabic speakers, educated or not, is rather of constant style shifting along a cline of opposite ends of which are "pure" MSA and the "pure" regional dialect, more accurately conceived of as idealized constructs than real entities. Most communication apart from the most "frozen," written as well as spoken, is conducted in a form of Arabic somewhere intermediate between those two ideals but governed by rules, nonetheless, even if we cannot yet capture the full complexity of the rules that control the combining and hybridizing of the two. (49)

The linguistic situation in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times was one in which much variation within the Arabic language occurred. Early stories show that this variation existed in speech since Arabs needed to communicate with each other. Ferguson (1959) identified what he called "Arabic Koine," a variety of Arabic functioning as a *lingua franca* among

Arabs and non-Arabs since the pre-Islamic period, to help them communicate across tribal boundaries. Such a need of a *lingua franca* persists until today and it has led to the emergence of Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA), which is meant to fulfill this need.

Dialects and the Emergence of Educated Spoken Arabic

The dialectal differences in the Arabic language, coupled with the need for Arabs to communicate with each other, had led to the establishment of the “Arabic Koine” in the *gahiliyya* period, and, in the current era, to the development of Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA). In 1921, Sapir offered a more general statement concerning the evolution of dialects, saying, "It is exceedingly doubtful if a language will ever be spoken over a wide area without multiplying itself dialectically" (Sapir 1921: 161-162).

In the fifteenth century, Ibn Khaldoun described in his book *المقدمة /Al-muqaddima/*, *The Introduction*, the linguistic situation in the Arab countries as follows:

أعلم أن عرف التخاطب في الأمصار وبين الحضرة ليس بلغة مضر القديمة ولا بلغة أهل الجبل بل هي لغة أخرى قائمة بنفسها بعيدة عن لغة مضر وعن لغة هذا الجبل العربي الذي لعهدنا وهي قائمة بنفسها فهو ظاهر يشهد له ما فيها من التغيرات الذي يعد عند صناعة أهل النحو لها وهي مع ذلك تختلف باختلاف الأمصار في اصطلاحاتهم فلغة أهل المشرق مباينة بعض الشيء للغة أهل المغرب وكذلك أهل الأندلس معهما. (n.d.: 638)

As Rosenthal (1967) renders this passage:

The dialects of the urban population follow the language of the nation or race that has control of (the cities) or has founded them. Therefore, the dialects spoken in all Muslim cities in the East and the West at this time are Arabic, even though the habit of the classical Arabic language has become corrupted and its vowel endings (i'rab) have changed. (294)

Although Rosenthal did not include “the *muḍar's* language” in his translation, Eid (1979) clarifies what Ibn Khaldoun meant by this term: “The '*muḍar's* language' or the '*muḍar's* tongue' - as Ibn Khaldoun calls it - is the ideal *fuSHaa* related to the Pre-Islamic Arabs" (109). Ibn Khaldoun notes that there were linguistic differences between the Arabic-speaking peoples of the East (Syria, Lebanon etc.), and West (Morocco, Tunisia etc.), yet he did not mention any details concerning these differences. However, these dialectal differences encouraged Arabs to look for a form of spoken language that functions as a *lingua franca* for them. Mahmoud

(1982) discusses some of the factors leading to the appearance of Educated Spoken Arabic:

The coming of age of many Arab countries both politically and economically, the massive spread of education and the sweeping changes that catapulted some of these countries into the technological age has produced a new elite with different communicative needs than those Ferguson may have encountered in the 1950's or the 1960's. This elite is comprised mostly of those who have completed their university education either at home or abroad. They did not feel comfortable using MSA, either because they did not master it, or because it was not modernized enough to adequately express the technological and educational advances that have shaped their lives. The lower form, on the other hand, while suitable for mundane needs, was deemed equally inadequate. In order to resolve this communicative dilemma, and in the absence of a common foreign or second language, they had to resort to a type of intermediate Spoken Arabic that cut across regional dialects and could be understood by the educated and uneducated alike. (245)

Badawi (1985) also discusses the issue, observing that "The Arabic of every Arab country has a spoken variety which may be labeled at this stage 'Educated Spoken.' Of all spoken varieties it is the most dynamic, versatile and the one readily understood outside its particular geographical region" (15). This definition of ESA does not indicate that this variety may not include dialectal variations. Bishai (1966) termed what is now known as Educated Spoken Arabic, "Inter-Arabic." He explained that all the revolutions taking place in the Arab countries and their desire to maintain their Arab identity were motivating factors behind the usage of this variety. His study proves that, "Colloquial interference may be expected to continue in modern Inter-Arabic" (320).

El-Hassan (1978), on the same issue of Educated Spoken Arabic, writes that:

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the written language of contemporary literature, journalism, and "spoken prose." It exists side by side with a great number of regional vernaculars, usually referred to globally as colloquial Arabic. Educated speakers in the Arab world use the variety of Arabic which we here call Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA), which draws upon both MSA and colloquial Arabic. MSA, ESA and colloquial Arabic constitute a continuum. These varieties of Arabic are neither discrete nor homogeneous; rather, they are characterized by gradation and variation. (32)

Ryding (2008) presents an overview of all research and work done on this variety, and expects the University of Maryland study to add more information on this variety in the future, through the extensive research being carried out. Mejdell (2006), in her book *Mixed Styles in Spoken Arabic in Egypt*, discusses the different varieties spoken in Egypt and questions whether the matrix of ESA is colloquial or MSA.

In light of all these opinions, it is difficult to deny the close relationship between Educated Spoken Arabic, which includes features from MSA and colloquial, and the written Arabic of the newspapers. Journalists constitute part of the educated community in any country. It is also well known that individuals are affected by their speaking traits. "Though the spoken and written languages are two distinct sets of habits, they are related sets of habits" (Firth 1964:198). Ibn Khaldoun said centuries ago "all languages are habits..." (Rosenthal 1967: 438). Since languages are habits and the spoken and written languages are related sets of habits, it can be deduced that any journalist's written language will be affected by his spoken one. This is important because it explains how the journalist's mother tongue (the dialect) affects his/her choice of words. On the syntactic level, Brustad (2000) carried out a study comparing and contrasting between syntactic features in Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian and Kuwaiti dialects and Classical Arabic in terms of the use of definite articles, mood, aspect, word order, and so on. She discovered that there were instances of conformity and others of variation. Again, this shows that the spoken dialects include many CA features as well as MSA ones. Actually Brustad's work is of great importance in Chapter Nine, in which a conviction of many Arab linguists is discussed, namely that several features of the modern Arab dialects stem from Classical Arabic rather than Modern Standard Arabic.

According to Mitchell (1978), ESA is a koine, and, like the koine Ferguson (1959) mentioned concerning Arabs in pre-Islamic times, it helps Arabs communicate. Mitchell describes ESA as follows:

It appears, in fact to serve most purposes and to be infinitely extensible, at least over sizeable areas of the Arab world transcending the boundaries of national states. Its users are motivated, first, to proclaim themselves as educated men and to converse on topics beyond the scope of particular regional vernaculars; secondly, to "share" with other Arabs of similar background, whether of their own or other Arab countries; thirdly, to promote the forms of pan - or inter - Arabic that the forces of modernization, including urbanization, industrialization, mass education and internationalism, require; fourthly, to maintain enough local and regional loyalty with prejudicing supra-regional intelligibility or provoking

ridicule, at the same time retaining the means to fulfill the more private, homely and familial functions of speech. (228)

Not only was the need to communicate with one another crucial, but also showing local and regional loyalty while speaking ESA was important. Many studies concerning variation in the pronunciation of spoken ESA, as well as variation in the use of participles and tenses, were carried out and this regional loyalty was demonstrated in these studies (Mitchell 1978 and 1980).

The desire to communicate with Arabs is also an essential issue for non-Arabs learning Arabic. The choice of which dialect to learn is a difficult one, especially for people working in the diplomatic corps. Consequently, linguists and teachers at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Washington, D.C., defined a language variety they term "Formal Spoken Arabic." The purpose of this variety is that it can be used throughout the Arab world. Ryding (1990), the author of *Formal Spoken Arabic*, introduces the book by saying: "The language described and taught in this text is not a spoken dialect of a specific Arab region. Within the continuum of Spoken Arabic variants, registers, and styles it is an intermediate language which embodies characteristics of interdialectal communication, as well as aspects of the standard literary language, and which has proven extremely useful to Foreign Service Officers assigned to various posts in the Arab world" (p. xvi). *Formal Spoken Arabic* uses some colloquial lexical items that are popular throughout most of the Arab countries such as *فيه /fiih/*, "there is/are," and *شنطة /sanṭa/*, "handbag."

In his book *مستقبل اللغة العربية المشتركة /mustaqbal al-luḡa(t) ʔal-ʔarabiyya(t) ʔal-muʔtaraka(t)/*, *The Future of the Shared Arabic Language*, Anis (1960) discusses how since pre-Islamic times Arabs have had a shared language they all understood, despite tribal dialectal differences. He says, "the Qur'an does not represent only the language of Qurayish (the tribe of Prophet Muhammad), as it is claimed sometimes in some books and stories, but it (the language of the Qur'an) represents the shared language among all Arabs, the language of literary works: poetry, speech and writing" (9). Here are his words in Arabic:

فلا يمثل القرآن لغة قريش وحدها كما يتردد أحيانا في بعض الكتب والروايات، وإنما يمثل اللغة المشتركة بين العرب جميعا لغة الأدب من شعر وخطابة وكتاب!

Therefore, this shared language, whether referred to as *lingua franca*, *Inter-Arabic*, *ESA*, or any other name still exists.

Mitchell's view concerning ESA is of great importance as it gives a general description of ESA. He says:

Educated Arabic speech - not unlike German - is characterized by general intelligibility among great regional and stylistic diversity. Both the investigator and the user must develop some awareness of sociolinguistic matters ranging from generalities like standardization or koineization to such particularities as concern, for example, for the manner in which the biographical identities of collocutors influence the linguistic choices they make. Such features cannot all be incorporated systematically and in detail within the framework of a recognizable grammar, but research has shown that such promptings upon a speaker as the need to establish rapport with his collocutor(s), or to proclaim himself either educated and/or of given regional provenance, or to respond linguistically to the (in) formality of the situation in which he finds himself, these and other promptings are all reducible to a limited number of stylistic distinctions, which must be incorporated in a grammar if it is to be sensitive to the phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences regularly observable among individuals who nevertheless subscribe to a shared norm, however fluid (1986:7).

As stated earlier, speaking and writing are distinct, yet connected traits and are also habits, which means that educated speakers are influenced by their speaking traits. Thus regional variation that exists in speech will extend itself to writing. This is best expressed by Mitchell's (1986) words, "It is the interplay between written Arabic and vernacular Arabic(s) that creates and maintains Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA), both nationally and internationally. A shared standard arising from a modern literary tradition has to be supported by a wide educated public and appear in their speech as well as in their writing" (8).

From all of the above, it can be summarized that lexical variation has existed in Arabic since the pre-Islamic era and that the Qur'an itself contains words from the dialects of the different tribes existing then. The dialectal differences in the Arabic language, coupled with the need for Arabs to communicate with each other and the spread of urbanization, have led to the emergence of Educated Spoken Arabic. Educated Spoken Arabic (ECA) was constructed to fulfill a need in the linguistic repositories of the Arabs. The features of this variety include both MSA and dialectal variation. Nowadays, the media plays a major role in broadening it. Before expounding on that, Modern Standard Arabic is discussed in the coming section, followed by the role of the media and the linguistic academies.