

## **The linguistic behavior of teachers and Students**

### **In Palestinian Arab schools in Israel**

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#### **Abstract**

This research aims to examine the students' attitude towards the linguistic behavior of the teachers and their linguistic behavior, according to independent variables: grade and gender. This research is based on a sample of Arab school students located in different geographical areas of Israel. The sample included 465 students from middle and high school classes. The sample was selected in two stages: the first is the selection of schools randomly from the list of Arab middle and high schools, and then the selection of the sample according to the grade-level sample way. A questionnaire built specifically for the research was used, three teachers and specialists in teaching Arabic as a mother tongue reviewed and examined the questionnaire, then measured the degree of internal consistency 0.86 (Alpha Cronbach).

The findings of the study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in linguistic behavior between male and female students, also there were no statistically significant differences between the genders in the linguistic behavior of the teachers in the classroom. Besides, the results did not indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the students based on the grade variable, but demanding the teacher to speak the standard language made a difference between students in the eleventh grade and students in the middle school, in favor of students in the eleventh grade. Finally, the results indicated that there is a positive statistical significance between teacher's

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speaking in the standard language and demanding the students to speak in the standard language.

## **Introduction**

Thousands years ago, man has used engraving and drawing as a mean for communication. Many researchers define language as a mean which used by human society to communicate with each other. According to crystal (2008), language is a regular use of sounds, signs and written symbols in the society to communicate and express oneself. In many different communities, there are two or more varieties of the same language that used by some speakers under different conditions. This phenomenon is called diglossia. Predominately the language divided into two patterns the standard language and regional dialect.

Diglossia appears clearly in Arabic so that the Arabic language is divided into three official languages around the world: the language of the Quraan (the holy book of the Muslims), the standard language and the local dialect. Arabic speakers depend only on the use of the standard language and the local dialect/s because the Standard language is based on the language of the Quraan.

People use the Standard language and the local dialects in different conditions and places, so that the Standard language is used in official situations and declarations, on the contrary, the local dialects used for daily communication and informal statements (Levin, 1995). The colloquial language differs from one country to another, and the slang is divided into four main dialects: The Gulf dialect - the Iraqi dialect, the Egyptian dialect, the Sham dialect (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine) and the dialects of Algeria (Yemen, Tunisia).

Several studies have suggested that acquiring knowledge in the mother tongue would help develop cognitive skills and literacy skills in children (Swain, 1996; Olson, 1997; James, 1996). However, studies show negative impacts on school

students in literacy skills acquisition as a result of the marginalization of their dialect that they use on a daily basis in all frameworks (Olson, 1997).

The use of the colloquial language is increasing daily as a consequence of the excessive use of local dialects through the electronic applications and social media, which leads to weakness of the standard language of speakers. This process is facilitated by the fact that the language is constantly changing, in order to suit the developments and needs of this era. There is a new generation of modern words that suits our fast technological era, that's creating a gap between the spoken language and the standard language.

The language's continuous development affects all language users, especially school students who have difficulty understanding some vocabularies due to the lack in using of the standard language, which leads to difficulty in the learning process and developing their knowledge. This is noticed when students surprised and feeling astonished when they recognize the meaning of the word "television" in the Standard language.

According to the Arabic language curriculum at the Ministry of Education in the State of Israel, teachers and students must use standard Arabic on a daily basis in the teaching and learning process in all the fields, although the standard language is not the mother tongue for the Arab students, and it is only taught in schools, unlike the colloquial language that the teachers and the students use, and they acquired it since their childhood naturally, i.e., without teaching. (Haeri, 2003; Kaye, 1994; Mejdell, 2006)

According to Gibran (2009, p. 94), "Arab students in Israel prefer using the Hebrew language instead of Arabic because of its smoothness and because they considered it more flexible than the Arabic language, in which they can express themselves in Hebrew without fallen in the forbidden mistakes." Abu Rabia (2003) claims that Arabic became a burden on the Arab student shoulders in

Israel, especially since it is considered a second language and remains limited or confinement in the books, because the student is not exposed to it in his daily life, and is taught in schools only. Whereas the language that the student learn it naturally is the colloquial language, which is completely different from the standard one in the phonological, morphological and orthographic aspects.

This study is based on previous studies examining the subject of multiple dialects for a single language. This study examines the language which the Arab teachers and students use during their discussions. and the students' attitude towards their teacher's linguistic behavior.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **The Arabic language and its dialects**

Language is not just vocabulary but it is based upon the use of grammatical rules, to link this vocabulary together to produce the speech that reflects our impressions and life experiences. Language enables us to influence people and situations around us.

**The Arabic Language:** Arabic is a Semitic language and one of the six official languages of the United Nations (UN). It is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world (Abushariah, Neustein, Hammo, 2016, p.1). The Arabic language today consists of two varieties, Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial dialects (Badawi, 1973).

Researchers consider language in all its forms as a variety, although they face many difficulties in identifying the differences between these terms. Wardhaugh (1992) defines linguistic variation (patterns) as a set of human speech models that depend on the geographical region or social group. Accordingly, the

language is divided into two main variants: the standard language and the colloquial dialect.

"Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the current formal linguistic standard of Arabic , which is widely taught in schools and universities, used in the office, the media, newspapers, formal speeches, courtrooms, and any kind of formal communication" (Abushariah, Neustein, Hammo, 2016, p.1). "MSA is the language of culture and written communication of all speakers of Arabic everywhere, whether Muslims, Christian or Druze. It is also used in speech, as the language of news broadcasts on radio and television. It plays a very important role in the life of all Muslims, since it preserves the language of the Quraan and serves as the language of prayer" (Badawi, 1973).

"However, Dialectal Arabic (DA) also known as Colloquial Arabic is the natural spoken language in everyday life. It varies from one country to another and includes the daily spoken Arabic, which deviates from the standard Arabic and sometimes more than one dialect can be found within a country". (Abushariah, Neustein, Hammo, 2016, 176)

The colloquial dialect contains: local words, special morphological expressions, and grammatical variants (Dickins, 2013; Watson, 2017).

"Arabic dialects vary on many dimensions – primarily, geography and social class. Geo-linguistically, the Arab world can be divided in many different ways" (Biadsy, Hirschberg & Habash, 2009, 55).

The following is only one of many that covers the main Arabic dialects:

- Gulf Arabic (GLF) includes the dialects of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman.
- Iraqi Arabic (IRQ) is the dialect of Iraq. In some dialect classifications, Iraqi Arabic is considered a sub-dialect of Gulf Arabic.

- Levantine Arabic (LEV) includes the dialects of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Israel.
- Egyptian Arabic (EGY) covers the dialects of the Nile valley: Egypt and Sudan.
- Maghrebi Arabic covers the dialects of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania. Libya is sometimes included (Biadisy, Hirschberg & Habash, 2009, 55).

### **Palestinian Arabic**

Palestinian Arabic is the spoken language of Arabic-speakers everywhere, whatever their education or social class (Cf. Levin, 1995).

We can distinguish between four Palestinian sub-dialects, whereas there are sub-dialects according to the region. The geographic region is associated with the hierarchical division of speakers.

#### **The Palestinian dialects:**

- Urban dialects in and near the Coastal Plain, in cities such Haifa, Jaffa, Acre and Jerusalem.
- Rural dialects of central Israel and Palestine.
- Dialects of the Bedouin in southern Israel and Palestine.
- Dialects of Galilee.

The following table contains different vocabularies that have the same meaning but are varying according to dialects and regions.

Central Region	North Region	South Region	Standard Language
<i>hassa</i>	<i>halla'</i>	<i>ilhīn</i>	<i>'al-'ān</i> Now
<i>ba'du</i>	<i>lissa</i>	<i>issā'</i>	<i>laysa ba'd</i> Not yet
<i>uxra šwayy</i>	<i>kamān</i> <i>šwayy</i>	<i>'adāna</i>	<i>qarīban</i> Soon
<i>ḍarif</i>	<i>kīs</i>	<i>gurṭās</i>	<i>ḍarf, kīs</i> pocket
<i>hāḍo</i>	<i>iyātu</i>	<i>ir'a</i>	<i>hā huwa</i> Here it is
<i>hēč</i>	<i>hēk</i>	<i>kiḍī</i>	<i>hākaḍā</i> Thus

There are no fixed limitations for the language because it is formed of unlimited variables. Researchers (Pennycook & Makoni, 2007; Bauman, & Briggs, 2003) claim that there is no limited and static language, that because it develops and changes as a result of communication and linguistic interaction.

The language is considered "dynamic", that because it changes permanently. So that, there is a continuous language production for serving its speakers. The spoken language is characterized by rapid development because of its flexibility in creating and adding new vocabulary that suites the present era. Unlike the colloquial language, the Standard language has been formed since ancient times and considered as a reference for all recent readers and writers.

Ferguson (1959, 332) claims that "language typically persists at least several centuries, and evidence in some cases seem to show that it can last well over a thousand years".

Makoni (1998) rejects the static and closed categories of language because language policies are formed on clear known boundaries in several languages used according to their importance.

Since Arabic is not different from the other bilingual languages, it consists of several linguistic styles: The Standard language and the colloquial. It is difficult to distinguish between both varieties because the boundaries between them are variable. So the individual is capable to produce a written or an oral text that contains both standard and colloquial elements.

Despite the split of many informal varieties from the Standard language that they are merged to it, these varieties are considered invalid, in which the Ministry of Education recommends to use only the Standard language in the teaching and learning process.

Researchers indicate that there is a Linguistic duplication (diglossia) in Arabic because of the existence of more than one variable in the language, i.e. the existence of the Standard language and the number of slang dialects. Researchers claim that the verbal and literal variables are related and we should not treat each variable individually (Badawi, 1973; Blanc, 1960; Hary, 1996).

The term 'diglossia' is defined for the first time in 1959 as "where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play" (Ferguson, 1959, 325). Ferguson highlights on the features of diglossia like functions, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, stability, lexicon, and phonology.

But Hary (1996) prefers using the term "Multiglossa", instead of using "Diglossia" and later used a new term "Continuuglossia". For his belief that a

linguistic state in which different varieties of a language exist side by side in a language community are used under different circumstances with various functions" (p.69).

Parkinson (1991) considers the linguistic variables meet in the middle of a pivotal line that connects between Standard and colloquial language, creating a continuum series in which users can combine texts using elements from both varieties at the same time.

Diglossia is a big obstacle for the Arab student in acquiring the standard language and it is considered the reason for their poor educational performance in school, as a result of the conflict that they experience because of linguistic variables (Amara, 1999; Abu Rabia & Taha, 2006).

Standard Arabic is more complex than colloquial, but both varieties overlap that because there is no boundary between them, which makes the two variables mixed, and this affects the students' acquisition of the language and their academic achievements.

In this study, we will investigate the language used by the teacher and the student during the different class lessons such as Arabic, history, civics, and science, also the impact of diglossia on the students' academic success.

### **Literacy and language**

**Literacy** is the ability to read and write: According to UNESCO, the literate is a person who has the skills and abilities to engage in tasks that require reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning to perform tasks efficiently in society (UNESCO, 2005).

Literacy is defined as a knowledge field that enables a person to participate in daily, social and economic life, which reflects a person's perception and discourse (Futures, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Literacy includes many different skills that help to fulfill the requirements of society through the use of knowledge. So these skills should be interrelated as a series such as knowledge of the country's official language, slang, knowledge of national identity and knowledge of different languages - more than one language (Kaplan & Balduaf, 2003; Hornberger, 2004).

The point here is that the language is considered the basis of the knowledge for the students, so that academic literacy is the acquisition of spoken language and knowledge of reading and writing the official language. so the effectiveness of the educational process that Arab students experience is depending on it, as the students use the language as a means to integrate into the school or educational framework in general.

### **Language employment in the school**

Most communities suffer from bilingualism, so the question remains: Which language should be used as a mean of teaching?

Governmental institutions are obliged to use the official language and ignore the other languages and dialects that students have acquired. One of these institutions is the school, since most of the education ministries are asking for the separating of the language unity, so these ministries do not agree to integrate the colloquial language in the school. The Ministry of Education obliges the schools to use the standard language, despite there are many other dialects in the country (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999).

Students do not use the languages they study at school because these languages are official, so they prefer to communicate with each other using the spoken language (Kaplan, 1994; Olson, 2017).

Many studies are demanding using the students' mother tongue during the teaching process. That because using the mother tongue has a positive role in the development of students' knowledge and cognitive skills during the teaching

process and this will assist students in academic success and attending in higher education (Ramirez, 1991; Swain, 1996; Haugen, 1991).

Students suffer from a big gap since the school focuses mostly on the mother tongue (standard) and ignoring the dialects spoken by students in their daily lives. The existence of many definitions of the term “mother tongue” creates a misconception in the understanding of the term. We must distinguish between the meaning of the mother tongue, which means the language of the motherland, and the meaning of the mother tongue, which means the spoken language.

### **Classroom discourse**

Since the curriculum is officially obliging teaching the standard Arabic in schools and even obliges teaching various subjects such as history, civics, science and other subjects in the standard language, the textbooks should also be written in the official language.

Arab students in Israel suffer from the dilemma of using the language properly because the official language in Israel is Hebrew, followed by English which makes Arabic the third language which is used by the Arab minority only.

Students acquire a mother tongue from a young age without teaching, unlike the standard language they study and use formally in the school only. The presence of the two patterns hinders students' success in acquiring new information.

Researchers claim that Diglossia is a problem since it makes students suffer during the process of acquiring and developing their academic literacy skills. All this will negatively affect the academic success of these students (Abu Rabia & Saiegh, 2005; Ayari, 2004; Taha, 2013; Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2011). Besides, studies indicate that the low achievement of students in the ministerial examinations of the state is the consequence of diglossia (Shield and Insulin, 2004; Amara & Mar'i, 2006).

Teachers create a language that combines the official Arabic in textbooks with the spoken language to simplify theoretical material for students. The answer to the question remains unclear: which language style should be used in the classroom, Standard or spoken language?

### **Research methodology**

#### **Research questions:**

Are there statistically significant differences between the students' attitude towards the teacher linguistic behavior and their linguistic behavior, according to the grade and gender variables?

#### **Hypothesis:**

There are statistically significant differences between the teacher linguistic behavior and the students' linguistic behavior based on the grade and gender of the student.

#### **Research method**

This research is quantitative; this study examines the students' attitudes of their teachers' linguistic behavior, also the linguistic behavior of the students themselves.

#### **Variables**

**Dependent variable:** The linguistic behavior of the teachers and the linguistic behavior of the students in the class.

**Independent variables:** gender, grade, self-assessment of academic level, education level of parents.

## **Research tools**

A questionnaire was distributed, the questionnaire included two sections: The first section examined the students' attitude towards the linguistic behavior of the teachers, while the second section examines the linguistic behavior of the students.

## **The research sample**

In the study, 465 students participated from Arabic middle and high schools from the seventh to eleventh grades, in Israel. The students' ages range from 13-17 years. The sample of the participating schools was randomly selected. Classes from schools (in the sample) were also selected randomly from the seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades. This sampling method was chosen because it is comprehensive and more suitable for the research, also to make sure that the research sample was distributed to participants of different ages and classes.

## **Results**

The present research dealt with the phenomenon of diglossia among middle and high school students in Arab schools in Israel.

A total of 465 students participated in the research. They were asked to answer a questionnaire that examined their linguistic behavior in the standard language and the behavior of their teachers. The students indicated that they agree with the questionnaire items arranged according to the Likert scale (1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) disagree (4) strongly disagree. Besides, students answered demographic questions related to gender, grade, self-assessment of educational level and educational level of parents (see Table 1 for the frequency of percentage of demographic variables).

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of the sample by demographic variables.**

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
gender	male	195	43%
	female	262	57%
grade	Seventh	153	33%
	Ninth	159	34%
	eleventh	152	33%
Self-assessment of educational level	Very good	258	57%
	Good	103	23%
	medium	81	18%
	weak	10	2%
Father's educational level	primary school	11	2%
	Middle school	49	11%
	High school	127	29%
	Postsecondary (none academic)	134	30%
	Academic	125	28%
	Mother's educational level	Primary school	15
Middle school	28	6%	
High school	126	29%	
Postsecondary (none academic)	126	29%	
Academic	146	33%	

In order to examine the differences in the linguistic behavior of the Standard language of students and teachers according to the gender variable, a T-test was performed for independent variables and there were no statistically significant differences in the linguistic behavior of the standard language among students, [ $t(455) = 0.71, p = 0.48$ ]. Also there were no statistically significant differences depending on the students' opinion regarding the teachers' behavior in the Standard language [ $t(451) = -0.37, p = 0.72$ ].

Regarding the differences in the students' and teachers' linguistic behavior in the standard language according to the grade level variable, two single-factor tests were performed and no statistically significant differences were found between teachers and students by grade level variable [ $F(2.461) = 1.22, p = 0.29$ ]. However, there were statistically significant differences between the opinions of the male students and the opinions of the female students regarding the linguistic behavior of the teacher according to the grade level variable [ $F(2.457) = 4.27, p = 0.02$ ]. This means that the 11th graders' approval rates ( $M = 1.7, SD = 0.87$ ) on the idea that the teacher speaks the Standard language in the class before asking the students to do so is higher than the approval rates of seventh graders ( $M = 2.03, SD = 1.07$ ).

Finally, to examine the relationship between students' linguistic behavior and the teacher linguistic behavior in the Standard language, Spearman test was performed, and therefore a positive correlation was found statistically significant  $r = 0.245, n = 461, p = 0.001$ . This means that whenever a teacher conducts linguistic behavior in the Standard language in the class, the student will agree that the teacher also conducts a linguistic behavior in the Standard language at the class before demanding students to do so.

## Discussion

The school considered one of the most important institutions that prepares students for the socialization. Socialization means, according to the social concept, training the individuals for their future roles to be active members of society. It teaches them the social values, customs, traditions and the prevailing customs in the society, to achieve harmony between individuals and social norms and laws, which leads to the creation of a kind of solidarity and cohesion in the society. The school has a big role in preparing students to face the community and the life requirements so that the teacher is responsible for preparing the students for their future roles and their involvement in the social and professional life. Students acquire knowledge in different fields through the learning in the classroom and with the help of the teacher, classmates, and textbooks. The teaching process and knowledge acquiring depend on the classroom discussion between the teacher and the student on the one hand and between the students themselves on the other.

Students are influenced by the language of teachers during the class discussion. Ochs points out that classroom dialogue is considered spontaneous and unplanned more than being a formal planned talk (Cazden, 2001). This is shown when the teacher asks the students questions, then they start answering, by quoting vocabulary were used by the teacher and their classmates, often this vocabulary is in the Standard language.

The results of the present study showed that there are no statistically significant differences between male and female students' opinions regarding the literary linguistic approach and behavior of the teacher. This means that students share an opinion on the linguistic approach of the teacher. This is represented in the study of Cazden (2001). When a teacher creates a classroom discussion by asking a question that examines the students' understanding of the subject, students share the answers by quoting vocabulary and points of interest from each other.

The linguistic behavior of teachers and students was examined according to their grade level, but no significant differences were found for students' linguistic behavior according to grade level. However, there are statistically significant differences between the linguistic behavior of students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. Students in the 11<sup>th</sup>-grade claim that the teacher must use the Standard language before demanding the students to use it.

Finally, the relationship between the linguistic behavior of teachers and students was examined. Moreover, it has been shown that whenever a teacher uses standard language during the class, the students agree to use it more during the lesson.

Barnes (1969) found that many teachers use a special language in the teaching and learning process which will create a barrier for students who do not use it since they cannot understand it, this leads students not to participate during the classroom discussion.

These results demonstrate that students follow their teacher in their linguistic behavior. The teacher leads the class dialogue and the students continue the conversation, following their teacher's approach. This is done when the students use vocabulary that the teacher put forward during the dialogue in order to make them create a classroom dialogue based on the linguistic behavior of the teacher.

In summary, the Arab Palestinian community in Israel suffers from multiple dialects and languages, because the official language of the Arabs is the Standard language, while the spoken language is a local dialect/s that varies according to geographical region and social class.

The dilemma of multilingualism appears in the education system since the Ministry of Education curriculum requires students to be taught in the official Arabic language as it is considered the mother tongue. Whereas students learn this Standard language only at school, the students acquire the colloquial

language naturally, and they consider it their mother tongue (Landau-Tasseron and colleagues, 2012).

However, the question remains: Which language should teachers and students use in the school, standard or spoken language?

Many studies suggest that the use of a native language (colloquial) would help students acquire academic and cognitive skills more easily (Ramirez 1991; Swain, 1996). The official language (the Standard) is considered more complex than the colloquial because it contains vocabulary and grammar that make learning and teaching seem to be more difficult than it is. This can lead to students dropping out of school.

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