

SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON THE CHOICE OF A LINGUISTIC VARIANT IN LIBYAN ARABIC DIALECTS

Libya Arap Lehçelerinde Dil Variant Seçimi Üzerindeki Sosyal Etkileri

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Öz: *Bu çalışmanın amacı, Arap dilinin farklı dil çeşitleri ve Libya'daki ikidillilik durumunu incelemektir . Yüksek ve düşük ağızları belirlemek için Libya (Trablusgarp ve Bingazi) farklı bölgelerden gelen iki farklı düşük ağız benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları karşılaştırıldı. Bu şehirler, Tripoli doğu tarafında ve Bingazi batı tarafında olmak üzere, Libya haritasında bir birine ters tarafta bulunmaktadır. Benzerlikler ve farklılıklar, örnekler ve tabloların yanı sıra , Modern Standart Arapça aracılığıyla da gösterilmektedir . Kolonizasyon ve göç gibi farklılıklara katkıda bulunan etkiler de açıklanmıştır. Libya Arapça ikidillilik kavramı oldukça karmaşık olduğundan, çok daha fazla çalışma gerektirmektedir .*

Anahtar Kelimeler : *Ikidillilik , diyalekt , Yüksek Lehçe , Düşük Lehçe, Libya , Klasik Arapça , Modern Standart Arapça , Kolonizasyon .*

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to look at the different linguistic varieties of the Arabic language, and the diglossic situation in Libya. In order to determine the high and low variety/ varieties, two different low varieties from different regions in Libya (Tripoli and Benghazi) were compared and contrasted. These cities are on opposite sides of the Libyan map, Tripoli being on the western side and Benghazi on the eastern side. The similarities and differences are shown through examples and tables as well as how those varieties measure up to the Modern Standard Arabic. The influences that contributed to the differences such as colonization and migration are explained. The diglossic concept in Libyan Arabic is quite intricate and requires much further study.*

Keywords: *Diglossia, Dialects, High Variety, Low Variety, Libya, Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Colonization.*

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Introduction

The people of Libya speak many varieties of Arabic. Although the official language is *Fusha* Arabic (Standard Arabic) it is almost never used within the confines of society. Libya is the fourth largest country in Africa and with such a vast geographical area; it is natural to have an equally vast number of different dialects and linguistic variants. Libya is divided into three main regions: Tripolitania the north part, Cyrenaica the eastern part and Fezzan the southern part. Each region speaks a dialect that is starkly different to the others. Many natives of a certain area might not be able to understand residents of another region even though they all speak a variety of Arabic Libyan *Lahja* (dialect). The differences in dialects encompass semantic, morphological and lexical differences. Perhaps the most positively different linguistic regional patterns in Libya are the Tripoli Lahja and the Benghazi Lahja. In this paper we will attempt to shed some light on the two dialects. In order to do so we must define a few key elements.

Definitions

Dialect is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a variety of language that is a characteristic of a particular group of the language's speakers”. It is a set of linguistic traits that belong to a particular group of people. All languages typically include several dialects, each of which sets it apart, and these entire dialects share in a range of linguistic qualities, and verbal habits that make up the language and set it apart from other languages. In many ways, dialects are a language's fingerprint. It is always unique, and serves as an identifying characteristic.

Language has been defined in numerous ways, it is a solely a human trait, a means of articulating thoughts and producing speech. It is the human ability of producing and creating verbal and written complex systems. The linguist and philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure said it best in his influential book (*Cours de linguistique générale*), "Language is no longer regarded as peripheral to our grasp of the world we live in, but as central to it. Words are not mere vocal labels or communicational adjuncts superimposed upon an already given order of things. They are collective products of social interaction, essential instruments through which human beings constitute and

articulate their world.”

History of the Arabic Language

The Arabic language is by no means different however it is important we understand what Fusha refers to. Fusha refers to the Standard Arabic and Classical Arabic. There is a significant distinction between Classical and Modern Arabic. Classical Arabic is one of the Semitic languages, rich in history and meaning and tends to be very anapestic and poetic. It is an ancient language where the first inscription dates back to 328 AD. It is the language of literature, science, and politics and most famed as the language of the Quran and early Islamic age mainly during the Abbasid Caliphate and Umayyad Caliphate c. 7th – 9th century.

Given that Classical Arabic is a Semitic language; therefore, it shares similar characteristics in regards of conjugation and pronunciation with other Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Aramaic. From a morphological stance, Classical Arabic posses a discontinuous morphology, where the root is modified rather than having morphemes linked to it.

يكتب	Yaktubu.	He writes.
كتب	Kutubun.	Books.
تكتاب	Kitabatun.	Writing.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

Modern Standard Arabic is the standardized literary Arabic, spoken and taught in twenty seven countries including the MENA region and The Horn of Africa. It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations. It is considered the proper and formal language used in print, politics, literature, media and taught in schools and universities. It has some differences and similarities to Classical Arabic.

MSA is considered less rigid than the Classical variation, it is less annunciated and most speakers are adequately literate without the need to be rigorously trained as is the case with Classical Arabic. MSA contains the same number of letters in the alphabet as well as consonants, vowels and prepositions. The most commonly taught and stressed grammatical fields are; lexicon, syntax and morphology. In CA there are two more in addition; rhetoric and derivation. There are various instances of simplification in MSA such as the dropping of a case and the omission of some final vowels. MSA remains to be the sophisticated formal standardized variety of language, however it is not the language used in daily life. It is a language reserved strictly for print and official documents. The Classical variation remains to be a nuanced study for avid linguist and experts as well as an art form.

Colloquial Libyan Dialect

Libyan Lahja or as it is referred to at times *Sulaimitian Arabic* due to the migration of the *Bani Salem* tribe from the Arabian Peninsula during the seventh century AD to North Africa. At the time it was much closer to Classical Arabic. Sulaimitian Arabic is the dialect of the general population of the North African nation. It is used for communication, trade and at times

even education where it can be taught alongside MSA. It is considered an L1 by some since it is the first variety children acquire given that the dissimilar MSA is taught later on in school. The Libyan dialect has been heavily influenced and shaped by Ottoman and Italian languages due to the long periods of colonization. This influence is much more apparent in the Tripoli dialect due to the Ottomans and Italians concentrated presence in Tripoli more than any other region in Libya. Another immense influence was the Tamazight language, which is the language of the Berber, the indigenous people of North Africa. However, the Benghazi dialect is more heavily influenced by Tamazight, due to the Berber population residing in the eastern part of the country. Below are some examples of some lexical items that seeped through into the modern day Libyan Arabic from Italian and Ottoman languages.

Italian loanwords

	Libyan	Italian	MSA	English
1	مرشابيدي Marshabedi	Marciapiede	رصيف Raseef	Sidewalk
2	كالشو Kalcho	Calico	ركله Raklah	Kick
3	كانشيلو Kanchelo	Cancello	بوابة Bawaba	Gate

Ottoman loanwords

	Libyan	Ottoman	MSA	English
1	كشيك Kasheek	Kaşık	ملقعة Mil'aka	Spoon
2	طبق Tabak	Tabak	صحن Sahan	Plate

Today the Libyan dialect, a lower variety of the Standard Arabic, is divided into two main dialects: The western Tripoli dialect and the eastern Benghazi dialect.

A main feature of both dialects is the pronunciation of the letter Q (*qaf*) as velar (*ge*). Another characteristic shared between the two dialects is the dropping of the isolated initial letter A (*'alif*) when speaking in the first person as is the rule in standard Arabic. As shown (1) in the table.

In the Tripoli dialect, vowels are elongated and pronounced even when there are none in the written word while the speakers of the Benghazi dialect would shorten vowels or omit them all together. Shown 2, 3 in table.

	Tripoli	Benghazi	MSA	English
1	نبي Nebee	نريد Nreed	أريد 'Oreed	I want
2	بنمشي Benemshee	نعدني N'ady	سأذهب Sa'thhab	I will go
3	خيرك Herek	كنك Knk	مايك Ma bik	What's wrong? (with you)

Conclusion

Diglossia in the Middle East and the Arabic speaking part of the world is very prominent. The Modern Standard Arabic is the high variety, it is the formal and official language and each country has its' own vernacular which is the low variety. In Libya MSA is the high variety, the official language and the formal written language. It is the variety of poetry and religion. The low variety is the language of the people, and the history of occupation and the diverse heritage of the Libyan people. It varies from region to region, Tripolitania, Cyrenaica or Fezzan, all have their own vernacular. Other languages such as Turkish, Italian and Tamazight have had an enormous impact on the Libyan dialect that still exists today.

Libya has become synonymous with much adversity in the past few years, but if one takes a chance to search and look at this nation with its rich history, various tribes, culture and languages, one is bound to find much to explore. Diversity is not a novel aspect in Libya. It has been ruled by the Greeks, the Romans, Berber, Ottomans, the British and finally the Italians. Each have left their footprint on the country, whether in regards to its' customs or traditions but none more so than on its' linguistic heritage. In each region of Libya, there is linguistic wealth

Stretching from the Sahara desert where the nomadic Toubou tribes live, to the Mediterranean coastline where the Greek and Italian influences are copious to the peaks of The Green Mountain where the Berber live and only speak Tamazight, linguistic diversity is in every corner of the country. This paper was an attempt to shed a glimpse of light on that. Much more in-depth research needs to be conducted and further thorough assessment of the assorted vernaculars of Libya need to be conducted. Due to the lack of research and dialecticians in the region, Libya has something of a linguistic diamond in the rough quality.

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