

# Features of Diglossic Stability in Arabic with Counterexamples

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## Abstract

Arabic as a macro language is the epitome of classical diglossia as well as the most wellknown and well documented example. Spoken and written Arabic have diverged for so long that some scholars have argued the possibility that Arabic diglossia predates Islam. Regardless of its beginning, numerous cultural and social motivators have held Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic in play as the dialects of prestige. But the prior motivator of this linguistic conservatism for centuries has been the religio-linguistic ideology of Islam. In this paper I analyze sociolinguistic conditions and ideological factors contributing to the stability of Arabic diglossia alongside various counterexamples of diglossic shift.

Keywords: Diglossia, Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Religio-Linguistic Ideology

## Introduction

When viewed with its broadest constraints, diglossia could be extended as a global phenomenon. Despite the stabilizing effects of standardized literature, widespread literacy, and education, native speakers of English experience a hierarchy of both natural and prescribed dialects and filter them instantly and accurately without metalinguistic reasoning<sup>1</sup>. However, numerous scholars take umbrage with

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. (Routledge, 2001), p. 34.

such generalization when applied to diglossia<sup>2</sup>. As Kaye<sup>3</sup> points out, the term diglossia loses its usefulness when we extend it this far. Yet classical diglossia<sup>4</sup> is symptomatic of a larger human impulse to distinctly stratify our codes based on function and context. Because of the generative nature of expression, lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic innovations are part of any language community; however, certain religious contexts call for much stricter constraints on our usage. For the purposes of this paper, I find reason for constructive comparison between Arabic and instances of bilingual diglossia.

Not least among the motivators for linguistic conservatism is religion. We should not be surprised that two of the four languages in Ferguson's<sup>5</sup> landmark paper on diglossia were the languages chosen for two of the world's most important religious texts—Greek, that of the New Testament; and Arabic, that of the Qur'an. Numerous other examples of diglossia (both classical and bilingual) exhibit similarly religious origins. German's high dialect originated with Luther's Bible translation printed in 1522<sup>6</sup>, and scholars trace Czech diglossia to the Kralice Bible of the same century.

The first half of this paper will examine the sociolinguistic conditions for Arabic diglossia in relation to various counterexamples. Perhaps the example with the largest correspondence to Arabic diglossia is that of Latin, which endured for many centuries in both religious and non-religious contexts. There will be a discussion of types of diglossia based on functions and domains as a way of mapping diglossic

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<sup>2</sup> Alan S. Kaye. *Diglossia: The State of the Art*. (International Journal of the Sociology of Language. 2001), p. 117-129

<sup>3</sup> Alan S. Kaye. *Diglossia ...*, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> i.e., the situation described in C. A Ferguson. *The Arabic Koine*. (Language 1959), p. 616-630.

<sup>5</sup> C. A Ferguson. *The Arabic ...*, p. 616-630.

<sup>6</sup> Heiko Wiggers. *Reevaluating Diglossia: Data from Low German*. (ProQuest, 2006), p. 41.

stability. Finally, I will discuss the ideological motivators for Arabic diglossia which primarily stem from the linguistically conservative ideology of Islam.

## Sociolinguistic Conditions

### 1. Arabic Dialects and Arab Nationalism

In many diglossic contexts, the H variety acts as a unifying factor for a multitude of L varieties. In Arabic, this includes at present thirty distinct L languages as categorized in *Ethnologue*.<sup>7</sup> As a further example, though Bassiouney (2009) takes the following claim as “exaggerated”, Versteegh has claimed that Arabic includes as much variation as the Germanic and Romance subfamilies of Indo-European<sup>8</sup>. Regardless of whether or not it is likely, unifying Arabic identity through language is an important motivator for the proliferation of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

While Classical Arabic (CA) has long been the language of Islam, the construction of a cross-nationally intelligible dialect with a CA lexicon and simplified CA morphology—Modern Standard Arabic—has become the pan-Arab nationalist goal of the Egyptian government. Stadlbauer (2010) references the text-regulating efforts of the Egyptian government as “actively involved in producing and controlling MSA as a modern version of CA.” Although these efforts are not without impact, the consensus for several decades seems to be that MSA is on the decline<sup>9</sup>.

Since MSA as an H variety has no L1 speakers, it is more of a reconstruction than a living dialect. While it is quite easy to

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<sup>7</sup> Simons Lewis & Fennig. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, (Summer Institute of Linguistics SIL International: 2009), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Kees Versteegh. *The Arabic Language*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001), p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> C. A Ferguson. *The Arabic ...*, p. 616-630

add to a child's lexicon and prescribe a better verb or greeting in the mosque or other formal settings, it is quite different to train a speaker in the entire morphosyntactic system or Classical Arabic. Instead, Muslim children (Arab and non-Arab) are often trained in reading (with or without comprehension) and dictation. As a result, CA lexemes, such as the interrogative particle, [hal], may be used (or misused) by even the poorly educated as prestige markers without any changes in inflectional marking. The resulting dialect is an overlay, including whichever CA elements an Arab can produce with accuracy and mutual comprehension. Stadlbauer (2010) calls MSA a "moving target" for which people may aim; the problem is that they are aiming at it from different directions (see especially Parkinson 1991). This is cause enough to doubt the power of MSA to achieve a true linguistic unity across the Arab world. MSA may have created an ideal of pan-Arab unification even if the reality of a pan-Arab dialect is far out of reach.

## **2. Dialect Variation within Communities**

As with the cross-national factors, dialect variation would also seem to promote the maintenance of an H variety. If an Arabic speaker is not understood in their L register, the typical response is to code-switch to the highest register they can produce accurately and test the results. One might expect spoken MSA to be very useful for highly international Arab communities like the urban centers of the Arab Gulf. Because of MSA's domain restrictions and the generally passive nature of its usage, the result has been rather the strengthening of L varieties, passive comprehension of new dialects, and koinéization in communities where mutually intelligible varieties have clear prestige disparity. With urbanization on the rise, dialect variation has decreased significantly in recent decades in urban speech communities such as Amman, capital of Jordan and Manama, capital of Bahrain (Holes 1995). Other areas like Sana'a, Yemen are more resistant to the creation

of koinés. Freeman (2006) cites dialect as a sectarian identity marker, as well as passive comprehension across dialects as maintaining dialectal diversity in Sana'a.

While MSA offers some utility in uniting political entities and maintaining the pan-Arab ideal in H domains, spoken usage is very limited. Spoken MSA and Educated Spoken Arabic fulfill this function about as often as spoken Latin fulfills that function for priests and serious students of Catholicism. Using MSA and CA is still as inappropriate or awkward as using a spoken variety in the mosque, so H varieties do not appear to be leaking into any new L domains. Communities with two or more Arabic dialects seem to be accommodating each other in their L varieties rather than relying on MSA to serve this function.

### 3. Language Domains and Diglossia over Time

An important consideration in diglossia is the clearly defined "division of labour"<sup>10</sup>. While this division is often stable for centuries at a time, it may shift between different types of diglossia. In both Latin and Arabic, this shift has extended over many centuries but with drastic differences in usage. This gives us reason to attempt a model of types of diglossia based on the domain shifts which take place. (Here we are mainly concerned with the constraints of the H variety since all our examples of diglossic shift involve the expansion of the L variety and the retreat of the H variety.) The three key domains in this model are the state (S), religion (R), and education (E). Where the H varieties influence in a domain is either declining or ambiguous, it is parenthesized in the table.

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<sup>10</sup> Janet Holmes. *An Introduction to ...* p. 27.

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Type of Diglossia (with Description)	H Domains
<b>Political Diglossia (Roman &amp; Post-Roman)</b> Latin as the language of Roman Empire maintained linguistic hegemony while related L varieties, i.e. the Romance languages, were in formulation (Ferguson 1959a, Holmes, p. 79-80).	S
<b>Religious Diglossia (Medieval)</b> The dominance of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe maintained the diglossic situation with its daughter languages and also extended Latin as an H variety to many non-Romance languages. Since the majority of schools and courts were religious, Latin also became the de facto language of law and prestigious education.	R (S) E
<b>Educational Diglossia (Reformation, Enlightenment)</b> Latin had as shifting role after the Reformation. In Protestant Europe and North America, the role of religion in education was on a steady decrease, but Latin continued to be an important language of prestigious education. Early American colleges had speeches and debates in classical languages including Latin. Latin remained the dominant language of worship for Catholics.	(R) E
<b>Diglossic Shift (19th &amp; 20th Centuries)</b> The educational influence of Latin was strong until the 20th century. But Catholicism was declining in Europe (Pew Forum 2013), and for lack of a clear ideology to sustain the prestige of Latin, it was gradually abandoned by many outside of the Catholic church. Following this global trend, the Vatican responded in 1963 by allowing vernacular worship ("Concilium" 1963), 446 years after Luther's 95 theses. It remains an official language in Vatican City.	(R) (E)

These changes in the role of Latin occurred over many centuries. The tipping point seems to have been the roles of the Reformation and the Enlightenment period. Both secular humanism and Protestantism involved an identity shift away from the Catholic church. As a brief example of how this identity shift was taking place, we can look at the influence of John Hus, a Czech religious reformer of the late 14th and early 15th centuries. Matthew Spinka, the chief scholar of Hus during the 20th century, wrote that preaching in the vernacular was the most salient feature of Czech reform.<sup>11</sup> Hus legitimized Czech by preaching as well as orthography reform. He wrote personal letters in both Czech and Latin, though experts see no pattern to this alternation.<sup>12</sup> Formal

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Spinka. *John Hus: A Biography*. (Princeton University Press 1966), p. 6

<sup>12</sup> Jan.Hus. *The Letters of John Hus*. Tr. by R. Martin Pope, with notes by

letters were always in Latin, with occasional Czech borrowing, some awkward loan translations, and affective code-switching to his L1 (Hus 1904). Latin was used both as a lingua franca and an H variety during this time, albeit inefficiently. In this case, the forces of conservatism and innovation were both religious, and these opposing forces grew from conflicting beliefs about language choice in religion. Thus, in this model, ideological factors are seen as the primary predictors of diglossic shift.

Table 2: Arabic Diglossia over Time

Type of Diglossia (with Description)	H Domains
<b>Religious Diglossia (Muslim Conquest)</b> With the Qur'an's redaction, the dialect of Muhammad's tribe became the only authorized dialect for Quranic recitation and ritual prayer. (See §3.3.) Arabic rapidly became a widespread language, and a koiné was needed in the S domain to maintain hegemony.	R
<b>Rising Diglossia (Political Power, Koineization)</b> Due to the existence of common features in Arabic dialects, Ferguson (1959b) has posited that a koiné variety of Arabic developed over the conquered territories. This is treated as a development distinct from CA usage in Islam, and it is not without dispute. As with medieval Catholics, a long period of Arab history involved an exclusively religious school system geared towards training religious leaders and inculcating religious ideals.	R (S) E
<b>Vigorous Diglossia (20th Century)</b> With literacy and Arab nationalism on the rise, MSA gained new ground as a language of education and print media outside religious domains. Ideologically, Stadlbauer (2010) sees the promotion of MSA as a post-colonial response to the invasion of Western influences, with Egypt as the center. Globalization and innovations in communications also allowed increasing interchange between Arab nations.	R S E
<b>Diglossic Shift (21st Century and Beyond)</b> Western influences have led to widespread usage of English as a language of wider communication in the Arabic-speaking countries of the Gulf, which will continue to complicate goals for a single Arabic H variety. Stadlbauer (2010) gives quotes from politicians printed in L speech to avoid sounding stilted, questioning the role of MSA in the S domain. Modern Islamic ideals are also in flux as Arabs grapple with the results of the Arab Spring and global perceptions of Islam. Based on this study, changes in ideals would foreshadow changes in language choice. Lastly, as Kaye (2001) points out, Arabic diglossia in the E domain, especially university education, seems to be poorly documented up to this point.	R (S) (E)

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Herbert P. Workman. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), p. 87.

#### 4. Literacy and Diglossia

Literacy has historically been a constraint on language change, and in Arabic, a preserver of H varieties. Although literacy in L varieties of Arabic is not well codified, the use of technology has led to innovations such as the use of Arabic with Roman script for certain types of texting and social media platforms. Twitter, for example, allows 140 characters in Roman script, but only 112 in Arabic script; so English or Arabic with Roman script would be the most useful choice in that instance. These innovations could be seen as the growth of L variety into previously unused areas of life, especially in more technology-literate communities of the Arab world. Arabic-English biliteracy is also worth considering as a reason that MSA usage could decrease.

Here I will examine literacy and language reforms in the Faroe Islands. The Faroes have been a dependency of Denmark since 1814. The Faroes have had a shifting case of bilingual diglossia with Danish as the H language. Since the Faroese languagelacked a sustainable literature, Danish was the language of both church and state. Faroese is descended from Old Norse and is most closely related to Icelandic; unlike other possible North Germanic pairings, Faroese and Danish are not mutually intelligible. A shift began when Venceslaus Hammershaimb started work on improving Faroese orthography in the 1840s, which incidentally distanced it from Danish and took leads from its closer relative, Icelandic (Ager 2015). His reforms enabled a growing literature in Faroese, a functional Bible translation, and there were increasing sentiments that the Danish language was no longer needed for education, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nationalism was also at play<sup>13</sup>, but steps toward linguistic independence surely bolstered feelings

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<sup>13</sup> see Rebecca Adler-Nissen. *The Faroe Islands: Independence Dreams, Globalist Separatism and the Europeanization of Postcolonial Home Rule*. (Cooperation and Conflict, 2014).

of distance from Denmark. In 1888, a national organization for the promotion of the Faroese language was organized. In 1891

Hammershaimb published a description and grammar of Faroese alongside a collection of Faroese ballads and folktales that he had collected.<sup>14</sup> Education became Faroese-medium in 1938, though there is still some dependence on Danish and English texts (Knooihuizen 2014). Finally, in 1945, the Home Rule Act gave the Faroese self-governance—though under the Danish kingdom. Once they had a sustainable orthography and a growing literature, Danish could not maintain linguistic hegemony in the domains of education and religion. While Arabic has had some shifts in this area—notably in the work of Egyptian novelists such as Naguib Mahfouz—literature in colloquial Arabic is not yet widely accepted.

Religion was the slowest domain to shift from Danish to Faroese, and caused great conflict in the early 20th century. A lack of music and religious resources in Faroese was one factor; more generally, our modeling of diglossia over time in §2.3 shows that the religious domain can be the last to change from an H variety to an L variety (as in the case of Catholicism). This is in agreement with Holmes’ (2013) remarks on language shift in general. Religion may be seen as the fulcrum in cases of ethnolinguistic conflict.

At this point we turn to the ideological motivators that precede the sociocultural factors.

## Ideological Motivators

### 1. High Context Culture

High context culture is another useful predictor for long-term diglossia. For our purposes, tribalism in the birthland of Islam was and is a reinforcer of the social structures in which

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<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Wylie. *The Faroe Islands: Interpretations of History*. (UP of Kentucky, 1987), p. 140.

diglossia can thrive. One characteristic of high context social structure is “a slower-pace societal change”<sup>15</sup>, and we can expect this to include language change. However, this conservatism appears to be limited to the H variety, since the L variety continues to change.

Strict norms about dress also mark high-context culture. In much of the Arabian Peninsula, adult men wear the same outfit seven days a week. An Arabic proverb says, “you may eat whatever you want, but you should dress like everyone else.” Carefully prescribed social behaviors may be related to the tribal cultures of the Arabian Peninsula, although that is beyond this study.

Below are a few examples of the types of prescribed speech acts one encounters in the Arab world. In Christian Baghdadi Arabic, one may encounter a specific phrase that local Christians say when sitting down together; in many Arab nations, there is a special greeting-and-response pattern when someone has gotten a haircut, taken a shower, or even returned from the bathroom. Such speech formulas seem to have proliferated within Arab culture, and are usually spoken in an elevated or H register. For Muslim Arabs, initial greetings always involve patterns of greeting and response that are prescribed both by culture and by Islam. For example, if someone asks formally, [keif Halik], ‘how’s it going?’, the Muslim response always involves [alHamdulillah], ‘praise God.’ If they use a colloquial greeting, the response is the same. All such invocations are normally pronounced as close as possible to the speaker’s understanding of CA. The local understanding is that maintaining these norms invites blessing and subverting them endangers that blessing and may invite reprisal. One can see how this ideology could sustain long-term diglossia!

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<sup>15</sup> Rachel Lev-Wiesel and Alean Al-Krenawi. *Attitude towards Marriage and Marital Quality: A Comparison among Israeli Arabs Differentiated by Religion*. (Family Relations. 1999). p.51-56.

## 2. Diversity within Arabic Religion and Ideology

Before discussing the ideological factors involved with the language of the Qur'an, it is necessary to note that there is no single Arabic culture or ideology. For Arab Muslims, Classical Arabic (CA) is the language of prayer and exhortation. But for many Arab Christian communities in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, CA and MSA are primarily restricted to the literary domain.

Arab Christians, especially those in evangelical traditions, often experience far less of the H variety in the religious domain; while there are sociolinguistic factors apart from religion, Islam appears to be the primary enforcer of prescribed MSA forms. Two appropriate places for spoken MSA in Christian worship are Scripture readings and the use of worship music. (Anglophone churches worldwide of course use analogously archaic language in both of these forms of worship, though not uniformly.) In some Arabic congregations, Scripture songs are sung in a variety approximating to CA, including otherwise-unused nominal case inflections, lengthening of pronominal clitics and verbal agreement markers. While some Christian traditions (including those mentioned above) inculcate linguistic conservatism, others encourage and expect linguistic innovation.

As one instance of this variation, a popular Sudanese Christian song is called [sikka tani maa fii], 'there is no other way (of salvation).' [tani] is a common colloquial reflex of [tsani], 'second' or 'other.' The negative existential verb, expressed in the two syllables here as [maa fii], is also the same in many L varieties of Arabic; in MSA, there is no simple negative existential, but several periphrastic choices. The uniquely Sudanese lexeme, [sikka], 'way,' means 'a railroad' or 'railway' in MSA and has an extended, metaphorical meaning in Sudanese Arabic. This innovation appeals to Egyptian Christians enough to utilize it in their worship. As a gauge to how this song differs from MSA,

the Bible verse on which it is loosely based says [lejsa bi'aHad ghairihi elkhalaS], lit. 'there is salvation with no other but him.'<sup>16</sup>

### 3. The Qur'an's Redaction and Sacred Languages

Because of the monolithic influence that the Qur'an has today, we should take a look at some of the most important literature regarding the text itself. For our purposes, the most important event in the Qur'an's history was the elimination of variant manuscripts by Muhammad's third successor in the seventh century. Sahih Bukhari—whom most Muslims consider the most reliable source outside the Qur'an itself—recounts the Qur'an's redaction:

The Caliph 'Uthman ordered Zaid bin Thabit ... [and others] to write the Quran ... and said to them. "In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit (Al-Ansari) regarding any dialectic Arabic utterance of the Quran, then write it in the dialect of Quraish, for the Quran was revealed in this dialect." So they did it.<sup>17</sup>

After this event, Zaid bin Thabit was responsible for creating copies and transmitting them to the provinces. Politicized language planning and religious instruction, then, have been united in Islam since the third caliph. This hadith (or saying) recorded by Bukhari shows that the Qur'an was not only monolingual, but monodialectal. Today over 200 million L1 Arabic speakers<sup>18</sup> and 1.6 billion Muslims (Pew Forum 2012) are influenced by this single -1300year-old dialect of Arabic. In this sense, redaction of an influential text may be viewed as language planning, at least in retrospect.

Dialect choice for popular religious texts can bring great prestige to a single dialect, but rarely does it carry such an

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Van Dyke Smith. *Theism and Evolution*, (Kessinger Publishing, 2005), p.12.

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Al-Bukhari. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. (Hamdaan Publications, 1987), 6:61: p. 507.

<sup>18</sup> Simons Lewis & Fennig. *Ethnologue*... p. 21

inherently monolingual, if not ethnocentric, ideology. What Sahih Bukhari called “the dialect of Quraish” is now the religious H variety of over a billion people, with the greatest numbers in the Indian subcontinent and Indonesia. Despite being a global religion, imams teach that the only language for prayer to Allah is the dialect of Muhammad.

In Tamil literature, we see a similar history of elevation of the language; one 17th-century poet questioned which was prior in its worth: the Tamil tongue or Shiva himself!<sup>19</sup> When the language is enthroned beside the primary deity, there is nowhere higher for the language to go. In south Indian Shaivism, Tamil was considered the only acceptable language for prayer. Sanskritic Hinduism carried a similarly monolingual ideology<sup>20</sup>, so when Sanskrit speakers clashed with Tamil in southern India, this naturally included religious competition. The language used was “endowed with the power or efficacy of expressing the ultimate truth” as well as spiritual power. The sacred language of the Qur’an, then, is not the only example of a monolingual religious ideology.

Likewise in liturgical practice and recitation, the only language for the Qur’an is CA, and imams teach that it is impossible to translate. While elevation of a second deity is inadmissible in classical Islam, Islamic language describes the Qur’an as immaterial, inexpressible, and eternal, existing in the mind of God “outside the limits of space and time”<sup>21</sup>. This is a surprising counter to the iconoclast thrust of Islam; the untranslatable words of the Qur’an present the transcendent mind of God in the most satisfactory way available. What does

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<sup>19</sup> Sumathi Ramaswamy. *Language of the People in the World of Gods: Ideologies of Tamil before the Nation*. (The Journal of Asian Studies 57.1. 1998), p. 66-92.

<sup>20</sup> Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande. *Ideology, Authority, and Language Choice*. (Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion 20. 2006), p. 141.

<sup>21</sup> C. A Ferguson. *The Arabic ...* p. 616-630.

this mean for Arabs?

While the use of CA is a requirement of Islam, CA's influence far outreaches the religious domain. CA is the superstrate for all the varieties of MSA that are encountered, and MSA acts as an attempted reconstruction. However, this ideology means that Arabic diglossia is most stable in the religious domain, and any major shift in religion could include a major shift in the Arabic language.

If CA is unintelligible for hundreds of millions of South Asians, it is only partially intelligible to Arabs, even those educated in MSA<sup>22</sup>. In Egypt, the typical Friday 'sermons' are composed of a variety of written quotes recited in CA, and if the imam wants to exposit the text or make a comment, this comment is often done in Egyptian Spoken Arabic, although he may elevate his register.

#### 4. Gender and Diglossic Shift

Many scientists have also noted the limited role of women as curbing language change<sup>23</sup>. However, the role of women in MSA and CA has some limitations. Female leadership over men is a controversial topic in Islam, and this is a cultural factor that confines many women to L varieties of Arabic. Interestingly, some recent scholarship contends that Anglo-Saxon culture had a similarly male-only diglossia with Latin as the H variety<sup>24</sup>.

Educational disparity between genders must also be considered in weighing women's influence in diglossia.

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<sup>22</sup> Alan S. Kaye. *Diglossia...*, p.117-129.

<sup>23</sup> Clive Holes. *Community, Dialect and Urbanization in the Arabic-Speaking Middle East*. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, (University of London 58.2 1992), p. 270-287. Also see: Andrew Freeman. *Why There Is No Koiné in Sana'a, Yemen. Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics XVI: Papers from the Sixteenth Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics*, Cambridge, March 2002. Vol. 266. (John Benjamins Publishing, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Eleanor Dickey. "Review." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113.4. 2014, p. 516-518.

Although in Qatar women tend to have more education than men, the general trend in the Arab world is the reverse. Thus educated men are allowed to set the agenda for MSA usage to an extent, although the role of Arab women is still growing. Lesser-educated Arab women often freely admit that they “can’t understand fusha,” yet this self-perception may belie a high degree of passive comprehension. Such dismissive statements from a native speaker may suggest that ideological factors override an objective judgment; part of the beauty and value of the language of the Qur’an is found in its mystic quality and untranslatability as a mark of its divine origin.

## Conclusion

The writer has taken the liberty of comparing bilingual diglossia and classical diglossia. Yet He believe that the same types of diglossic shift are possible, though perhaps in a larger time frame than cases of post-colonial bilingualism. We have seen evidence in both recent and older scholarship that Modern Standard Arabic may be losing ground in political and educational domains, both to English and colloquial forms of Arabic. The political-linguistic goal of Modern Standard Arabic has not been accomplished to the degree that some Arab nationalists idealized, and speakers within communities are innovating more practical ways of achieving mutual comprehension. Diversity of thought within the Arab world means that CA is not a necessary superstrate for non-Muslim Arabs. Finally, gender gaps and attitudes limit the use of H varieties by women, further reducing the small contingency that can use MSA/CA/ESA for any practical function.

Taking all these factors together, the writer see that current shakings in ideology within the Arab world along with Western democratic ideals may lead to the subversion of superimposed MSA forms in a variety of settings. Several millennia of high

context culture and one millennium of Islamic dominance ensure that if the Arabic language does experience diglossic shift, these changes would touch the religious life either latest or least.

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