ARABIC DIGLOSSIA: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SPOKEN ARABIC AFTER LIVING IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING WORLD

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This paper presents data collected from students who studied Arabic for at least two semesters before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. Results show that if the majority of these students could restart their study of Arabic, they would want to learn a spoken variety of Arabic before traveling abroad. Results also indicate that students who attempted to communicate in spoken Arabic in the Arabic-speaking world felt that they were more easily able to integrate into the culture. This new research provides considerable support for inclusion of spoken varieties of Arabic in curricula - even for beginning students.

INTRODUCTION

Palmer (2007) presented data from the National Middle East Language Resource Center's (NMELRC) extensive student and teacher questionnaires that addressed a myriad of issues concerning the teaching and learning of the Arabic language. The data showed that the majority of the students taking Arabic in the United States want to learn a spoken variety of Arabic even though many of their teachers might not encourage the practice. This paper continues to investigate the issue of student desire to learn spoken Arabic in the United States. This article is unique, however, in that it presents data from a new questionnaire designed by the author to elicit feedback exclusively from students who studied Arabic for at least one year before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. These students also had no, or very minimal, contact with Arabic before taking their first Arabic course. The purpose of this research is to understand how students who have studied Arabic and lived in the Arabic-speaking world relate to and perceive the role of spoken Arabic. It was expected that some of the students studied spoken Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world, while others did not. Data show that the majority of the students wish they would have had spoken Arabic instruction before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. It is hoped that the rapidly increasing Arabic language programs in the United States will consider these new findings in their departmental curricula and philosophy. With Arabic representing the most remarkable increase in enrollments in the 2002-2006 MLA language report (at a stupendous 126%), this issue is certainly of timely and significant import (Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2007). This paper also presents a discussion concerning the binary, or diglossic, nature of the Arabic language along with a historical review of the teaching of Arabic in the United States both prior to September 11th, 2001, and beyond. Challenges and considerations for departments wishing to introduce spoken Arabic into their curricula are also presented.

The rationale for this follow-up article is based upon the need to understand how students who have lived in the Arabic-speaking world perceive the function of spoken Arabic. Did these students feel that knowing spoken Arabic provided any benefit in the Arabic-speaking world? Did these students feel that not knowing spoken Arabic was a problem? Did these students wish they had studied spoken Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world? Qualitative and quantitative data were elicited in the questionnaire.

The recent increase in Arabic enrollments may largely be attributed to national and individual reaction to the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001. These attacks revealed a dearth of Arabic language expertise and regional knowledge in the United States government and general populace. When it comes to foreign language teaching and learning, the United States government –and perhaps its citizens – is historically a reactionary establishment that often seems intransigent rather than forward-looking. This new era of interest in Arabic has been compared to the situation following the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 (Al-Batal, 2007). Such events often spurn spontaneity in policy planning and execution. In the case of Arabic language teaching and learning, some funding has been allocated to develop and improve Arabic language programs throughout the United States. It is hoped that this funding will be used wisely. There remain, however, many challenges facing the field of Arabic language teaching and learning as it seeks to balance enrollment increase with qualified teachers.

BACKGROUND

History of Arabic in the United States

The teaching of Arabic was first introduced at U.S. universities in the 17th and 18th centuries. McCarus (1992), in his article regarding the history of Arabic teaching in the United States, described various reasons that stirred development of Arabic programs over the past decades and centuries. He wrote, "Arabic was being taught in the United States over a century before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, introduced to complement the study of Hebrew and the Old Testament" (p. 207). Thus, Arabic was first looked at as a language that might assist in better understanding Hebrew and ancient scripture. McCarus (1992) continued, "If the first phase in the U.S. study of Arabic was theologically motivated, the second phase was philological" (p. 207). After philological interest, attention to Arabic came from the field of archeology in the 1900s. Thereafter, Arabic came to be seen as an important language on a national level. World War II was somewhat of a watershed moment for Arabic. Concerning the United States at that time, McCarus (1992) wrote, "The immediate need to train combat infantrymen and intelligence personnel … revealed how woefully unprepared the nation was in terms of [Arabic]" (p. 208). This comment is worthy of attention in our time. A few words particularly stand out in the quote: namely, 'immediate' and 'unprepared'. At that time (WWII), the United States perceived an immediate

need and reacted accordingly, having realized its lack of preparation. The status of Arabic in America during World War II troublingly resembles the lack of Arabic linguists and area specialists on hand in the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 2001. Allen (2007) wrote, "The events of 9/11/2001 found American 'preparedness' in terms of Arabic-competent citizens at a very low level" (p. 258). Allen (2007) continued,

> Since that day, the status of Arabic in the national consciousness has been transformed almost overnight to become the number-one desideratum of the American government and its various agencies. Huge amounts of money are being spent and will be spent in an attempt to produce an increased number of Americans who are competent in the Arabic language at levels considerably higher than those of the majority of previous learners of the language (p. 258).

Truly, Arabic has become a topic of national interest in a very short time. Allen's mention of huge sums of money being spent confirms the reactionary nature of our government. It is hoped that these funds will trickle down to Arabic departments throughout the United States in order to address the current enrollments and lack of qualified teachers.

Sadly, even as late as 2006, the field of Arabic language teaching and learning was still deficient of trained professionals. Describing the situation, Ryding (2006) wrote that there are few people that could be considered professionals of Arabic language teaching and that "the active membership of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic [AATA] currently numbers about 130" (p. 13). With so few trained professionals in Arabic teaching, the United States remains unprepared to accommodate increased enrollments in Arabic programs throughout the United States.

Truly, the field of Arabic language teaching and learning has transformed from the obscure to the front page in the United States. Illustrating this point, Ryding (2006) wrote, "Traditional questions asked of Arabic students have now shifted from 'Why study Arabic?' to 'How long does it take to become fluent?'" (p. 13). This quote is most illuminating in that it describes how some students are now approaching learning Arabic. On the positive side, these students are quite motivated to reach high levels of proficiency.

Diglossia

A brief discussion of terminology is necessary for those unfamiliar with Arabic. This paper refers to different varieties, or registers, of Arabic using certain specialized terminology. It is sufficient to note that Arabic is often considered a "diglossic" language, denoting the existence of a higher and a lower register used in semi-exclusive contexts (Ferguson, 1959). The higher register is sometimes referred to as *fusha*, classical Arabic, standard Arabic, or modern standard Arabic. This paper adopts the term modern standard Arabic (MSA) to represent a more modern version of Arabic related to the language

found in the Quran that is used in formal contexts and writing. The lower register will be referred to simply as colloquial Arabic or spoken variety(ies) of Arabic. Spoken varieties of Arabic are used for day-to-day communication and are seldom codified.

It should be noted that MSA, the higher register, is often considered more prestigious, while the lower version may be considered ungrammatical. In his original article about diglossia, Ferguson (1959) described how the use of the incorrect register might lead to social ridicule. Such ridicule may certainly occur in any language with standard and dialectal varieties of speech. Ferguson distinguishes, however, between diglossic languages and languages that have standard and dialectal varieties. Ferguson claims that diglossic languages embody a higher register that is not regularly used "as a medium of ordinary conversation, and any attempt to do so is felt to be … pedantic and artificial" (1959, p. 35). Thus, in a diglossic language the use of the more prestigious higher register is reserved for restricted contexts. In addition to the existence of separate speech registers, Ferguson (1959) also emphasized the role of a sizeable body of literature and restricted literacy "to a small elite" in diglossic speech communities (p. 36).

History and Diglossia Together: The Unfortunate Past and Present

The teaching and learning of Arabic in the United States has long followed the model of language use and observation in the Arab world. This model consisted of what some might consider gratuitous reverence for the written language (MSA) and outward contempt for spoken varieties of Arabic. Maamouri (1998), describing the situation after Arabic was standardized in the 8th and 9th centuries, wrote, "the notion [appeared] that the now codified written standard was the 'real language,' and that all other varieties of it were 'degenerate' and 'corrupt' versions" (p. 33). This ideology is still common today both inside and outside the Arabic-speaking world. Ibrahim (1989), commenting on the historical practice of holding the written language to be inflexible, wrote, "Arabic grammar was written and continued to develop as a closed system independently of living usage and continuous linguistic change" (p. 40). Such living usage and continuous linguistic change has been occurring for many centuries. Modification of the written language has been much slower.

This lack of linguistic vitality has produced linguistic uncertainty among native and non-native users of Arabic. Maamouri (1998) wrote,

> Young Arab users do not feel that they are free to use and innovate in [MSA]. Pupils entering school have to 'unlearn' or even suppress most of their linguistic habits while they try to acquire a new set of 'rigid' rules (p. 41).

The schism between MSA and spoken varieties of Arabic is such that Arab students must unlearn the language used at home and among friends to relearn what is supposed to be their native language. Commenting on this oxymoron,

Maamouri (1998) wrote, "[MSA] is nobody's mother tongue and is rarely or almost never used at home in the Arab world" (p. 33).

The state of Arabic language teaching and learning in the United States is similar to that found in the Arab world. This similarity is manifest in the prominence placed on MSA. There is, however, a discrepancy in relation to the Arab world in that Arabic programs in the United States ignore the spoken varieties of Arabic. Remarking on this disparity, Ryding (1995) wrote, "the educational establishment [in the United States] has for decades enforced the concept of MSA first and foremost, this is completely the reverse of the native speaker's experience with Arabic as a mother tongue" (p. 226). Thus, the experience of the majority of American learners of Arabic differs from the linguistic facts on the ground in the Arabic world in that they are not learning spoken varieties of Arabic. Although this situation differs from language acquisition in the Arab world, one can argue that Ferguson's binary and idealized definition of diglossia is reflected in the teaching of Arabic in the United States. Prominence and prestige are assigned to the higher register, and the lower is thought to be ungrammatical and not worthy of academic attention. Thus, students who wish to learn spoken varieties of Arabic are often left to their own devices. Commenting on this biased approach, Ryding (1995) wrote that it leads to "undermining of learner confidence in spoken interaction … [and] the net result of this has been the early discouragement of many potential Arabic students" (p. 227). The one-sided teaching of MSA in the United States does not reflect the linguistic facts on the ground in the Arab world and may cause students to feel discouragement in learning.

As for the teaching of Arabic to foreigners, Abdalla (2006), describing the debate as 'classical,' wrote, "[this debate] about what form of Arabic and which dialects should be taught is still in question" (p.317). This is the fundamental question concerning potential implementation of spoken varieties in the field of Arabic teaching and learning. Unfortunately, there is no empirical research supporting the efficiency – or lack thereof – of teaching spoken varieties of Arabic. There is, however, motivational research demonstrating positive student feedback in relation to the learning of spoken Arabic (Schmidt, Inbar, & Shohamy, 2004) and research indicating that many Arabic learners in the United States want to learn spoken Arabic (Palmer, 2007).

Despite the overarching bias in the direction of teaching only MSA in the United States, there are some alternatives being proposed. For example, Al-Batal (1992), describing what he termed "an alternative approach" to teaching Arabic, wrote that a colloquial and MSA should be taught in the classroom to reflect the linguistic reality in the Arab world today. His approach calls for lower levels of proficiency to be exposed to a more colloquial component with higher levels focusing more on MSA. Not until the superior level would students "be expected to handle such a discussion using MSA exclusively, as is done by educated native speakers" (p. 299). In a similar model, Wahba (2006) proposed the teaching of Arabic in light of its diglossic nature. His model proposed presenting MSA and a spoken variety of

Arabic as separate entities at the early stages of learning, followed by "mixed texts … at the intermediate levels" and integration at advanced levels (p. 151). Future research should investigate the success of such alternative approaches. Such research may encourage more Arabic programs to introduce spoken Arabic into their curricula.

METHODOLOGY

This paper presents the results of a recent questionnaire designed by the author, which consisted of 4 qualitative open-ended questions and 30 quantitative questions using a 6-point Likert scale. The questionnaires were sent to students who met the criteria of having studied Arabic for at least two semesters before spending time in the Arabic-speaking world. This paper uses the term 'student(s)' to refer to the respondents to this questionnaire, though some of them may not have currently been studying at an institution of higher education at the time of completing the questionnaire. At some point in the past, however, they were students of Arabic who had studied Arabic before traveling abroad.

The qualitative items in the questionnaire provided students the opportunity to explain their views regarding the teaching and learning of spoken Arabic. For example, the first qualitative question is "Why should, or shouldn't, spoken varieties of Arabic be taught concurrently with MSA in the first two years (4 semesters) of Arabic instruction?" The other questions elicited student experience and recommendations with regards to the issue of diglossia. Examples of student responses are provided below.

The quantitative questions are better described as items or statements that ranged from issues pertaining to student perception regarding the role of spoken Arabic to their own experience using (or not using) spoken Arabic in the Arabic-speaking world. Students were asked to circle or highlight the numeral from 1 – 6 that corresponded with the degree of their agreement or disagreement with each statement. A 6-point scale was chosen to disallow students from indicating neutral responses.
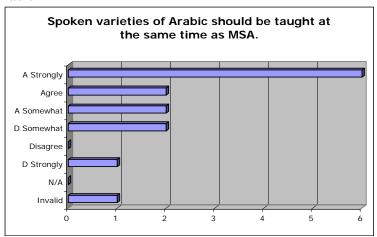
The questionnaire was sent to students using two listservs. A total of 14 former or current students of Arabic returned completed questionnaires to the author. One of the listservs is Arabic-L, an international listing that reaches students, teachers, and anyone else interested in Arabic language, culture, scholarly articles, conferences, books etc. throughout the world. The questionnaire was also sent to a listserv for students studying Arabic at the University of Arizona. All respondents had studied Arabic for at least one year before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world and remaining there for at least one month. Only students with no or very minimal exposure to Arabic before their first Arabic language course were sought for participation in this research. Due to the small sample size this paper should be considered a stepping-stone to future research on a larger scale. The results do, however, present patterns and trends in language perception and usage that are worthy of note.

<center>**RESULTS**</center>

Only uncomplicated arithmetic has thus far been employed for analysis. Future research should include analysis with statistical software. Due to time and space restrictions, not all items from the questionnaire are presented in this paper. The quantitative items on the questionnaire were arranged into several categories. These items may be categorized as follows: 1) student opinion regarding the function of spoken varieties of Arabic and MSA, 2) student spoken Arabic language production experience in the Arabic-speaking world, and 3) retroactive considerations.

Student Opinions about spoken Arabic and MSA
This paper first presents several items about student opinion regarding the pragmatic function of the varieties of Arabic. The first item directly addresses the issue of teaching spoken Arabic and MSA. Table 1 shows that 71% of the respondents agreed that spoken varieties of Arabic should be taught at the same time as MSA with 43% agreeing strongly. Note that 'Invalid' indicates the response was illegible, absent, or represents a selection of more than one option for one item.
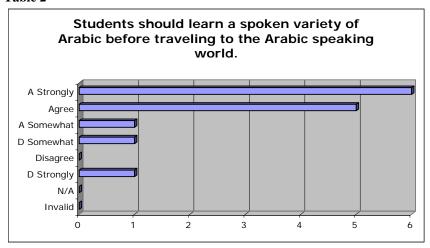
Table 1

It is interesting to note that the majority of the respondents agree to the teaching of spoken Arabic and MSA without reference to semester, year, or any timeframe. However, when asked more specifically about the timing of such instruction the responses are even more indicative of student perception toward spoken Arabic. Thus, the following item concerns the learning of spoken Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. Table 2 shows that even more of the respondents believe students should learn spoken Arabic before traveling abroad, with 86% agreeing.

Table 2

Students should learn a spoken variety of Arabic before traveling to the Arabic speaking world.

Response	Value
A Strongly	6
Agree	5
A Somewhat	1
D Somewhat	1
Disagree	0
D Strongly	1
N/A	0
Invalid	0

 The one student who strongly disagreed later commented in the section containing open-ended questions that students beginning to learn Arabic and planning to travel to the Arabic-speaking world should "Focus on MSA and learn a few of the spoken Egyptian phrases." When asked about learning MSA and spoken Arabic concurrently in the first two years of Arabic instruction, this same student wrote that "for a beginner, learning Egyptian and MSA at the same time made things more confusing. Egyptian sometimes makes one forget certain MSA grammatical rules." These comments are important and should be investigated in future research.
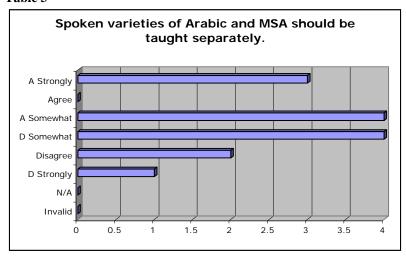
Table 1 and 2 demonstrate that students believe spoken Arabic and MSA should be taught at the same time and that students should learn spoken Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world.

Interestingly however, another item shows that only the slim majority at 57% of the respondents agrees that learning a spoken variety of Arabic should be the priority of first- and second-year students. Thus, the respondents to this questionnaire believe learning spoken Arabic is important and should be undertaken before traveling abroad but it should not necessarily be the priority of beginning students. Perhaps this item indicates that students maintain there is more to learning Arabic than only a spoken variety. Future research should clarify whether respondents consider learning spoken Arabic should be *a* priority rather than *the* priority for first- and second-year students. Such wording may produce more reliable results.

If the respondents believe students should learn spoken Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world and that spoken Arabic should be learned while studying MSA, one might assume that the two varieties of Arabic would have to be taught simultaneously in beginning Arabic courses.

However, when asked if MSA and spoken Arabic should be taught separately the respondents are split 50-50 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Spoken varieties of Arabic and MSA should be taught separately.

Category	Value
A Strongly	3
Agree	0
A Somewhat	4
D Somewhat	4
Disagree	2
D Strongly	1
N/A	0
Invalid	0

Thus, the respondents believe that learning spoken Arabic while learning MSA is important and that one should know spoken Arabic before traveling abroad; however, there is disagreement regarding the manner of learning MSA and spoken Arabic. Perhaps 50% of these respondents feel that students should be taking two distinct Arabic classes simultaneously. Future research should query more students in order to learn which direction the majority leans regarding this issue. The data from this item do not clearly portray why some of the students would think that spoken Arabic should be learned separately. Fortunately, one of the qualitative items provides some illumination. This paper presents four comments, two of which are in favor of spoken Arabic being taught with MSA and two against.

Table 4

1) At first the idea of learning two "languages" intimidated me and I worried about keeping the two kinds of Arabic separate in my mind. I quickly found that it was extremely useful to learn both at the same time.
2) My biggest problem with the way spoken Arabic was taught concurrently with MSA in my first year of Arabic instruction may have been an issue with my home university. Because I only had MSA twice a week, I did not have a strong foundation in grammar and in spoken MSA. Also, for a beginner, learning Egyptian and MSA at the same time made things more confusing. Egyptian sometimes makes one forget certain MSA grammatical rules.
3) I believe that dialects should be taught along side MSA so the student understands the formal/informal relationship of MSA and the dialects from the

beginning.
4) Students need to have a basic understanding of MSA before they learn the spoken language since the spoken language is taken from MSA.

These comments show the disparity regarding the issue of learning spoken Arabic and MSA at the same time. Although the second response indicates that spoken Arabic was taught separately, the other responses do not specify. Thus, more information is needed about the ramifications concerning the presentation of spoken Arabic in the curricula as a separate entity or combined with MSA. This particular issue requires future research on a large scale to determine the potential advantages and/or disadvantages of teaching spoken Arabic simultaneously, yet separately, or in the same class.

   Regardless of how spoken Arabic is taught, data from this questionnaire demonstrate that students support learning it before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. Moreover, there are items on the questionnaire that present data depicting the advantages of using spoken Arabic in-country.

Using Spoken Arabic in-Country
   When asked regarding personal experience using spoken Arabic in-country, the respondents are typically positive. For example, Tables 5 and 6 show that the majority of the students felt they were more trusted and more easily able to integrate into society using spoken Arabic.
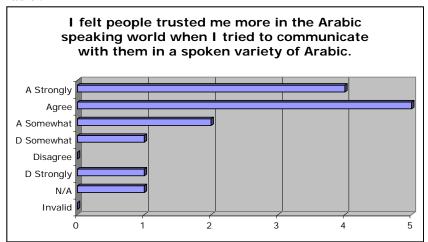
Table 5

Table 6

I was more easily able to integrate into the culture in the Arabic-speaking world when I tried to communicate in a spoken variety of Arabic.

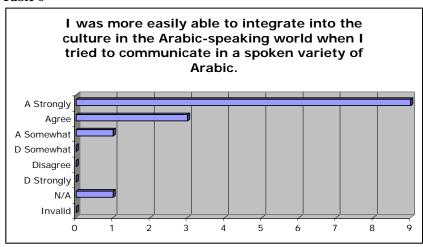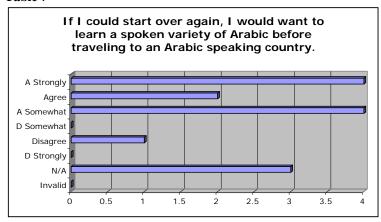| Response	Value
A Strongly	9
Agree	3
A Somewhat	1
D Somewhat	0
Disagree	0
D Strongly	0
N/A	1
Invalid	0

Table 5 shows that 79% of the respondents agreed that they felt people trusted them more if they tried to communicate in spoken Arabic. Table 6 shows that 93% of the respondents felt they were more easily able to integrate into the culture when attempting to communicate in spoken Arabic. Such positive response rates show some of the advantages of communicating in spoken Arabic. Bearing in mind that many students travel to the Arabic-speaking world after one or two years of Arabic, the perceived advantages of using spoken Arabic may encourage students to want to learn as much as possible before arrival. Language departments should consider such implications.

Retroactive Considerations

The above data support the learning of spoken Arabic before traveling abroad to the Arabic-speaking world. The data also present the beneficiary nature of using spoken Arabic to communicate with the locals. In this final category students were asked to consider what they would choose if they could start learning Arabic again. Firstly, however, this paper presents student responses to the query "I wish I had studied a spoken variety of Arabic before going to an Arabic speaking country." Students were instructed to choose N/A if they had actually taken some spoken Arabic before traveling abroad. The data indicate that 57% of respondents agreed that they wish they had studied spoken Arabic with 5 respondents (36%) selecting N/A. Thus, there was actually only one respondent who disagreed. This paper now presents responses from students regarding retroactive reflection.

Table 7, the final table in this paper, presents the retroactive thinking of the respondents pertaining to the studying of spoken Arabic.

Table 7

If I could start over again, I would want to learn a spoken variety of Arabic before traveling to an Arabic speaking country.

Responses show that 71% of the respondents would want to learn a spoken variety of Arabic before traveling abroad if they could start over again. It is assumed that the 3 respondents (21%) who selected N/A thought this particular item did not pertain to them since they had taken some spoken Arabic. The item should have specified that it was not important whether or not the respondent had actually studied spoken Arabic before travel or not. Most importantly, however, the vast majority of the respondents reveal that they would want to study a variety of spoken Arabic before going abroad if they could start over.

DISCUSSION & CHALLENGES

The results of the questionnaire show that students want to learn Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world and while learning MSA. There is, however, some disagreement concerning how the teaching of spoken Arabic and MSA should take place. Perhaps spoken Arabic and MSA should be taught at the same time but in separate courses; perhaps they should be taught in an integrated fashion. These questions are beyond the scope of this paper though it should be noted that it might be excessive to require students to take two language classes in the same semester considering other coursework. Perhaps, however, this is the preferred solution for some. Future research should clarify this issue with a larger group of respondents. Moreover, the wording of the item might provide more reliable responses if it were phrased as "spoken varieties of Arabic should be taught in the same class/course as MSA."

This research has shown that the majority of the respondents believe students should learn spoken Arabic before traveling to the Arabic-speaking world. Unfortunately, spoken Arabic is not always included in the curricula for beginning Arabic students. This paper now presents some challenges and

considerations that may need to be addressed before introducing spoken Arabic into beginning language curricula.

There are numerous obstacles on the path to introducing spoken Arabic in language departments. Some of these obstacles may pertain to logistical limitations, while others may be more ideological in nature. When discussing the teaching of spoken Arabic, the issues of prestige, the preservation of the Quranic language, and integration are often cited as significant concerns.

The prestige of the Arabic language may be characterized as the two-fold manifestation of nationalism and religion. As for nationalism, the very existence of a higher register like MSA often stirs pan-Arab nationalistic feelings in the Arab world. Suleiman (2003) described the "Praise of a group's language [as] a well-known phenomenon" in nationalist discourse (p. 42). Any attempt to remove significance from MSA and place emphasis on a spoken variety may be seen as a threat to supporters of such discourse. Zughoul (1980), citing a panel discussion about diglossia in Arabic, wrote that all the panel members rejected the use of spoken Arabic as a national language because it would widen "the gap between [spoken Arabic] and [MSA] … [and lead] to the unintelligibility of the Koran, the holy book of Islam" (p. 210). Comments concerning Zughoul's research methodology are not relevant here. What is important is the reverence demonstrated for the language of the Quran and the refusal of spoken Arabic as a possible national language. Describing varieties of spoken Arabic himself, Zughoul (1980) wrote, "The [spoken varieties of Arabic] are like the patois in French, and substandard and uncultivated speech in English" (p. 214), which may be considered a somewhat subjective opinion. His article, however, illuminates the lack of enthusiasm of some for spoken varieties of Arabic as national languages.

These ideological values and barriers often confuse students of Arabic. Students who learn some spoken Arabic may find that they are scorned for using sub-standard language, whereas students who can produce only MSA may also be subject to ridicule. Describing this possibility, Al-Kahtany (1997) wrote, "using MSA in a situation where the dialectal form is appropriate may expose the speaker to ridicule from his/her listeners" (p. 3). These possibilities testify to the need for a more accurate representation and integration in Arabic programs in the United States of linguistic facts on the ground in the Arab world. Students who are only taught one variety, are not prepared to acculturate into a diglossic/bilingual society. The field of Arabic language teaching and learning seems to be frozen in Ferguson's idealized characterization of diglossia: the higher register is emphasized – even though it is only part of the language – whereas the lower register is disrespected and ignored, even though it is widely used in many situations and circumstances.

CONCLUSION

In opposition to Zughoul's (1980) article about the ills of diglossia in Arabic, there are clarion calls in favor of teaching spoken Arabic. For

example, Wahba (2006) wrote, "In light of current theories of foreign language acquisition, selecting only one 'variety' of Arabic for instruction, such as classical or colloquial, will seriously prejudice the ability of the non-native learner to communicate effectively in an Arabic-speaking community" (p. 139). He continued, "both varieties of the language should be taught together, as occurs in natural speech contexts" (p. 139). Younes (2006), describing MSA and spoken Arabic as one entity with different sides, wrote,

> Each side of this system is used in situations and for functions for which it is uniquely suited, and both sides are necessary for functioning in the full range of situations where and educated native speaker is expected to function (p. 159).

These calls should be heeded in order to better prepare students for the linguistic realities in the Arab world. Alternative approaches to teaching Arabic need to be tried and researched. Commenting on the need for research in Arabic, Gass (2006) wrote, "Many would point out that SLA research is quite skewed in the direction of a few languages. Unfortunately, Arabic is not one of them, but the acquisition of Arabic is a field awaiting exploration" (p. 32). Such exploration is of the utmost importance in this era of proliferated enrollments in Arabic. It is hoped that the field of Arabic language teaching and learning in the United States will respond to these statements and this research in implementing spoken varieties into Arabic program curricula.

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