

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

E-LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A SOLUTION TO NEGLECTING OF ARABIC LANGUAGE BY MIGRANT WORKERS

¹Muhammad Al Gammal, ²Najeem Adewale Sharaf, ³Adel Abdel Fadeel Eid bleek

¹Associated Professor, College of Islamic studies, HBKU

²Researcher, College of Islamic studies, HBKU, Contemporary Fiqh & Usul al-Fiqh

³Professor of Comparative Jurisprudence at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University and Al-Azhar University

Email: ¹malgammal@hbku.edu.qa, ²sharofuadewale@yahoo.com, ³a.bleek@psau.edu.sa

¹Muhammad Al Gammal, ²Najeem Adewale Sharaf, ³Adel Abdel Fadeel Eid bleek, E-LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A SOLUTION TO NEGLECTING OF ARABIC LANGUAGE BY MIGRANT WORKERS– Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 17(6) (2020). ISSN 1567-214X.

Keywords: E-Learning, Migrant Workers, Neglecting Arabic Language, Teaching Arabic Language, Integration

ABSTRACT

There is no any developed or a developing country in the East or West of the world except it gives priority to its own tongue and work hard to promote it locally and internationally, most especially at the time that many studies conducted show that that the world loses averagely one language every six weeks. Countries in the east and west usually require a good command of their language and culture before granting a work permit or starting work in such countries, while Arab nations seem careless about promotion of their own tongue; they recruit foreign employees without obliging them to learn Arabic nor expose them to the Arab culture. This study aims to address the issue of neglecting of Arabic language by migrant workers it's the impact on language itself and Arab culture, and to look at whose responsibility is teaching Arabic language to migrant workers.

1 Introduction

Any nation's culture survives as its language remains alive and disappears when their mother tongue dies out. Language must be preserved to avoid extinction. A 2018 report shown that the world loses one language every six weeks.

Currently, Arabic has occupied a universal position among world languages. It is one of the best and broadest languages that communicate and convey people's needs and feelings. Arabic, therefore, with its varied dialects, is one of the most widely spoken languages on earth whose speakers amount to 467 million people and ranks the fourth after Chinese, Spanish, and English.

Unfortunately, countries whose official language is Arabic do not care for teaching Arabic to expatriates or ask them to learn it. This article focuses on the Arabic language as a requirement that migrant workers have to fulfill and studies the effects of ignoring it. Then, it suggests practical solutions to encourage foreign workers to learn Arabic.

Arabic has a high status among world languages, and the Arabic-speaking countries are among the highest countries accommodating the foreigners. Nevertheless, Arabic language is at risk as most of the expatriates migrating to Arab countries are non-Arabs. The situation is that many migrants settle in those regions for a long time then return to their homelands without being encouraged to learn the Arabic language or being acquainted with its culture, preventing them from being fully efficient or completely integrated. Statement of the problem could be formulated into one main questions, which is: "How does Arab nationalism need to advocate its culture and impose its language on expatriates? And Who is responsible for transforming the migrant worker's reality in the Arab countries?"

The significance of the research lies in highlighting the danger of not requiring expatriates in the Arab countries to learn Arabic.

These articles have the same objectives and adopted a similar method when presenting the migrant workers' problem. They conclude that migrant workers negatively impact the Arabic language, but they did not propose solutions to address these effects.

2 Migrant worker's negligence of the Arabic language

2.1 Importance of studying Arabic

Arabic is a Semitic language, derived from Shem's name, son of Noah (PBUH). Semitic languages include Canaanite, Nabataean, Babylonian, and Abyssinian. The Arabic language has survived; other languages could only maintain some scattered inscriptions on the stones. It is also a long-lived language. The Prophet (PBUH) was reported to have said: "There were five prophets from the Arabs: Muhammad, Ishmael, Shuaib, Saleh, and Hud (Peace be upon them)." This report indicates that Arabic is an old language, and all those prophets lived in the Arab lands. Those who lived in the Arabs' lands and the Arabian Peninsula and spoke its language are Arabs.

Language is the tool that individuals and communities use to communicate and understand one another and express their feelings and ideas. Arabic is a lively human language with its own phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and structural systems, and its utterances have unique connotations.

Arabic is the language that recorded the Arabs' glories and promulgated their feats and wisdom. Its richness and sublimity lie in its wide range of synonyms and various figurative forms and the ability to derive and produce new words that convey the target meanings, in addition to its flexibility, high rhetorical aspects, and eloquent speech. Arabic enjoys the most beautiful and easy-to-use expressions with enormous regular structures and less irregular forms. There are sounds in Arabic that do not exist in any language, and the language has the inflection phenomenon in which there are many forms of plurals and the most robust structures. Sufficient as honor is that Arabic is the language of the Quran and Prophetic traditions, and it serves as a reservoir of the Islamic-Arabic thought, knowledge, and culture. Arabic is a symbol of identity and marks the

Arab self-fulfillment and communication bridge in the Arabian space. (Ali, 2016)

There is sublime literature stored for us through Arabic, such as the pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. This heritage portrayed a shining and accurate image of the Ummah's life and its noble manners, such as generosity, magnanimity, care for pure family lineages, pride, bravery, and disdaining of cowardice, stinginess, and treachery.

Studying Arabic is an introduction to the Islamic civilization study and the gateway to understanding the Arab world and Islamic values. That is because language is the repository of every nation's culture, a reflection of its thinking and life, and a demonstration of its social, economic, and political lifestyle. Moreover, Arabic is the only way to understanding the noble Quran, and any attack on the language is seen as an attack on the Quran itself and vice versa. (Ali, 2016)

When Arabic was the language of hegemony, power, prestige, and knowledge, all people under the Muslim State's control integrated into the Ummah's social fabric and spoke and wrote in its language. Sooner, prominent scholars in Arabic literature and language, science, mathematics, and Sharia sciences were from non-Arabs, such as Sharia, Avicenna, and more. All those scholars had written in Arabic and centered their sciences and philosophies around it.

Mastering Arabic and achieving fluency and eloquence in it has become a religious value, inherited honor, and virtue that people pursue. Poets used to boast of those acquiring this virtue and criticize those lacking it.

Had Arabic not been a language of civilization and urbanization with broad horizons and rich vocabularies and structures, our early predecessors would not have been able to transfer to it sciences of Greece or the arts of Persia and India. Otherwise, they had to learn the languages of these countries and become Arabs with Persian and Greek minds. If this had happened, the course of Islamic history would have been completely changed.

2.2 Migrant worker's impact on the Arabic language and culture

2.2.1 Impact of migrant workers on the language

Many linguists and thinkers unanimously agree on the pioneering position that a language occupies in the life of nations and countries and the role it plays in the course of humanity in science, progress, and civilization. Language is one of the most powerful elements of unity and solidarity among members of the nation. It can transform man into a social being aware of the reality, build from the nation speaking it a robust structure, and unify their thinking. (ZuhayruddĒn, 2018)

Some countries hosted a vast number of foreigners. Their diversity and multitude have contributed to curtailing Arabic liveliness and spread to the extent that one may feel it is no longer the daily life language. Some observers anticipate that unless jealous Arabs who care for Arabic address this issue, standard Arabic will exist only in mosques as Latin had been used only in churches. Today, Arabic suffers from many foreign words, blended dialects, and multilingualism. Add to these bilingualism, ignorance, and illiteracy of some of its speakers. All these factors muted the longstanding loud voice of Arabic.

Foreign languages play an exact role in neglecting Arabic and belittling it and its use and push it out practically from many domains. For instance, English has become the language of business, science, medicine, tourism, and the media.

Arabic lies on the edge of a bank about to collapse. It undergoes deformation every day, sometimes at the hands of those who speak it and other times due to distorting it for quick communication with non-Arabs who travel to Arab countries for work. Aspects of deformation include:

First: Dominance of colloquialism

The Arabic language is a land with inviolable borders, and every foreign word enters into it serves as a blow to this land and shakes its foundations. The more the protection element exists, the more the structure remains firm, durable, and safe against any shake and storm. This element is a leading role and not restricted to a group of people, but also thinkers and intellectuals have a leading responsibility in this sphere.

The impact might be lighter when we talk about the prevalence of colloquialism over the standard language as the former emerges from the latter. According to the Palestinian writer a colloquial language is a specific form of arts derived from and built on the standard one, not an alternative to it. Promoting colloquial dialects is an effective way of disrupting and troubling Arabic architecture.

The Arab society lives: "a state of bilingualism that creates incurable communication problems. The Arab student learns in schools a language and practice in life another language. In the Mashreq, colloquialism controls the child before going to school, and its impact continues after enrollment. In the Maghreb, languages overlap so that we do not know if the student's mistakes in using Arabic are due to non-application of its rules or due to French influence on him/her. Let alone the dualism resulting from foreigner's migration to the Gulf countries in particular, which forces locals to resort mostly to English for ease of understanding.

Second: Language brokenness

Language brokenness when communicating with non-Arabs is an imminent threat to Arabic, thinking that this facilitates the communication process. However, the Arabic language is rich in words and styles that can convey the whole idea accurately to any recipient. Examples of language brokenness include, but not limited to, changing verb endings, ignoring the correct feminine and masculine modifiers with numerals, and misplacing pronouns. These mistakes could also contain non-Arabic words during speaking, and, strangely enough, the Arab citizen uses the same broken vocabularies.

The situation worsens when we realize that expatriates constitute about a third of the population in some Arab countries. We deal with them in almost every aspect of our life – in our homes, the streets, and markets. Migrant workers come to the Arab countries knowing nothing about Arabic. They learn and speak what they hear from Arabs. It means that if we talk with them in a broken language, they will reply the same, and vice versa. Al Watan Newspaper surveyed 150 foreigners in Saudi Arabia found that words come in the top words they use, arguing that these are the words they often hear and use in the workplace (Ibid, p9).

Third: Extinction of Arabic globally

Several international indicators suggest the extinction of Arabic, such as the UN seeks to drop it from the official languages (English, Spanish, French, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic) for three reasons:

First: Arab countries representatives in the UN do not use Arabic; they use English or French.

Second: Lack of competent Arab translators who master Arabic.

Third: Many Arab countries do not abide by their commitments to paying the fees of using Arabic in the Organization (Ibid, p11).

2.2.2 Impact of migrant workers on Arabic culture

Many researchers argue that language policies in the Arab countries incline towards preferring colloquial dialects and foreign languages in the various fields of life, such as media and education. They also encourage colloquialism in the radio and TV without any efforts to ban or reduce it. The researchers observe that these policies turn the book's standard Arabic into a strange and rarely-used language difficult for people to use, and thus citizens are discouraged from reading. As a result, illiteracy has prevailed, reading rates have decreased, and knowledge has been shrunk in Arab societies. Statistics show that the average reading rate is one book per 80 persons in the Arab countries, meaning they are destroying their living language (Ibid, p11).

An Emirati academic, conducted a study indicating that Gulf students are not proficient in Arabic, particularly at their early childhood. He argued that these children have grown in environments where babysitters are essential in the upbringing process. The study presents the following shocking rates: 80% of the Gulf pupils have dyslexia; 75% use English in their daily life; 95% make mistakes in Arabic. Dr Hasan Madan mentions that broken Arabic has become the primary medium for understanding in the streets and markets and is not by nature an alternative to Arabic only, but also to all local dialects whose rules are derived from the standard Arabic (Al-NŌwashiz, NĒrah. (n.d.).

The impact of foreign babysitters on the Gulf society continues throughout the new generations that no longer hail their national identity. Moreover, migrant workers occupy leading positions (Bufelja GhĒyĒt. (2009), and priority in recruitment is given to them. They receive salaries bigger than their Arab counterparts who have the same qualifications and expertise. It means they control and direct the culture, resulting in the erosion of the Arabic culture with its religion and customs elements.

2.3 Shared responsibility for teaching Arabic to migrant workers

In sociolinguists, there is no language strong by itself; any language's strength stems from the power of its people (Weston-Taylor, L. (2013). It means that language's strength or weakness depends on those who use it: if they use and promote it adequately, it becomes more powerful; if they do not care for it, it remains undeveloped.

Migrant workers in the Arab countries do not use Arabic, which underlines the need for further steps to promote the Arabs culture at the public and private levels and the necessity to learn the language by expatriates.

Facing this phenomenon requires taking serious actions and firm decisions to restore the Arabic language glories and list it among the top world languages.

Implementing the principle of "shared responsibility" or "social responsibility" is necessary to address migrant workers' lack of commitment to using Arabic. This principle requires all stakeholders – public and private sectors, families, individuals – to share part of the responsibility as follows:

First: Regional responsibility

All Arab countries suffer from the issue of expatriate's non-commitment to using Arabic. The effects of this problem exist in the Gulf and non-Gulf countries, and migrant workers do not use Arabic or care for learning it in all of them.

For instance, a 2010 study by the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research reported that migrant workers make up a staggering 90 percent of the labor force. Unfortunately, such vast numbers of migrant workers have had a negative impact on the use of the Arabic language and hinder the development of Arabic-language skills among the citizens. Non-Arabic speaking domestic workers often spend significant amounts of time with children of families that employ them (Zayed, P. (2013).

Other studies demonstrate that Arabic is also being undermined in the Gulf by the influx of foreign labor. Many families rely on foreign babysitters and housemaids, who neither know nor learn Arabic, to care for children (Al-Suwaidi. (2018).

Based on the foregoing, it is a regional responsibility to advocate Arabic and require migrant workers to learn. A firm decision must be taken to obligate the migrant workers to learn Arabic, which needs all Council of Arab League members' support. If some countries of the Council of Arab League adopted a language policy without the others, the problem would remain unsolved, or the result will be insignificant.

A similar model exists in the European Union Council's language policy that has played an active role in supporting the member states to draw up an appropriate language policy for their people as per the EU policy of supporting the member states' European languages (Union, I. (2014).

Council of the Arab League must carry the responsibility to draft general policies targeting the strengthening of Arabic and supporting the member states to play their roles in implementing them.

Second: State's responsibility

In addition to the borders, the name, the flag, and the currency, the national language makes a country respected, unique, and distinct from other countries. When a government is not serious about promoting its national language, its culture shall be in a state of turmoil. On the contrary, a country with a strong national language has definitely managed to promote this language locally and internationally. When Quebec wanted to strengthen French, its national language, it issued regulations imposing writing all signs and posters in French, and the government has the authority to do that. (Quebec Charter of the French Language, n.d.)

When China attempted to protect its national language, the government removed the use of foreign words. Authorities in China recently scrutinized the brands and names of over 20,000 western companies, forcing them to change 2,000 to more Chinese-sounding names (Chang-Castillo, (2019).

Therefore, Arab countries and governments have to take Arabic more seriously and introduce appropriate regulations and suitable policies requiring migrants to learn it. The Arabic language and culture protection will be more efficient when supported by applicable laws and regulations.

Third: National organizations responsibility

There must be national organizations supported by the government or ministry of municipal affairs to protect the national language in parallel with the official

regulations supporting it. These organizations undertake the mission of encouraging the foreign workforce to learn Arabic and teaching it to them.

Some countries followed this strategy to protect its national language and established independent regulatory institutions to support their people's language progress. For instance, the National Language Authority was established in 1979 in Pakistan to support the advancement and promotion of Urdu. In 2012, its status changed into the National Language Promotion Department (Zia, K. (1999).

The implementation of this strategy succeeded in promoting the national language to the extent that the government attached it to their departments. Such success proves that national language protection is not the government's responsibility only, but also a social responsibility.

Fourth: Families' responsibility

According to the International Labor Organization report in 2015, around 19 percent of the world's domestic workers live in the Arab States. The region hosts the largest number of women migrant domestic workers globally, estimated at 1.6 million. (Kagan, S.) It means a fifth of the migrant domestic workers travel to the Arab countries and are employed by Arab families.

Given this situation, the Arabic language protection responsibility is not restricted to the governments and national organizations; but it includes the Arab families as well. Those families have to obligate their domestic workers to learn Arabic or volunteer to teach them some Arabic phrases and use them in their communication. Perhaps they could understand the language by listening and signs.

Fifth: Individuals' responsibility

Individuals also share the responsibility for teaching Arabic to migrant workers. Arabs could start conversations in Arabic with expatriates upon entering the departments, offices, stores, and malls to feel the language's value and the necessity to learn it.

In some countries like Malaysia, when people enter the departments or go shopping, they initiate the conversation in Malay, which helps foreigners understand some Malay words without taking language lessons or being encouraged to do so.

In a nutshell, requiring migrant workers to learn Arabic is a shared responsibility. All stakeholders have to contribute to achieving this goal, starting from the Arab League Council that should draft the general policy for promoting Arabic and support the Arab countries to implement it. It is also the responsibility of every Arab country to issue the laws and regulations regarding teaching Arabic to foreign workers. Families employing domestic workers and citizens bear the same responsibility as well.

3 Proposed solutions to obligate migrant workers to master the host country's language

Language is the facet of peoples with their different concepts and ideologies. Their adherence to it means they adhere to everything that protects their culture and loyalty to their lands. Therefore, Arabs have to protect the Arabic language from any distortion and alteration.

To strengthen the Arabic language, promote and revive it, and maintain its universality that is about to diminish, we have to take strategic steps as follows:

First: To establish e-training centers to teach migrant workers the basic Arabic words covering the essential topics in their daily situations and explain how the Arabs speak and like to be treated.

Second: To demand the employees in public and private sectors to accomplish specific Arabic skills before starting work or being promoted.

Third: To adopt an Arabic Language e-testing system for expatriates before or after assuming their work or upon renewal of their contracts in public and private sectors.

Fourth: Employers should allow their employees to learn the Arabic language basics and formulate a supervisory committee for that purpose.

Fifth: Employers should issue decisions forcing migrant workers to dedicate part of their free time to e-Arabic learning.

Sixth: To issue regulations necessitating the use of Arabic in specific official meetings.

Seventh: To introduce night, weekly, and summer e-courses for migrant workers and require them to obtain certain scores in specified times to renew the contract.

Eighth: To issue regulations imposing writing streets' names and administrative sites in Arabic.

Ninth: Citizens should be strict with those workers and avoid imitating them in their broken language.

These suggestions aim to teach migrant workers a new language to improve their capabilities and build their confidence and communication skills. They also acquaint the workers with the host country's culture to facilitate their integration in the new society on the one hand and guard this language and its people's culture against neglect and extinction on the other.

In fact, all these steps will not be practical unless the Arab countries adopt a unified Arab renaissance project to restore the glory and respect of the Arabic language. Moreover, each Arab state must include in its immigration laws terms that require the migrant worker to learn Arabic as commonly practiced by other nations.

Acknowledgment

This paper is part of Hamad bin Khalifah University (HBKU)'s Project No: IS45-CIS

References

- 1.(n.d.). Retrieved from Quebec Charter of the French Language: <http://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/c-11>
- 2.Ali, N. M. (2016). Al-Lughah al-*Ō*Arabiyyah: MafhĒmĒt wa Qiyyam. *Majallat al-'ŌdĒb*(116), 167-171.
- 3.BĒbĒ, MasŌĒd.Mushkilat al-'AdĒ' fi al-Lughah al-*Ō*Arabiyyah: 'AsbĒb al-'ŌaŌf wa WasĒ'il al-ŌĒĒj. (1419AH). *Damascus: Majallat MajmaŌ al-Lughah al-ŌArabiyyah*, 73(14), 563-564.
- 4.BudayrĒ, B. Y. (2016). Al-Lughah wa'tharuhĒ fi TajdhĒr al-HĒwiyyah al-*Ō*Arabiyyah wal-IslĒmiyyah fi ŌĒr al-ŌAwlamah . *Arabic language Academy Magazine*(1), 39-62.
- 5.Kagan, S. (n.d.). In *Domestic workers and employers in the Arab states: Promising practices and innovative models for a productive working relationship* (p. 2017). Beirut: ILO Regional Office for Arab States. Retrieved from <http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publicat>
- 6.KĒrt, N. e. (2015). Al-Lughah al-*Ō*Arabiyyah: Nash'tuhĒ wa MakĒnatuhĒ fĒ al-Islam wa 'AsbĒbu BaqĒ'ihĒ. (6), 137.

7. ManḌĒr, I. (1414AH). LisĒn al-ŃArab. 1, 587.
8. ÓthĒr, A.-B. A.-'. (1978). ash-Shaykh al-BashĒr al-'IbrĒhĒmĒ. 1, 260-261.
9. ZuhayruddĒn, Ø. (2018). *MakhĒlir IstihdĒf al-MustashriqĒn Lillughah al-ŃArabiyyah*(14), 50