

## EFFECTS OF MODERN MEDIA ON THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

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### Abstract:

This article addresses the relationship between media and the Arabic language and its impact on it, focusing primarily on the painful reality our language has reached. It attempts to diagnose the problems in this relationship with the aim of eventually building a future vision for what the Arabic language should be like in these media. This research comes for several reasons, most notably the importance of the Arabic language. In our current time, especially with the significant technological development in the world and the emergence of modern communication networks, preserving the Arabic language has become more necessary than ever before, especially in our Islamic world.

**Keywords:** Arabic language, media, linguistic errors, importance of the language.

### INTRODUCTION

Language is considered a means of direct communication and is known as the vessel of culture and thought for peoples, as well as a tool for connecting the past with the present. Through language, the bonds of a nation are tied and unified, individuals meet, and it stands as one of the elements of identity and sovereignty. If the language flourishes and evolves, the nation prospers intellectually and culturally. Conversely, if a nation abandons its language, it becomes weakened and diminished, its stature lessened, and its people scattered.

The dilemma of our Arabic language is most evident in the media with its various outlets, as it represents the front that reflects different cultural interactions in any society. It is the entity that forms and shapes public opinion around the world, earning it the title of the fourth power. Because of its significant role, it plays the most critical roles in elevating or diminishing the Arabic language. The immense influence that these media have begun to exert in people's lives now places them at the forefront of the factors that establish and shape public perception.

Thus, language is considered to be highly influenced by the media, because it is the mold into which the media pours its opinions and ideas. The media has become the entity that sets the language, determines tastes, and innovates in literary styles, more so than writers and poets do. It injects into the veins of the Arabic language a vast amount of new words, structures, and meanings at every moment, which linguistic academies may struggle to notice.

This necessitates a pause to consider this evolving media language and the roles that media play in promoting the Arabic language.

### **1. The Importance of Language**

The Arabic language is not a static entity devoid of life; rather, it is akin to a living being that grows and evolves, and at times may become vulnerable to weakness, breakdown, and frailty, and may even age, enter a dying phase, or die. However, in all cases, it has not lost its identity nor has its character faded, due to it being a sacred language, closely associated with the Holy Quran. It is its vessel, its miraculous expressive performance, and the language of worship and remembrance. The connection of people with Arabic is not just a mere association with a language but goes beyond to represent a deep bond with a valued religion and a noble prophet. This strong connection is supported by what Abu Mansur al-Tha'alibi said in his book "The Jurisprudence of Language and the Secret of Arabic": "Whoever loves Allah Almighty loves His Messenger Muhammad, and whoever loves the Arab Messenger loves the Arabs, and whoever loves the Arabs loves the Arabic in which the best book was revealed to the best of Arabs and non-Arabs, and whoever loves Arabic engages with it, persists upon it, and devotes his zeal to it" ([Abu Mansour, 2000, p. 29](#)).

It is a universally acknowledged fact that the Holy Quran has preserved Classical Arabic throughout the centuries, having gone through various phases and stages in this long history. Perhaps the first stage was when the true faith transformed Classical Arabic "from a materialistic pagan language into the language of a heavenly religion, carrying spiritual, intellectual, religious, social, and humanitarian values unknown to Classical Arabic" ([Daif, p. 235](#)). Thus, Classical Arabic derived from the religion new words and meanings such as Islam, faith, disbelief, polytheism, almsgiving, and others.

The importance and distinction of the Arabic language and the Quran's favor upon it is also acknowledged by some orientalist. Carl Brockelmann pointed out that, thanks to the Holy Quran, the Arabic language achieved a breadth unmatched by any other language because of its noble lineage, and all Muslims believe that Arabic alone is the tongue allowed for them to learn in their prayers, giving Arabic a long-standing high status and distinction above all languages of the world ([Brockelmann, 1959, p. 43](#)).

The German orientalist Harnbach says: "The Arabic language is not weak at all, as some Arabs and non-Arabs claim, nor is it incapable of keeping up with the age of technology. History guides us to the fact that Arabic was the language of more than a third of the world's population, not only a language of poetry or prose, but also a language of commerce and science. Through it, the Greek civilization and its sciences and philosophies were transmitted... It is a language that interacts with every subject, art, and science, and that is its greatest feature that no other language possesses" (Salem, 2009, p. 39). (Labeid, 2009, p. 39).

Classical Arabic saw scientific and civilizational development during the Abbasid era, performing wonderfully in various aspects (Daif, p. 235), due to its inherent nature, the abundance of its vocabulary, and the streams that nourish and renew its fabric such as analogy, derivation, sculpting, and metaphor, which negate any notion of it being rigid, incapacitated, or limited in scope.

The Arabic language could not have maintained its vitality, elegance, and dignity until now, were it not for the significant efforts made by ancient language scholars, and still being made by contemporary scholars. Among the most notable scholars interested in it from the ancients was "Abu al-Fath Ibn Jinni", who gave one of the finest definitions of language found in the Arab linguistic heritage, through the definition he set for language, saying: "Its definition is sounds by which all people express their purposes" (Ibn Jinni, 1999, p. 33), a clear indication of its function manifested in people using it to express their various purposes.

And indeed, language exists so that each community can express their purposes with it. The connection between language and community highlights the importance and social value of language, as the term "community" refers to all individuals in a society. Language is the crucible in which identity is forged and a sense of belonging grows (Salah, 2006, p. 13).

Language has received the attention of peoples throughout human history, as it is "man's means of expressing his needs, desires, feelings, and positions... Language is the tool for this human to communicate with others, to understand and exchange opinions and feelings with them, and his way to understand them, feel their tastes, and know their doctrines and means of influencing them" (Al-Mu'tuq, 1996, p. 35).

In our era, in which much chaff has infiltrated our Arabic language, many modern language scholars have taken it upon themselves to protect the Arabic language and work on its development to keep pace with the scientific and technological advancement in the world, and to be compatible with various sciences, despite those miserable attempts that were secretly plotted to destroy it, and some others' desire for its extinction.

Some express this openly by calling for not following the method of the ancients in language, considering those who believe in the rules of Arabic language as presented by the ancients as people of superstition and backwardness who prefer nomadism over civilization (Khulufi, 2011, p. 93). There are those who mock the inherited Arabic language, its rules, rhetoric, and system, considering it a dead, static language without movement or development, resembling an old hag surpassed by time, thus it should leave our lives (Khulufi, 2011, p. 91).

There are those who attack everyone keen on the language's correctness, alerting to mistakes as superficial, accusing them of incapacity and shallowness, and lack of taste, because they care only about the external form of the language (Khulufi, 2011, p. 10); and some do not value grammar and parsing, calling for its elimination from our language as it is a manifestation of nomadism under the claim that if it were a means of understanding, it would remain present in all languages (Khulufi, 2011, p. 11).

Since these claims had malicious intentions behind them, they were not successful. Their goal was the elimination of Arabic, and these claims were unfounded, relying on lies and falsehoods. Additionally, the nature of the Arabic language does not align with these claims, as what suits other languages is not necessarily suitable for Arabic.

The issue of protecting the Arabic language from such claims and falsehoods is not only the domain of linguists but is of greater significance and larger in scale than that. It is dangerous for this matter to remain exclusive to them, regardless of their high status and the importance of their efforts, because protecting the Arabic language is a public matter and a shared responsibility that everyone bears in their field, especially political leaders, intellectual and cultural elites, and at all educational and media levels. Although we see that the media have a more significant impact than other means, the challenge laid before those in charge of the media lies in how to elevate Classical Arabic in and through the media, in order to stand against those voices calling for expression in non-Classical Arabic.

## **2. The Importance of Media**

Undoubtedly, various media forms are considered one of the most significant aspects of human civilization in our current era. They create and shape public opinion worldwide, with their direct and immediate impact on the audience in all fields and spheres. Often, various media are referred to as the fourth power, following the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, indicating their distinctive role in society.

There has been much discussion about the roles modern media, both auditory and visual, play. Some view its role as educational and informative for the nation, shaping individuals' opinions and perspectives. Others consider its economic, social, political

roles, and its monitoring function, in addition to its crucial role in advertising. Many have spoken about its significant role in maintaining linguistic security.

It seems that the linguistic role of the media is of utmost importance in our lives, especially that which is exercised by visual, auditory, and even written means. This importance stems from its direct message to both the general and specific audiences without intermediaries.

It is acknowledged that these various media devices have a clear impact on acquiring the language, its vocabulary, and structures. They currently bear a huge responsibility in preserving the Arabic language, rectifying and caring for the Arabic tongue, and spreading it in the best form, thereby working to elevate the linguistic level of the individual (Hamou, 2011, p. 75).

We can say that this era is the era of media without dispute, where media has taken a central and leading role in society. This role moves in two directions: one is based on educating and enlightening the community and advocating for morals, and the other is based on enticing the individual, tampering with their mind and time, and falsifying their consciousness. There is no doubt that media can have a positive effect if subject to responsible supervision, or negatively affect humans if placed under the disposal of unethical owners of wealth and influence.

It's unreasonable to deny the favor our national radio performed during the liberation revolution; rather, that leading role should be acknowledged, appreciated, and its achievements highlighted, including its efforts to make Algeria's voice heard in the world. Also among its achievements is the expansion of the linguistic usage circle, making the Arabic language constantly present on various fronts from independence to our day. As a result, the Arabic language "has spread and its scope of extension and influence has expanded to the furthest extent, so much so that it can be said that the language has never known this spread and popularity at any stage of history, which is a positive aspect as the status of the Arabic language has been enhanced as never before, and the interest in it has increased tremendously" (Hamou, 2011, pp. 72-73).

Furthermore, the media has become a tool for language production and dissemination through oral discourse. Language is now acquired through listening from these sources without scrutinizing it, which poses a significant risk to the correct reception of the language. Moreover, society now suffers from a severe rift after these media sources have taken the place of parents and schools in the field of knowledge dissemination.

From this standpoint, the media has endeavored to develop Arabic language styles to match the recipients' needs, showing its complete responsiveness and great ability to absorb different terms and meanings and convey them clearly in various formulations,

while ensuring "adherence to linguistic rules with simplicity in style and conciseness, bearing accuracy and clarity that necessitate truthful news and good intentions" (Belaid, 2002, p. 130).

However, the media has not always been benign to the Arabic language. While it has greatly benefited the Arabic language as mentioned before, it has also caused a lot of harm and showcased poor taste among many. The media content that some outlets have begun to publish has taken another direction, championing dialects and promoting foreign languages, besides greatly and blatantly harming Arabic, not to mention openly promoting linguistic errors. We believe this is due to the rapid spread and significant impact of the media across all social layers and categories.

But the pressing question that arises is: Where do linguistic errors seep into the media from? It has been observed that the media in Algeria has made a qualitative leap amidst the freedom of expression and media openness the country has experienced over the last decade. However, at the same time, it is noted that some specialized and non-specialized channels have turned to fulfilling their need for labor without going through the correct employment channels to select individuals with high scientific competencies. This has resulted in the widespread errors we hear and see from presenters in various programs.

Instead of the media being tools for spreading and appreciating the language, they have - regrettably - turned into demolition tools that threaten the language, widely opening the door to dialects in their various accents and to foreign languages. Over time, we will become a forgotten nation without distinctive features that differentiate us from other nations.

The spread of linguistic errors clearly appears "among different programs, segments, conversations, articles, and other media content, posing an imminent danger" (Halim, 2002, p. 31). According to experts, the primary reason for this lies in the prevalence of dialects in the media, especially radio and television. There are radio stations and satellite channels that begin and end their programs in dialect, and between the beginning and end, the viewer hardly hears a single eloquent sentence.

There is no doubt that if this negligence in using dialects or the "language of ignorance" continues in the media, it will lead to a disaster for the Arab nation and the human mind, no less than the disaster of poverty and poor living conditions (al-Aqqad, 2013, p. 50). It will inevitably also lead to "a decline in the level of reception and in the level of generations that are separated by the use of dialects by radio stations from their national Arabic sense, which should be rooted and developed" (Farouk, p. 144).

Thus, it is inevitable and unsurprising that the media commit grave dangers to the Arabic language, posing a risk to its continued proper use and reception. This danger lies in the

poor, unthoughtful choice, based on favoritism by those in charge of the media, of individuals and employees who have gradually distanced themselves from the sources of the Arabic language, which they were supposed to have learned the rules and foundations of in schools and universities. Sadly, after graduation, they fell into the trap of dialects and found themselves under the pressure of its logic contrary to Fusha (classical Arabic). Abu al-Qasim Saadallah, one of those passionate about the language of Heaven, describes the situation of the Arabic language in Algeria, when we neglected it and favored French over it starting in the third year of primary school, and when we eliminated Arabic writing in many official locations. Moreover, our first national radio station, dedicated to the Arabic language, began addressing its audience in various dialects, with most of its presenters falling into the use of dialects when speaking (Salah, 2006, p. 17).

He then asks: Is this how the first national radio station in Algeria, which prides itself on its reputation and believes in the role of media and conveying ideas through speech, should be? And what language is this that does not respect itself, its language, and its audience (Salah, 2006, p. 21)?

This distressing view of the state of the media in Algeria is justified, for undoubtedly, the more dialect is used, the more it fosters ignorance among society members. As the reality of consciousness dwindles and the number of people carrying national responsibility decreases, the tools of demolition grow stronger and more daring in destruction and alienation.

The reality of the Arabic language in media outlets and the spread of linguistic errors, colloquialisms, and foreign influences have negative impacts on the mother tongue. Among the most significant of these impacts are the corruption of individual taste and the infiltration of weakness and excess into the language of the educated, as they are influenced by what they hear and see, imitating incorrect pronunciation and poor performance. As a result, bad habits are acquired that are difficult to refine, and thus, the function of Classical Arabic, which is considered an effective tool in individual and societal life, is impaired (Khulufi, 2011, p. 90).

We are not exercising control over the media, nor are we unfairly accusing it of being the sole cause of the spread of colloquialisms. Instead, there are several outlets that have facilitated their spread, including the dangerous factor that contributed to the isolation of Classical Arabic: the use of dialects or a low level of Classical Arabic by those involved in teaching in schools up to the end of high school. The matter is even more serious and continually worsening when we see and hear about university professors, specialists in their fields, resorting to the use of colloquial language in many faculties, including those of Arts. This is not an exaggeration or slander, as we do not deny the presence of

competent professors who respect Classical Arabic before themselves and adhere to it in their lectures. If this is the state of degradation in disrespecting the Arabic language among members of the Faculties of Arts, God knows what the situation is like in other faculties and institutes.

As language scholars say, the corruption of language is an entrance to the usurpation of identity, weakening national character, and its purpose is to force individuals and groups to dissolve into the foreign culture that invades the tongue. From here, weakness begins to seep into the fabric of society, as with the loss of the language's status and its loss of position, the elements of the national entity and national consciousness weaken. Therefore, it is essential to restore Arabic to its former glory, the era in which it was regarded as the language of intellectual, spiritual, and civilizational communication, and the sanctity that was bestowed upon it "as it was once a condition for religious diligence... today, it is a condition for national existence. It and the Islamic Arab history, with its dominant spiritual character, are one; it has merged into this history and become the secret of its secrets, and it has merged into it, becoming a present that transcends the barriers of time just as the Arabic language itself does" (Al-Jabri, 1995, p. 109).

Therefore, the urgency is greater than ever to care for the language's reform, to strive to correct speech, and to endear the mother tongue to the youth by drawing them to it. This is what some media outlets have begun to practice, not just as media tools, but "as primarily cultural tools no less dangerous than the book and the newspaper... and with the necessity of fulfilling their duty and their mission in spreading literature and equally in its creation" (Farouk, p. 144).

The hybridity and chaff that we see in our language can only be eliminated by searching for the roots of the existing problem, which can only be achieved through "reforming the educational system, which is one of the pillars of the modern comprehensive renaissance" (Belaid, 2002, p. 138); and this reform must be accompanied by a zeal for Arabic, like that zeal which God instilled in the old language scholars, may God have mercy on them.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, if we wish to limit the blatant violation of the sanctity of our Arabic language in all fields and at all levels, and also to rescue it from the incorrect pronunciation that has become attached to the tongues of those holding high positions in the country, this depends on the efforts exerted by its people who are entrusted with it to address the situation and to reform what requires reform. This can be achieved through relying on sound educational curricula, and the situation must be addressed with collective will and bold political decisions that are binding for everyone who deals with the Arabic language at any level. Decision-makers must also have zealous visions that

prioritize the promotion of the Arabic language. The state should adopt a clear educational language policy that considers the importance of generalizing education in Arabic and does not hesitate in Arabizing education at all educational levels, especially at the university level. This could yield individuals who are zealous about the Arabic language and possess the linguistic fluency that Arabic language recipients aspire to. These are the ways through which the media can benefit, so that the language of its people becomes somewhat free from linguistic corruption.