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***Quran Schools as an Alternative Remedy for The Negative
Repercussions of Arabic Diglossia***

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Language
Studies(LS)*

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to:

My parents who constantly helped me;

my siblings;

*and my beloved nephews **Karim** and **Adam***

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Abstract

Diglossia characteristic of the Arabic language imposes serious issues on quality education and academic achievement, especially at the beginning of the learning career. This is primarily due to the fact that education is based on Standard Arabic which actually is not the real mother tongue, or at least the first language, of children. Therefore, the present work addresses this issue by considering learners (second grade) in primary schools of Algeria, as an instance of the diglossic community. The work examined the effects of early exposure to Standard Arabic. It therefore sought the (linguistic) role of Quran schools which receives children under the age of six. To this end, the work built on a linguistic comparison between learners of second grade in a classroom which counts learners with prior experience in Quran schools and others who have never enrolled in such institutions. The work based on a structured questionnaire designed for teachers in addition to classroom observation. As for the findings, elementary school teachers confirmed that young learners confront several linguistic challenges at the beginning of their school career. The findings also revealed significant linguistic differences among learners in the sense that learners who experienced Quran schools exposed developed linguistic abilities and a higher readiness to use/understand the language of instruction compared to their counterparts with no similar experience. Therefore, the great majority of teachers acknowledged the advantages that are gained from early acquaintance with Standard Arabic. Teachers confirmed that Quran schools play a chief role in the preparation of the child linguistically but also psychologically and socially.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CA: Classical Arabic

DA : Dialectal Arabic

H : High

L : Low

MCQ: Multiple Choice Questions

MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

SA: Standard Arabic

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Studies on the linguistic situation in the Arabic-speaking countries, including Algeria, denote the linguistic duality which characterizes the Arabic language. This diglossic situation has always attracted the attention of linguists but also educators. In fact, low academic attainment and high illiteracy rates throughout the Arab World have been (partly) attributed to diglossia.

This issue has triggered the researcher's interest to investigate how diglossia impacts education and how to overcome this question. The end is then to spot the main difficulties confronted by beginning school learners. However, the major objective is to look for the benefits of an early exposure to Standard Arabic (language of instruction), i.e., before school age. To reach this end, the researcher is interested in investigating the role of Quran schools from a linguistic perspective. In other words, the researcher aims at showing whether Quran schools have an influential role in the linguistic preparation of children or not, especially that such schools are places where young children meet Standard Arabic at the age of three or four. To meet the above-stated objectives, two research questions have been formulated, as sketched below:

1. How does diglossia characteristic of the Arabic language negatively impact young children's academic attainment?
2. Being institutions where young children meet Standard Arabic at an early age, do Quran schools rationalize the diglossic issue?

We hypothesize the following:

1. Young children, especially at initial stages like first and second grades, face substantial challenges with the use of Standard Arabic. These difficulties mainly relate to lexical items and grammatical structures, which are largely different from their home language.
2. Quran schools are aid-pedagogical with a prime linguistic importance.

As for the organization of this work, three chapters form the work. The first chapter revolves around the relevant literature about diglossia. It explains the

phenomenon of diglossia. Then, it provides a general overview on Arabic diglossia. The major part concerns the negative repercussions of diglossia on education.

Chapter two addresses the overall methodological guidelines followed in the conduction of this work. It mentions the type of research design, sample population, research setting and the research instruments used for data collection.

The last chapter includes the analysis and discussion of the main findings. It provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis. This chapter is meant to answer the research questions raised above, and to validate, or nullify, the associated hypotheses that have been suggested. Within the same chapter, a number of recommendations are proposed with aim of rationalizing the diglossic effects on learning achievement.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Diglossia defined

1.2.1 Fishman's Elaboration of Diglossia

1.3 Diglossia in the Arab World

1.3.1 Varieties of Arabic

1.3.1.1 Classical Arabic

1.3.1.2 Modern Standard Arabic

1.3.1.3 Dialectal Arabic

1.3.2 Arabic Diglossia

1.3.3 Arabic Diglossia's Implications on Quality Education

1.4 Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

Language contact and its various related phenomena are of high concern in the field of sociolinguistics. One of the key phenomena that have attracted linguists' attention is the sociolinguistic condition known as diglossia. Accordingly, the current chapter discusses the issue of diglossia in general, and diglossia characteristics of the Arabic language in particular. A core concern of the chapter is to highlight relationship between diglossia and education, i.e., academic achievements of learners in diglossic communities.

1.2 Diglossia defined

Diglossia is one of the central topics in sociolinguistics. The French linguist William Marçais (1930) used the term with reference to the Arabic language arguing that diglossia describes a situation characterized concurrence between a literary linguistic variety (generally written) and a vernacular which most often has no other than an oral tradition¹. Although it was Marçais who first introduced the concept of diglossia, such a sociolinguistic condition gained generally currency after its appearance in Ferguson's (1959) eminent article entitled 'diglossia' in the journal *Word*. Since then, diglossia has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Ferguson uses the term to refer to a situation where two varieties of a language are used throughout a speech community "with each having a definite role to play" (Ferguson, 1972:232). Such varieties are "linguistically related to but significantly different from" one another (Trudgill, 1992, 27). Wardghaugh (2006), Modelling on Ferguson, argues that "a diglossic situation exists in a society when it has two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is, one code is employed in one set of circumstances, and the other in an entirely different set" (p. 89). Likewise, Hudson (1996:49) reports that "one [variety] is used only on formal and public occasions while the other is used by *everybody* under normal, everyday

¹ Marçais (1930: page) originally stated this : "la concurrence entre une langue savante écrite, et une langue vulgaire parfois exclusivement parlée"

circumstances. The two varieties are normally called ‘High’ and ‘Low’, or ‘standard’ and ‘vernacular’” (italics in the original).

Ferguson approaches diglossia on the basis of four speech communities: Greece, the Arab World, Haiti, and German-speaking Switzerland. In all such cases, Ferguson identifies a high (H) variety and a low one. He explains the differences with regard to nine rubrics, as discussed below:

- *Function:*

What can be captured in most definitions of diglossia, including the ones sketched above, is that “the most important hallmark of diglossia is the functional specialization of H and L. In one set of situations, only H is appropriate, while in another, only L.” (Romaine, 1989:31). In this respect, “where sharp differences in form and function exist between formal and informal style, we speak of Diglossia.” (W. Bright, 1964:12). It goes without mentioning that H is associated with formal contexts, whereas L fits informal settings.

- *Prestige*

Generally speaking, “H” is held in high esteem by its users, whereas “L” is deemed to be less prestigious, being often regarded as a deviation from the norm.

- *Literary heritage:*

In most diglossic languages, most of the literature is associated with the H variety. Literature in L may at best relate to folk literature.

- *Acquisition:*

The L variety is considered as the mother tongue of speakers as it is naturally acquired at home since childhood.

- *Standardization:*

An H variety is generally a standard language. This translates that H has grammar books and a dictionary. L is rarely standard.

- *Stability:*

The high variety is generally more stable because of its association with writing and education, while the L variety is more subject to variation and change.

- *Grammar:*

H grammar is often more complex compared to L grammar

- *Lexicon:*

In general, the H variety tends to have a rich dictionary. L lexicon is often less and many times draws from H vocabulary to fill in lexical gaps.

- *Phonology:*

The high variety has a preserved and organized phonological system. The phonemic system of the L variety might contain elements that are of a foreign origin, such as /P/and /v/ in some dialects of Arabic.

1.2.1 Fishman's Elaboration of Diglossia

By 1967, Fishman refined Ferguson's theoretical notion of diglossia arguing that the phenomenon can also cover situations where the "H" and "L" varieties are not necessarily genetically related, and are used for different functions. Fishman termed such further reformulation 'extended' diglossia. As an illustration, Fishman (1967) mentions Paraguay as a case in point where Spanish and Guarani (genetically unrelated language varieties) fulfill different functions throughout the community. Spanish, being the "H" variety, is used in education, administration, government, and religious purposes. Guarani, the "L" variety, serves the daily communication tasks.

In his reformulation of the concept of diglossia, Fishman draws a boundary between diglossia and bilingualism. Doing so, Fishman stresses the point that the former characterizes the societal level (a matter of sociologists and sociolinguists), whereas the latter is analyzed at the individual level (a matter of psychologists and psycholinguists).

The point that should be emphasized is that both Ferguson's formulation and Fishman's extension of the notion of diglossia firmly stress the complementary distribution of the two existing codes. In other words, the rubric of 'function' remains the cornerstone of diglossia. In what follows, we describe diglossia in the Arab World taking account of Algeria as a representative case.

1.3 Diglossia in the Arab World

The Arab World is one instance in Ferguson's (1959) discussion of diglossia. Indeed, a closer look at the linguistic situation in the Arabic-speaking countries supports Ferguson's theory in the sense that two distinct varieties of Arabic exist side by side; each is kept for a specific function. However, before reviewing diglossia in the Arab World, it is worth mentioning the varieties of Arabic.

1.3.1 Varieties of Arabic

It is a fact that native speakers of Arabic are only aware of the existence of two varieties of their language; this is not the case for many linguists who generally acknowledge the existence of a continuum of varieties. However, the recognition of more than two varieties is still a matter of debate among the linguists. In what ensues, we consider three variants, namely Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic.

1.3.1.1 Classical Arabic

Classical Arabic (hereafter CA), also known as Quranic Arabic, is the language used in the Quran as well as in numerous old literary texts such as poetry. In spite of its strict association with the Quran, this variety existed well before the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Quran. In this regard, Aramouni (2011) stated that the Quran, unlike other holy books, has a strong influence in maintaining the power of Arabic and preserving it from change and variation. In the same line of thought, AlBzour (2015) continues to defend the strength of CA by stating that “Arabic is by no means rivaled by any language because it is the language of Islam” (p.9). Such a solid liaison with Islam marked the durability of this variety in the sense that it has been considered as the source language which inspired and guided the old classical grammarians (e.g. Abu Al-Aswad Al-Du’ali, Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad Al-Farahidi, etc.) to establish the rules of Arabic grammar. Undoubtedly, CA occupies the H variety and it certainly enjoys a high status among its speakers because of its tight connection with the Quran.

1.3.1.2 Modern Standard Arabic

Modern standard Arabic (hereafter MSA) is a formal variety of Arabic, characterized mainly with simplification compared to Classical Arabic. Ryding (2005), for instance, observes that MSA has replaced CA. Ryding (ibid) adds that both CA and MSA are two sides of the same register ‘Standard form’, and most of the differences are in terms of lexical items and some stylistic features. For Bassiouney (2009), among other writers, the distinction CA vs. MSA is a ‘western invention’ and has no trace in the Arabic literature, which makes it of a questionable validity indeed.

1.3.1.3 Dialectal Arabic

The term ‘dialect’ shares a low status, and is often stigmatized by speakers in any speech community. In Arabic, the term encompasses the set of the existing regional dialects spread throughout the Arabic-speaking countries. In fact, there exist

a huge number of regional dialects which are slightly/largely dissimilar from one another. In this regard, Youssi (1992), when discussing the concept of mutual intelligibility², states that the more geographical distance increases, the greater linguistic differences between dialects will become.

In fact many linguists, including Ferguson (1959), consider another variety which they call the intermediate or middle variety which draws from both H and L varieties of Arabic. Ferguson (1996:59) states:

I recognized the existence of intermediate forms and mentioned them briefly in the article, but I felt then and still feel that in the diglossia case the analyst finds two poles in terms of which the intermediate varieties can be described, there is no third pole

1.3.2 Arabic Diglossia

In his influential framework of 1959, Ferguson explains the concept of diglossia with reference to four speech communities. The Arab World constitutes one of the key communities on which Ferguson built his conceptualization of this sociolinguistic phenomenon. It is obvious that the linguistic duality of having a formal written language and an everyday spoken form in almost every Arab country is no longer a moot point (Bassiouney, 2009). Although some researchers have tried to trace it back, the linguistic fragmentation between the H and L varieties of Arabic is still a matter of debate. Alshamrani (2011:59), for instance, points out that “Arabic diglossia seems to have existed in Arab communities for more than fourteen centuries”, and continues to prove that “the most characterizing feature of Arabic is the existence of diglossia” (ibid).

² Trudgill (1974) defines mutual intelligibility as the degree of linguistic intelligibility between speakers using two dialects or more of the same language. It is used as a linguistic criterion to distinguish between ‘dialect’ and ‘language’.

As a starting point, it is necessary to provide a brief discussion of diglossia characteristics of the Arabic language. Standard Arabic stands for H, whereas Colloquial Arabic has the status and functions of L. In fact, SA is restricted to literacy and literary purposes. However, speakers tend to use the dialectal form on a daily basis. Diglossic switching between the two varieties is a common behaviour especially in (semi-) formal situations where the speakers might use colloquial words and expressions from time to time. This implies that the two varieties are not in a perfect complementary distribution as an overlap is often noticed.

Like the situation in most other diglossic communities, SA (as an instance of the H variety) is prestigious and enjoys a high esteem among its users. In fact, it is felt as a ‘revered’ language due to its direct association with religious texts, especially the Quran. Although it is variety mostly used, Colloquial Arabic remains a stigmatized variety. This is a societal judgment, however.

Moreover, central to our research is the acquisition of both varieties. SA is most often a learned variety, i.e., it is a variety generally accessible through (any type of) schooling. On the contrary, Colloquial Arabic is the mother tongue which is naturally acquired since babyhood. Such state of affairs, besides the linguistic distance between the two varieties, is worth considering from a pedagogical standpoint, as discussed below.

1.3.3 Arabic Diglossia’s Implications on Quality Education

Many researchers have discussed the impact of SA use as a medium of instruction with young learners. Their conclusions have always shown the negative aspects of the confrontation with SA in school, especially at the beginning of the education career. Their findings also revealed that the main reason which is responsible for this issue is mainly the mismatch between Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic.

Therefore, it is agreed on that the schoolchild who is raised in a diglossic community meets a variety which is significantly different from his daily language, as it is noticed in the Arab region. The mismatch between Spoken and Vernacular Arabic is at all levels: lexical, morphosyntactic and even semantic. This raises new challenges for young children as far as they are required to learn the new variety in order to cope with the different subjects of instruction. Abdulaziz (1986:21), among many other researchers, support such a view by reporting that “the gap between the colloquial forms; which are the true mother tongues of the speakers; and MSA causes many problems to educationalists and writers”.

Ayari (1996), for instance, attributes the high rates of illiteracy in the Arab world to diglossia. Ayari lists a number of headlines which, according to him, are responsible for the low results of Arab students due to their diglossic environment. Firstly, the variance between the two forms of Arabic is motivated by the effect of the colonial languages, namely English and French which dominated the Arabic-speaking countries for a long time. Now, due to such historical events, the linguistic structure of the Standard and its associated regional dialects are noticeably different from one another at all linguistic levels³.

Secondly, Freeman (1996) claims that Arab students share the same level of difficulty when they come to perform writing in the English language, attributing this to the absence of the required writing skills in their native language, Arabic.

As a matter of fact, Cote (2009) criticizes the language planning policy of the Arab world for its inability to choose and implement one unified language. Cote (ibid) reports the demand of many educators (e.g. Chejne, 1965) for replacing SA by the vernacular as a medium of instruction if the target is reducing the linguistic challenges encountering Arab children. The basis for this is that the vernacular is the true mother tongue of Arab children, and for this reason the introduction of the mother tongue as a primary medium of teaching is highly recommended to

³Freeman (1996) points out that dialects of Arab countries share a considerable amount of mutual intelligibility, with the exclusion of the ‘Maghrebi’ dialects once they are used outside the ‘Maghreb’ region.

minimize the diglossic issue. However, promoting the vernacular in education spheres generates a lot of disagreement.

Horn (2015) draws a comparison between the Arab and English children. Horn highlights that the English child's exposure to his mother tongue permits him to acquire a variety which is similar to a great extent to the school's language, whereas the Arab child faces substantial obstacles as soon as he begins schooling because of the significant gap between his mother tongue and the language of instruction.

Ayari (1996) puts the blame on parents when explaining the parents' attitudes towards SA use in the following points:

1. Parents' non-mastery of SA: in some families where parents themselves are not equipped with the necessary skills of SA, children find no opportunity to get any kind of familiarity with and exposure to SA.

2. Parents' lack of awareness: a considerable number of Arab parents share the negative impression towards SA, thinking that it would be too difficult and perhaps not possible for children at a very young age to understand and cope with the intricate system of the Arabic language. Indeed, by holding this misconception, they seem quite underestimating their children's highly-developed mental capacities by convincing themselves that it would be more beneficial to translate stories and written texts from SA to DA for more simplicity and enjoyment (Ayari, 1996)

In addition to the duty of Arab parents in enhancing their children's acquisition and mastery of Standard Arabic, the role played by school Arabic teachers especially in primary levels shouldn't be neglected. In reality, although SA is normally the language of instruction which is supported by ministerial correspondences, this is not always a valid case. The classroom teachers remain strong actors in the scene. Abdulaziz (1986: 21) is clear about this situation arguing that:

Although it is assumed that in the education system only the standard form would be used; the fact is that it is used only for writing; the language of instruction in schools or university lectures is the colloquial in its various forms; students are therefore faced with the problems of receiving their instruction in one form and reading and writing in the other. Until a consensus can be reached regarding the validity of the vernaculars as worthy of being used as languages of instruction, little progress will be made.

However, despite the significant divergence between them, one should confidently claim that there is still, to a greater extent, a space of mutual comprehensibility between Standard Arabic and its various colloquial varieties. Also, acquaintance with SA is not always absent before school age. In many ways, Arab children are exposed to SA, either through mass media (TV, radio, internet, etc) or other means like kindergartens and Quran schools. As such, children in a way or another have an extent of familiarity with the Standard form before joining the school. Such familiarity is in fact dependent on a variety of factors, not least the upbringing environment of the child. In the following section, we mention the repercussions of Arabic diglossia on the education of Arab learners.

Turki (2014) makes the point that the negative repercussions of diglossia are primarily responsible for delaying progress in education. Furthermore, this duality of Arabic causes troubles even to foreigners. In a study conducted in the US, Palmer (2011) mentions the challenges faced by American students who still confuse which form and which dialects should be taught/studied in American institutions. Palmer proposes simultaneously teaching of the two varieties (but as separate entities) to raise American learners' awareness of the linguistic reality in the Arab countries.

The negative education consequences of diglossia have urged educationalists and linguists to put forward remedial suggestions that might reduce the impact on quality education. Dendane (2013), for example, suggests a gradual preparation of the child to acquire a version of Arabic recognized as 'middle' or 'intermediate' a

variety which draws from the dialect and the Standard but which considerably resembles the Standard norm.

The point which should be stressed is that though SA is mostly restricted to formal use, it is not an alien variety. In fact, the idea of a total divergence between SA and DA is not valid. Djennane (2016:85) argues that “overestimating the ‘foreignness’ of SA would be unfair”, since “many illiterate people come to the mosque to attend the Friday sermon and can readily understand the language used” (Alshamrani, 2011:59). Again, we cannot generalize the idea that young children have no familiarity with SA before the school age. Kindergartens, mass media and even family (parents and siblings) are linguistic aids which, to varying degrees, supply children with an exposure to SA.

1.4 Conclusion

The current chapter exposed the necessary background knowledge related to this research work through the discussion of the sociolinguistic phenomenon of diglossia, then stating briefly the different varieties of Arabic, with some focus on Algeria. Evidently, the major concern was to provide a general picture about how diglossia influences quality education with reference to Arab learners’ educational progress.

Chapter Two

Setting the Methodology Framework

2.1 Introduction

2.2 The Purpose of the Research

2.3 The Research Questions and Hypotheses

2.4 The Site of Research

2.5 The Research Design and Instrumentation

2.6 Data Collection Tools

2.6.1 The Questionnaire

2.6.2 Classroom Observation

2.7 The Sampling Population

2.7.1 Questionnaire Sampling

2.7.2 Observation Sampling

2.8 Types of Data

2.8.1 Quantitative Data

2.8.2 Qualitative Data

2.9 Ethical Considerations

2.10 Conclusion

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter summarizes the overall methodological guidelines followed in the practical realization of the study at hand, by providing a general account and description of the research setting, the sample population covered in the investigation, a characterization of the research design, as well as a thorough elucidation of the research instruments used for data collection, analysis and interpretation. For best credibility, a justification of each choice concerning the various steps and procedures used is present.

2.2 The Purpose of the Research

Any research paper should possess a set of academic characteristics in order to best contribute to the existing knowledge of a specific topic or area of interest. A good qualified research work should take account of both aspects of knowledge: the theoretical and practical. Fred and Perry (2008), in this regard, claim that the biggest responsibility for any researcher is to establish and focus the tight bond between the knowledge being explored, and the application of that knowledge into practice. In other words, the essence of a good research approach is to bring together the already acquired theoretical notions, principles, assumptions and ideas plus the application of these in real life situations (ibid). This implies the fact that the two are substantial components responsible for the success of any research achievement, as this principle is applicable to all educational domains and scientific streams, not least in language teaching. In fact, teaching is a complex activity which includes complicated tasks that can be achieved through successive steps. In doing so, language teachers should be fully aware of the tight connection between **theory** and **action**, strongly believing that the former represents an impetus for researchers behind their performance of any **action** (ibid). Griffiee (2012:07) summarizes this fact by stating that “every action we do has a rationale [...] What we do is dependent on what we know”, and this translates that it would be senseless to separate what we have in our brains and what we intend to do, since this intention is no more the result of our reflections upon our ideas and assumptions. It goes

without mentioning that the most gifted teachers play at the same time the role of active researchers, and this verity is eventually reached from their over-thinking and deep reasoning on how to facilitate the learning process for their learners.

According to Dörnyei (2007), the effectiveness or value of ‘doing research’ or ‘being researchers’ can be epitomized in the following three ends:

1. Proficient researchers always put into question their own methods and ways of transmitting information to their learners, and only through systematic research that their inquiries might be either validated or nullified.

2. Engaging in research activities will ultimately divert any teacher from the state of being inadequate (or at least having this sensation) to someone active and more functional in his job environment. In that sense, research is being considered as the cornerstone capable of determining the quality of any instructor being good or not, as it agitates passive instructors to work on themselves for the end of reaching out the duties they are in charge of as professionals.

3. The intrinsic inducement behind any research work is the prevailing savor of repeat in any educational method or system, and the need for renovation in these classes. This fact arouses teachers to think of solutions to their problems and turn their interests into novel directions of recognition and comprehension, and this set of requirements can be rightly fulfilled only via ‘research’.

The choice of any research topic is obviously conditioned by the kind of concern of the researcher, and hence the research question(s) is raised as a consequence of this concern. According to Biggam (2008), the outline of any research paper turns basically around providing two answers for two research questions which are:

1. What is the problem or the question of this research?
2. How can this problem be solved, or this question be answered?

The former covers the stated research questions; the latter deals with the research design and instrumentation.

2.3 The Research Questions and Hypotheses

The current study deals with the sociolinguistic condition of diglossia from a purely academic viewpoint. Our concern is to investigate the impact of diglossia on quality education taking Algeria as a case in point. The study builds on two research questions, listed below:

3. How does diglossia characteristic of the Arabic language negatively impact young children's academic attainment?
4. Being institutions where young children meet Standard Arabic at an early age, do Quran schools rationalize the diglossic issue?

Building on the above mentioned questions, we hypothesize what follows:

3. Young children, especially at initial stages like first and second grades, face substantial challenges with the use of SA. These difficulties mainly relate lexical items and grammatical structures, which are largely different from their home language.
4. Quran schools are important linguistic support institutions as they allow young children to meet Standard Arabic at an earlier age through reciting verses and learning basic Islamic principles which are delivered through the standard norm.

2.4 The Site of Research

The present research questions the negative effects of Arabic diglossia in Algeria, and focuses more precisely on the influence of this language duality upon the academic results of young learners. For this purpose, the field-based investigation took place in a primary school located in Maghnia, an Algerian town in the western borders with Morocco in the department of Tlemcen. The choice of the school was motivated by the fact that it receives many young learners who have

received early education in Quran schools before enrollment in official schooling at the age of six.

From a pure linguistic standpoint, the researcher suggests that the role of the Quran schools is substantial as they can be seen as ‘aid-institutions’ which *linguistically* prepare young learners and make them meet SA at an earlier age. The study holds a kind of comparative vision between two groups of learners which are:

1. Learners who have enrolled in Quran schools before the age of six.

This category is also divided into two sub-groups:

- a. Learners who still attend Quran classes.
- b. Learners who abandoned such classes as they started formal schooling.

2. Learners who have not had the opportunity to enter such kind of schools neither before nor after the enrollment in formal schooling.

2.5 The Research Design and Instrumentation

The research design contains a number of tricks, strategies, techniques or instructions useful for data collection, analysis and interpretation. It offers a model to orient the researcher to reach out the conclusive findings and discover credible answers for the research project queries. The literature generally compares the design to a blueprint in the building of a house. In this respect, Fred and Perry (2008:71) observe that “just like a poorly designed blueprint, which results in a house full of problems or possible collapse, a poorly designed research study produces results containing many flaws and, consequently, little practical use.”

The current study was carried out by means of a case study that is frequently adopted to illustrate a more general principle. The case study helps provide a holistic description of the studied subject as it also enables the researcher to describe, explain and explore the problematic issue. In our research, the subjects are young learners who have been systematically examined for the aim of either validating or repealing the proposed hypotheses put forward earlier in the general

introduction. However, this end cannot be fully achieved without the aid of some instruments to collect and gather the required data from the participants.

In fact, several types of data collection tools have been introduced to serve researchers fulfilling and finalizing their works, including questionnaires, interviews, tests, observation, diaries to name but a few. The work at hand made use of two instruments, namely questionnaire, which was administered to elementary school teachers, and classroom observation, which concerned itself with learners. An explicit description of the two processes is provided in the coming subsections.

2.6 Data Collection Tools

The effective completion of any academic research work cannot be done without the data. Walliman (2011:65) claims that” Data is another word for bits of information (singular-datum). Research uses data as the raw material in order to come to conclusions about some issues. It depends on the issue being investigated what data needs to be collected”.

Consequently, in order to collect the data necessary for the achievement of any scientific research, a number of tools and instruments have been proposed. The present study built on a questionnaire and classroom observation.

2.6.1 The Questionnaire

The core of any scientific research is the attempt to find out answers to specific inquiries in a systematic way. For their ability to achieve such a goal in a direct and methodical manner, questionnaires are widely and frequently used in researches. Questionnaires are a kind of instrumental procedures and they are characterized by their capacity to come up with numerical and usable data. Meyerhoff et al. (2015) offer a set of requirements that questionnaires can accomplish during the conduct of a research work. In this respect, they state that questionnaires have the ability to “produce highly reliable data if used appropriately

and they may be especially good for accessing information on linguistic behaviour that is difficult to observe or record” (2015:71)

In the present research, the questionnaire was distributed on twenty (20) teachers working in different primary schools provided that they have an experience with teaching second grade classes. The questionnaire was composed in Standard Arabic, as it is the language which is intelligible to the informants.

As for the design, the questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section revolves around the teachers’ bio data, including their professional experience in general, and their experience in teaching second grade classes. The second section aims at gathering information about the linguistic variety which the teachers use extensively with their learners. It also addresses teachers’ beliefs about the role of the Quran schools in preparing young learners linguistically. In fact, the questionnaire was designed in a way which renders quantitative and qualitative data. Accordingly, different types of questions were used, as explained below:

1. **Yes/no questions:** this type of questions is frequently used in the designing of questionnaires as it practically helps the researcher to obtain the required information from the participants. Such questions are easy to code. As far as our questionnaire is concerned, only one question calls for a yes or no answer (question N-9)

2. **Multiple choice questions:** our questionnaire is largely made up of such a type of questions (12 questions). Among the advantages of MCQ is that it does not call for a higher cognitive load on the part of the informants as they are given a variety of options to choose among them what best reflects their opinion. The informants are also limited to a range of choices which makes it easier for the researcher to analyze the data.

3. **Open questions:** such questions offer the informants more freedom and opportunity to express their attitudes and opinions. This is its blessing and its curse as a lot of information may surface. Our questionnaire includes three questions of such a type.

2.6.2 Classroom Observation

In addition to the various types of research instruments that are devoted for data collection purposes, observation remains, according to Wragg and Wragg (1998), a very useful tool as it offers the researcher the opportunity to gather reliable and live data from real-life situations. In fact, “direct observation of classroom phenomena allows the researcher to see at first hand what is happening” (Wragg and Wragg, 1998:05). Observation enables the researcher to gather data on a variety of settings including physical environments and interactional settings. Indeed, Sapsford and Jupp (2006) claim that classroom observation is beneficial not only in gathering reliable and accurate data because it allows the researcher to watch the learner’s as well as teacher’s behaviours in a natural and spontaneous setting, but it also typically limits the researcher’s ability of engagement in the informants’ motivations for their attitudes and actions .

Depending on various types of dimensions, different types of observations have been identified. The fundamental classification is participant and non-participants observation. This category takes account of the degree of the involvement of the observer. While participant observation denotes, as the name implies, a strong and active presence in the operation, non-participant observation calls for no direct involvement of the observer. In the current study, non-participant observation was favored because of the advantages it renders, especially that it does not contaminate the observed subjects’ behaviour. The process also built on *structured* observation. This translates that the observer relied on an observation protocol, containing the precise points necessary for observation.

In fact, the goal of observation in this research was to watch learners’ linguistic behaviour inside the classroom, especially their verbal interaction with their teacher and their peers as well. Furthermore, focus was on their use of SA and their reaction when they are questioned in SA and/or required to use it. The aim was also to examine the extent to which learners switch to Dialectal Arabic.

As it was already stated, the current study revolves around suggesting the role of Quran schools to promote the acquisition of SA among young learners. To this end, the observation process targeted a 2nd grade classroom composed of 37 learners. Observation was meant to compare the linguistic abilities of learners who have/are enrolled in Quran schools before starting their official education (12 learners) and the other learners who have never studied in such schools (25 learners). The degree of understanding, mastery or difficulty in using Standard Arabic by learners of the two categories was the first priority for the observer.

Besides learners, the teacher (only one teacher) was also subject to observation. The objective was to watch his linguistic behaviour with his learners. Examining the strategies he uses to minimize the linguistic barrier, or at least SA effects, was of paramount importance. In a nutshell, the purpose out of observing the teacher was to form an image about the nature of the medium of instruction, whether it is SA, DA or a mixture of the two varieties.

The observation protocol which was used is sketched below. Section one comprises two checklists designed for both categories of learners. Section two concerned the teacher under observation.

Lastly, we should note that the permission to conduct this classroom observation could be met on the part of both the headmaster of the primary school and the teacher.

Table 2.1 Learners and Teachers' Linguistic behavior

Section 01:

A.

	Language choice	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Greeting the teacher.	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
2. Asking questions	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
3. Responding to the teacher's questions	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					

B.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
4. Learners code-switch/code-mix when interacting verbally with the teacher.					
5. Students' questions/answers are constituted of long strings in SA.					

Section 02:

Item	Not at all	To a great extent
6. SA is used by the teacher to a high extent.		
7. Orders and instructions are exclusively in SA		
8. Clarifying, re-explaining and simplifying the unclear content is done via SA.		
9. Only SA is accepted and tolerated by the teacher from the learner.		

2.7 The Sampling Population

The significance and utility of any research paper is basically determined and strongly evaluated by the ‘accurate’ specification of its sample. Thus, sampling is a key element in research process. It involves a thorough description of the individuals engaged in the study, and from whom the data is obtained. Alvi (2016), for example, defines a sample population as “a group of relatively smaller number of people selected from a population for investigation purpose (p.11).

Questions of sampling arise directly out of the issue of defining the target population on which the research will focus. Dörnyei (2007) mentions the difference between *sample* and *population* arguing that “the sample is a group of participants whom the research actually examines in an empirical investigation whereas the population is the group of people whom the study is about” (p.96). Among the remarkable issues that face researchers in the sampling process is what

strategy to use. Cohen et al. (2005:92) mention four key factors that any research must consider in their sampling:

1. The sample size.
2. The access to the sample.
3. Representativeness.
4. The sample strategy to be used.

The researcher has also to be attentive when thinking which one of the two basically offered sampling paradigms would be selected. As far as this study is concerned, we opted for the information-rich paradigm⁴ in the selection of the sample. The motive behind this is to take account of the quality of the information provided by the participants, and more importantly to offer the reader larger space of freedom to judge the value and worth of this work. To put it another way, the aim was not generalizability but rather transferability; this implies that the point is to provide a profound analysis of the information presented by the subjects, without necessarily aiming to generalize the findings.

As for the sampling methods, two major types are considered in scientific research: probability and non-probability sampling method. The former offers the opportunity for all members of the target population to be included in the investigation, while the latter only limits the scope of participation to some members. In our research, the subjects have been purposefully chosen for having specific characteristics which fit into the identified research questions and hypotheses of the work. In other words, the type of questionnaire and observation sampling is purposive sampling which is classified under the type of non-probability sampling. Of course, the selection of the participants is primarily based on the fundamental purpose of the research, the type of research design adopted and the methods of data gathering.

⁴ The other paradigm is called the representative sampling paradigm which focuses mainly on a sample that is representative of a large population. Unlike the preceding paradigm, its major attempt is to generalize the research findings.

2.7.1 Questionnaire Sampling

Firstly, the questionnaire was administered to teachers who have a previous experience in their professional career with teaching second grade learners. A total number of twenty (20) teachers, working in different primary schools in the town of Maghnia, have been covered. As for the return rate, all the questionnaires have been completed and almost all the questions were answered.

2.7.2 Observation Sampling

Classroom observation covered a classroom made up of thirty seven (37) second grade learners. The choice of the classroom was conditioned with the verity that it contains two categories of learners. The first category consists of twelve (12) learners who have previously undergone a type of religious teaching in Quran schools before joining the school. To the exclusion of two children, such learners still keep learning in Quran schools after school time. The other category comprises learners (25 children) who have no prior experience in Quran schools.

Having two categories of learners within the same classroom served the aim of the research. Here, a comparison was drawn between learners of each category, and a description of the linguistic abilities of the members of each category was the end point. Our observation targeted the linguistic behaviour of the young learners during classes, and how they verbally reacted to the teacher's instructions and explanation. As for the time, the observation sessions took place in the morning from 8:30 to 11:30. Observation was conducted a whole month, starting from the first week of March until the second week of April during the year 2017.

2.8 Types of Data

We need to specify whether the findings offer valid and appropriate answers to the research questions or not. However, before coming to this issue we need to identify in which way the data will be presented and analyzed, i.e., quantitatively and/or qualitatively.

2.8.1 Quantitative Data

It is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics. In this respect, Mackey and Gass (2005:02) state that “quantitative research generally starts with an experimental design in which a hypothesis is followed by the quantification of data and some sort of numerical analysis is carried out (e.g. a study comparing student test results before and after an instructional treatment)”.

2.8.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative studies, on the other hand, generally are not set up as experiments; the data cannot be easily quantified, and the analysis is interpretive rather than statistical. This type of data is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. In the same line of thought, Mack et al. (2005:01) state that “the strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue”.

The work at hand treats its data both verbally and numerically, i.e., by applying a mixed method approach of analysis in which the findings are going to be presented in the form of narrative descriptions and textual explanations in parallel with some statistical and graphic representations for better illustration. Numerical data (quantification) is obtained through structured items of the questionnaire. Unstructured questions as well as observation data provide more qualitative data. Table 2.1 summarizes the various steps and stages that a research work should undergo with reference, of course, to the present work:

Table 2.3 General Guidelines of the Research Methodology (adapted from Biggam, 2008)

Research Methodology	General Guidelines	The Current Study
1.Forepart	Research focus and the overall research aim and objectives.	Research questions and hypotheses.
2.Research design	Type of the research method implemented in the study plus a justification of the choice	Case study
3.Research instrumentation	Data collection tools used.	Questionnaire and classroom observation.
4. Data analysis and interpretation	How the data are going to be reported, analyzed and interpreted.	Mixed-method approach
5.Suggestions and future recommendations	Mentioning the significance of the present study, and opening the door for future research investigations.	

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations form a crucial part in any research work to the extent that dissertations and theses may be even destructed to failure if this part is missing. Ten, fundamental principles of ethics are most recognized in the field of social sciences. Among these principles, we cite the following points:

❖ Research participants should not be subjected to harm in any ways whatsoever. In this research, this element was automatically guaranteed as part of confidentiality.

❖ Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study. As far our research, informed consent elements (capacity, information and voluntariness) on the part of the participants, whether teachers or learners, were all

considered. Regarding capacity, the teacher is a competent subject being adult able to retain and evaluate information. As for learners, who were subject to observation, consent was met from the school administration and the classroom teacher. As far as information is concerned, it was the responsibility of the researcher to make the participants understand the purpose of the study, its procedures and its expected benefits with focus on the demands built upon them as informants. Because the participants should consent on a voluntary ground, no pressure was put on any informant.

❖ The protection of the privacy of the participants has to be ensured. In the present study, the type of data collected (biodata, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions) made ensuring privacy for the participants a first priority. For this end, the questionnaires of the present study were anonymous.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher offered a descriptive background of the essential methodological considerations used for the completion of this research paper. This part describes mainly the research design, the instruments employed for data collection and the sample used to find out rational answers to the pre-stated research questions and therefore support or deny the already proposed hypotheses. The next chapter will analyze the collected data and report the main research findings.

Chapter Three:

Data Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Data analysis

3.2.1 Teachers' Questionnaire Results

3.3 Discussion of the Questionnaire Findings

3.4 Analysis of the Observational Results

3.4.1 The Findings of Category 'A'

3.4.2 The Findings of Category 'B'

3.5 Discussion of Classroom Observation Results

3.6 Suggestions and recommendations

3.7 Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the general methodological standards that were exploited in the realization of this investigation. It introduced mainly the research design and data collection procedures, as it included a description of the research site and the target population. The current chapter will provide an account of the main findings venturing into the analysis, discussion and interpretation of the already reached data. The aim is to see the extent to which the results could afford reliable answers to the pre-stated research questions. Therefore, the researcher will ultimately be competent to decide about the validity of her suggested hypotheses.

3.2 Data analysis

Having collected the data through the two research instruments (teachers' questionnaire and classroom observation) is a step forward to analyze the findings qualitatively and quantitatively. Indeed, data analysis aims at organizing the findings and transferring them into usable and understandable information as well as showing the different possible relationships between the present results and variables. In what ensues, we will provide an account of the results obtained from each instrument separately.

3.2.1 Teachers' Questionnaire Results

As mentioned earlier, the informants are twenty elementary school teachers who have current/prior experience with second grade learners. The results of each of the questionnaire will be given enough space for analysis.

As a starting point, it was proved that the teachers participating in the present study have all worked with second grade classes. Of the twenty participants, nine teachers have an experience of less than five years while six others have already experienced teaching second grade for more than five years (five teachers did not give information about their professional experience).

Item One:

Teachers were required to give their opinion whether learners face linguistic difficulties at the beginning of their school career or not. None of the teachers denied the verity that learners are confronted with a linguistic issue. While 60% (or 12) of the informants claimed that learners only brazen out some kind of linguistic difficulty, 40% (or 8) others strongly supported this item. These results are schematized in figure 3.1, exposed below:

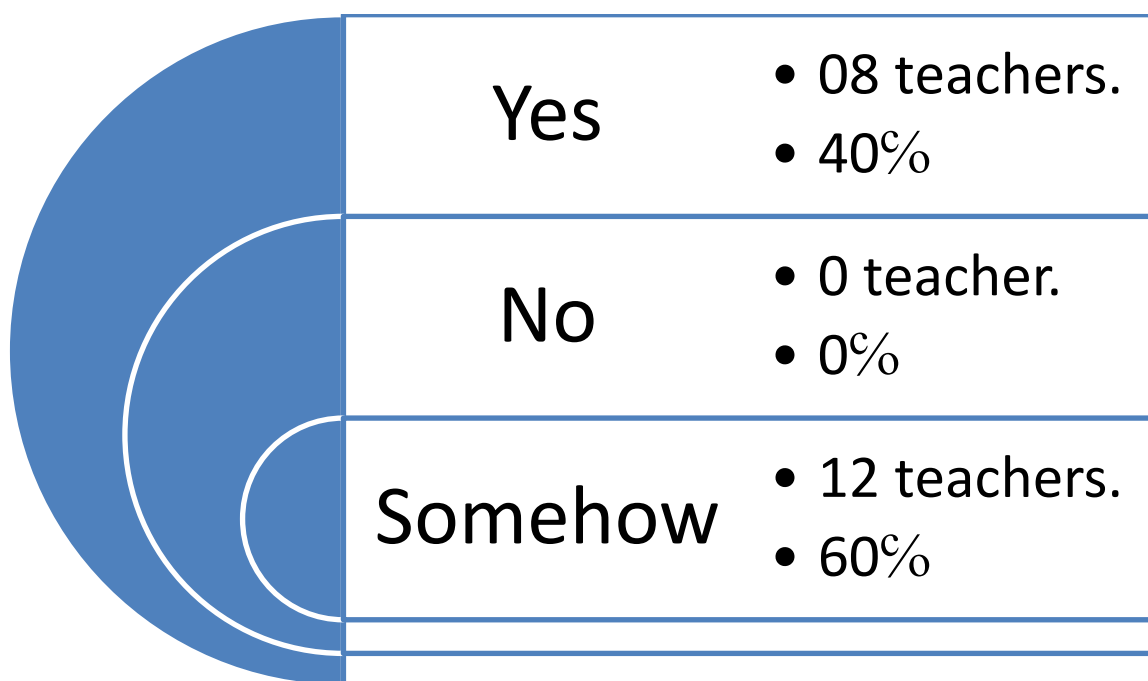


Figure 3.1 Linguistic Difficulties at Beginning School Years

Item two:

Clearly indicated above, this item is positively-worded stating revolving around the language used by the teacher to deliver lectures inside the classroom. Answers to such item were varied; they can in fact be arranged in a continuum. While 5 informants claimed that teaching is exclusively dispensed in SA, three others confirmed that they only sometimes use it. Between these edges, 12 teachers admitted that though SA is not solely used it largely remains the medium of instruction used for most of the time inside the classroom. The results are graphically displayed on figure 3.2:

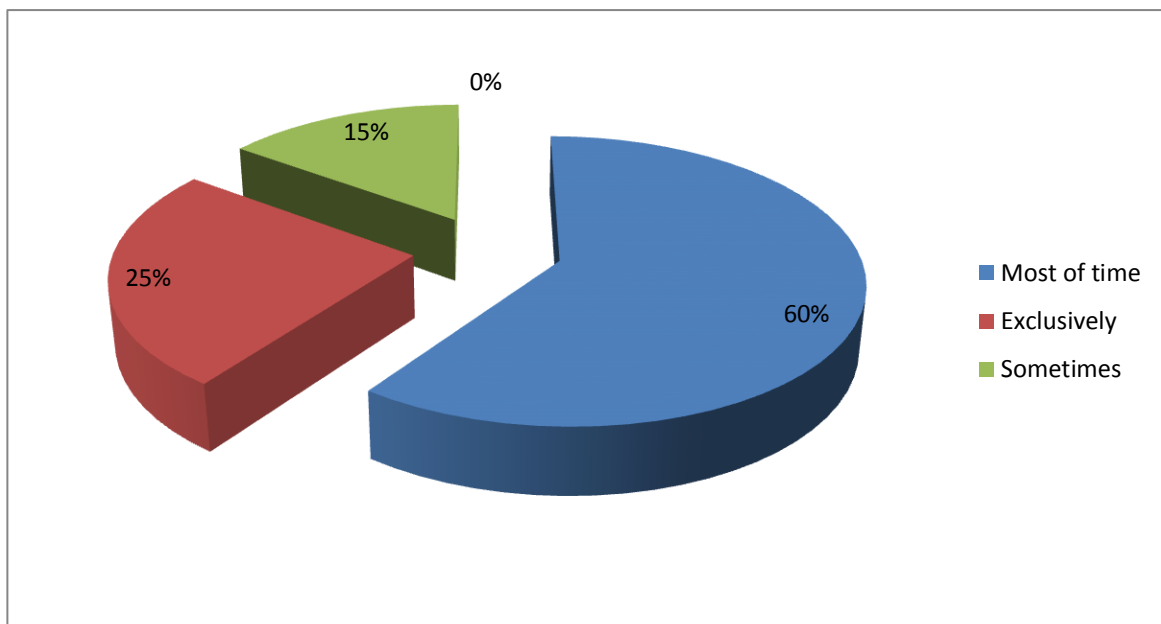


Figure 3.2 Teachers' Use of SA as a Medium of Instruction

Item three:

This item goes around the linguistic variety that the teacher resorts to in situations where he/she faces difficulties in getting the message across to learners. Of the twenty informants, no teacher approved that he directly and solely opts for Dialectal Arabic to explain what is found hard to digest in Standard Arabic. However, a great majority of them (75%) reported that they often tend to alternate between the H and L varieties of Arabic. In other words, diglossic switching is a common behavior when learners go blank. Only five teachers claimed to rely always on Standard Arabic even when ambiguity/difficulty surfaces. The results are shown on table 3.1, mentioned below:

Table 3.1 Teachers' Linguistic Variety for Re-explanation

	SA	DA	Mixture (code switching)
Frequency	05	00	15
Percentage	25%	00%	75%

Item five:

This item is set to know about the linguistic variety that learners use when they interact with the teacher in the classroom. Results for such item are exposed on figure 3.3:

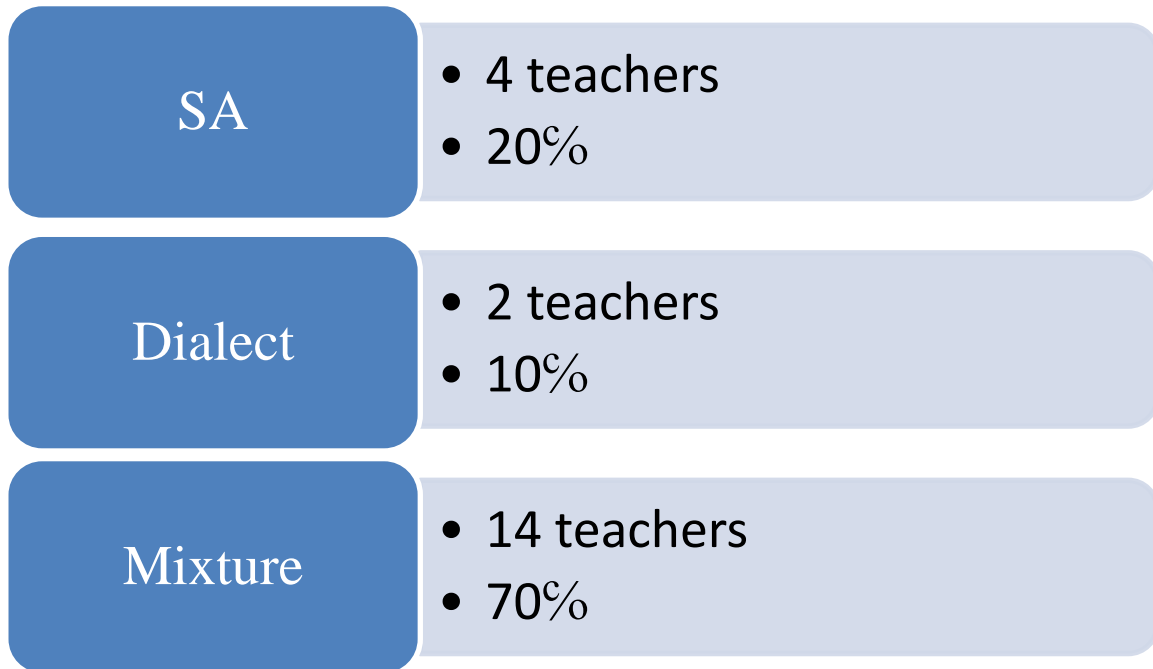


Figure 3.3 Learners' linguistic Choice in the Classroom

Item six:

This item asks teachers to report how often they tolerate learners' use of Dialectal Arabic inside the classroom. Answers were mixed. To the exception of one informant who stated that he never stands for dialect use, fourteen others admitted that they only sometimes accept it. Yet, five other teachers proclaimed that the dialect is always welcomed. Table 3.2 demonstrates the results:

Table 3.2 Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of DA in the Classroom

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Frequency	5	14	1
Percentage	25%	70%	5%

Item nine:

Here, teachers were required to state whether they feel notice a developed degree of competence in using SA at least among some students. Indeed, all of the informants came to a full agreement that some learners manifest a remarkable competence in SA. They confirmed that some learners demonstrate noticeable linguistic differences.

Item ten:

This item was meant to know teachers' opinion about the effect/importance of an early exposure to literary Arabic. In fact, a great majority of teachers (95%) strongly believed that the earlier learners are exposed to SA, the better their linguistic skills will become. Nonetheless, although the remaining teachers (5%) agreed with the benefits of exposure to SA before school age, they only partly validate this view.

Item twelve:

This item is in fact the cornerstone of the questionnaire. Here, teachers are urged to draw a comparison between the linguistic abilities (in terms of SA) between their learners who have previously received education in Quran schools before they joined the school and those who have never benefited from such kind of education. Out of twenty informants, 12 teachers strongly agreed that the first type

of learners demonstrate higher linguistic skills; 6 others partly validated this standpoint. Figure 3.4 provide a visual representation of the findings.

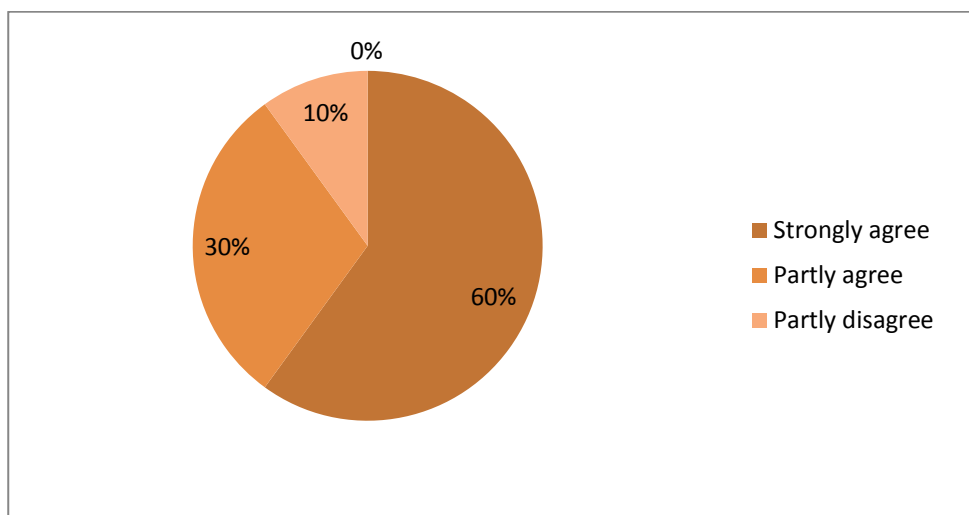


Figure 3.4 Teachers' Opinions about the Benefits of Quran Schools

Item 14:

This item articulates around the teachers self perception of Quran schools. In fact, there was a general agreement among all the informants about the (linguistic) importance of such institutions. In other words, all the informants reported that they encourage learners to enroll in Quran schools early. The point here is that they will have acquaintance with SA before they start their formal education

3.3 Discussion of the Questionnaire Findings

Here, we provide a discussion of the results reached through the questionnaire. In general, the majority of teachers stated that their young learners definitely confront several linguistic challenges at the beginning of their school enrollment. Although our study covered only one school, we can generalize the findings to include other schools countrywide as DA remains the day-to-day medium of interaction and the true mother tongue of learners. As such, it is surprising in no way that learners experience a linguistic hurdle when they are taught through SA- a language which they do not really use in the home and the street. If learners are deprived from an exposure to the literary language, an

educated guess would allow expecting them to suffer a great deal at the beginning of their education career.

The results also revealed that SA is the medium of instruction used to transmit the information and explain the lessons inside the classroom. In fact, this is an expected point as ministerial directives require schools to dispense instruction in the official language of the state, i.e., SA. However, it seems that top-down regulations (ministerial orders) are not strictly followed by the classroom teachers. Item three of the questionnaire denotes that the majority of teachers tend to switch between SA and DA when they lecture. Alternation between the two varieties is found to be the rule rather than the exception, especially with beginning learners. In fact, switching is meant to fulfill academic functions, not least providing explanation when ambiguity rises due to SA. In fact, teachers come across situations in which they find it extremely difficult to impossible to convey the message solely via SA. Therefore, opting for the dialect might be a must or the optimal option to simplify a point and make it easier to digest.

Items one to five disclosed diversity in teachers' opinions towards the use of SA. Although they confirmed the serious challenging academic obstacles encountering young learners due to the language of instruction (SA), they still give priority, if not exclusivity, to the use of SA asserting that it should remain the most dominant linguistic variety in the classroom. Although many of them confirmed to switch from time to time to DA, it is understood that such diglossic switching is no other than a linguistic support to the young learner. Understandably, teachers may not be ready to tolerate (extensive) switching between H and L as learners advance in their studies.

It is evident that learners switch to DA when they face difficulties to ask/ answer their teachers. This is normal at this stage as learners are characterized by linguistic needs, i.e., they switch to compensate lexical gaps in the language of instruction. Because SA is definitely the language of the school, teachers are aware that their learners must develop sufficient skills if they wish to progress

academically. Hence, as items 7 and 8 show, teachers encourage the sole use of SA in the classroom as a kind of obligation; the motive of such stand is to allow learners build their language through using the new vocabulary and syntactic structures in the construction of simple sentences. This explains the reason why teachers commit themselves to the exclusive use of SA in the classroom environment, for they are regarded as ideal linguistic models capable of affecting the learners' linguistic behaviour.

The motive behind this study was to examine the effect of Quran schools on young learners' academic achievement and educational progress after the engagement in formal schooling. In fact, the focus of the questionnaire items mainly concerned the linguistic perspective and the ability of learners to use SA. Items 9 and 10 denoted that teachers acknowledged obvious linguistic differences among learners who have already enrolled in Quran schools and those who have never gone through such education institutions. Items 12 to 13 divulged that the first type of learners exhibit more developed linguistic abilities. This confirms the value of an early exposure to the language of the school in a diglossic community. Building on the aphorism 'the sooner, the better', besides significant psycholinguistic studies conducted by influential researchers (e.g. Harris, 1992; Hurford, 1991; Kennison, 2013; Singleton, 2005), exposure to SA (as an instance of the H variety) must take place earlier and even before the age of six as the child has the mental ability to acquire more than one language variety simultaneously. This brain plasticity was proved to decrease with time.

In fact, teachers' responses strongly support the fact that beginning learners confront challenging linguistic obstacles and their answers reveal a general agreement on the negative impact of late exposure to SA on young children's academic attainment. Such unfamiliarity with SA delays the learners' educational achievements; this validates our first hypothesis which reads that learners face serious difficulties at initial stages of schooling mainly due to their failure to cope with the bulk of vocabulary items which are mostly different from the home language.

The results also demonstrated that the teachers advocated that the positive influence of Quran schools surpasses the linguistic dimension. In other words, not only the linguistic abilities are developed, but also cognitive aspects are also noticeably progressed, such as calculus. This is because religious principles and reciting the Quran, which are all done via SA, are not the sole concerns of Quran schools; basic mathematics and sociological concepts also take share in the agenda of the schools. The conclusion is that most teachers supported enrollment in Quran schools before school age, as such type of education might be taught of as preparatory classes which set up children and habituate them to the learning atmosphere. Teachers listed a number of advantages that Quran schools render as shown below:

- Introducing learners to the Arabic alphabet. This is a step to teach them writing in SA.
- Daily reciting of the Quran is a way to improve the speaking skill
- Getting the learners accustomed to SA sounds and words
- Because learners enroll in such schools at an early age (generally around three or four), they are given the opportunity to acquire SA in a more natural way.
- Teaching learners the correct pronunciation of Arabic words
- They refresh their mental abilities through daily reciting
- Incorporating non linguistic dimensions, such as calculus in the school programs.

Undoubtedly, we come to understand that most of the interrogated elementary school teachers call out for the spread of the Quran schools which are positively thought of as aid-pedagogical institutions, keen on preparing the child psychologically but also linguistically. This is a way to rationalize the impact of diglossia on quality education.

3.4 Analysis of the Observational Results

Classroom observation was conducted in an elementary school in which we considered a second grade class during a whole month (14 consecutive sessions). The group is composed of 37 learners. Of these learners, 12 have previously/are enrolled in Quran schools before they first join the public school. The remaining learners, who are the majority (25), have never gone through such schools.

The observation process relied on a pre-fixed observation plan in which a number of the needed aspects were included. Most of the items turn around the learners' linguistic choices arranging from SA, DA or a mixture of the two varieties. Therefore, the main concern of the observation process is the verbal behaviour of learners. In order to draw a comparison between the two categories of learners, we have provided a description of their linguistic abilities in separate observation plans. The first category is labeled 'A'; these are learners with previous experience in Quran schools. The other learners are categorized under the designation 'B'. What ensues provides a general account of the observation process. In other words, the results will not display the findings of each observation session but rather the approximate sum of all the sessions.

3.4.1 The Findings of Category 'A'

Here, we will not consider the whole range of items. Focus will be on the most important items, however.

Section One

Part 1:

Item 1: Greeting the teacher.

During the whole observation process, we noticed that learners of both categories greet their teacher in the Standard form. When observation was up, we

concluded that this is the only case where SA is exclusively used with no switching to the dialect.

Item.2

Asking questions

Item.3

Responding to teacher's questions.

Items 2 and 3, for instance, revealed slight differences in the learners' code choice. When asking questions or responding to the teacher's instructions and orders, learners' use of language varied between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic. But even in such a case, SA remains the dominant variety adopted by young learners to interact verbally.

Item.4

Talking to one another

Item.5

Pair/group work.

When it came to in-group communication, there was a glaring difference. Learners usually used DA to interact with one another, especially in pair/group work. The use of SA was very limited.

Item.6

Situations in which learners face difficulties in understanding.

Item.7

When failing to construct correct sentences in SA.

In situations where the learners faced difficulties in understanding, learners often performed code switching. When they could not construct full sentences in SA, the output of their linguistic behaviour was intrasentential switching, i.e., mixed sentences that incorporate linguistic elements of both SA and DA. The point which should be stressed is that these learners opted for diglossic switching only as a final solution, i.e., when it was extremely difficult to finish the sentence in SA. This is natural if we consider that they are still beginning learners with many lexical gaps.

Part 2:

The second part highlights four elements. The most significant point here is to discover to what extent learners of this category alternate between SA and DA. In fact, the results largely showed that learners who passed through Quran schools rarely switch code when interacting orally with their teacher. Learners of category 'A' are chiefly characterized of a high tendency to use SA in the classroom; the exception relates to cases where they fall short to find the necessary Standard vocabulary equivalents or to come up with the correct grammatical structure. In such situations, switching to the dialect was a common option.

The second item of observation revolves around whether learners' questions and answers are constituted of long strings in SA or not. The results demonstrated that learners were able to form long sentences. In terms whether the sentences are well-formulated in SA or not, the results revealed that learners of this category generally attempt to employ SA. In fact, we did not notice that it was extremely effort-demanding for them to employ SA. In the whole, we can confidently argue, on the basis of our observation, that these learners were largely successful in communicating via SA; their sentences were clear, grammatical and meaningful.

3.4.2 The Findings of Category ‘B’

Part 1:

As it has already been mentioned earlier, the central aim of this part is to capture the linguistic abilities of learners, and the extent to which they succeed, or fail, to use SA orally. As for asking and answering the teachers’ questions, learners of category ‘B’ more often than not switch to DA. The alternation can be partly, such as to come up with one word, or complete when they start the answer/question and then rapidly continue in DA. Their talk in the classroom, out of the teacher-learner interaction, was only in DA. When the teacher put the students in small groups and required them, for instance, to comment on a picture, it was always recognized that they heavily depend on DA to express themselves either with their classmates or their teacher. It goes without saying that extensive use of DA was not always welcomed by the teacher. In situations of hard understanding, these learners regularly switch to DA. Although they might try to construct simple sentences in SA, they quickly adopt dialectal items when they fail.

Part 2:

Here, observation focused on the frequency of using SA and the tendency to code-switch/code-mix when interacting verbally with the teacher. In fact, learners of this category often code mix linguistic elements from both varieties. Furthermore, these learners proved to face serious problems when it comes to formulate sentences or constitute long strings of speech. Their sentences are in many times agrammatical, short, and often mingled.

Section 2: the Teacher’s Key Indicators

The second section is managed to discover how much effort teachers reserve in order to explain the lessons in SA to these beginning learners, and how they manage to bypass the linguistic barrier at this early stage. Therefore, the major focus was on the linguistic variety used by the teacher when interacting verbally

with the learners. Because classroom observation concerned only one second grade class, only one female teacher was under simultaneous observation. To this end, a brief description of the linguistic behavior of the informant is provided.

In situations where ambiguity arose and misunderstanding surfaced, the teacher used to explain again the same content in the same variety, i.e., SA, making herself a model to imitate. Indeed, the teacher tried most of the time to maintain SA as the dominant language used for explanation and clarification. However, although the teacher did avoid DA to a large extent even when learners went blank, she found herself sometimes urged to switch to DA. Employing DA was meant to facilitate the content and help students. This was not a common behaviour of the teacher who showed less tolerance of DA in her classes. On the part of the learners, the teachers only sometimes accepted their use of DA, insisting that this behaviour is a kind of linguistic deviation. Therefore, she most often corrected the learners' mistake or made them correct themselves. In a word, the teacher showed great support to the use of SA within the classroom environment and she encouraged her learners to develop their linguistic abilities.

3.5 Discussion of Classroom Observation Results

After the completion of the fourteen observational sessions, we now reach the stage of discussing the major findings obtained from this procedure. Discussion may also build on, or clarify, findings of the teachers' questionnaires. In fact, observation is a useful tool which provides deep, rich and accurate information since it allows the researcher to gain direct facts about a particular learning or teaching situation (Kumar, 2011:125). In our research, observation greatly served the researcher to gather the required information about the linguistic interactions of second grade learners with their teacher in the classroom.

Observation was set to watch the second grade learners' verbal communication during a whole month, and to catch the linguistic differences between the two categories of learners involved in the study. The results showed

clear differences among learners of the two categories ‘A’ and ‘B’. The pre-set observation drill denoted that learners who underwent education in Quran schools demonstrate higher tendency and greater ability to use SA. Although they sometimes switch to DA, they proved in most cases to be linguistically qualified to communicate with more ease compared to their counterparts who have never experienced Quran education. Their use of DA is mainly reserved to exceptional situations, such as when cases in which they face severe linguistic gaps.

The findings revealed that Quran schools help learners not only in reciting and memorizing the Quran- a widely spread belief among people- but they play a significant linguistic function as they allow children acquire and be used to Standard Arabic at an early age. The benefits of such kind of schools are clear when we compare the linguistic achievement of learners of category ‘A’ with their classmates of category ‘B’. Indeed, learners who did not receive Quran education before the school age largely displayed a perceptible incompetence to use SA. Learners of this second category confront many vocabulary items for the first time at schools. They might even know the Arabic graphic symbols only when they enter school. Therefore, it becomes no wonder that they have a strong tendency to use DA at the cost on SA inside the classroom. This is maybe because they feel linguistically unsecure to use SA in their verbal interactions. This should not be confused with other intellectual abilities as such matters were not probed in this research. It might be the case that the best learners belong to category B though they still show deficiencies in their use of SA. The discussion here concerns basically linguistic differences among learners of each category.

As for the *linguistic* role of the teacher, we conclude that, building on the questionnaire and the observation findings, that the use of SA in instruction is strongly supported. The use of DA is not really appreciated. This does not negate the fact that teachers switch back and forth between the two varieties in the classroom. This diglossic switching is restricted and employed to achieve academic ends (facilitation, clarification, etc) at the beginning stages. Teachers might not be

ready to switch to DA at advanced levels, as they might not tolerate that on the part of the learners.

As for the impact of Quran schooling on young learners, teachers approve the positive role of such institutions. Besides acknowledging their significant contribution in the linguistic preparation of the child, teachers also back up the view that such schools help a great deal learners to develop other cognitive abilities. As such, both results accumulated from the questionnaire and the observations recommend enrollment in such schools. This does validate the second hypothesis which denotes the positive role of Quran schools on learners' educational progress and academic attainment.

3.6 Suggestions and recommendations

The current study investigated the impact of diglossia on young learners' academic achievement, in which we tackled the diglossic nature of the Arabic language in the Algerian society and the negative outcomes of this issue on learners. The end of the research was to dissect whether Quran schools have a positive linguistic impact on learners or not. The results demonstrated that such institutions, which generally welcome learners of different ages including children of three and four, do have strong effects on the children as they qualify them linguistically, psychologically and socially.

Because we have reached positive findings, this section is devoted to ponder the prominence of the pre-schooling education on learners' academic attainment and educational progress. There is a general consensus that early childhood education has a tremendous impact on life outcomes. Accordingly, we list some of the academic supports that are thought to solve, or at least rationalize, the diglossic issue in the Arab World and its negative repercussions on quality education.

a. Quran schools

Based on the results achieved in this study, we call for setting up Quran schools countrywide. Such institutions can play an influential role in developing the linguistic abilities of the children as teaching in such schools is based on SA. Therefore, the earlier we introduce the standard language to our children, the better its acquisition and mastery will be. This will decrease the danger of late acquaintance with the literary language.

b. Preparatory classes

Preparatory classes, which are meant to welcome learners one year before formal schooling, are another important support for the young learners. In fact, such classes contribute a great deal in the preparation of the child to the school life. However, policy-makers as well as teachers in these classes have to take the linguistic issue at the highest regard. In other words, these classes should not be solely concerned with working on the psychological and social dimensions of the child; they have to include the linguistic dimension (Standard Arabic) as education builds primarily on language. By doing so, these classes are expected to prepare the future learner to a Standard-Arabic based instruction.

c. Kindergartens

The linguistic challenges faced by novice learners at the beginning of their school enrollment can also be decreased through the enrolling the children in nursery schools and kindergartens. Such places provide an environment for the child where he can meet other children of his age. Besides a perfect socialization, the care-takers must consider the linguistic dimension while watching the children. Here, care-takers can introduce them to SA through a variety of ways, such as songs, cartoons, to name but a few.

3.7 Conclusion

The present study is concerned with explaining the issue of Arabic diglossia and its negative impact on beginning learners, and suggesting the positive role of Quran schools on children under the school age from a linguistic viewpoint. The data which were gathered through questionnaires and classroom observation, and which were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, revealed interesting findings. It is concluded that Quran schools, as one way of introducing the children to the literary language, has substantial effects on the linguistic abilities of learners.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

It is agreed among researchers that diglossia is a critical issue which has significant consequences on education outcomes. The linguistic situation in the Arabic-speaking countries is characterized by the existence of two (quite) divergent forms of Arabic: literary and colloquial. Like other diglossic situations, the scholastic attainment of Arab children is seriously influenced due to this linguistic duality. In fact, several studies attempted to explain how diglossia contributes to low academic achievement and high illiteracy rates among Arab learners. Indeed, the Arab children are faced with a linguistic issue as soon as they join the school. They simply have to cope with a variety different to an extent from the home language. This situation, which can be described as ‘alarming’, necessitates serious considerations by teachers, linguists and also education decision-makers.

Therefore, the current study highlighted the negative consequences of diglossia on the academic achievements of young children, and put forward some remedial suggestions in order to get around the problematic issue of diglossia. To this end, the research went around two questions. On the one hand, the aim was uncover the linguistic difficulties encountering beginning learners, especially first and second grades. On the other, the research investigated the impact of Quran schools on young children from a purely linguistic viewpoint.

As for the organization, the work is made up of three chapters. The first one is a space in which a general overview about Arabic diglossia and its related effects on education are provided. Such a review of literature is meant to guide the reader as it gives a definition of key-concepts and related literature. In fact, this chapter provided the ground on which the explanation of the findings could be met. The second chapter dealt with a description of the research methodology adopted in the conduction of the field work. The third chapter constitutes the core of the research as it is here where data were analyzed and discussed.

Building on the belief that early acquaintance with Standard Arabic, the literary form of Arabic, can eliminate, or at least minimize, the heavy impact of diglossia on Arab learners (Algerian children in this case), a group of second grade learners was put under observation. The choice of this group was purposeful as it is composed of learners who previously enrolled in Quran schools before they began their formal education and other learners without a similar experience. Besides observing the young learners, a questionnaire was administered to elementary school teachers with a prior experience with second grade learners.

The findings demonstrated that the teachers certify that young learners definitely are faced with serious linguistic challenges at the beginning of their schooling. This learning condition pushes many teachers towards alternation between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic. Performing such diglossic switching is meant to help the beginning learners. The data revealed that the learning difficulties are (though not solely) due to the linguistic gap between the home and the school varieties. Indeed, learners confront a large number of vocabulary items which they have no prior knowledge of.

As for the focus of this research, the data showed that the teachers approve the role of Quran schools. This is motivated by the fact that the teachers acknowledge that learners who are used to reciting the Quran since their childhood are used to Standard Arabic and therefore are at an advantage when they start their formal schooling. This aligns with the results of our observation. In fact, it was clearly noticed that learners who have enrolled in Quran schools before they began their formal education at the age of six expose significant linguistic abilities in Standard Arabic. They largely understand the instructor as they also use Standard Arabic to a satisfying degree. Their classmates who have no prior experience with Quran schools were found to be at a disadvantage. Understanding the instructor or using Standard Arabic was more challenging for them. This should not be confused with their mental and learning abilities; the comparison is more linguistic. Such findings did prove that Quran schools represent ‘aid institutions’ which can effectively contribute in the linguistic preparation of the Arab child. This is made on

the verity that the younger the child is introduced to a language, the better acquisition is achieved. Quran schools are institutions accessible to children at very early ages (since their third or fourth year).

At the end of the work we focused on the prominence of pre-schooling and its invaluable effect on young Arab children as an instance of children in other diglossic communities. Alongside Quran schools, preparatory classes and nursery schools also play a significant role to qualify the young child socially, psychologically and linguistically.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 'A'

استبيان خاص بمعلمي السنة الثانية ابتدائي

غاية هذا الاستبيان دراسة تربوية من جانب لغوي حيث نحاول الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة المتعلقة بتأثير الثنائية اللغوية التي هي من خصائص العربية (العامية في مقابل الفصحى) على التحصيل العلمي و التكوين النوعي للأطفال الذين غالبا ما يجدون فرقا شاسعا وواضح بين لغة المنزل و الشارع (اللغة المكتسبة أولا أو اللغة الأم) مقابل الفصحى التي تكتسب عموما في المدارس. فيما يلي نعرض بعض النقاط. الرجاء اختيار الإجابة التي تعكس رأيك. نعلمكم أن الباحث هو الوحيد الذي يطلع على المعلومات المقدمة هنا.

الجزء الأول: بيانات شخصية

الخبرة المهنية:.....

درست أقسام السنة الثانية.....مرة

الجزء الثاني:

1- يواجه التلاميذ صعوبات لغوية في بداية مشوارهم الدراسي:

أوافق كليا أوافق جزئيا لا أوافق

2- لغة التدريس هي اللغة العربية الفصحى:

حصرا في معظم الأحيان ليس دائما قطعا لا

3- في حالة استصعاب إيصال المعلومة إلى التلاميذ فاني الجأ إلى:

الفصحى مع محاولة التوضيح أكثر العامية مزيج بين الفصحى و العامية

4- المزج بين الفصحى و العامية تصرف لغوي واسع الاستخدام من قبل الأساتذة داخل القسم مع التلاميذ

الجدد:

أوافق كليا أوافق جزئيا

أعارض جزئيا أعارض كليا

5- يستخدم التلاميذ للتواصل داخل القسم مع الأستاذ:

الفصحى العامية مزيج بين الفصحى و العامية

6- هل تقبل من التلاميذ تقبل من التلاميذ استخدام العامية داخل القسم؟

دوما أحيانا إطلاقا

7- هل تشجع التلاميذ على الاستخدام الواسع و أخصري للفصحى داخل القسم؟

دوما أحيانا إطلاقا

8- في حالة نعم فكيف تحفزهم على استعمالها :

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9- هل يبدي التلاميذ (على الأقل بعضهم) كفاءات و قدرات واضحة في استعمال الفصحى مقارنة مع غيرهم؟

نعم لا

10- اعتقد أن تعرف التلميذ على الفصحى في سن مبكرة (قبل سن التمدرس القانونية) من شأنه أن يحسن و يرقى قدراته اللغوية

أوافق كليا أوافق جزئيا

أعارض جزئيا أعارض كليا

11- التلاميذ الذين أدرسهم تلقوا تعليما بالمدارس القرآنية قبل سن السادسة (أي قبل دخول المدرسة):

كلهم معظمهم

بعضهم لا احد منهم

12- يوجد فرق واضح بين التلاميذ الذين تلقوا تعليما بالمدارس القرآنية و غيرهم الذين لم يفعلوا من الناحية اللغوية (الكفاءة في استخدام الفصحى):

<input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق جزئيا	<input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق كليا
<input type="checkbox"/>	أعارض كليا	<input type="checkbox"/>	أعارض جزئيا

13- الفرق بين التلاميذ الذين تلقوا تعليما بالمدارس القرآنية و غيرهم يتعدى اللغة بحيث أن حتى القدرات الفكرية تنضج بطريقة أسرع (مثلا الحساب):

<input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق جزئيا	<input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق كليا
<input type="checkbox"/>	أعارض كليا	<input type="checkbox"/>	أعارض جزئيا

14- بناء على خبرتك الشخصية فأنت تشجع التحاق الأطفال بالمدارس القرآنية قبل دخول المدرسة من اجل تعرف مبكر على الفصحى:

<input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق جزئيا	<input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق كليا
<input type="checkbox"/>	أعارض كليا	<input type="checkbox"/>	أعارض جزئيا

15- في اعتقادك ما هي الفوائد التي توفرها المدارس القرآنية للأطفال؟

.....

.....

.....

.....

16- علاوة على المدارس القرآنية ماذا تقترح كبديل أو زيادة من اجل تعرف مبكر على الفصحى باعتبارها لغة المدرسة؟

.....

.....

.....

.....

شكرا على تعاونكم

APPENDIX “A” (English Version) Teachers’ Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at investigating the influence of diglossia characteristic of the Arabic language on academic achievement and quality education of Arab young learners who generally face huge differences between the language of the home and the street (their mother tongue) and the school language. You are kindly requested to tick where appropriate. Your answers are kept confidential.

Part 1: Teachers’ Biodata

Professional experience:.....

I taught second grade learners for.....year(s).

Part two:

1. Learners face linguistic difficulties at the beginning of their school enrollment :

- a) Totally agree
- b) Partly agree
- c) Disagree

2. The medium of instruction inside the classroom is Standard Arabic:

- a) exclusively
- b) Most of the time
- c) Not always
- d) Not at all

3. In case it is difficult to transfer the information to the learners, I resort to:

- a) SA with more clarification
- b) DA
- c) Mixture of the two

4. Mixing between SA and DA is a common linguistic behavior practised by teachers with novice learners:

- a) Definitely agree c) Partly disagree
b) Partly agree d) Definitely disagree

5. In order to interact with the teacher , learners use:

- a) SA
b) DA
c) Mixture of the two

6. How often do you accept learners' use of the dialect in the classroom?

- a) Always
b) Sometimes
c) Never

7. Do you encourage learners to use SA in the classroom?

- a) Always
b) Sometimes
c) Never

8. If yes, how do you encourage them using it?

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Do learners (or at least some of them) demonstrate a high ability in using SA compared to others?

- a) Yes
b) No

10. I think that if the learner is exposed to Standard Arabic at an early age (before the official age of schooling), his linguistic abilities will be much developed:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Definitely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | c) Partly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Partly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Definitely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. My learners have already been in Quran schools before they join the public school:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| a) All of them | <input type="checkbox"/> | c) some of them | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Most of them | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) None of them | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. There is a clear linguistic differences between those who received a Quran education and those who did not (competence in using Standard Arabic)

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Definitely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | c) Partly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Partly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Definitely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

13. The difference between those who received Quran education and those who did not surpasses the linguistic ability in the sense that even their cognitive abilities (like calculus) evolves earlier:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Definitely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | c) Partly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Partly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Definitely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. According to my experience, I encourage learners to join Quran schools before starting their official schooling so as to familiarize with SA:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Definitely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | c) Partly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Partly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Definitely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15. According to you, what are the benefits of Quran schools for young children?

.....
.....
.....
.....

16. In addition to Quran schools, what do you suggest in order to expose the children more to Standard Arabic?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix B: Classroom Observation Plan

Date:

Time:.....to.....

Category: A

B

Section 01: Rating of Learners' Key Indicators

A.

Item	Language choice	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Greeting the teacher	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
2. Asking questions	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
3. Responding to the teacher's questions	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
4. Talking to one another	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
5. Pair/group work	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
6. Situations in which the learners face difficulties in understanding	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					
7. When failing to construct correct sentences in SA	SA					
	DA					
	Mixture					

B.

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Learners code-switch/ code-mix when interacting verbally with the teacher					
2. Students' answers/questions are constituted of long strings in SA.					
3. Answers/questions are well formulated in SA.					
4. Answers/questions are agrammatical /not clear.					

Section 02: Rating of Teacher's Key Indicators

Rate each of a number of key indicators from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent).

Item	Not At all					To a great extent
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
1. SA is used by the teacher to a high extent						
2. Orders and instructions are exclusively in SA.						
3. Clarifying, re-explaining and simplifying the unclear content is done via SA.						
4. Only SA is accepted and tolerated by the teacher from the learner.						
5. DA is used in the classroom on the part of the teacher.						

<p>6. Teachers correct agrammatical sentences.</p>	
<p>7. The teacher has a tendency to perform diglossic switching between SA and DA.</p>	
<p>8.Learners deviation from SA in the classroom is corrected by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The teacher</i> ➤ <i>Themselves</i> ➤ <i>Their classmates</i> 	
<p>9. In case DA or a mixture of DA and SA are used by the learner in the classroom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The teacher shows tolerance</i> ➤ <i>The teacher requires the learner to use SA to deliver the same content</i> ➤ <i>The teacher himself corrects the learner</i> ➤ <i>The teacher appoints another learner to correct his classmate</i> 	