Meta-meaning in Context: The Military Application of Sociolinguistic Anthropology to Operations in the Arabic Speaking World

A Monograph

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Abstract

META-MEANING IN CONTEXT: THE MILITARY APPLICATION OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY TO OPERATIONS IN THE ARABIC SPEAKING WORLD by MAJOR David S. Abrahams, US Army, 82 pages.

This paper demonstrates how a better understanding of culture can lend itself to a better understanding of meaning in discourse between two cultures who operate across a linguistic barrier. The paper falls under the tradition of cultural relativism, and the modern version of linguistic relativity. Culture is a multi-faceted concept that can mean something different depending on the objective of study, and the particular discipline of the researcher. This led the researcher to adopt a theory of culture as socially distributed knowledge. Due to the particular subject related to meaning and linguistic contact, the paper makes language the parameter to define the culture being studied, which in this case is the Arabic speech community, writ large. Obviously, there are many subordinate cultures in such a large entity. The particular theory and parameter that we adopted will allow us to make some generalizations about Arabic speakers, based on a study of characteristics of the Arabic language. The theory also allows for human indeterminism, which tells us that each individual human being acts on his own accord, sometimes in accordance with cultural norms and sometimes not. This helps to keep the project in perspective and to prevent rash action based on expectations of behavior that can never be accurately predicted.

About one third of this paper is dedicated to gaining an understanding of the history and characteristics of the Arabic language varieties. Because the Arabic speech community is the culture being studied, and language reflects the particular history and traditions of those who speak it, this amount of space is justified. In this case, the roots of Arabic language diglossia, and the different ways that the language has become a symbol of nationalism, pan-Arabism, and pan-Islamic ideology are of interest to the study and are the focus for the history. There is no foray into the realm of linguistics as a science, nor the large corpus of Arabic language literature. primarily because the researcher does not speak the language.

The paper pinpoints elements of sociolinguistic research, specifically contextualization clues and codeswitching. Arabic is a particularly rich case study, because codeswitching occurs constantly in the daily speech of native Arabic speakers. The author shows how these theories can be applied to discourse observation to obtain meta-meaning from the whole context of a speech event. Meta-meaning is defined as the meaning of the basic message, plus the meta-message that can be inferred from the context, subject to a level of ambiguity that can never be totally eliminated. The more ambiguity is accounted for, the more accurate the meta-meaning that can be inferred from the language. A well trained observer may be able to determine social relationships, and perceptions of speakers about themselves and others that are not stated by the individuals.

Lastly, the paper makes recommendations for military application of the theory presented above. This includes a recommendation for increasing cultural competence, improving the Arabic language capabilities of linguists, training discourse observers, and technological applications.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND THESIS

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. . . . The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. . . .We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.[1]

Shortly after the invasion of Iraq, Kevin Woods, a retired Army Officer and co-author of the "Iraqi Perspectives Project," was responsible for overseeing the interviews of hundreds of Iraqi captives. The purpose of the project was to gain an understanding of how Iraqis at all levels of the government and defense apparatus viewed the events leading up to the change of Saddam Hussein's regime, in order to better understand the military effectiveness of our strategic, operational, and tactical planning and execution. One perplexing observation Woods made was that regardless of the experience and education level of his interpreter, and that of the subject being interviewed, the meaning of statements made by interviewees often varied widely when translated by more than one interpreter. The responses to questions, even when translations were essentially the same across interpreters, at time made little sense within the perceived context of the interlocutors. In this case the context of 'captive' and 'captor,' where both perspectives emanated from very different and mutually antagonistic cultures. While the cause of this phenomenon would be nearly impossible to determine without real scientific experimentation, this work categorizes it as a problem of culture, and cross-cultural transfer of information.[2]

In light of the continued struggle to effect change in Iraqi society, the problem whose symptoms are only touched upon above has become particularly problematic. LTC Gian Gentile, recently returned from a year as a battalion commander in Iraq, has summarized the problem as

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[1] Edmund Sapir as quoted in Whorf, 134.

[2] Interview conducted 04 October 2006 with Kevin Woods at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Also from an e-mail dated 26 September 2006. The "Iraq Perspectives Project" can be found online at http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2006/ipp.pdf accessed as recently as March 8, 2007.

an issue of legitimacy. Without recognized legitimacy by the people to be governed, the Iraqi

government will never have the necessary foundation to succeed in the management of the

extremely complex environment that is Iraqi society.[3] Numerous pundits and military leaders

have weighed in on the discussion as well. A constant refrain that one hears in the media, in

military classrooms, and private conversation is that ultimately success in Iraq will stem from a

political solution, not a military solution.[4] If the reader accepts this *a priori*, he inevitably must

face a harsh reality. Of the hundreds of billions of dollars that are poured into Iraq annually in the

furtherance of United States policy, the vast majority is dedicated to support the military effort.

Of the hundreds of thousands of United States citizens on the ground in Iraq to implement United

States policy, the lion's share are United States' military personnel. At first glance it would seem

that even while recognizing a political solution is required, the United States is inexorably and

irrevocably tied to the pursuit of a military solution.

The situation is not as hopeless as the previous conclusion might imply. To find hope it

will be helpful to view politics as the interaction of micro and macro levels.   At the micro-level

the actions and interactions of people in society coalesce into a series of shared values, beliefs,

and behaviors. At the macro-level leaders and policy makers implement policies that have a

reasonable chance of success based on the understanding of the micro level.[5]

Viewed this way, there is tremendous efficacy in the presence on the ground in Iraq of

more than one hundred thousand men and women who represent the values and beliefs of the

United States and our allies. This view operates on at least three assumptions that bear

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[3]Gian P. Gentile, "Legitimacy was Step One," *Washington Post*, February 11, 2007: B07 accessed on 27 February, 2007 at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/09/AR2007020901950_pf.html, 1.

[4]Hoover Institute, 2004 and Zakaria, 2006 and Levin, 2007 and PBS.org, 2007 were a sampling of the thousands of references to a political solution in Iraq encountered in a five minute search online. The links for these stories are in the bibliography.

[5]This view of 'politics' is necessarily simplistic, and is a creation of the author to demonstrate the importance of understanding the social milieu, or culture, of a given community (in this case Iraq, and as we will see the entire Arabic speaking world).

acknowledgement. The first is that at both the micro and macro level, politics and culture are inseparably intertwined. The second is that 'culture' and the individuals and subcultures that it consists of somehow results in a view of the world that is relative--in other words the interplay of cultural factors influences the perspective through which a culture views the world. The third is that United States culture, as represented by the behavior of the men and women who serve in that combat environment, is somehow commensurate with Iraqi culture to the extent that the United States can proffer a set of interactions and policies that will lend itself to the ability of the Iraqi government to gain legitimacy. It is the view of this paper that if the United States Armed Forces are to be successful in their interaction with Iraqis at all levels of politics, they must have a sophisticated understanding of Iraqi culture and cultural nuances associated with the Arabic speech community.

In Chapter Three of this paper, the reader will find a short explanation of the academic murkiness surrounding a definition of culture, and an argument for a view that employs a 'theory' of culture as opposed to a 'definition' of culture.[6] For now it is sufficient to inform the reader the theory of culture that this paper employs, in order that he may maintain a perspective throughout that is appropriate to the subject matter. As established above, this work falls into the paradigm of understanding cultures as 'relative' as opposed to 'universal' (see below for more on these opposing philosophies). The nature of this particular study, an interdisciplinary approach that borrows heavily from theories of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, leads us to a theory

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[6]This argument borrows heavily from the argument forwarded by Dr. Brian Selmeski of the Royal Military College of Canada, in his paper "Military Cross-Cultural Competence" currently unpublished and in draft form.

of culture that relies heavily on the influence of language.[7] In particular the work must apply a

theory that demonstrates cultural relativity as a function of language communities. The

researcher's inability to speak the target language of the culture in question forces the

employment of a theory of culture that is sensitive to the attitudes and implications of certain

"types" of language use, without recourse to linguistic science in the structural sense. In other

words, the reader will find no cumbersome formulaic approach to language structure as a window

to culture. That is not to say these approaches lack value, only that they would necessarily be

limited by the inability to address the target culture through language with sufficient depth that

would allow one to realistically hypothesize suitable military applications of the principles

discovered in this paper. Lastly, and perhaps most important, is to recognize the admonishments

of Edward Said as the paper works to identify points of difference in culture and cultural

perspectives[8]. The sensitivity of the word 'relativism' perhaps carries with it an unintended

connotation of hierarchy. Citizens readily accept the cultural differences that exist in this

country, for example between communities of Mexican and Asian immigrants. In fact in the

United States people celebrate these differences by romanticizing large celebrations of such

events as Cinco de Mayo and the Chinese New Year. Yet there is a hesitation to explore

differences between cultures because one may possibly be perceived as attempting to make a

value judgment of the culture in question. This paper takes an objective view of culture that

examines differences based on the context of language use, without resorting to value judgments

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[7]Duranti, on page 13 of his excellent textbook *Linguistic Anthropology* states that "Among the disciplines in the social sciences and humanities that study communication, sociolinguistics is the closest to linguistic anthropology. In fact, looking back at the history of the two disciplines, it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart." This paper borrows freely from terminology common to both disciplines with no attempt to distinguish between them; hence the term "Sociolinguistic Anthropology" in the title.

[8]Pages 14 of this paper discusses Edward Said's description of how academic work can be colored by political predispositions, resulting in a view of the 'others' being studied as somehow inferior to the author's culture.

of the Arabic-speaking language community and the culture it represents, or for that matter the culture of the United States.

In line with the assumptions and restrictions outlined above, this paper operates within the theoretical framework of "culture as socially distributed knowledge."[9] Within this framework is the recognition that culture does not reside in individuals but is unevenly distributed among individuals in a given society. In other words "cognition is 'distributed--stretched over, not divided--among mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings (which include other actors)."[10] This allows us, while making generalizations about the nature of a given culture (in this case the Arabic-speaking language community), to accept that "people from different parts of the country, different households within the same community . . . may have quite different ideas about fundamental cultural beliefs."[11] Anthony Wallace, in his description of culture as an *organization of diversity* (emphasis in the original), said that "what characterizes people who share the same culture is not uniformity but 'their capacity for mutual prediction.'"[12] Duranti summed up our adopted theory of culture in the following statement, of particular relevance to the complex environment in which we are immersed in Iraq:

> communities … survive with a manageable degree of internal conflict, not when everyone thinks the same (something that seems impossible), but when different points of view and representations can co-exist. Racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination as well as violence are manifestations of problems people have accepting as meaningful other ways of being, including their way of speaking.[13]

Gumperz, whose work in the field of sociolinguistics the reader will become more familiar with in Chapter Three, adopts this viewpoint when he describes how language can become a hindrance to social integration in multi-lingual communities.[14]

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[9]Duranti, 30.
[10]Ibid.
[11]Ibid., 32.
[12]Ibid.
[13]Ibid., 33.
[14]Ibid.

In the example at the beginning of the paper it would be difficult to prove that any one factor of the Iraqi culture, and the specific local cultures of those individuals interviewed, contributed more or less to the gap in understanding that seemed to occur. One common denominator in the two previous scenarios, however, is the medium of contact. The Arabic language in both its local spoken Iraqi dialect, or "low" form, and "high" form of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) serve as the conduit of information between the United States Service Members and the members of Iraqi society--both allies and adversaries.[15] This fact indicates that a better understanding of the language and its relationship with culture may help us to achieve success in current operations in Iraq.

The significance of this study is of greater magnitude than its immediate impact in Iraq. The Arabic language is spoken in the form of one dialect or another by approximately 246 million people worldwide. Of this number, an estimated 206 million can speak and write in MSA, a common language which is a descendant of the classical Arabic of the Quran. At least 19 countries (not including Gaza and the West Bank), incorporate MSA as their official or co-official language for public administration (see figure 1). The countries in Figure 1 are related to a large number of United States interests, including energy resources, trade, and security. Large Arabic speaking populations thrive in other countries as well, notably Iran, France, the United States, and Great Britain.[16]

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[15]Charles A Ferguson, "Diglossia," *Word* 15, no. 2 (August 1959): 336. In this work Ferguson describes languages which are taught, written, and spoken publicly in a different form than they are spoken colloquially. He uses the term "low" to describe a local dialect, and "high" to describe the formal, educated version of the language. Other experts on the Arabic language such as Badawi and Alosh, while not denying Ferguson's concept of Diglossia, believe that Arabic speaking people operate on a continuum between the extremes of the 'high' classical language and the 'low' colloquial language, each end of the continuum an ideal not fully realized in every day conversation. Chapter 2 will elaborate on these views.

[16]This information was accessed on 13 January, 2007 at the website of the national virtual translation center: http://www.nvtc.gov/lotw/months/august/ModernStandardArabic.html.

Figure 1: Arabic-speaking Nation States[17]

The fact that the Arabic language is the liturgical language of Islam worldwide adds another dimension to our study. While it is certainly not true to say that all Muslims in the world speak Arabic, one can assert the following. In accordance with Qur'anic scriptures and the authority of four major Islamic schools of thought, one must speak and read classical Arabic in order to fully understand and teach the religion of Islam. Even in countries where Arabic is not the common spoken tongue, non-Arabic speaking Muslims pray in Arabic, and simply submit to the desires of their Arabic speaking clergy. [18] This paper will explore the relationship between Arabic and Islam in further detail, but the evidence presented to this point indicates that for approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide, the Arabic language has some impact on their culture.[19]

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[17]Ibid.

[18]Mohhamed Ayoub, "Translating the Meaning of the Qur'an: Traditional Opinions and Modern Debates," *Afkar Inquiry*, Vol. 3, Issue 5, 34-39. Also, in a November '06 e-mail conversation with Yusuf Alan, the webmaster of the site http://www.islamanswers.net/toc.htm in which he states "Most of the practicing non-Arab Muslims learn just how to read Arabic, without understanding the language. They trust the scholars."

[19]The number of Muslims world wide is a topic of controversy, estimates range from 1.3 to 1.9 billion. The number 1.5 billion is a compromise between the figures, and is sufficiently accurate to highlight the large percentage of the world population who have some connection to the Arabic language.

The nature of the relationship between language and culture has been a topic of debate for nearly as long as man has been aware of his unique abilities to speak and think about speaking. Most readily agree that language is a key component that sets one culture apart from another. They also agree that language serves to preserve the folklore, customs, and traditions of a group of people who share the same language. [20] A point of disagreement, however, is the impact that language has on cognition. The universalist school believes that the language one speaks speak is only a medium by which one expresses independently formed thoughts.[21] The relativist school, as evident in the quote above by Sapir, insists that there is some relationship between the language one speaks, and the way one thinks. Levinson describes the opposing viewpoints as two strands of "common sense", which can be traced back to more than a millennium of philosophy. The thread of universal linguistic rules runs through the philosophy of St. Augustine in the 5th century and the Port Royal grammarians in the 17th century to the 1960s discovery of universal deep grammatical structure by Chomsky. The relativist thread can be traced at least from the work of Roger Bacon in the 13th Century, through Humboldt's theory of *Weltanshauung* in the 19th Century to American anthropologists Boas and Sapir, and through them to Benjamin Lee Whorf.[22]

Whorf was a graduate of MIT with a degree in Chemical Engineering, and took up linguistic science as a hobby. He spent his vacations recording and analyzing languages of

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[20]In the preface to his excellent work *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World*, Nicholas Kostler says "Our language places us in a cultural continuum, linking us to the past, and showing our meanings also to future fellow-speakers." Other leading intellectuals that include language as a key aspect of culture include Agar, Duranti, Hourani, Huntington, Hallpike, Boroditsky, and Levinson. This is a distinction rarely, if ever, challenged in the aforementioned fields.

[21]This school of thought has been prevalent since the 1960's and is largely attributed to the work of Noam Chomsky, who posited that all humans share a universal grammar and had essentially the same capacity for cognition, independent of the language that they spoke. Chomsky specifically refutes the idea of linguistic relativity (the Whorfian viewpoint) in the preface to Adam Schaff's, *Language and Cognition*, McGraw Hill, 1973. (Accessed at http://www.enformy.com/dma-chm0.htm) also Gumperz and Levinson, 1-3.

[22]John J. Gumperz and Stephen C. Levinson, *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1-3.

Native American Indians. He earned acclaim in his lifetime for his writings on the Mayan

alphabet, and several works about the Hopi language. Whorf's most enduring work, however,

was his assertion of the existence of the principle of "linguistic relativity" in a paper he published

in 1940.

> We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do,
> largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement
> that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our
> language. . .We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all
> observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe,
> unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.[23]

Whorf's principle has been taken to ascribe a level of subjectivity to all meaning that was

entirely dependent on language. Many anthropologists and linguists worked to disprove this

absolute view over the years, and by the seventies it had been discredited.[24] A recent revival of

the hypothesis has taken place, however, in the work of sociolinguists like John Gumperz and

linguistic scientists like Dr. Stephen Levinson of the Max Planck Institute of Psycholinguistics.

New approaches to the theory of linguistic relativity do not discard the possibility of a universal

grammar, but insist that meaning and perception of reality is in some manner shaped by the lens

of cultural milieu through which members of a particular culture look. As Levinson stated, "the

kind of contextual information that is actually needed [to share meaning between interlocutors is]

. . .deeply embedded in practices of speaking, the local conduct of social life, and the social

distribution of shared understanding."[25] The common thread between Levinson and Gumperz

approach to linguistic relativity and the adopted theory of culture above should be evident to the

reader.

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[23]Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought & Reality,* ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1956), 213-214.
   [24]Lera Boroditsky, "Linguistic Relativity," *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science Volume 2,* ed. Lynn Nadel (New York: Nature Publishing Group, 2003), 917-921.
   [25]Gumperz and Levinson, 8.

This paper applies sociolinguistic theory to posit that an observer of Arabic language discourse can make useful social inferences based on an analysis of the type of language employed by individuals whose first language is some variety of Arabic. To draw these inferences requires a demonstration of the Arabic language's impact on the culture of Arabic speakers, which the paper accomplishes through an exploration of Arabic diglossia, language indexing, and codeswitching. The symbiotic relationship between the Arabic language and Islam assists in the preservation of aspects of the formal language that have remained relatively unchanged for over a millennium. For both Muslims and non-Muslims who speak Arabic as their first language, the historical-religious lens through which they view the world, coupled with the social context represented between the interlocutors, may influence the way they use language. Knowledge of this phenomenon may allow third party observers to make social inferences from an analysis of the discourse. A better understanding of the impact of the Arabic language family on worldview may enable a more effective interaction between United States policy makers and implementers on one hand, and members of the Arabic-speaking world and the Islamic culture on the other. Further study of this phenomenon is warranted, to include a scientific analysis to identify the validity of these social inferences prior to implementation of the techniques recommended below.

Methodology

The purpose of this work is to arrive at a better understanding of the culture of Arabic speech communities through a synthesis of historical, anthropological, and socio-linguistic disciplines. In order to reach that end, the reader must understand the circumstances of history that have contributed to Arabic diglossia, and the various ideologies that are indexed by particular uses of the language. Chapter Two describes the current situation of diglossia in the Arabic-speaking world, and identifies critical components of the history of the Arabic language that

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influence the worldview of Arabic speakers. The chapter specifically focuses on the circumstances that occasioned the spread of the Arabic language and its development into a separate spoken and written form. Chapter Two sets the stage for the understanding of the practice of code-switching and the application of theories of meaning that are the topic of Chapter Three.

Chapter Three begins with a brief survey of a small portion of the copious literature in the disciplines of socio-linguistics and linguistic anthropology. The intent is to show that interlocutors use language differently based on how they perceive themselves and the situation in which they are conducting discourse. The chapter ends with an explanation of a simplified model for appropriate Arabic language use, based on extra-linguistic contextual factors and a discussion of application of this theory to interaction between United States policy implementers and Arabic-speaking cultures. Finally, the paper introduces the concept of meta-meaning to demonstrate how an observer of discourse can infer important social information from codeswitching practices of Arabic speakers.

Chapter Four concludes the paper. The chapter draws on various points raised throughout the paper in order to make recommendations about military cultural training, intelligence analysis, formal and informal multi-party negotiations, training of translators and operators, and applications for technology. Some of these recommendations should be implemented immediately, and some are untested hypotheses to be tested for further development.

Scope

Often to obtain the largest nuts, the squirrel finds himself far out on the end of a branch, teetering between satisfying fullness and a frightening plummet. The position taken by this paper will no doubt deposit the author on a proverbial limb, and incite degrees of indignation spanning

accusations of racism and pseudo-scientific research. These may be seen as necessary reactions to a work that spans several disciplines and adopts a controversial theoretical basis in order to attempt a hypothesis applicable to cultural interaction.

Foremost, this paper is intended to identify factual elements of Arabic and Islamic history and the Arabic language that impact the perceptions of interlocutors in Arabic language conversation. The evidence demonstrates that some difference in worldview does exist, and that it manifests itself in language use during conversation. Determining the complete nature and extent of this difference in world view is not within the scope of the current work.

Secondly, the limited nature of the linguistic evidence presented in the third chapter is solely intended to formulate hypotheses and generate questions worthy of further linguistic research. The author has no formal training in Arabic, which is an obvious shortcoming. He attempted to overcome this by engaging various Arabic Linguists and native speakers in dialogue about the nature of the language and its unique characteristics. Any misinterpretations of these discussions or flawed conclusions are the fault of the author alone.

Thirdly, the researcher remains aware of potential pitfalls of full indoctrination into either the 'universalist' or 'relativist' school of thought. From Chomsky's universal grammar and theory of innate meaning, one could easily arrive at a conclusion that all 'rational' individuals reach the same conclusion about abstract concepts, for example, the value of constitutional democracy. This is an assumption that has played out in recent events as false, although admittedly the failure could be attributed to implementation. In any event, an analysis of Chomsky's political discourse would certainly indicate that he does not ascribe to the same set of assumptions as the neo-conservative platform. The same *reductio ad absurdam* demonstration with respect to relativism could erroneously lead to the often invoked principle, repeated in military classrooms and social interactions by numerous veterans of the present conflict that "the people in that part of the world only understand power." This statement is a superficial

generalization of a very sophisticated cultural milieu, perpetuated by ignorance of the circumstances into which our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are thrust. Unfortunately this principle governs their actions on the ground, and is a reflection of our military inability to inculcate "cross cultural competence" as a learning objective for service members.[26]

Lastly the methodology used, integrating disparate elements of history, anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics to arrive at a better understanding of the relationship between language, context and culture is intended to be an example of a holistic approach to understanding culture. Understanding the culture of a society is not a function of simply learning the language, learning the history, or learning the dominant religion of the cultural group – but synthesizing knowledge of those elements to gain a holistic picture of the underlying assumptions and covert cognitive mechanisms that influence its members. One must keep in mind that full understanding of a culture cannot be accomplished from afar, it can only be realized through the methods described above coupled with extended immersion into the environment.[27]

Even immersion and study together will not guarantee an objective view of a culture to which the observer does not belong. Of utmost importance is the awareness of potential biases inherent in the observers' cultural experience and political motivations, and in this case an entire body of literature germane specifically to the study of Middle Eastern culture. Edward Sa'id labels much of this body of literature; both its specific subjects and its commonly accepted generalizations about Middle Eastern reality, Orientalism.[28] Many of the sources used in this paper fall directly into the Orientalist paradigm as described by Edward Said. It is hoped that recognition of this construct and consultation of a variety of viewpoints to include those squarely

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[26]Selmeski, draft paper "Cross-Cultural Competence."
[27]This wise injunction was offered by Colonel William Held, Director Department of Foreign Languages at West Point, in a conversation on 08 January 2007. It must be stressed that objective analysis such as this paper attempts can only offer partial understanding of the culture.
[28]Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978 (With 1995 Afterword and Preface written in 2003), 2-3.

outside the paradigm will supply the required objectivity. In a series of lectures published in the 1968 book *Language and Mind*, Noam Chomsky stated that "the greatest defect of classical philosophy of mind, both rationalist and empiricist, seems to me to be its unquestioned assumption that the properties and content of the mind are accessible to introspection."[29] This paper embarks on an exploration of the elements of language--culture interaction in Arabic-speaking society, beginning with a whirlwind tour of several millennia of language history, with the presence of mind to recognize the existence of a paradigm that over-generalizes the 'others' balanced against the need for impartial scholarly observation of attributes that may not be even be fully recognizable to members of the culture being studied.

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[29]Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World Inc.), 968.22.

CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTERISTICS OF ARABIC: DIGLOSSIA AND UNITY

Introduction

In order to explore the complex nature of the Arabic language as it exists today, it is important to see Arabic not as a monolithic entity, but as a family of language varieties which interact on various levels within the Arab Middle East and the Islamic world. The first section of this chapter is a brief description of the language situation in the Arabic speaking world as it exists today. The paper will then examine certain events in the history of the spread of Arabic in order to identify the roots of the current divergence between the colloquial varieties of Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The chapter will then demonstrate various ways in which the language has been central to conflicts involving religious ideologies, pan-Arab nationalism, and nationalism of both Arab and non-Arab states in the Middle East and Europe. By demonstrating the power of the language as a symbol of different social realities, the paper will prepare the reader for a discussion of linguistic anthropology and social linguistics in Chapter Three.

The Arabic speaking world today exists in a state of diglossia. In a much-quoted 1959 article in "Word," Charles Ferguson, a premier scholar of the Arabic Language, described diglossia as:

> . . . a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.[30]

Ferguson's description of diglossia fits the Arabic language situation relatively well. Everywhere that the language is spoken, there is a major difference between the colloquial

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[30]Charles A. Ferguson, "Diglossia," *Word* 15, no. 2 (August 1959), 336.

version of the language which is used in conversation, and the formal version that is written or spoken in public appearances or by members of the media.

Arabic pedagogues and even Ferguson himself have updated the basic understanding of Arabic language diglossia since his 1959 article was published. In an article originally published in 1991 in the Southwest Journal of Linguistics, Ferguson addressed some weaknesses in his original article. Ferguson said that his original definition of diglossia was not a description of the Arabic language, but of the Arabic language speech community. He described a speech community as "a social grouping sharing features of language structure, use, and attitudes that functions as a sociolinguistic unit for the operation of linguistic variation and/or change."[31] The use of the term 'Arabic language speech community' in this paper is a reflection of Ferguson's definition.

Another important update to Ferguson's article is his further definition of dialect and register variations in Arabic diglossia. Fittingly for this paper's approach, he described this update as a result of work he conducted with John Gumperz at about the same time as he was publishing the original article on diglossia. He said one should assume that in a diglossia situation there are "two basic dimensions of variation in language, dialect variation and register variation."[32] Dialect variations are a function of the region from which the speaker hails, while register variations are related to the context of the discourse. "H and L varieties of diglossias are register variants." He believes that the study of register variation is critical because it has not been properly addressed.[33] Of particular importance in this regard is the study of "communicative strategies used by interactants in conversation as they draw on the resources of register variation."[34] Context specific language has been an aspect of Arabic grammar since the first

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[31]Ferguson, 54-55 in Alaa Elgibali's *Understanding Arabic*.
[32]Ibid., 56.
[33]Ibid.
[34]Ibid., 62.

codification of the language by Sibawayhi (see below). The phrase "*li-kulli maqaarim maqaal*," (every statement is appropriate for a specific context), has been used in Arabic grammar since Sibawayhi's time, and reflects the Arabic speaker's specific attention to appropriate language use.[35]

Elsaid Badawi of the American University of Cairo decries this view of Arabic "comprising two separate, self-contained entities with nothing to fill the "gaping void" between them."[36] Badawi's model of the Arabic language locates pure colloquial and pure classical Arab as two rarely realized ends of a language spectrum that has five levels of speech. Level one is Classical Arabic, a "time bound" version of the language as it is represented in the Qur'an. This level is rarely spoken in social situations.[37] Level two in Badawi's construct is Modern Standard Arabic. This is the language most often taught in schools and maintains the same grammatical structures as level one. Level three Badawi calls Educated Spoken Arabic, which is a level of language most often spoken in educated Arab society. It maintains many of the grammatical structures and words of the first two levels, but freely incorporates foreign loan words and elements of the colloquial Arabic. Semi-literate spoken Arabic is Badawi's Level four. He sees this level of language as the "vehicle for daily communication for mundane topics."[38] Lastly, level 5, illiterate spoken Arabic, is pure colloquial only spoken by those who live in an area with no acess to education or contact with literate people.

Badawi posits that levels four and three are the most common spoken variety in Arab society, and level 2 two is most often realized in written material. He cautions however, that in much the same way as Ferguson's model oversimplifies the division between these levels of

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[35]Conversation with Dr. Mahdi Alosh, Associate Dean of International Academic Affairs at West Point, and author of several textbooks on the Arabic language, 28 February 2007.

[36]Elsaid M. Badawi, "Educated Spoken Arabic: A Problem in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language," American University in Cairo, Egypt: Date and publication unknown, 2.

[37]Ibid., 3.

[38]Ibid.

language, his "levels are not segregated entities; . . . overlapping exists between them . . . blurring their lines of demarcation and creating a graded continuum of features . . . as we go from level 1 to level 5."[39]

Of particular interest to this study are the reasons that Arabic speakers may move along the continuum from three to five. Badawi indicated that speech varies among the different levels as a result of numerous contextual factors such as: "locutors, topic, place," "degree of education," and "modern, religious, and psychological" cultural factors.[40] In the end, he said that the "neatness" of his model is "achievable only at the highest level of abstraction . . . the result is upsetting for the researcher, an almost entirely different biography for each item."[41] In addition to contextual elements, Badawi supplied concrete evidence for the use of language as an index, or symbol, of extra-linguistic ideology. He said that even the "best available performances of level 1 betray the nationality of the performer; a fact attributable to the carry-over from the features of the speakers' particular brand of" the colloquial form.[42] This indicates that examination of the level of language used by Arabic language interlocutors may allow interested parties to ascertain previously unknown contextual information, to include the speaker's perception of self, his perception of how he fits into the group, and his feelings toward the topic being discussed.

This paper ascribes to the view of diglossia as described by Doctor Mahdi Alosh, currently the Associate Dean of International Academic Affairs at West Point, and author of several best selling textbooks on Arabic language instruction. In his textbook *Learner, Text, and Context*, Alosh acknowledges the work of language experts like Badawi to describe a series of levels on the Arabic language speech continuum. According to Doctor Alosh, the problem with descriptions like Badawi's is that they "do not exist independently from the socio-cultural factors

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[39]Ibid., 3.
[40]Badawi, 3-5.
[41]Ibid., 5.
[42]Ibid.

that contributed to their actualization in the social context."[43] To describe separate levels of language as if they exist independently is disingenuous.

Alosh uses specific examples of differences in "phonological, lexical, morphological, and syntactic variation" between the colloquial and MSA form of the Arabic, in order to support Ferguson's notion of diglossia. In fact, the differences between colloquial and MSA are so great that he refutes Ferguson's update to his original article with respect to movement along the Arabic speech continuum as a matter of register. To Alosh, register variation implies an "*intra*varietal phenomenon . . . where forms of the same variety" are chosen based on contextual factors. In Alosh's model, colloquial and MSA are so different that the movement between varieties is "*inter*varietal in which the elements from MSA and colloquial are used in the same speech event influenced mainly by situational factors."[44] To an outside observer inter and intra-sentential changes between colloquial and MSA appears to be "a shift into an entirely different language" and are "activated on the basis of sociolinguistic appropriateness."[45]

It is this description of "sociolinguistic appropriateness" that makes his approach so valuable to our study. Alosh presents a model (figure 2 and 3) of appropriate Arabic language use that this report will use to demonstrate sociolinguistic analysis of Arabic language discourse in Chapter three. In Alosh's model, "speech is conditioned by three variables, resulting in output that ranges from pure MSA to pure C."[46] While Alosh's model as depicted only describes three variables (Situation formal or familiar, Event public or private, and Setting local or non-local), in reality the variables that dictate the amount of colloquial or MSA incorporated into speech include "age, education, status, and gender" and perhaps a much longer list. [47] Additionally,

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[43]Mahdi Alosh, *Learner, Text, and Context* (Columbus: Ohio State University), 89.
[44]Ibid., 86.
[45]Ibid., 81.
[46]Ibid. 87, In Alosh's work MSA stands for Modern Standard Arabic, and C stands for the Colloquial variety of the language.
[47]Ibid., 88.

Alosh forgives that the model may have to be updated to account for "language behavior in specific situations."[48] Doctor Alosh's model is intended as a way to teach Arabic language students how discourse context dictates the relative mixture of Modern Standard and colloquial Arabic language that is appropriate to spoken language interaction. In Chapter three this work will use the model to assess the feasibility of determining discourse context and information about speakers, introduced later as 'meta-meaning,' from the relative amount of this mixture in observed Arabic language conversation.
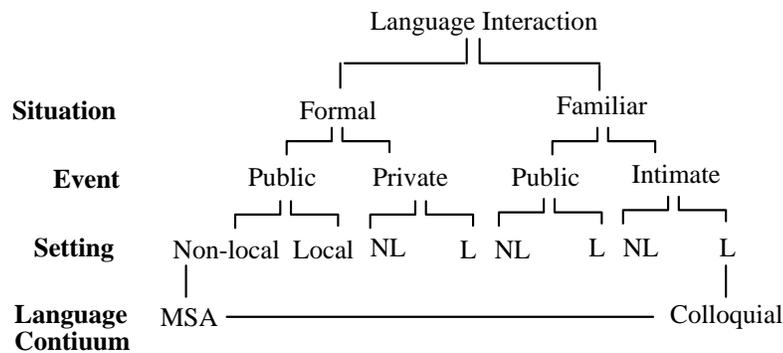
Figure 2. A Model of the Standard-Colloquial Continuum

Before returning to the model for Arabic language discourse, the reader must gain a thorough understanding of the situation of diglossia. The paper begins here with a simple explanation of the colloquial and MSA versions of the Arabic language.

The spoken dialects of Arabic are usually grouped into five regional varieties: the dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, the Mesopotamian dialects, the Syro-Lebanese dialects, the Egyptian dialects, and the Maghreb dialects.[49]

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[48]Ibid.

[49]Versteegh, 144 and Nydell 194 – Dr. Rajaa Chouairi, professor of Arabic at WestPoint, recognizes 4 varieties of Arabic, combining the Syro-lebanese and Mesopotamian into one category (conversation 14 February 2007).

These dialect groupings are generally differentiated by lexical, morphological and phonological differences, and some small changes in grammatical structure. The regional boundaries are not sharp, and at the periphery of each region the dialects share common elements. The Syro-Lebanese dialect and the Egyptian dialect are closest to each other, but the different groups are for the most part intelligible to each other in speech. Versteegh describes how within each dialect group, there are prestige sub-dialects that emanate from within regional centers of power. He cites several instances where speakers choose colloquial forms even over forms closer to the classical language.[50] The recognition of prestige dialects within larger dialect groups adds a layer of sophistication to the analysis of discourse, which this paper will discuss in the following chapter. Nydell has commented that speakers of regional dialects often express their linguistic pride by stating that their dialect is the closest to the classical language.[51] Dr. Rajaa Chouairi stated that even the use of the term 'dialect' to describe the colloquial languages is misleading. His position is that Modern Standard Arabic is an artificial language, a form of the archaic classical language that was revived for ideological reasons, and is never used in discourse in its pure form. For this reason, he prefers to call the colloquial languages 'varieties' of Arabic, rather than dialects of MSA.[52] Some elements of history to be described below support his view, but for the purpose of this paper the use of the word dialect will follow the conventional thinking in the field. Despite the varying measures of pride in the colloquial forms of the language, tensions that arise from Muslim and Arab identity with the language of the Qur'an and classical Arab literature have prevented any substantial movement toward development of a colloquial literary tradition.

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[50]Versteegh, 133 and 138 demonstrates specific examples of prestige dialect choices. The 9th and 10th chapters of his book are dedicated to the study and classification of the Colloquial dialects for more in depth study of their similarities and differences.
    [51]Nydell, 195 and Versteegh, 189.
    [52]Discussion with Dr. Chouairi, 15 February 2007 at West Point, New York.

The Arabic word for the spoken language is *'āmiyyah*, literally 'common.' The written language, known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), is called *fusha*, which means 'most eloquent.'[53] MSA is essentially the language of the Qur'an, which has been updated with new vocabulary to meet the needs of the modern speaker. With respect to perceptions of education and religious authenticity, the attitude reflected in the difference between the terms *'amiyyah* and *fusha* is generally held throughout the Arabic speaking world. One who is well-educated and cultured will be able to write in MSA and incorporate elements of it into his or her everyday speech. An educated Arabic speaking Muslim is expected to have a command of Classical Arabic, which would certainly cause him to be proficient in MSA as well. Most scholars agree that MSA is not spoken in normal daily conversation, and therefore it is not learned in the course of normal first language acquisition. In fact, proficiency in this version of the language is only obtained through education, and mastery takes years of study even for native speakers of a colloquial variety. This contrasts with how the language is taught to non-native speakers. MSA is taught first for non-native speakers. This is virtually the same throughout the entire world, to include in the academic institutions of Europe and the United States.[54] This causes inauthentic practices in non-native speakers, and may also cause them to miss important aspects of the context of the discourse in which they participate.

The ubiquity of the written version of the Arabic language is a symbol of power and unity. At times Arabic unity, for example the rise of secular 'pan-Arabism,' has been at odds with Islamic unity, although both rely on the Arabic language as a symbol. Foreign powers have recognized this power of the language as well, and have made attempts in history to suppress it. The following section will highlight important historical points in the development of the

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[53]Chejne, 161 and 166, also Versteegh, 185, 189-191.
[54]DeYoung, 17-19, on MSA as a second language acquisition see Alosh, 76-78.

language that led to the current situation of diglossia. Section three will use historical events to demonstrate evidence of the symbolic nature of various levels of the Arabic language.

A Brief History of the Arabic Language: How Did Diglossia Develop?

The Arabic family of languages is Semitic, related to Aramaic and Akkadian; languages that dominated the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, and North Africa from the 3rd Millennium B.C. These are the languages of the Semitic people, who have populated the geographic area known as the Modern Middle East since the beginning of recorded history. The origin of the Semitic people is one of history's great mysteries. One hypothesis is that they originated as tribes of Northeastern Africa. Similarities between the Semitic languages and the Hamito-Semitic, also known as the Afro-Asiatic language group which includes the Egyptian, Berber, Chadic, and Hausa languages, serves as evidence for this theory. The desertification of the Sahara region is believed to have precipitated a mass migration of Semitic tribes North, West and East, to the areas now known as North Africa, Palestine, the Fertile Crescent, and Arabia.[55] There are problems with this and other theories that arise from a study of the genealogy of the language. These problems stem from the fact that there has been constant contact between the Semitic peoples for at least the last four millennia, and at different times Aramaic, Akkadian, and Arabic have been lingua franca of the entire Semitic world.[56] This has made it impossible for historical linguists to settle on a single theory of a Proto-Semitic language as the father of all of the Semitic languages, which has in turn made it difficult to settle on an accepted theory of the genesis of the Semitic people. Because historical linguists to date have had difficulty identifying the historical

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[55]Ostler, Chapter 3, 29–93 gives a detailed description of the known history of the Semitic Languages, including what is known about the roots of Arabic.

[56]Versteegh 10–11 discusses a comparison of Indo-European language development in which the various offshoots of the proto-language lived in isolated speech communities that allowed their languages to evolve independently of one another.

roots of the Semitic languages, the following traditional classification is a purely typological/geographical approach and is not intended to posit a linguistic genealogy.

The Semitic languages have traditionally been divided into three sub-categories based on their geographical distributions known from the earliest historical records. Northeast Semitic included Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian. These were the languages of the Fertile Crescent and the first languages of empire in the Middle East. The Northwest Semitic languages originated in Palestine and the Mediterranean coast and included Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and a multitude of other languages.[57] It is from here that the alphabet system of writing, believed to have first developed in the coastal cities of Syria, was exposed to the world via trade on the Mediterranean.[58] The Southwest Semitic language grouping includes Ethiopic, and the languages of the Arabian Peninsula. The languages of the Arabian Peninsula have been further categorized into Southern and Northern languages. Written records of the Southern Arabian languages have been traced back as far as the 8th century B.C., and describe the kingdoms of the Sabaens, Minaeans, Qabatanians, and Himyarites on the Southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The Northern language is Mudar and is considered to be the forerunner of the modern family of Arabic languages, specifically variations of the dialect of the tribes of the Hijaz, a broken desert region of the northwestern Arabian Peninsula around the cities of Mecca and Yathrib (later Medina) and the Naqd, the central desert region of the Arabian Peninsula.[59]

The earliest known inscription of Mudari Arabic is an epitaph found on a mausoleum south of modern day Damascus. This sample dates from about 328 A.D., and although written in

[57]Awar G. Chenje, *The Arabic Language: Its Role in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 25.

[58]Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the World: A Language History of the World* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 34.

[59]Chejne, 25, 34 and Versteegh, 38-39 cites evidence that the language of the Qur'an is in fact the language of the Bedouin tribes of the Central and Eastern Arabian Peninsula, not that of the Quraysh tribe, who were mostly sedentary Arabs of the Hijaz region. Pg 39: "It seems that the differences between Classical Arabic as we know it and Eastern Arabic were smaller than those existing between Classical Arabic and the language of the Higāz."

a Nabataean Aramaic alphabet, its syntax, semantics, and lexicon are strikingly similar to that of the Qur'an.[60] Besides this inscription and a few others from the 5th Century, Mudari Arabic has very little written literary tradition that predates the revelation of Islamic scripture to the Prophet Muhammad between 610 to 632 A.D.[61]

Much of what does exist of pre-Islamic writing is preserved in the form of poetry, handed down orally for generations. In fact the position of a tribal poet in pre-Islamic Arab society was a position of power and prestige. The poet was "spokesman, leader, and oracle for the tribe; a master of satire and praise; a guide in peace and a champion in war."[62] The poet was called *shaa'ir*, literally 'one who has knowledge,' (from the root *sha'ara*) which to some Arabists "indicates that they were seen as the guardians of an arcane form of language," or in other words, a language that was used for literary purposes, but not spoken in everyday conversation.[63]

The language of pre-Islamic poetry is believed to be very similar to the spoken language of the Quraysh tribe of Mecca in the Hijaz. Chejne and Alosh describe Mecca as a bustling, cosmopolitan city in the centuries leading up to the rise of Islam. It was the center of commerce in the Arabian Peninsula and attracted caravans traveling both East and West, to and from all points in the known world. It was also the center of culture and attracted Arab tribes from throughout the region to festivals centered on the Kab'a, a black stone building around which the tribes performed their religious duties with deference to idols of their various gods. A major part of these festivals were poetry competitions between the *su'ara* (plural form of Shaa'ir) of the various tribes. The winners of these competitions had their poetry posted on the Kab'a. The winning poetry was called the *Mu'allaqāt*, or 'postings.' Several examples of these poems have

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[60]DeYoung, 4-6 and Versteegh 30–33 in addition to this epitaph Versteegh cites other examples of early Mudari writing from the 5th and 6th century C.E. that indicate the existence of an early forerunner of the modern Arabic script.
[61]Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 16-19.
[62]Chejne, 6.
[63]Kees Veresteegh, *The Arabic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 46-47.

been preserved as examples of the most perfect form of the Arabic language that existed at that time.[64]

This practice indicates that a common literary language existed among the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as the early existence of an Arabic script. Alosh, Chuoairi, and Versteegh have posited, however that the literary language of the Arabic tribes was in fact not the spoken language of the Arabian Peninsula. Versteegh used linguistic comparisons to show that the tribes outside of Mecca, specifically of the region of the Nagd, and the Southern Peninsula spoke a version of the language with substantial phonological and morphological variations from the Quraysh tribes who were the rulers of Mecca at the time. Alosh rationalized this by describing the Quraysh dialect as a lengua franca for the Arabian Peninsula, the language of culture and commerce that was a natural outgrowth of the Quraysh status as the power brokers of the Arabian Peninsula. The co-existence of spoken dialects substantially different from the language used by tribal orators supports the theory that the roots of the current diglossia were extant in the historical circumstances of pre-Islamic Arabia.[65]

One can state with some certainty that the event that most contributed to the current status of Arabic as one of the most widely spoken language families in the world was Muhammed's receipt of the Qur'anic revelations between the years 610-632 C.E.[66] Sura, literally 'chapter' 41:44 and 42:2 of the Qur'an have been interpreted over time to mean that the Qur'an can only be understood in the Arabic language.[67] Other Suras and traditions of the prophet were used as well to strengthen the argument. Hence Arabic, specifically a mixture of the Quraysh

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[64]Chejne, 55 and Alosh, conversation 16 February, 2007 and 28 February, 2007.
[65]Versteegh, 37-41 and conversations with both Chouairi and Alosh, 15-16 February, 2007.
[66]Hourani, 17-21.
[67]Ayoub, 35-39. Al-Hilali and Khan - Sura 41:44 "And if We had sent this as a Qur'an in a foreign language (other than Arabic) they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail (in our language)? . . ." Sura 42:2 "[These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'an, and none but Allah (Alone) knows their meanings]".

dialect of the Hejaz and the dialects of the Bedouin tribes of the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, became the language of both religion and administration for several centuries across a vast empire.

This was not an immediate transformation but rather a process that occurred over centuries and at different rates throughout the Muslim world. Mohammed's work and proselytization unified the Arab tribes and set the stage for their expansion out of the Arabian Peninsula. Under the leadership of the next four Caliphs, Arab armies began to move West, through Egypt and North Africa, and North through the Fertile Crescent, into the Levant, and into Persia. These first Arab armies were small, numbering in the low thousands. The victory of the Arabs during these years can be viewed as a combination of the disintegration of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, the hardiness of the invaders and the charismatic appeal of their simple, egalitarian religious message.[68]

The relatively small numbers of Arabs who carried out the conquests meant that the initial spread of the language was quite slow. The Arabian victors established military garrisons from which they ruled their newly conquered territories, the biggest of these being Basra and Kufa in the Fertile Crescent, al-Fustat in Egypt, and al-Qaywaran in what is modern day Tunisia. Contact between the Arabs and the majority of the common people was limited until these military garrisons became centers of commerce. As the Arabian tribes expanded farther from the peninsula, these garrisons became more important to the non-Arab people who lived nearby as centers for trade and governance.[69]

One unique element of the new Arabic societies was the nature of their religious practice. The presence of the *huffaz*, those tasked to memorize and recite the Quran, coupled with the five daily calls to prayer and the simple declaration of faith required to become a Muslim, made

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[68]Hourani, 23-25 and Nasr, 16-18.
[69]Levtzion, 7-8 and Versteegh 96-97.

beautiful language an integral and visible part of the life of the Arab-Muslims.[70] Most of the

conquered civilizations, at least prior to 711 CE and the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, would

have had at least some minimal contact with the Arabic language. In this new society, the

beautiful strains of the Arabic language drifting across the marketplace, and the corresponding

vision of the pious responding with prayer had to have been a powerful appeal to the curiosity of

the conquered people whose lives in the preceding few generations had known only hardship and

very little beauty.

Aside from access to markets and aesthetic appeal, the conquered peoples were also

motivated to learn Arabic because of its position as the language of the governing power. Non-

Muslims, who were also non-Arabs in the initial years of the expansion, were forced to pay a poll

tax also known as the *Jizya*.[71] Initially, the Muslim creed preached a generally charitable attitude

toward the conquered peoples, the majority of whom were Jews and Christians and considered

people of the book, due to their shared religious heritage.[72] This was not always the reality in

practice, however, and often the ritual associated with the paying of the *jizya* was demeaning to

the non-Muslim.[73] The motivation for a man to convert to Islam and teach Arabic to his children

could also be seen as a way out of a sort of bondage imposed upon people of the newly conquered

areas. Regardless of the motivation: commerce, religion, status, or some other, the people of

Egypt, Syria and the Levant, the Fertile Crescent, and Persia who took it upon themselves to learn

the Arabic language, would have undoubtedly spoken the colloquial dialect of the tribes that

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[70]Chejne 39, 58, Levtzion 9, Madigan, Stewart 11, 16, 18, 31-34.

[71]Ye'or, 77–79.

[72]Hourani, 42–47. Hourani describes how treatment of non-Muslims over time became worse, but varied by region. Also Ye'or 73. Stewart 56-67, and Nasr 51 stress the tolerance of the Muslim rulers, for example the beneficence of Muhhad upon his return to Mecca, and Umar in his treatment of Jews upon seizing the town of Jerusalem.

[73]Ye'or, 77–79 specifically about the Jizya, but Ye'or's entire book is dedicated to the phenomenon of '*Dhimmitude*' which in a 2002 speech to Brown University she describes as the "comprehensive legal system established by the Muslim conquerors to rule the native non-Muslim populations subdued by Jihad wars."

conquered their respective areas. It is in this manner that the expansion of the Arabic armies, each group a smaller language community that reflected the linguistic situation on the Peninsula, laid the groundwork for the later evolution of the major dialect groupings that exist today.

During the reign of the third Caliph Uthman, about thirty years after the Muslim conquests began, a crisis resulted in the next extremely influential event in the development of the classical Arabic language. The strains of administrating a far-flung empire, coupled with the battle deaths of many of the *huffaz* began to endanger the propagation of the religious and administrative elements of the Islamic tradition. Uthman called for the collection of the various written portions of the Qur'an, and oversaw their compilation and codification. Once the Qur'an had been thus compiled, he ordered the individual notes destroyed, and had copies of the book sent out to the leaders of all of the conquered territories. The literary language most associated with the Quraysh, the tribe of Muhammed and Uthman, became the official language of the Qur'an.[74]

The importance of this development is clear. The specific dialect that became the language of the Qur'an is known as Classical Arabic, and is the forerunner to today's Modern Standard Arabic. As the colloquial varieties of the language changed based on societal factors in various Arabic speech communities the classical language remained essentially unchanged. The mixing of colloquial and classical Arabic in modern Arabic speech that occurs today can be traced back to this point. As demonstrated by Alosh in the previous chapter, the various ways speakers mix languages reveals information about the social context of the speech event from the point of view of the speaker.

As the empire continued to expand the spoken Arabic language was influenced by the languages of the native people; Berber in Western North Africa, Copt and Greek in Eqypt,

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[74]Hourani, 21, Versteegh, 53-56, and Chejne, 58.

Aramaic and Syriac in the Levant, and Persian in the Fertile Crescent. Local dialects began to incorporate foreign words, and foreign grammatical rules, which found their way into official correspondence between leaders of the empire. According to some historical accounts, the fourth Caliph Ali, amid widespread dissatisfaction of this corrupting influence on the language of Islam, ordered the first written grammatical rules of the Arabic language by 'Abū l-'Aswad, an important Qur'anic scribe already known for his work on reforming the written Arabic script. [75]

It is important to note that because the Arab tribes did not have a strong written tradition prior to the expansion of Islam, they were ill-equipped to manage the administrative requirements of a massive empire. The administrative languages of early Islam were Greek and Persian, because the conquered territories had a literate class of bureaucrats that spoke these languages. This situation remained for most of the first century of Islam.[76] With the standardization of the Qur'an and the subsequent development of written grammatical standards, a written literary tradition in classical Arabic was born, and the language of the newly established ruling class began its ascension to the language of empire. This ascension was fully realized, in the late 7th Century, when the fifth Umayyad Caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, declared that Arabic would be the language of administration "and the language of the public registers was changed from Greek to Arabic in Syria and Egypt, and from Pahlavi to Arabic in the eastern part of the Empire."[77] Malik also minted coins with Arabic inscriptions and oversaw reforms in the script that made the language simpler to understand and to learn. As a result, "many non-Arabic speaking persons studied Arabic so that they would have a chance to assume official positions."[78] The cornerstone was laid for the rise of the Arabic language as the medium of state and culture in the Middle East.

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[75]Versteegh, 58.
[76]Chejne, 59 and Hitti, 226-227.
[77]Chejne, 64.
[78]Ibid.

The rise of the Abbasid dynasty from 750 CE was another important factor in the development of the language. Although the Abbasids received a large amount of their support from non-Arab (especially Persian) Muslim clients, or *mawālī*, they had no intention of supplanting the Arabic language as the language of the empire. In fact, although the Abbasid caliphate never reached the level of government centralization and control that was obtained under the Ummayad's, they reached a much greater level of cultural achievement in the Arabic language.[79] The first fully developed written Arabic rules of grammar, called *al-Kitāb* (the book), was written by a Persian named Sībawayhi during the early years of the Abbasid rule. In order to ensure that the language as codified in the grammar was pure, Sībawayhi consulted three sources: The Qur'an, pre-Islamic poetry like the Mu'aqallat, and the speech of the Bedouin people.[80] This began a great tradition of language study in Arabic, and became the basis for all later attempts to codify the language. The writing of this grammar also is an important factor in the situation of diglossia that exists today.[81] As the spoken Arabic of various regions of the Muslim world began to change due to influence from the native language and contact with people on the periphery of the Muslim world, structure of the liturgical language of the religion, codified in the Qur'an and the rules of grammar, remained essentially the same.

Despite a disintegration of centralized political control, the years from the ninth through the eleventh century are often called the golden age of Arabic literature. Contributions to Arabic literature under the Abbasids include timeless works of poetry, history and prose. Under the sixth Abbasid caliph Ma'mūn, the library in the Baghdad palace of the Caliphate, called the *bayt al-hikmah or* 'House of Wisdom,' became a center for the development of culture, which had a positive impact on the growth of the language. There many people were employed translating

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[79]Versteegh, 68-70 and Chejne 65-76.
[80]Versteegh, 58–59.
[81]Chejne 42-43, Versteegh 58–60.

important works of science, medicine, philosophy, alchemy, astrology, and literature from Greek and Syriac into Arabic.[82] This was an important step in the development of the Arabic literary tradition. The language of literature was the same level as the language of the Qur'an. From the very beginning of the Arabic literary tradition the colloquial was seen as a less prestigious form of the language, not suited for literary use.

All four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence came into being during the Abbasid caliphate as well. Eventually, each of the schools made legal rulings against the translation of the Qur'an into other languages, which solidified the link between the Arabic language and Islam and served to prevent evolution of the classical language. These rulings arose from tension between the spread of Islam beyond the boundaries of the Arabic speaking world, and the belief that the Qur'an had been delivered in the perfect speech of god. The controversy arose in the early 8th Century when the first great Muslim Juror, the Persian Abu Hanifah, ruled that the "Qur'an could be recited in Persian in prayer."[83] He argued that the meaning of the Qur'an was more important than the sounds, and translated properly it could be recited in any language. The jurist Imam Malik, who lived and preached in the same time frame as Abu Hanifa, believed that Hanifah's ruling on the translation of the Qur'an was reprehensible. His followers cited the Qur'anic Sura 41:44 which says in part "Had we sent this as a Qur'an other than Arabic, they would have said 'Why are not its verses explained in detail?'"[84] To the Maliki school, this verse and others clearly require that Muslims learn Arabic in order to fully comprehend the Qur'an. Later rulings by Imam Shafi'i in the ninth Century, and by Hanbali jurists in the thirteenth Century support the Maliki position that the Qur'an must not be translated or recited in a language other than Arabic. Even later Hanifi scholars downplayed their patriarch's approach to translation, ruling that all

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[82]Versteegh, 68–70, Chejne 69–80, and Hitti 243-288.
[83]Muhammed Ayoub, "Translating the Meaning of the Qur'an: Traditional Opinions and Modern Debates," *Afkar Inquiry,* Vol. 3, Iss. 5, May 1986, 34.
[84]Hilali and Khan, 687.

Muslims should learn the declaration of faith and the prayers in Classical Arabic.[85] The significance of these rulings to the history of the development of the Arabic language is that they solidified the inseparability of the Language and the religion. The Qur'an became the most important measure of correct Arabic grammar, and any attempt to revise the grammar or the lexicon of the written language was viewed with suspicion as a corrupting influence on both the language and the religion, and has met with varying degrees of resistance.[86] Although the lexicon did update throughout the period of Islamic expansion, and continues to update in modern times, the grammar has changed little, if at all, since the 7th Century.[87]

This was not the case with the colloquial varieties of the language, as spoken in communities throughout the Muslim world. As long as Islam continued to expand, the spoken language changed through interaction with new races of people and new environments. The colloquial speakers were less hesitant to incorporate loan words from foreign languages, and over time even the grammar of the colloquial variety changed. The natural drift of the colloquial varieties of the language was not tempered by the corrective nature of Qur'anic influence, which caused the original diglossic situation to develop into its present form.[88]

A great decline in the Arabic literary tradition occurred between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries that cannot be attributed to any one cause. Chejne describes the rise of an orthodox theology based on the writings of Al-Ash'ari in the tenth century and al-Ghazzālī in the twelfth century as an important factor. This orthodoxy led to a view of scientific pursuits as secondary to rhetorical and religious studies.[89] Certainly of equal importance to the decline are the various invasions of the Muslim lands by the Seljuks and Kurds in the twelfth century and the

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[85]Ayoub, 34–36.
[86]Chejne, 60.
[87]Conversation with Dr. Alosh at West Point, NY, 28 February, 2007.
[88]Versteegh, 104.
[89]Chejne, 80.

Mongols in the thirteenth century. In 1298, the Mongol destruction of Baghdad, the center of

Arabic culture at the time, ended the period of the House of Wisdom's tremendous contribution to

the development of the language.[90] The Spanish reconquista of the Iberian Peninsula (called *Al-Andulus* in Arabic), which had developed as perhaps the second most important center for the

propagation of Arabic culture, also contributed to the decline of the Arabic literary tradition.[91]

The decline of the Arabic language was fully realized during four centuries of Ottoman rule.

During this time the Ottoman Turkish language began to slowly replace the Arabic language as

the language of administration, although Arabic remained the language of religion and literature.

Chejne describes this period in the history of the Muslim world as "Dark Ages," where the Arabs

were in a "state of lethargy and ceased to be aware of their Arabness."[92] This state was further

exacerbated by the excessively conservative religion of the Turks, who frowned on any kind of

innovation. Even the use of the printing press was resisted for years in the Ottoman empire. The

first was allowed after much resistance and a long period of deliberation by the Mufti in 1716,

nearly three hundred years after its development in Europe.[93] The several century decline of the

Arabic literary tradition led to an increased separation between Classical Arabic, which stagnated

in its development around the early 15th Century, and the colloquial varieties of Arabic which

continued to develop to meet the needs of speakers throughout the Muslim world.

An Arab awakening began to occur throughout the Muslim world in the late 18th Century

that eventually led to a reinvigoration of the language, and the development of what is known

today as Modern Standard Arabic. This awakening is generally attributed to rising ethnic

awareness of Arab-Christians in Syria, and the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 CE. Both

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[90]Philip K. Hitti, *The Near East History: A 5000-Year History* (New York: D. Van Norstrand Company Inc.), 298.
 [91]Versteegh 227–228 describes the development of an Arabic culture in Al-Andulus. Chejne describes how, as part of the *reconquista*, the Arabic language was "forbidden in any shape or form. . . after the fall or Granada in 1492."
 [92]Chejne, 83 and Versteegh, 147 and 176-177.

of these elements were fueled by the oppressive nature of the Ottoman regime, especially with regard to its perceived anti-Arab policies, and colonization of Arab States by European powers.[94]

As indicated above, Napoleon's short-lived invasion of Egypt in 1798 opened the previously closed Muslim society. European interest in Egyptology resulted in increased exchange between European intellectuals and the citizens of Egypt. One consequence of this traffic was that the "Arab intellectual--either Christian or Muslim--became increasingly aware of the shortcomings of his society in government, social structure, religious attitudes, and education."[95] In fact, some of these concepts were so foreign as to have no equivalent terminology in the Arabic language.[96] This new awareness, or *nahdah*, had a duality that would reflect in attempts to modernize the language. On the one hand the Arab world was re-introduced to a rich tradition of classical and religious literature that been nearly forgotten in the three centuries of decline under Turkish rule. There was tension between this awareness and a desire to modernize and emulate Western institutions.

Arab-Christians in Syria (including what is now Lebanon) had maintained constant contact with European Christianity throughout the period of decline. Unconstrained by the influence of Islamic jurisprudence, they stressed the separation of the language and the religion while emphasizing their Arab ethnicity. This put them in conflict with the Ottoman rulers, who insisted on downplaying the role of Arabic in society, and who consistently denied petitions to incorporate Arabic into administration and education throughout the 19th Century.[97] As the printing press and Arabic language periodicals made their way into Arabic society, the

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[93]Ibid., 84.
[94]Chejne, 101-102 and Dr. Chouairi conversation 15 February 2007.
[95]Chejne, 86.
[96]Versteegh, 173–175 lists examples of terminilogy for which Arabic could not account, for example, "constitutional monarchy," "nation-state," and "citizen."
[97]Chejne, 109–110, 89 and 96, also Dr. Chouairi conversation 14–15 February 2007.

involvement of educated Syrian Christians "ensured the emphasis on its Arabic character."[98] Butrus Al-Bustānī, a Syrian Christian, published the first modern Arabic dictionary, called the *al-Muhīt*, which aimed to combine elements of the classical language with the incorporation of modern new ideas, especially in the areas of technology and politics.[99]

In 1805, Muhammad Ali seized control of the Egyptian government, declared his independence from the Ottoman Empire, and began a period of modernization. Though an ethnic Albanian and originally an officer in the Ottoman Army, Ali recognized that less than one percent of the people of the empire spoke Turkish, which was the language of administration. As part of his program of reform and modernization, which was counter to the direction that the Ottoman Empire had taken, Ali declared Arabic the official language of Egypt. In practice, Ali and his reform-minded government found that very few people were qualified to teach Arabic in Egypt. These circumstances, coupled with Ottoman recalcitrance and oppression against reform minded Syrian Christians, led to the migration of many Syrian intellectuals to the newly modernizing state. In 1828, the Egyptian government began the publication of the first Arabic language periodical, *al-Waqā'i' al-Misriyya,* an important step in the beginning of a modern Arabic literary tradition, and aided by abilities of Syrian Christian intellectuals.[100]

Ali's reforms, however well intentioned, were beset with difficulties. Much in the same way the language had stagnated, the methods used for teaching it were also antiquated. Despite the influx of intellectuals from Syria, as late as 1870 the language "still faced increasing encroachment of French and English at the official and educational levels."[101] British occupation of Egypt in 1882, and subsequent declaration of English as the official language of the Egyptian colony, might have been a major blow to the development of Arabic, but the awakening had set

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[98]Versteegh, 177.
[99]Versteegh 177 and Chejne 18, 110 – 111.
[100]Chejne, 101–102.
[101]Ibid., 102.

the stage for the rise of many important Arab and Islamic intellectuals for whom the language became a symbol of rebirth. A reaction to English and French colonization in Arabic speaking nations sustained the drive for the reinvigoration of the language.

An in-depth exposition on the complex history of the Arab awakening is beyond the scope of this paper, however, of major importance is the development of Arabic language academies in Damascus in 1919 and Cairo in 1932 (and later Baghdad and Jordan), modeled on language academies of Europe. These academies were devoted to modernizing the classical Arabic language, while maintaining as much as possible its freedom from foreign influence. As indicated above the most important element of this language reform was the modernization of the lexicon to account for new concepts, especially in the areas of politics and technology. Versteegh draws an interesting parallel between this period (from 1798 – present) in the history of the Arabic language and the 8th—9th Centuries, when Ma'mūn established the translator's academy and "the translation of Greek logical, medical and philosophical writings required the invention of many new words."[102]

One key difference between the eras, however, was the relative amount of control that the Caliph had during the time of the Islamic Empire. Although the political control of the Caliphate had begun to fracture under the Abbasids, Baghdad was still seen as the center for religious authority, and by association the authority for admitting new Arabic words into the lexicon of the Classical language.[103] This contrasts with the situation that obtained in the 19th and 20th Centuries, where a lack of centralized authority and ideological differences often made consensus on the methodology for lexical augmentation difficult. The Academies of Damascus and Cairo, owing to the cross-fertilization of Syrian intellectuals describe above, achieved some modicum of

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[102]Versteegh, 179.
[103]Chejne 65, 69-71. On page 71 Chejne states that "The bureau of translation established by Ma'mun no doubt filled a most pressing need in the language, for Arabic terminology became uniform throughout the width and breadth of the Empire."

cooperation, but according the Versteegh, "the national academies guard their independence and autonomy jealously so that cooperation on a higher level is at most a cherished ideal and does not seem to have led to any concrete results."[104]

With this caveat in mind, the written language has been able to accommodate in one fashion or another the words required to remain relevant to modern times. Some words coined by the academies as the permitted versions remain in common usage, while others have been ignored as too artificial for modern terminology and foreign words have been accepted instead. An example of the former is the word *qitār,* whose original meaning was 'caravan' that has been accepted in common usage for 'train.' Another example is the word *garīda* for 'newspaper,' which in its classical form was 'a strip of palm leaf used for writing.' An example of the latter is the word *'irzīz,* or 'sound of thunder' for 'telephone,' which has remained in most literature as the simple adoption – *tilifūn.*[105] In the Syrian dialect, the classical word *hatif*, meaning 'one who calls' has been adopted, and is gaining usage throughout the Arab world. The success of this word, in one respect is that it was introduced by the Syrian language academy first to the people who work in the field of communication. It became part of the technical lexicon first, which drove its usage in society.[106]

In addition to the adoption of new lexical items, there has been debate about simplifying the structure and even the alphabet of the language itself. Much of this debate has come about as a result of attempts to reintroduce Arabic, specifically Modern Standard, as the medium of education. The difference in structure from the colloquial is so great, and proficiency in the classical language had atrophied so much that many in the Arabic communities called for

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[104]Versteegh, 179. Although the Academies did not often cooperate or agree on individual words, the augmentation of the lexicon to encompass new concepts generally occurred in one of the following five methods: Borrowing of the foreign word, integration of the foreign word morphologically or phonologically, analogical extension of an existing root, translation of the foreign word, semantic expression of an existing word.
[105]Versteegh, 181

adoption of an easier language. The 1950s discovery of a text written in 1196CE by Ibn Madā, was a catalyst for this interest. Madā' , a grammarian from Cordova, proposed the abolition of certain grammatical concepts in order to make the language easier.[107] At least one Arabic writer, Frayhah, has even proposed the adoption of a Latin script as the road to modernization.[108] Conservative intellectuals in the academies as well as religious authorities have resisted any such extreme measures, and "on the whole, the trend in written Arabic has been towards a stricter regulation of the level of speech, rather than towards an increasing flexibility in the application of the rules."[109]

As indicated above, colonial intervention in the Middle East in the 19th and 20th Centuries exposed the Arabic speaking world to modernization, but also sowed the seeds for a return to the roots of the Arabic civilization. The latter is most evident in the re-Arabization that has taken place in North Africa, former French colonies where the language of the occupiers had taken over nearly every aspect of administration and education before Algeria (1962), Tunisia (1956), Morocco (1956), and Libya (1951 from Italy) won their independence.[110] The debate in North Africa, unlike Egypt and the Levant, was centered on how to raise the prestige of the Arabic language beyond the level of French, so that it would become the language of administration and education. Language reform in North Africa region, as a result, has centered more on the replacement of French at all levels of society with a pure form of classical Arabic, and not on reform of the language itself.[111] This has resulted in a tendency in the former French

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[106]Conversation with Dr. Alosh on 28 February, 2007.
[107]Ibid., 185.
[108]Chejne, 149.
[109]Versteegh, 185.
[110]Hourani, 358-372.
[111]Versteegh, 185-186.

colonies for speakers to use a "hypercorrect standard language" as a way to compete with the prestige of French.[112]

Technology in the last century has had an impact on the Arabic language situation as well, certainly increasing the recognition and acceptability of the use of some dialects. Television programs and movies from Egypt, often permeated with the colloquial Egyptian dialect, have been broadcast throughout the Arab world more than the media of any other nation. This has served to make the Egyptian colloquial dialect the most recognized spoken variety of the language in the Arabic world.[113] This as well as the central role that Cairo has had in the modernization of the Arabic language and the diffusion of Egyptian teachers to help countries in North Africa in their re-Arabization programs, has led some to posit that the Egyptian dialect may become the new Pan-Arab version of the Arabic language.[114] In recent times, however, satellite broadcasting has had the same impact with respect to the Syrian dialect. Doctor Alosh predicts that the impact of technology on the Arabic language spread will eventually reduce the differences between the dialects to and increase communication in the colloquial language throughout the Arabic world.[115] Certain peculiarities of the Egyptian dialect have become the prestige version of the spoken language as far away as Yemen. The internet has also had an impact on the cross-fertilization of dialects. The trend in weblogs and e-mail has been toward a much less formal version of speech, a heavy mix of the colloquial and the classical language.[116] In education and true literature, however, MSA is still the standard throughout the Arab world (and the West).[117] In this manner, the separation between the spoken variety of Arabic and the written language has continued.

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[112]Ibid., 204.
[113]Versteegh 197.
[114]Badawi, 1.
[115]Interview with Dr. Alosh on 28 February, 2007.
[116]Dr. (LTC) David Dimeo, in a conversation on 14 February 2007.
[117]Alosh, 76 and 79.

In his influential book published in 1997, *The Arabic Language*, Kees Versteegh used an analogy to describe the current Arabic language situation. He said to imagine a "hypothetical modern France" where Latin is the language of newspapers and books, all classroom instruction is conducted in Latin, and formal speeches in parliament and to the public are conducted in Latin. By contrast, on breaks from class students and teachers speak French. Politicians converse in French in private conversation. In his hypothetical France, only French is spoken in the home, which makes it the first language acquired by all members of society.[118]

The analogy breaks down in one key aspect. Unlike Latin, the classical Arabic language in history and MSA in modern times have never been the spoken language of society. Even well-educated Arabic speaking people speak a colloquial dialect in the home, although mixing of MSA and colloquial is common. Ferguson posits that classical Arabic, and today MSA, are the descendants of a literary koine that was different from a common spoken language in pre-Islamic Arabia. Classical Arabic developed as the language of the poets, was immortalized in the Qur'an and codified in subsequent grammars. It differed greatly from the spoken language of any single tribe, and from the common spoken dialect. The diversity of the sources used to develop the language, and the stability of the language through time, had the effect of distancing classical Arabic from the spoken varieties, which were in some measure a reflection of the varying spoken language communities of the Arabian Peninsula.[119] Because the Arabic language and Islam spread together at first orally in groups that reflected the pre-Islamic language communities, this reinforced the dialectal variants as the basis of the spoken language in the Islamic world.[120] In fact, some historians cite differing versions of the Qur'an, as recited by the *huffaz* in different dialects, as one of the reasons that Uthman was so intent on codifying the language and writing a

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[118]Versteegh, 89.
[119]Ferguson, *The Arab Koine*, 616-617.
[120]Versteegh, 130.

single version of the Qur'an to be promulgated throughout the expanding empire.[121] By the time

the written Qur'an was fully distributed to the Islamic empire, and especially by the time the first

fully articulated grammar of the classical language was produced, adstratal and most likely

substratal linguistic influences had begun to impact the different dialects that spread out from the

Arabian Peninsula.[122] The colloquial forms of the language had taken hold in society. The

classical language throughout history was a lengua franca and a literary language, but never the

spoken language of a group of people. As a lengua franca classical Arabic has been a symbol of

ideological unity from the very beginning of its known history. The theories of codeswitching

discussed in Chapter three will explain why speakers mix two languages when speaking. This

can be an indication of personal ideology or an interpretation of the social context of the speech

event in which they are involved. The next section of this chapter will highlight a few historical

periods and events that demonstrate the ideological and symbolic power of the Arabic language,

beginning with what is known of pre-Islamic society and continuing to the present day.

The Arabic Language as a Symbol

This section will elaborate on a few aspects of history, some of which were discussed

above and some new, to highlight the way in which the Arabic language has been an essential

element in the unity and ideology of Arabs and Muslims through time. Alessandro Duranti, in

describing the raison-de-'etre of linguistic anthropology, stresses a "view of language as a set of

practices, which play an essential role in mediating the ideational and material aspects of human

existence and, hence, in bringing about particular ways of being-in-the-world."[123] According to

Ostler, "Our language places us in a cultural continuum, linking us to the past, and showing our

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[121]Chejne 39–40, 58–59, and Hitti 215-216.
[122]Versteegh 102–112.
[123]Alessandro Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 5.

meanings also to future fellow-speakers."[124] This view of language is independent of value

judgment or specificity to a certain culture or civilization. An observation of discourse in French-

Canadian society, for example, might lead one to identify certain ideological or unifying themes

that are called to mind by the use of language.[125] This paper will further develop the applicable

socio-linguistic and anthropological theory that supports this notion in the following chapter.

Here the paper describes ways in which the Arabic language itself has been perceived or used as a

symbol of ideology, in order to later discuss possible modes in which the language brings about

"particular ways of being-in-the-world."[126]

       The first historical stop on this tour is pre-Islamic Arabia. This paper has discussed

above the high place of poets and orators in the tribes of the Peninsula. Bernard Lewis described

language during this time as an "important weapon of political warfare," having a "magical

quality . . . in the imprecations hurled at the enemy."[127] The tribes of Arabia, as discussed, spoke

different colloquial dialects, but also shared a koine--a common literary language. This language

was most likely related to the dialect spoken by the Quraysh tribe, the Meccan hosts for festivals

which featured awards for poetry (see above). Even before Islam the precursor dialects of

classical Arabic were a source of unity for the Arab tribes, and prowess with the language was a

symbol of prestige and honor for the poet's tribe.

       Sometime between 610-632 CE, the Prophet of Islam received the Qur'an in a series of

revelations. In the words of the Qur'an, God chose the Arabic language as the speech in which to

reveal his message (see above). After Muhammad's passing the message was carried out in the

form of recitation by the different tribes of the peninsula, each an individual language

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[124]Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the World: A Language of the World* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), xix.
[125]Duranti, 18–19.
[126]Ibid., 5.
[127]Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 10.

community.[128] The leaders of Islam became concerned that the purity of the message would be

corrupted. This concern was twofold; on the one hand the Caliphs felt the languages of the

conquered peoples would find their way into the message, on the other hand the diversity of the

colloquial languages of the *huffaz* themselves was proving problematic. As a result of these

sources of corruption, the third Caliph Uthman ordered every written verse of the Qur'an to be

compiled into one book. To account for ambiguities in meaning attributed to weaknesses in the

Arabic script of the time, a system of vowel markings was developed that eventually became a

standard for the language.[129] The written text was then promulgated throughout the rapidly

expanding empire as the only approved version of the Islamic tradition. With the distribution of

the text classical Arabic was born.[130] From the beginning this language has been inextricably

related to the Islamic religion.

The coup against the fourth Caliph, Ali, saw the rise of the Ummayad dynasty. It is

interesting to note that most Islamic theists see the Ummayads, with one exception (Umar Ibn Al-

Aziz the seventh Caliph, 717–720), as essentially a corrupt, political dynasty, not true to the

Islamic faith. The decree by the fifth Caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, that the language of the

Qur'an would become the language of administration of the Caliphate can be seen in this light as

an effort to maintain political control. By this time the Empire had expanded to include all of

North Africa, Persia, the Levant, parts of Central Asia and Anatolia, and in just five more years

would include the southern Iberian Peninsula. The decree was intended to increase the level of

loyalty of the bureaucrats who managed the administration of the Empire.[131] With this decree, as

with the koine on the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam, the classical Arabic language

[128]Daniel Madigan, *The Quran's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 30-38.

[129]Madigan, 39 says that in this manner the Qur'an "was responsible for the development of writing, because the script was required to regulate the sounds being made in the recitation of God's speech."

[130]Versteegh, 54-58.

became the language of prestige for a very large portion of the world; a unifying factor that represented power and enfranchisement.

The Ummayad dynasty cemented the place of the Arabic language as the language of prestige in the Islamic Empire. The Abbasid dynasty which followed, however, fostered a state of intellectual development that would further cement the relationship between the classical language and the religion of Islam. It was during the Abbasid dynasty that the four main schools of Islamic jurisprudence: Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi'I, and Maliki developed. As seen above, the Hanafi school's initial ruling that the Qur'an could be translated, and that non-Arabs could recite their prayers in Persian or other languages met with tremendous backlash in the Muslim world. All subsequent schools of thought refuted the Hanafi view, and eventually even members of the Hanafi school accepted that Arabic was the only language of Islam. This debate continues to this day, and even the hundreds of million Muslims throughout the world who do not speak Arabic recite their prayers in the language of the Arabs.[132] The rulings that solidified this link have had an impact on the development of Modern Standard Arabic in the last two centuries, as any attempt to modernize or simplify the language has been met with resistance from the religious scholars who view a change in linguistic structure as an attempt to implement changes in the religion. Often this objection is viewed through the lens of resistance to centuries of colonial subjugation, and more recently the cultural and economic imperialism of Western Civilization.[133] Thus, since the ninth century, the classical Arabic language has been a symbol of Islamic ideology for the Muslim world.

The rise of the Ottoman empire in the 15th century saw the eventual implementation of Turkish as the language of administration for much of the Muslim world. Roughly corresponding in time was the completion of the *reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula (Al-Andulus). This ended

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[131]Hitti, 218–230 and Hourani 26–29.
[132]Ayoub 34–39 and Chejne 12–16.

in 1492 with the defeat of the last Muslim kingdom in Grenada and the decree that the Arabic language was forbidden to be spoken in public, despite over 700 years as the language of culture on the Peninsula.[134] From the perspective of the Spanish and Turks, the Arabic language is seen as a symbol of opposition, representing a body of people that must be disenfranchised in the name of the maintenance of power. This period marked the beginning of a several hundred year decline of the Arabic literary tradition.

The Arab awakening that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries tells us more about the Arabic language's symbolic power. Muhammad Ali of Egypt, upon declaring his independence from the Ottomans, declared Arabic the language of administration and education in Egypt. Syrian Christian intellectuals who fled the Ottoman oppression and took refuge in Egypt became an integral part of his effort to Arabize. Those intellectuals who did not leave Syria played a an important role the push to modernize the language as well. For Ali and intellectuals like Butrus al-Bustani, the language was a both a symbol of a former Arab greatness, and a symbol of independence from the oppressive rule of the Turks. Unfortunately Ali's plan for modernization and reestablishing the Arabic language in society was destroyed by the mismanagement of his successors and the eventual colonization of Egypt by Great Britain.[135] Even though it would be nearly a century for Ali's dream to be realized, in his mind as in the Syrian Christians so essential in the eventual modernization efforts, the classical language is seen as a symbol of a great pan-Arab unity.

From the middle of the 18th century there was also a rebirth of pure Islamic thought. Religious scholars like Abdul Wahab, Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida believed the classical Arabic language was sufficient to handle even newly encountered political and

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[133] Ayoub 37 and Chejne 161-168.
[134] Hourani 88-89, 96, Hitti 336–337, and Chejne 81, 85.
[135] Chejne, 102.

technological ideas with a minimum of modernization.[136] As before, attempts to modernize the language are seen through a religious lens as a symbol of encroachment on the unity of Islam.

In the post World War I disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal Ataturk abolished the caliphate and established a secular government in Turkey. As part and parcel of the 'turkification' program, Ataturk prohibited the use of Arabic in public. He initiated a program to purge the Turkish language of Arabic influence, a near impossibility after over a millennium of influence.[137] To Ataturk the Arabic language was a symbol of backwardness and fundamental religion that had prevented the Turkish state from modernizing since the 16th Century.

As the nations of the Middle East gained their independence from European colonizers, each implemented a program of re-Arabicization. Academies of the Arabic language were established in Egypt, Syria, and later Jordan and Iraq, whose tasks were to attempt to maintain some unity in the modernization of the language (see above). Although these academies never fully coordinated their efforts (even today this is not possible), the importance of the language in the re-establishment of Arabic society ruled by Arabs is difficult to overstate. Pan-Arabism, born in Syria 20th century, relies on classical Arabic as a symbol of unity of the Arab people. Often the rhetoric of the Pan-Arab leaders hearkened back to the days of Arab greatness during the Golden Age of Islam.[138]

In North Africa, most particularly evident in Algeria, the almost complete subjugation of Arab culture to European culture caused the Arabic speaking peoples to be completely disenfranchised. As a result, the re-introduction of Arabic as the language of administration was taken on with a zeal fueled by over a century of frustration. In education this program took over thirty years to implement through the high school level, and is still ongoing by select Algerian universities. One characteristic of the situation in Algeria has been the involvement of Islamic

[136]Versteegh 175-177 and Chejne 88–89, 95, 97.
[137]Hitti, 229.

fundamentalism in the re-Arabization process, where in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Levant it was initially more secular. In a 1989 study of two Algerian universities, one where French was still the language of the curriculum and another which had been Arabized, Coffman cites the Arabic language as the number one factor in a tendency towards extreme views about Western Imperialism, World Zionism, and a return to an Islamic Caliphate.[139] The validity of the research can certainly be called into question, starting with a sample size of one which makes any overt generalization suspect It is conceivable, however, that such a shift could occur in North Africa, where modernizing the language was never a priority like it was in the rest of the Arab world (see above). In this manner, the language can be seen as a symbol of defiance and triumph after years of cultural subjugation, as well as a symbol of religious revival.

The perceived failure of Pan-Arabism after the defeat of the Arabs in the six-day war gave boost to pan-Islamic ideology. Although Pan-Islamic thought incorporates cultures whose primary language is other than Arabic, the Salafist ideology, as an example, often uses the classical language as a symbol. Because this is an ideology that espouses a wish to return to the simple religious zeal of seventh century Islam, Salafist ideologues routinely use classical references in their speeches, and for them the classical language is a powerful symbol of authenticity, purity, and unity.[140]

The existence of prestige dialects within colloquial Arabic varieties adds a different dimension to the use of language as a symbol. Versteegh describes how the majority Sunni community in Bahrain, even when speaking in formal Arabic, avoids using certain phonemes that are considered standard in the classical language because the minority Shia community uses these

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[138]Versteegh, 196.

[139]Coffman, 2.

[140]In a speech by Omar Al-Baghdadi , newly appointed by Al Qaeda as the head of the Islamic state of Iraq, he refers to all Christians as 'Byzantines', an example of language used to call to mind a millennium old conflict: accessed 02 March 2007 at http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP145407.

sounds in their colloquial dialect.[141] In this example the colloquial language is a symbol of

regional allegiance or power, even when the dialectal qualities are counter to Classical usage.

Conclusion

By studying the history of the development of the Arabic language, and demonstrating

historical cases where the use of Arabic in several forms is a symbol of an extra-linguistic idea,

this paper sets the stage for theoretical application of socio-linguistics and linguistic anthropology

in the next chapter. The particular case of Arabic lends itself to these applications. The

colloquial language as spoken by various societies in the Middle East is the first language learned

by Arabic speakers. Through education and the media, people in Arabic speech communities are

exposed to MSA, which employs enough different grammatical devices and lexical choices to

warrant many Arabists to label it a different language altogether from the colloquial varieties.

After a certain amount of education, Arabic speakers should, and do, use a certain amount of

MSA in everyday conversation. Pure MSA, however, is a language reserved for formal public

pronouncements and literary endeavors, rarely if ever is it used in its pure form in private or

informal conversation. The complex history of the concurrent spread of the Arabic language with

Islam, and the ebb and flow of Arabic culture and civilization, add another dimension to this

study. While speakers may make linguistic choices based on the social context of their discourse,

they may consciously or unconsciously use certain types of speaking as a symbol of identity with

their ideological foundation. The question that follows from this is the following. Can a third

party observer of Arabic language discourse draw social inferences about relationships between

members of the group of interlocutors, or clues to the psyche of the individual speaking, from an

analysis of the type of language being used by the interlocutors in a given scenario? In Chapter

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[141]Versteegh, 133.

Three this paper will answer this question by discussing the theories that apply, a model that

demonstrates appropriate Arabic language use based on context, and a theory of meta-meaning.

CHAPTER THREE: ARABIC CODE-SWITCHING: MILITARY APPLICATIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted events in the history of the development of the Arabic Language, in order to identify the roots of the current situation of *diglossia*, and demonstrate historical cases where the language has been used or perceived as a symbol of ideology. This chapter will build on these ideas, through the lens of socio-linguistics and linguistic anthropology. Section one is a short description of relevant theory that funnels from a theory of culture, through an understanding of the roles of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, to a description of the theory of contextualization clues in discourse. Section two describes the theory of code-switching and the idea that bilingual language speakers use different elements of language in different social context. The special case of colloquial Arabic versus MSA is applied to this theory. Finally, the chapter concludes with a model for application of this theory to derive social inference from third party observation of social discourse in situations where the Arabic Language is spoken.

Culture, Linguistic Anthropology, and Sociolinguistics

In the introduction this report established that conventional wisdom holds that one characteristic of the current conflicts in Iraq, and indeed a feature of the operational environment now and for the near future, is that a military approach by itself will not end in the termination of conflict. At least one serving officer, recently returned from command in Iraq, has stated that the political legitimacy of that country is the linchpin for success.[142] Other prominent leaders and

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[142]Gentile.

pundits have also weighed in on that vein, stating the need for a political not a military solution.

We have also established that at the heart of politics and political legitimacy are the people of the

region in question. The people to be governed must accept the government. The unfortunate

truth is that the weight of the United States effort in Iraq is military in nature. [143] This leaves us

with the following conclusion. If the solution to the current conflicts are to be found in the

political realm, and the majority of the United States effort in this conflict involves United States

Service members, and the United States wants to bring about a successful resolution to these

conflicts, then members at all levels of the United States Armed Forces must become politically

capable. [144] This takes a view of politics at both the micro-level; the interaction of individual

service members with members of the countries in question, and at the macro-level; the shaping

and implementation of policies that have a reasonable chance of success when viewed from the

perspective of those to be governed.

It is unreasonable to assume that success as described above at the micro or macro level

of politics is achievable without some understanding of the embedded meanings, embodied

feelings, behaviors, "values, beliefs, expectations, and symbols" that are "learned, shared,

patterned, and transmitted across generations"; that are "relatively stable but change over time"

and in response to various interactions; that range from "commonly recognized to those that are

taken for granted;" all of which influence, but do not determine, "what people do, how, why, and

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[143]Because this paper specifically addresses aspects of the Arabic speaking world, the focus is not on Afghanistan; where a completely different and arguably more complex milieu of language exists. Some aspects of this paper do apply, however, as Afghanistan is almost exclusively a Muslim country and so the Arabic language does figure prominently in the spiritual lives of Afghans.

[144]'Politically capable' at the "micro" level of interpersonal interaction, means the ability generate grass roots feeling of good will in the very day interaction of between US forces and Iraqis. As an example, we accept the existence of a 'political reality' in our everyday work environment, we measure our words specifically based on who is privy to our conversations, and what information we want to disclose both in the meaning of the words and in the way we use them. This same 'political reality' exists at every level of interpersonal interaction in society, and is eminently more difficult when working across a language and cultural divide, such as exists between US service members and members of Iraqi society.

the way they think and feel about it."[145] That necessarily cumbersome description is what comes

from an attempt to pin down this word <u>culture</u>, which has become so popular in today's search for

a solution to understanding and managing complex human interactions. Selmeski contrasts that

complicated definition with the official United States Department of Defense definition of

culture: "a feature of the terrain that has been constructed by man. Included are such items as

roads, buildings, and canals; boundary lines; and, in a broad sense all names and legends on a

map."[146] Having established that solutions to our current conflict involve politics and people, the

DOD definition provides little value to the current discussion.

     Selmeski and Duranti, both admit that culture is something that defies definition, and

that hundreds of definitions abound across multiple disciplines and even within the disciplines of

anthropology.[147] Rather than defining culture the same for all purposes, it suits us to adopt a

theory of culture that is adapted to our "objectives, purpose, or needs . . . the culture in question,

and the context."[148] Our purpose is to theorize ways to interpret complex social interactions

through an understanding of Arabic language diglossia, and how different uses of the Arabic

language may index different ideologies. For this purpose it is necessary to adopt a theory of

culture that lends itself to linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics.

     The theory of culture this work adopts is "culture as socially distributed knowledge."[149]

This implies that within a culture defined by a certain parameter "cognition is distributed –

stretched over, not divided – among mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings (which

include other actors)."[150] This view of culture allows us to account for human indeterminism,

while at the same time generalizing cultural aspects based on an understanding of shared

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[145]Selmeski, 3.
[146]DOD 2006a as quoted in Selmeski, 4.
[147]Selmeski, 3 and Duranti, 23-24.
[148]Selmeski, 3.
[149]Duranti, 30.
[150]Ibid.

knowledge across the cultural parameter chosen. In this case that parameter is the Arabic language speaking community. As stated above, Anthony Wallace has said that "what characterizes people who share the same culture is not their uniformity but 'their capacity for mutual prediction.'"[151]

Duranti stated that anthropology as a discipline has always experienced tension between the desire to <u>interpret</u> the practices of a group or an individual, and the desire to <u>predict</u> the same. This tension arises from the question: to what extent can the rules of human interaction be understood with the measure of certainty applied to the interaction of physical objects? Duranti made two seemingly contradictory points about the study of culture. On the one hand, he said, people are predictable. Without some predictability the life would be in perpetual chaos, and progress would be impossible. On the other hand, "it is possible that certain behaviors will not be easily interpretable (either by the actors or by the analyst) . . .the student is advised to treat them as the manifestations of the not fully predictable (not predeterminate) nature of human conduct."[152]

By taking the above theory of culture into account, and applying it to the Arabic speaking language community, one may be able to learn more about the individuals and relationships between individuals within the culture by the way they use language in discourse. This requires attention to the manner in which the language is used, specifically how speakers use a different mix of colloquial and MSA in discourse and the particular lexical choices they make that may signal ideological underpinnings. Understanding the theoretical basis of clues to context necessitates a short discussion of sociolinguistics.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to expound upon the full range of ideas that encompass the field of sociolinguistics. Similar to the problems experienced with defining

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[151]Ibid., 33.
[152]Duranti, 48–49.

culture, Figueroa describes how different theorists have parted ways and entertained different views of what constitutes the discipline.[153] As with the theory of culture, the situation requires this work to simply adopt a theory of sociolinguistics that most suits our objective of study. This paper takes a view that sociolinguistics is a discipline complementary to linguistic anthropology. On one hand linguistic anthropology aims to determine how languages "play an essential role in mediating the ideational and material aspects of human existence and, hence, in bringing about particular ways of being-in-the-world,"[154] Sociolinguistics, on the other hand, "focuses directly on the strategies that govern the actor's use of lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistic and other knowledge in the production and interpretation of messages in context."[155] With respect to the Arabic language speech community, linguistic anthropology informs us as to the range of practices shared among the culture, and sociolinguistics helps us to understand particular meanings that exist in the way the Arabic language is used. One way meaning is found is through "contextualization clues."[156]

Gumperz defined contextualization clues as "any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions."[157] These forms are bound by the linguistic repertoire available to the interlocutors. In the paradigm under study here, this includes the interlocutors' Arabic dialect variation, learned through first language acquisition, and their particular command of MSA, the learned variety of the Arabic language. Gumperz went on to say that these contextualization clues may include "code, dialect, and style switching processes . . .as well as choice among lexical and syntactic options."[158] The practice of codeswitching

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[153]Figeueroa, 1-3.
[154]Duranti, 5.
[155]Gumperz, as quoted in Figueroa, 113.
[156]Figueroa, 128.
[157]As quoted in Figueroa, 128.
[158]Ibid.

encountered here has been heavily studied, and is a particularly "rich point" with respect to the

Arabic language speaking community.[159]

Inferring Meta-meaning from Observation of Codeswitching

Code-switching, simply put, is the "use of more than one language in the course of a

single communicative episode."[160] Our previous inquiry into the diglossia of Arabic language

speaking communities, especially with respect to the model provided by Alosh, indicates that this

practice is intrinsic to the Arabic language speaking community. Heller interprets code-switching

as a speech strategy that "contributes . . . to the definition of roles and role relationships at a

number of levels, to the extent those interlocutors bear multiple relationships to each other."[161]

Gumperz view is that "switches within a conversation provide clues to other participants about

the speaker's attitude or stance vis-à-vis other participants."[162] Meyers-Scotton adds an

additional dimension. She sees code choices in general as a "way to index the set of rights and

obligations that [speakers] wish to have in force between speaker and addressee in the current

exchange."[163] Of particular importance is her assertion that "an overall pattern of switching

codes can index the speakers' desire to project themselves as persons with the identities

associated with more than one language."[164] Meyers-Scotton sees code-switching as a rational

choice that the speaker uses to gain an advantage in conversation.[165] An interesting dimension of

this phenomenon, described by Heller in her language experiment with French-Canadian youth, is

that many people who "codeswitch are not aware of their behavior until it is brought to their

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[159]Agar, 9 defines a "rich point" as a surprising point in ethnographic research that yields particularly fruitful continuation of a new thread of investigation.
[160]Heller, 1.
[161]Ibid.
[162]Carol Meyers-Scotton, *Contact Linguistics: Bilingual Encounters and Grammatical Outcomes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2002.45.
[163]Ibid.
[164]Ibid.
[165]Ibid., 46.

attention."[166] Each of these dimensions of codeswitching is supported by extensive empirical study in various bilingual and multilingual language communities.

By virtue of the research conducted on the phenomenon of codeswitching, it would seem that the practice would lend several contextual clues when observing discourse between interlocutors. A careful distinction must be made, however, between situations in which the observer is present, as in a multi-party negotiation or a social setting, and when the observer is absent, as in analysis of recorded conversations or interviews. The presence of each interlocutor in the discourse impacts the language choices of the individuals within the group, and so must be examined in the complete context of the event.[167] Either way the theory tells us that a careful observer can make social inferences through an examination of the particular levels of language used, the conscious or unconscious switching between MSA and colloquial in a given discourse event. The observer could possibly infer how the interlocutors perceive the roles and relationships of themselves and the other participants in the conversation and the attitudes that each speaker has toward other members of the group. By observation one could ascertain attempts by individuals to establish authority, or to portray a certain image, for example piety or regional pride. Because this phenomenon occurs both consciously and subconsciously, it is possible that individuals in discourse could yield clues to all of the above inferences without being aware of it. All of these possibilities can be operationalized in the military's cultural interactions with members of the Arabic language speech community.

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[166]Heller, 6.

[167]Versteegh, 194–195 describes various ways in which the level of speech of each interlocutor impacts the speech of the other, sometime consciously and sometimes unconsciously.

Applications of Sociolinguistic Analysis: Codeswitching and Arabic

In the previous chapter, the reader discovered that two very different languages varieties are extant in the linguistic repertoire of members of the Arabic language speech community. The colloquial variety, by nearly all accounts, is the first language acquisition of speakers in the community. Availability to speakers of lexical and grammatical elements of MSA is determined by members' levels of education, contact with the media, and contact with educated members of the community. In nearly all cases, members of the community have some MSA tools available to them.[168] As seen above, Arabic speakers often state that *fusha*, or MSA is the prestige version of the language, and *amiyya*, or colloquial Arabic is the less desirable form for public speech. In private or intimate settings the norm is colloquial, which indicates that the publicly held view on the prestige of *fusha* is perhaps a polite fiction. In any event, this paper has shown that based on the context within which the discourse occurs, proficient speakers use an appropriate level of speech along a continuum between MSA and colloquial. The movement along this continuum involves a constant application of mixing codes between the two varieties of language. In this manner the reader can see that codeswitching is innate to Arabic language discourse.

In *The Arabic Language*, Versteegh made an important contribution to our effort to infer meaning from Arabic discourse; specifically related to speaker's attitudes toward their language and the meta-meaning associated with its use. Versteegh stated that the choice of language level is "controlled by the associations that the speakers connect with the varieties of speech current in their community."[169] He described choices between colloquial and MSA in speech as a possible indicator of positive or negative attitudes toward the interlocutors. Use of MSA could indicate respect for the other, or acknowledgment of education or socio-economic success. On the

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[168]Alosh, 84.
[169]Versteegh, 195.

negative side use of MSA may signal an attempt to distance one interlocutor from another, or label him as a member of the out-group. Use of the colloquial may signal disdain for someone else's illiteracy and poverty on the negative side, or it may be used as a marker of intimacy or inclusion into the in-group.[170] It is important to remember that without the appropriate level of contextual clues, to include the characteristics of the interlocutors, it would be nearly impossible to ascertain the attitudinal aspects of their codeswitching practices.

Versteegh also discussed the contextual factors associated with language choice in diglossia. He categorized the extra-linguistic factors that govern speech choice as the interlocutor, the topic, and the setting. This is somewhat commensurate with, but slightly less sophisticated than Alosh's contextual elements of: situation, event, setting, age, education, status, and gender (see above). The idea that the topic under discussion governs language choice is an important addition. This may have particular relevance to inferring meaning when observing discussions about politics and religion.

To this point, this work has established a few basic ideas about the use of language to convey extra-linguistic meaning, specifically with regard to the Arabic language speech community. Most members of the speech community in question have a repertoire of tools from two different language varieties that they mix in various ways according to the context of discourse. The amount of colloquial versus MSA that interlocutors use is driven by contextual aspects of the event. These contextual aspects include, but are not limited to: situation, setting, event, and topic. The context also includes personal aspects relative to each of the interlocutors which include: gender, age, level of education, self-perceptions, and attitudes toward the other interlocutors. The high level of variables present make it difficult to model the appropriate use of the Arabic language along a continuum from pure colloquial to pure MSA. While difficult, Arabic language instructors have recently found it important to incorporate the idea of context

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[170]Versteegh, 195.

driven language use into their curriculums.[171] This is so because of the disparity that exists

between a formally trained interlocutor, for whom Arabic is a second language, and the native

speakers with whom he engages in discourse. One of Dr. Mahdi Alosh's principles of Arabic

language instruction is that "teaching rules of use is as crucial as teaching rules of grammar." To

him these rules range from "the lower-level pronunciation rules that are used subconsciously to

the higher-level rules that involve comprehension of discourse beyond the sentence level."[172] To

demonstrate some of these rules Alosh has developed a simplified model to use in the classroom,

which will help students with a burgeoning language repertoire understand the appropriate use of

the Arabic language (Figure 3).
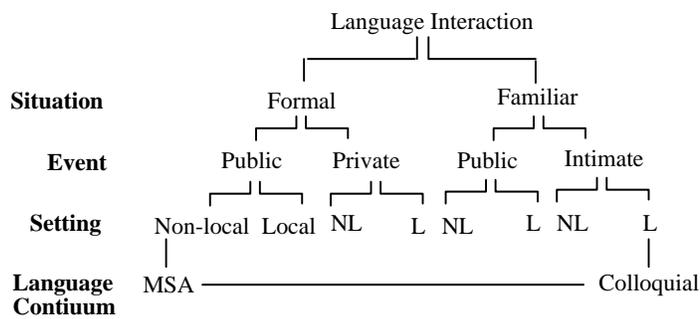
Figure 3: A Model of the Standard-Colloquial Continuum[173]

Doctor Mahdi Alosh's model incorporates three binary variables used in a 'context tree'

(my term) to show how context might dictate the level of language appropriate. Those variables

are: situation--formal or familiar, event--public or private, and setting--non-local or local. It is

easiest to illustrate the use of this model by picturing the extremes. A formal situation, in a public

place, away from the region in which the speakers colloquial variety is the prestige dialect (non-

[171]Alosh, 94–106.
[172]Ibid., 109.
[173]Ibid., 87.

local) would most likely result in the very highest level of MSA usage.[174] An example might be a

pan-Arab conference on energy resources in which interlocutors are having open discourse about

the level of oil production. On the other extreme one can envision a man and his wife having a

conversation about their children under the comfort of their own roof. The reader can follow

each of the possible eight options on this model to hypothesize about Arabic language speech

events and the appropriate level of language to expect.

It is a particularly strong assertion of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics that

every speech event carries with it two messages. The first is the message carried in the words and

the second is the message carried in the context of the event. The second message is the idea of

the "metamessage" which is a "second message, encoded and superimposed upon the basic,

which indicates how we want someone to take our basic message."[175] According to Gumperz a

basic message by itself cannot be accurately interpreted.[176] This assertion lends credence to the

argument posited by Alosh that "rules of use [are] as crucial as rules of grammar."[177] It is

supported by the assertion of Arabic grammarians, as state above, that "every statement is

appropriate for a specific context." In a native Arabic speech community rules of use are learned

through the process of normal acquisition and become second nature to the speaker as they move

through the educational hierarchy and increase their repertoire of MSA tools to mix with

colloquial. The standard educational paradigm for Arabic continues to "emphasize the teaching

of . . . MSA in contexts that are sometimes unauthentic." [178] For one who learns Arabic as a

second language the process is backwards. An "inauthentic" repertoire of MSA is the first set of

tools, and speakers must discover appropriate use of language as they build their tools in the

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[174]Ibid, 85-87.
[175]Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon, *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach 2nd Edition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 76.
[176]Ibid.
[177]Alosh, 109.
[178]Al-Batal as quoted in Alosh, 77.

colloquial language and learn appropriate context. This acknowledgement is the basis for Dr.

Alosh's model for appropriate Arabic language use.

A Model of Meta-meaning

From the evidence presented above, this paper posits a theory of meta-meaning,

described as follows.[179] An interlocutor engages in a certain speech event, which has a specific

message whose meaning is ascertainable. This is the basic message of the speech event,

represented below by the letter M. In the process of speaking, the interlocutor provides clues to

an additional layer of meaning, which is the metamessage described by Gumperz above and is

represented below by the letter M_1. These clues are ascertainable, if the proficient observer has a

certain amount of knowledge of the physical context of the situation--the situation, the event and

the setting. Other clues to the metamessage might include intonations and inflections, prosody,

and physical gestures if the event involves face to face communication.[180] In the Arabic language

speech community the clues to understanding the metamessage may be particularly observable,

because our understanding of the physical context would lead us to expect a certain amount of

codeswitching by a proficient speaker, on the continuum between pure colloquial and MSA. This

is represented by Dr. Alosh's model for Arabic language speech in figure 3. One important point

about the meta-message is that it may transmit meaning that is not intended to be shared. As an

example, a poker player who reaches too quickly for his chip stack when he says "I will just call"

with a high inflection in his voice may very well be telling his opponent, unintentionally, that he

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[179]Meta-meaning, as defined by the author, is the combination of the meaning in the message and the meaning in the message context, subject to a certain level of ambiguity. This will be explained fully in the following pages.
[180]Duranti, 212.

has a great hand. This leads us to an understanding that the intended meaning of a speaker is a lesser included set of the meta-meaning that can be obtained through careful observation of discourse.

The combination of the message (M) and the metamessage (M_1) is the metameaning (MM) of the speech event. Recognizing an earlier promise to refrain from a "cumbersome formulaic approach to language structure as a window to culture" (see above) the paper represents this combination in a simple addition below:

$$M + M_1 = MM$$

Unfortunately, the ability to ascertain meta-meaning is not as simple as represented above. The fact that "language is ambiguous by nature" makes our ability to ascertain MM with any certainty much more difficult. [181] Scollon & Scollon, building on the work done by Levinson on conversational inference, identify three levels of ambiguity in language: word level, sentence level, and discourse level. Ambiguity at the word level is due to the fact that there is "never complete agreement among speakers of a language about the semantic ranges" of certain words.[182] For example, imagine a friend is running late to pick you up and calls you to tell you that he will "be there soon." You might put on your jacket and stand by the curb; or you might decide to pop some popcorn and watch a movie--based on the level of shared understanding about the meaning of the word 'soon,' and your assumptions about your friend's meaning of the word 'soon' based on prior experience. The second level of ambiguity is at the sentence level. To partly use Scollon's example, if you are sitting at home and your spouse asks you "What time is it?" your response might be "its 8 O'clock dear." At a party if she asks the same question, you may answer, "I'll get my coat" or alternately "No, thanks – I'll just have some water" depending on the context in which the question was asked. "Knowing how to interpret the meaning of this

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[181]Scollon & Scollon, 7.
[182]Ibid., 8.

sentence requires knowledge of the world as well as knowledge of words and sentences."[183]

"Language remains inherently ambiguous at the level of discourse as well."[184] This ambiguity is based on internal prioritization and desires of the individuals engaged in discourse. Speaker A, for example, may feel that in order to convey an important point he must first give relevant details to build his case. Speaker B, however, may be attuned to understanding priority in the order of conveyance. In this manner Speaker B attaches the most priority to the less relevant detail conveyed initially by Speaker A and winds up completely missing A's point. In this model, certain elements of ambiguity are inherent in the basic message (primarily word ambiguity) and other elements of ambiguity are inherent in the metamessage (context ambiguity).

As promised, this paper will forgo a complex formulaic representation of meta-meaning that involves an ambiguity variable. It is sufficient to represent the theory of meta-meaning in sentential form:

In a given speech event the basic message plus the metamessage, each subject to a certain level of ambiguity, equals the meta-meaning that an interlocutor is able to infer.

This definition allows at least one important observation. If ambiguity detracts from the ability to match the combination of message and metamessage in order to obtain a true meta-meaning, the more an observer accounts for ambiguity in discourse the closer he will get to truly understanding the meta-meaning of a given speech event.

The reader saw above that codeswitching can tell him many things about the interlocutor and the context of the interlocution. He also saw that this phenomenon occurs at times subconsciously – individuals who engage in the practice of codeswitching often don't know, or at times even care to admit that they are conducting such language practices. By paying careful attention to codeswitching practices in Arabic language discourse, one can account for ambiguous

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[183]Ibid., 9.
[184]Ibid.

elements in the metamessage, and thus obtain a more accurate inference of the meta-meaning of a given speech event. It is important to note that the meta-meaning of a speech event is not simply the meaning that the speaker intended to convey. As in the example of the poker player who inadvertently gives away his hand, meta-meaning is the meaning inherent in the conveyance of the message and the contextual factors (linguistic and non-linguistic) surrounding the speech event.

Military Applications

The ability to apply the theory of meta-meaning in the Arabic speech community is contingent on the availability of well-trained observers of Arabic language discourse. The complexity of the Arabic language situation hampers this effort; specifically the requirement that observers be fluent in both a regional dialect and in Modern Standard Arabic. The paper demonstrated above that typical Arabic language education programs teach MSA as both a written and a spoken language. Dr. Foazi El-Barouki, Arabic curriculum developer at the Defense Language Institute (DLI), confirms this practice. In sixty-three weeks of intensive Arabic study at DLI, only three weeks are dedicated to the study of a dialect variety. "Oral proficiency testing procedures and regulations do not allow codeswitching or speaking in dialect."[185] Some students may participate in an immersion program, but this immersion is not long enough for students to gain proficiency in codeswitching. Dr. Barouki does agree that properly trained Arabic speakers can obtain contextual clues by observing codeswitching in the Arabic language. In fact, the DLI is currently working toward implementing a longer immersion program, which will allow students to gain at least a basic understanding of codeswitching and the implications of Arabic diglossia. Dr. Mahdi Alosh, Associate Dean for International

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[185]Barouki, an e-mail sent 22 February, 2007.

Academic Affairs at West Point, is one of the "pioneers supporting this program."[186] Until this program has been fully implemented, there will be very few military members with the requisite training to conduct the type of observation required to obtain meta-meaning in Arabic language discourse.

Native Arabic speakers, properly vetted, can be trained to make observations about contextual clues in Arabic language discourse. For native speakers, the training would need to include discourse theory, contextualization clues, and implications of codeswitching.[187] One immediate application of using observers is the ability to obtain a better understanding of the social and cultural milieu that exists for commanders on the ground in Iraq. A native speaker so trained may act as a silent observer during multi-party negotiations or town hall meetings. Levels of language observed between native speakers who are at the meeting may allow him to make inferences about the self-perceptions, social perceptions, covert alliances, and perhaps even ideological foundations that exist within the group. These inferences would be uncertain, but could provide valuable information to United States military members involved in the discourse that allows them to negotiate the complex network of socio-cultural interaction. Such an observation may yield new insights into the real distribution of power or knowledge within a certain group of speakers. These observations may also yield important clues as to the perceptions that the speakers have of the American soldiers engaged in the discourse.

This type of discourse observation can be applied to intelligence analysis as well. Although many contextual clues are absent in recorded conversations, a trained observer might be able to infer important information about unknown individuals based on codeswitching practices employed during the recorded conversation. This could include the speaker's region of origin,

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[186]Ibid.
[187]Ibid.

perception of self and his place within the group, level of education, ideological foundation, and other clues to his individual psyche.

Application of technology to analyze contextual clues is quite possible. A computer could be trained to read transcripts of discourse between interlocutors and generate a report that helps with overall analysis. A sample report of three way discourse recorded between unknown interlocutors might say "Speaker A has known Speaker B for a long time, and both Speaker A and B feel disdain for Speaker C, even though they defer to him on all matters related to politics. Speaker B is the most devoutly religious of the group. Speaker C is trying to gain the respect of Speakers A and B."[188]

Regardless of the specific aspects of meta-meaning theory and sociolinguistics that the military applies, this paper demonstrates a need for a better understanding of the culture in which our Armed Forces operate. Historical, cultural, and linguistic anthropology provide methodologies by which members of a given group can be studied, in order to interpret, and to a lesser extent predict the practices of the group. These types of studies will certainly yield valuable understanding of the perspectives members of the Iraqi society have of themselves and of the American Armed Forces. These perspectives may be extremely important data to inform action as the United States strives for a military solution to what has been deemed a political and cultural problem.

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[188]The feasibility of this application was verified in a conversation with Doug Landsdowne, a professional computer programmer with nearly 20 years of experience writing software.

CHAPTER FOUR: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Recommendations

This work has identified two main areas which should be addressed by the United States Military: military understanding of culture, and discourse analysis. Within discourse analysis there are additional recommendations for both immediate implementation and further research and development. This paper focused demonstrating the historical development and implications of diglossia in Arabic speech communities, and on the development of an untested theory of meta-meaning in conversation. As a result, the recommendations should be seen as a starting point, each worthy of its own development by individuals who are more well-versed in the areas impacted (for example, doctrine writers, Intelligence Officers, etc.).

A primary recommendation for immediate change in our military approach is the implementation of a program that prioritizes cultural competence. The DOD definition of culture, which is absent of any reference to people, underscores the fact that our profession has not spent enough intellectual capital on the understanding of this concept. Theories of culture provide a foundation for our pursuit of the understanding of peoples, and provide a path to a deeper understanding of the nuances of cultural interaction. Without a valid theory of culture on which to base our interaction with people, and to guide our implementation of policy, the United States will have difficulty gaining legitimacy in any environment, regardless of the intentions of our soldiers or policy makers. The theory of 'culture as socially distributed knowledge' used by this paper provides a framework for understanding general similarities in groups of people, without falling into the trap of deterministic generalizations. This paper does not advocate full scale adoption of this particular theory of culture, but simply a more nuanced understanding of what culture is. The DOD definition of culture properly sets the foundation for this pursuit, by informing us explicitly what culture is not.

In line with this short recap of the previously discussed concept, this paper makes the following recommendation:

Delete the definition of culture as written in the DOD glossary. Develop a cultural understanding working group engaging academics from the various fields of anthropology, language study, social psychology, international affairs and any discipline related to the study of human beings and human interaction. Give that group the authority to develop a theory of culture that is commensurate with the missions required of the United States Military. Use this theory to implement changes to Military doctrine at all levels, and to implement training programs at all levels. Inculcate an ethos of cross-cultural competence, and make it a recognizable factor in leader development and selection for promotion and command.[189]

The second major recommendation supported by this research is the need to increase our sophistication with respect to **d**iscourse analysis. This paper has hypothesized that all speech events have a basic message (M) and a metamessage (M_1) which, when combined, equal meta-meaning (MM), subject to some value of ambiguity that can never be completely eliminated. The paper posits that an understanding of culturally authentic language practices, and an understanding of contextualization clues present in a given speech event can lead to a reduction in ambiguity. The more ambiguity is reduced, the more likely one is to understand the meta-meaning in a given discourse. The information presented allows for the following recommendations:

Allocate sufficient resources to educate certain officers and soldiers on discourse theory, and allow for controlled experimentation of the theory of meta-meaning presented here, or some other theory that will support the development of techniques that allow for more effective cultural interaction. Implement discourse analysis training , specifically with respect to culturally

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[189]For a complete exposition on cross cultural competence, or 3C, see Dr. Brian Semelski's article of the same name.

appropriate language use, recognition of contextualization clues, and derivation or inference of meaning from social discourse. Require this training at a level commensurate with their duties for all Army linguists, intelligence analysts, interrogators, and Army leaders (Officers and NCOs) who will be responsible for officially representing the United States in the implementation of policy. Increase Arabic language proficiency and authenticity of members of the Armed Forces. The current practice of training Arabic linguists to speak in only MSA, and not testing or requiring proficiency in any colloquial dialect leads to "inauthentic practices" when DLI trained linguists interact with members of the Arabic speech community. It also prevents a sophisticated observation of discourse that draws on cultural speech practices to interpret metamessages in order to obtain meta-meaning. This may result in an inaccurate interpretation of intentions by interlocutors, based entirely on message, and lacking the meaning inherent in context. Participants may also miss evidence about social relationships between interlocutors, as well as their ideologies. These are important pieces of information that will help military leaders navigate the complex, sophisticated social milieu that is Iraq and the greater Arabic speech community. All of these factors are the basis for the following recommendation:

The Department of Defense (DOD) should immediately allocate money and resources, to include bonus offers, to increase the size of the population of Arabic language speakers in the military. DOD should implement a program that increases the amount of colloquial Arabic training linguists receive, in order to test them on their ability to speak in a more authentic fashion. Test linguists on their ability to codeswitch appropriately, to recognize codeswitching as it occurs, and to infer meaning from this practice through discourse analysis. While building a corps of trained linguists who can analyze discourse, vet and hire as many educated native speakers as possible and train them in discourse analysis so that they can provide valuable feedback on meta-meaning from any given discourse event.

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The military should allocate resources to conduct research and development of discourse analysis software. This software should be able to take either typed or recorded transcripts of conversation from intelligence analysis, and return a narrative description of perceived social relationships and contextual factors among persons engaged in the conversation being analyzed.

Conclusion

In his book *Linguistic Anthropology*, Alessandro Duranti uses a joke to describe the constant debate about culture:

Q: What do you get when you put two anthropologists into a room?

A: Three definitions of culture!

This may be an accurate representation of the state of Academia, but academic definitions of culture do have one common element. Every definition of culture that has been read by this researcher involves in some capacity a relationship among humans, or groups of humans. The DOD definition does not, and this could reflect in our intercultural practices. The United States Armed Forces must strive for a nuanced understanding of culture, that includes humans, in order to take advantage of opportunities for interpretation and action that we miss in every day cultural contact.

Culture as 'socially distributed knowledge' is a theory that some anthropologists use when defining commonalities between groups of people. This theory allows the study of cultures based on common elements of experience that they share in groups, while accounting for human indeterminism. It is particularly useful when looking at speech communities, and trying to interpret or predict behavior of members of those communities. This is the underlying theory applied by the sociolinguist John Gumperz when he describes the different ways language is used by members of bilingual speech communities. A better understanding of the codeswitching phenomenon that Gumperz and other sociolinguists describe can lead to a more effective

interaction across cultural barriers when interacting with members of bilingual speech communities.

By virtue of the diglossia phenomenon in Arabic speech communities and the huge difference between the colloquial and the classical version of the language, all modern Arabic speech communities are essentially bilingual. Arabic speakers mix the colloquial and classical form of the language constantly and in a manner appropriate to the context in which they are speaking, which is the codeswitching described above. The various levels at which this codeswitching occurs indicates elements of the social context, as well as ideological and cultural predispositions of the speaker. Most speakers of Arabic as a second language, to include those trained at the Defense Language Institute, are not able to communicate in an authentic manner because they are only trained in the classical version of the language, also known as Modern Standard Arabic. In addition to inauthentic language practices, this shortcoming prevents linguists from obtaining important contextual information when interacting with members of the society in which they are operating.

Obtaining additional meaning from the context of discourse could be an important capability in our continuing effort to understand the complex dynamics of Iraqi society. In a conflict where junior leaders are meeting with leaders of Arabic speech communities frequently, the ability to infer meaning from the way language is used could help to ascertain the sincerity and intentions of these leaders beyond the meaning of translated words. When meeting in mult-party negotiations in which there are unknown individuals present, an analysis of the language could help our leaders understand the complex social dynamics that might otherwise be lost. Clues to social context that are inherent in the way the Arabic language is used will be innately obvious to an educated interpreter whose first language is the local colloquial language. The leader must spend time after the meeting questioning the interpreter about these clues, in order to

better understand the social hierarchy of the group with which he met and perhaps gain insights into particular ideological foundations of the individuals who were present.

As demonstrated by this paper, the study of human cultures can yield important insights into the difficult task of communicating across cultural barriers. Iraq, specifically Baghdad, Kufa, and Basrah as indicated in Chapter two, is extremely important in the development of Arabic culture. It is the birthplace of Arabic grammatical studies and represents the height of the Arabic literary tradition. If Iraq is such an important region to Arabic culture, the study of Arabic culture should be an important part of our preparation and engagement there. In particular, the study of Arabic culture through a better understanding of Arabic speech communities may help our soldiers and leaders on the ground negotiate the difficult maze of human dynamics present. This could lead to more effective interactions at all levels, from the junior leaders conducting small informal meetings with local leaders and professionals to the four star General meeting with the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet, attempting to lead the country out of its current difficulties.

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