

Special Topics in Arabic Linguistics | ARB 596M

(Seminar on Diglossia)

Department of Near Eastern Studies

Fall 2007 ARB 496M/596M Th 4:00-6:30 Marshall 479 Office hours: TBA

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Course Description

Diglossia is a new course in seminar form designed to introduce students in Near Eastern Studies, Linguistics, or related fields to the psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, structural, cultural and societal aspects of diglossia, defined broadly as the coexistence of a literary (high) and spoken (low) varieties of the same language in the same speech community with complementary sometimes competing functions and domains. The course will examine how diglossia is defined, the historical roots of diglossia, the linguistic aspects of diglossic use such as code-switching and mixing, the relationship between diglossia and group identity, societal conventions governing the use of one variety over another, and the challenges diglossia presents for education and language planning and policy. The course will draw on past and recent work in psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, political linguistics as well as syntax, phonology, morphology and lexical studies of Arabic varieties.

We will further discuss and assess attempts at minimizing the rift between the H variety (the classical) and the L variety (the colloquial) or even eliminating the diglossic situation altogether through status and corpus planning. This minimization will necessitate an investigation of the consciously or unconsciously held attitudes and ideologies which inform and steer linguistic behavior, resulting in the maintenance of the unspoken literary variety and the marginalization of the mother tongue.

We will then discuss the methodological approaches to the two primary orientations in Diglossia research: the performance-based type grounded in the Labovian variationist model, and the attitude-based type which establishes its grounding within the political and social research on nationalism and identity.

Objectives

- To understand, evaluate, and discuss the different definitions of diglossia and their underlying assumptions.
- To recognize, assess, and critique objectively the numerous popular myths concerning diglossia.
- To situate the discussion of diglossia within a descriptive (non-prescriptive) realistic model of language use.
- To examine and understand the confluence of factors imposed on language choice, including societal/cultural norms vs. individual sense of self and group identity.
- To understand and discuss basic issues of diglossia-related language policy and language planning.
- To assess the impact of diglossia on education and the media in the Arab World.
- To assess the impact of diglossia on the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation	20%	Reflective essay on topic	10%
Discussion session	15%	Abstract	10%
Paper	30%	Presentation	15%

Schedule

Week 1 Aug 23

Introduction; requirements; what is diglossia

Read: Ferguson 1959, 1991

Week 2 Aug 30

Diglossia: Definitions and concepts

Read: Wardhaugh 2005 Chapter 2; Kaye 2001, Holes 2004 Chapter 9

Week 3 Sep 6

Diglossia and language attitudes

Week 4 Sep 13

Old and contemporary dialects: a historical review

Week 5 Sep 20

Diglossia and gender-related variation

Week 6 Sep 27

Diglossia and language ideology

Week 7 Oct 4

Diglossia and language ideology (cont.)

Week 8 Oct 11

Diglossia and language planning

Week 9 Oct 18

Diglossia and education in the Arab World

Week 10 Oct 25

Diglossia and the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language

Week 11 Nov 1

Diglossia and the media

Week 12 Nov 8

Diglossia and the media (cont.)

Week 13 Nov 15

Diglossia and language use (code-switching and mixing)

Week 14 Nov 22

Thanksgiving

Week 15 Nov 29

Research methods in Diglossia Studies

Week 16 Dec 13

5:00-7:00 p.m.!

Final presentations