

Issues in Palestinian Arabic Spelling Standardization

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Abstract

This paper is part of a book in progress that proposes a system for standardizing Palestinian Arabic Spelling as part of an effort to create a Palestinian Arabic literary language. Many previous attempts for writing Arabic "dialects" failed to achieve wide-spread use because of insensitivity to the native culture (e.g. Latin script) or ad hoc application of Classical Arabic spelling rules with no regard to the linguistic differences between the two languages. The proposed approach defines the regionally-mixed formal spoken Arabic of educated Palestinians as Standard Palestinian Arabic. The script used to write it is the Arabic script with several extended letters and a mixed historical/morphophonemic spelling system. In this paper, some specific issues in standardizing the spelling system and extending the script are discussed in light of a comparative analysis of Classical and Palestinian Arabic.

Introduction

- Research Context
- Developing writing systems for Modern Arabics
- Encouraging the development of a Modern Arabic literary language to complement and extend Classical Arabic
- PASS: Palestinian Arabic Spelling Standardization Project

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Problem Background
- Proposed Solution
- Issues
- Conclusions

Background

- Diglossia and Writing the “dialects”
- Theoretical Debate
 - The Traditionalists
 - The Modernists
 - Everyone else in between
- Practical Issues
 - Recording Traditions (folktales, songs, poetry, etc.)
 - Popular culture (songs, poetry, letters, email, etc.)
 - Teaching Arabic as a second language
- Standardization Proposals and the status quo

A Proposed Solution

- Why no proposed system managed to capture public appeal?
- The elements of proposed writing systems
 - The Language
 - The Script
 - The Spelling System
 - Promotion
- Maximize on all elements (a la Smalley)
- The interaction between the elements
- Consulting the future users:
The customer is always *write!*

The Language

- Diglossia, Triglоссия, Badawi’s Levels, Multiglossia, Supradialectal L and the nature of Standard Arabic (SA)
- What is Standard Palestinian Arabic (SPA)?
 - Educated
 - Classicalized
 - Hajiin (Geographically Mixed)
 - Multiglossic (L Grammar, L+H Vocabulary)
 - Dynamic (Past and Future)
 - Unmarked (least marked)

The Script

- Arabic Script, Latin Script
- Maximum Representation of Speech? Maximum Transfer?
- Extending the Arabic Script to accommodate SPA needs

CA	SPA
و ي	ا و ي ي
/i:/ /u:/ /a:/	/e:/ /i:/ /o:/ /u:/ /a:/

دير	دير	دور	دار
/de:r/	/di:r/	/du:r/	/da:r/
nunnery	pour!	turn!	house

CA	SPA	Examples
ق /q/	ق ق /q/ {p//k//g//q/}	قلْب /ʔalb//kaɫb//gaɫb//qalb/ heart
ج /ʒ/	ج ج /g/ /ʒ/	عجَال /ʕa:ɪ/ /ʕa:ɪ/ headband tires
ة /t/	ه آ ة /t/ /t/ /a,e/	فصه فصة اربع أيام /arbaʕ tiyyam/ /ʔoʃset/ /ʔoʃsa/ four days story of story
أ /an/	أ /n/	مثلاً غصياً /ʔaʃben/ /aʃlan/ forcibly for example

Feminine Ending

The Spelling System

- Least discussed element
- Accommodating *both* Classical Arabic spelling conventions and SPA phonology, morphology and syntax
- Spelling is an Art

Phonological Issues

- Phonological changes vs. etymological connections

CA	ثوره /θawra/ revolution	ثوب /θawb/ dress
SPA	ثوره /θawra/, /sawra/ revolution	ثوب /to:b/ Palestinian folk dress

- Vowel shortening

يوم
/yo:m/
one day

يومين
/yome:n/
two days

- Epenthesis

غزال بستان
/ʔaza:l e b bosta:n/
a deer in a garden

Morphological Issues

- Morphophonemic spelling
- بنشوف
/menʃu:l/
b + n + ʃu:f
we see
- بيشوف
/biʃu:f/
b + y + ʃu:f
he sees

- SPA is more agglutinative in nature than CA

CA	لا يسمح له /la: yasmahu lahu / he doesn't allow him
SPA	ما يسمحوش /ma byasmahlo:ʃ / he doesn't allow him

Spelling Simplification vs. Standardization

The case of the Hamza (glottal stop)

- Multiple forms and complicated rules: **بهاء** **بهاؤه** **بهاؤه** **بهاؤه**

بهاء **بهاؤه** **بهاؤه** **بهاؤه**

/bahaʔ/ /bahaʔahu/ /bahaʔuhu/ /bahaʔihi/
glory his glory (acc) his glory (nom) his glory (gen)

- Simplification causes loss of consistency with CA spelling

- The “Root Persistence Principle”

مفاجأة **مفاجأة**

/muʔa:ʕaʔa/ /muʔa:ʕaʔe/
surprise surprise of

Promotion

- Education
 - Focusing on advantages to standardization and writing SPA
 - Traditions and Culture
 - Culturally sensitive terminology
 - Addressing cultural misconceptions
 - Addressing CA problems without being too offensive
- Publication
 - Developing a SPA literary style
 - The Age of Information

Conclusions

- PASS addresses all elements of a writing system creation to maximize the appeal of standardizing and using SPA
- This work is still in progress and there is a lot of work to be done.

الكتاب المقدس: سفر التكوين ١ - ٥

في البداية، الله خلق السموات والأرض. والأرض كانت خربة فاضية، والعتمة كانت في كل مكان، وروح الرب كانت بتفررف ع روح المي. والله قال: «خلي يكون في ضو» فصار في ضو. والله شاف انو الضو منيح، ففصل الضو من العتمة. والله سمى الضو «نهار» والعتمة، سماها «ليل». واجا مساء، واجا صباح - اليوم الأول.