

## Variations of Arabic Language in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** According to Bassiouney (2009: 10) it is stated that in Arab society there are two variations of language used side by side (diglossia), namely the Standard Arabic and Arabic Dialects. In the early 20th century, this problem becomes a debate among Arab scholars: which language variation would be the official language. Some claim that the spoken language is the most appropriate to be used as official Arabic, because it is a living language among the educated scholars or even children, whereas the standard language is a dead language that is only taught in schools, like mathematics or other sciences. On the other hand, there are also those who say that standard language is best used as an official language, because the standard language is a religious and unifying language for all Arab-speaking nations. With this situation, how does this affect the development of Arabic in Indonesia?

**Keywords:** Diglossia, Arabic Language, Indonesia, sociolinguistics

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### I. INTRODUCTION

This article conducts research on the variety of Arabic languages that exist in Indonesia, with the aim of providing knowledge to the community, so as not to make mistakes in understanding the problem. This is because so far there have often been misinterpretations from the public who think that Arabic is only used for matters relating to Islam, even though Arabic is also used for other things outside of religious affairs and is also used by Arabs who are not Muslim. The interim findings, there are three different types of Arabic, namely the standard classical Arabic variety used in pesantren to read religious books or *kitabkuning*; Modern standard Arabic is used and taught in public or private institutions in which there is a curriculum concerning the language or in departments that cooperate with Middle Eastern countries. Meanwhile, Arabic dialects are used by Indonesian workers who work in the Arab countries.

Arabic is one of the longest living languages in the world. Like other languages, Arabic branched out into many colloquial variations. The foundation of Arabic was located in the Arabian Peninsula. Arabic continued to undergo massive transformation until the third decade of the seventh century, when Arabic began to spread alongside Islam to the North, East and West. (Alorifi, 2008: 5).

In the early 20th century, there was a debate among scholars in the Arab world regarding the use of Arabic. The issue addresses whether it is the Standard Arabic or one of the variations of the local dialects that should be used as the official language. Some claim that the spoken language is the most appropriate to be used as official Arabic, because it is a living language, which is used among all people including educated scholars or children, whereas the standard language is a dead language that is only taught in schools, like mathematics or other sciences.

At the Orientalist congress in Leiden in 1931, an Egyptian author Mahmud Taymur, without hesitation, said that he agreed that the spoken language in Egypt used at that time to be the official language of the State, both orally and in writing, while literary language was still used as written language for everyone who used Arabic. However, his opinion was opposed by those who still wanted to maintain literary language as the official language. Finally, at the closing of the congress it was decided that the literary language would be used as the official language used by all Arab countries, while the spoken Arabic would only be used in conversations.

In the Congress it was stated that there were two factors that led to literary language chosen as the standard language for all Arab countries. First, it is because literary language is the language of religion. Classical Arabic is a sacred language because the Quran is written in that language and is a constant source in maintaining the Islamic heritage and Arabic culture in every generation. Second, it is due to political factors. The spoken language is influenced by the local environment and the words in each group or country develop into new words that are not owned by other dialects. Thus, spoken language can cause disintegration and separation of the Arabs, hence they may not have a Pan-Arab national identity and cultural heritage. Local languages emphasize local identities of individuals, while Classical Arabic is seen as unifying all Arab-speaking nations. Arabic

dialects are often considered to be inferior to the standard language, because the language is used by illiterate and rural people, thus weakening Pan-Arab supranational relations. (Amara, 2006).

## **II. DIGLOSSIA IN ARABIA**

Somech in Joshi (2013) states that in Arabic there are two worlds of language, namely the language world for educated and highly cultured elite people expressed through written Arabic and the world of the language used by common people expressed through spoken language. Alofiri (2008: 4) calls it a condition in which there are two variations of a common language which are used by the same speaker in different conditions in a community. Modern Arabic is used in written texts, formal oral language, lectures and news broadcasts, while colloquial Arabic is used among family and friends or soap operas on radio and television. According to Ferguson, this situation is called Diglossia, is a linguistic situation in which there exists a balance between various oral and written language dialects that are totally different or between formal written language and everyday spoken language. Meanwhile, Harris and Hodges (1981) call it high or low standard or style in a language. The formal one uses written language and a number of oral situations and others use colloquial language. (Joshi, 2013)

Classical standard Arabic began to develop in the 6th century AD, at the time of the development of Arabic literature, especially poetry. The form of language used in the poems was the standard language of poetry. Since the revelation of the Quran, Arabic has not only been used as a language of poetry, but also as a language of the religion. From the 7th to 12th century, Arabic-speaking countries and Islamic rulers have further expanded the use of Arabic. (Ryudin, 2005: 6)

Classical standard Arabic began as a tribal literary language. The dialect languages used by tribes varied, at least, in most cases, were structurally the same, thus forming a standard Arabic language which showed a tendency to a type of synthetic language. It expressed some concepts of the same word conjugations. The Arab conquest of the 7th century changed the linguistic structure of the dialect, starting from the urban language area, then spreading to the Bedouin dialects. After the conquest, dialects tended to be of an analytic type, which expresses each idea with different words, eliminating cases and suffixes. Thus, there existed a linguistic dichotomy, namely the structure of synthetic language and analytic language.

The gap between classical standard written language and oral dialect can actually be bridged if the history of Arabic used a "normal" method and the oral language influenced the written language. However, this effort cannot be carried out in the presence of Arabic doctrine, namely the doctrine which says that classical Arabic, as codified by Arabic philologists, is the language written in the sacred the Quran and classical Arabic literature cannot be changed and are the only one used for the written language. Therefore, theoretically, classical standard Arabic cannot be changed with time and may not be influenced by oral dialects. Therefore, while dialects undergo changes, as it happens in every expression in everyday life, the standard Arabic, both in theory and practice, remains unchanged especially in phonetic and morphological inventories to a large extent syntactically.

In the late 18th century, when Napoleon invaded Egypt, the separation between standard Arabic and dialect was almost perfect. The Arab community produced only a thin layer of educated people who used modern standard Arabic to express traditional Arabic culture in their writings, while the majority of people, such as women who, almost all of them, were illiterate, and other educated people used Arabic dialects in oral communication. (Blau, 1969: 7)

Modern Standard Arabic is considered the standard dialect of all Arabic speaking countries and is the mother tongue of more than 200 million people who live in a geographical area known as the Arab world, which includes countries such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Sudan. The pronunciation and vocabulary of Modern Standard Arabic can change drastically when mixed with local dialects. (Alorifi, 2008: 5)

Modern Standard Arabic began to be used in the 19th century. This variation of the Arabic language is a continuation of classical standard Arabic, but it must be considered a separate layer. Before the advent of modern standard Arabic, classical standard Arabic was a broken language and its literary writing had declined for hundreds of years. During the revival, a language emerged which was a continuation of previous classical Arabic, but substantially still had not changed, at least in its pronunciation and morphology for more than a thousand years. However, it was a language that was somewhat different from that of Modern Standard Arabic (Blau, 1969: 7)

Meanwhile, Arabic dialects does not only differ between Arab countries, but also between regions in the same country. For example, in the Arabian Peninsula alone, one can find 200 different dialects. At the same times the dialect can be the same and different. The dialects in Morocco and Egypt have the same grammar, vocabulary, and phonology, but dialects in other countries are very different. Differences in individual dialects can be categorized into three types, namely:

- Eastern and Western dialects

Countries that speak the Eastern Arabic dialects are Countries in the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen) as well as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, and Sudan, while those which use Western Arabic Dialects can be found in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. However, there are some differences between Eastern and Western Arabic dialects, but the main difference is in terms of its phonetics. Speakers of the Western Arabic Dialects tend to eliminate a number of short vowels and shorten long vowels, while the speakers of the Eastern Arabic dialects tend to retain vowels in classical Arabic. In addition to the field of phonology, there are also differences in morphology and syntax and vocabulary. In the field of morphology, Western Arabic dialects tend to use (n-) in singular and plural subjects, while the Eastern dialects Arabic use subject (n-) only in plurals, for example:

Western Arabic Dialects		Eastern Arabic Dialects	
Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
<i>Naktab</i>	<i>Naktabu</i>	<i>'aktib</i>	<i>Niktib</i>
I write	We write	I write	We write

- Bedouin and City Dialects

Historically, Arabic was a collection of various dialects. Some came from Bedouins, some from the city. City dialects were a mixture of classical Arabic and foreign influences, while the Bedouin dialects was isolated from foreign influences hence they could withstand the drastic linguistic evolution and maintain the characteristics of classical Arabic. The main characteristics of the Arabic Bedouin Dialects are uvular consonants which are generally voiceless, namely *qaaf* (q) to become voiced consonants namely *qaaf* (g) or affricative voiced consonants, namely *jim* (dz).

- Religious Data

Besides regional dialects, Arabic also contains several linguistic variations related to religion, especially Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Different religious sects also have varied dialects. The Shia, Sunni, Druze and Maronite Sects in Lebanon have their own dialects (Alorifi, 2008: 5)

### III. CONCLUSION

In Indonesia there are several varieties of Arabic known, as stated by Versteegh that the Indonesian Muslim community is the largest Muslim community outside of the Arab countries which treats Arabic as a holy language. Therefore, it is no surprise that Arabic becomes a language of religion. Some Indonesians have a basic knowledge of Arabic, because they have recited the Qur'an. Even the general curriculum cannot do much to eliminate Arabic from the society. Although in certain periods there are rulers who try to eliminate it, Arabic still can be obtained from pesantren (Versteegh, 2001: 238).

According to Drewes, since the entry of Islam into Indonesia, there are two ways that have been used in the teaching of Classical Arabic, namely the native method, which is the method used by the instructor to translate simple Arabic words without giving any introduction about the grammar. Teachers teach, while the students write their translations between the lines of text. With this method, the students learn to translate the contents of the text without mastering the basic principles of Arabic grammar, such as morphology and syntax (Auroux, 2000: 333). This method appeared in the 19th century and is still used today (Orfali, 2011: 183).

In Islamic boarding schools, classical Arabic is used as a tool to explore and understand Islamic teachings, especially those in the Quran, Hadith and classical Islamic books. Arabic is an absolute requirement to explore the teachings of Islam. Therefore, this knowledge is learned at the beginning of entering pesantren as the basic knowledge for students to learn the next lessons (Qamar, tt: 113), Arabic is a top priority in boarding schools, because among the important skills in the lives of students, one's expertise is measured by his expertise in Arabic, especially his grammar. An alumni of an Islamic boarding school is seen as pious when they are able to read the book correctly according to the correct *saraf* (morphology) and *nahw* (syntax) (Muhfid, 2006: 134).

Regarding Arabic in Islamic boarding schools, there has been a dialogue between Nurcholis Majid (CakNur) and K.H. Badri Mashduqi, Caregiver of Raudhatul Thalibin Islamic Boarding School, Rembang at the LP3S Seminar on pesantren education in Puncak. In his lecture, CakNur mentioned that education in pesantren, in general, uses Arabic, for example through *kitabkuning*, but is rarely used by students in daily life. Hearing these words, KH Badri commented that the purpose of the pesantren was to study the thought of the previous scholars, namely the salaf scholars. The main purpose of boarding schools is not to make students who are fluent in Arabic. If only the student wants to be fluent in Arabic, KH Badri recommended going to an Arab country, one or two months while working, so that person will be proficient in Arabic. (Saifullah, 2008: 241)

In addition to modern standard Arabic, Indonesia also known as modern standard Arabic. This language is studied in various government and private institutions. This is because, since 1974, modern standard Arabic has become one of the official languages of the United Nations (Dominguez, 1995: 343), official language in 23 countries in the Middle East (except Turkey and Iran) and North Africa, the official language

international organizations, such as the Arab league, the African Union Organization, the Islamic Congress, Muslim Organizations for education, science and culture, UNESCO and FAO (Amara, 2006).

Likewise Arabic dialects, especially by Indonesian workers who have worked in Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, there are two possible variations of Arabic that have been maintained by people who have worked there. First is the local Arabic dialects and modern standard Arabic. As Long did that in Saudi Arabia there are two languages used, namely the new form of Arabic (*lughafusha*), which is called Modern Standard Arabic, which is used for oral or written communication, and the local dialects (*lughadaarija*). Modern standard Arabic language is used if the local dialect cannot be understood. Modern standard Arabic is used for formal communication between Arab countries, while local dialects are used for non-formal matters (Long, 2005: 82)

In Saudi Arabia, the dialect is named according to its geographical area, for example the dialect of Najdi, Hijazi, East Parsi Bay, or Janubi (from the South). Literate people can master two or three types of languages, such as the Hijazi dialect, classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic (Zuhur, 2011: 245). Dialects in Saudi Arabia are known as Gulf Arabic which tend to be more formal than Arabic in Egypt and Morocco. Classical Arabic is more advisable in daily conversations, in addition to modern standard Arabic used throughout the Arab world, although the pronunciation is very much varied. Gulf Arabic tends to be deeply rooted in Bedouin Arabic in the desert, therefore the pronunciation is considered to be rough compared to the other dialects (Ham, 2004: 193).

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