

***The Arabization Movement on Social Media:
- Facebook as a Case Study -***

**التعريب من خلال مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي
- الفيسبوك أنموذجا -**

Rajaa Soualah*

University Center Si El Haouass
Barika / Algeria
Laboratory of Theoretical and
Applied Linguistic Studies
University of M'sila
Radjaa.soualah@cu-barika.dz

Khalil Salah Eddine BELAID

University Center Si El Haouass
Barika / Algeria
Laboratory of Theoretical and
Applied Linguistic Studies -
University of M'sila
Khalilalah.belaid@cu-barika.dz

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Abstract:

Arabic, a language from the Semitic family, is widely spoken globally and is known as the language of the Quran and Prayer. Despite its prominence, native speakers have increasingly shifted to other languages in their daily interactions, leading to the emergence of the Arabization movement to defend Arabic. Scholars, researchers, and advocates have devoted significant attention to this issue, with discussions extending to social media platforms, such as Facebook, where various campaigns promoting Arabization have taken place.

Key words: Arabization, Social media, Facebook, Arabic language advocacy.

الملخص:

إن اللغة العربية تنتمي إلى عائلة اللغات السامية، وهي من بين اللغات الأكثر انتشارا في العالم، كما أنها لغة القرآن والصلاة وهو ما زادها قوة وانتشارا. إلا أن أبنائها قد حادوا عنها وانشغلوا بلغات أخرى وراحوا يتناولونها بينهم، وهو ما أدى إلى ظهور تيار التعريب والدفاع عن اللغة العربية، وقد شغلت قضية التعريب حيزا كبيرا من اهتمام العلماء والباحثين وكل الغيورين عليها في الجامعات اللغوية والدراسات الأكاديمية، إلى أن

* Corresponding author.

وصلت إلى مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي التي على رأسها تطبيق فيسبوك، الذي كانت فيه عدة حملات للتعريب والدفاع عن اللغة العربية.
الكلمات المفتاحية: التعريب، مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، فيسبوك، الدفاع عن اللغة العربية.

1. Introduction

Language is a vital aspect of human existence, comparable to the importance of water, air, and sustenance. It facilitates communication among individuals, allows the sharing of ideas, information, and research, and serves as a collective mental repository for community members, expressed through speech and writing. As Ibn Jinni eloquently states, language consists of sounds that convey the intentions of each group, forming an integral part of our intellectual legacy.

Arabic is a widely spoken and utilized language globally, primarily due to its association with the Quran, Prayer, and Islam. As an ancient Semitic language, it has existed for centuries before the pre-Islamic era and possesses several unique characteristics that distinguish it from other languages. Historically, Arabic was a dominant and influential language, particularly during the golden age of the Abbasid era, akin to the status of English as a leading global language today. However, it has experienced a decline, particularly following foreign invasions and Western colonization of Arab lands, leading native speakers to adopt foreign languages, aligning with the colonial aim of erasing Arab identity.

Despite these challenges, a group of dedicated individuals has emerged to safeguard the Arabic language and promote Arabization through various individual, collective, local, and international efforts. In recent times, social media platforms, particularly Facebook—the most widely used platform globally—have played a significant role by providing pages and groups as a means of support. This study focuses on the development of Arabization in the digital context.

a. Research Questions

- What is Arabization?
- What are the key characteristics of Arabic language?

- What role do social media platforms, specifically Facebook, play in Arabization?

b. Hypotheses

- Arabization involves integrating words from other languages into Arabic to preserve and enrich it and to encourage its use.
- The Arabic language, spoken by the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula long before the pre-Islamic era, is the language in which the Quran was revealed to Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- Major social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have significantly contributed to promoting and supporting Arabization.

c. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-analytical method to explore and analyze the contemporary state of the Arabic language and Arabization, focusing on its manifestation on Facebook.

d. Significance of the Study

This research holds significant value, which constitutes the primary rationale for undertaking it. The Arabic language requires numerous individuals committed to defending it against aggressive campaigns. Failing to address the issue of Arabization and remaining silent poses considerable risks to the language's preservation.

2. Arabization

Arabization refers to the process of incorporating foreign words into Arabic by adjusting phonetic patterns, rules, and principles to make them compatible with Arabic morphology. This practice has a long history dating back to pre-Islamic times and involves slight modifications to the structure and letters of non-Arabic words to integrate them into the Arabic lexicon. Arabization aims to eliminate the influence of foreign languages, promote the exclusive use of Arabic, and enrich and expand the language to prevent its extinction [1].

According to Al-Zamakhshari, a foreign word becomes Arabic after it undergoes changes to its form, weight, and letters, making it

consistent with Arabic grammatical structures. Thus, Arabization serves as a means of preserving Arabic from extinction, misuse, and the dominance of foreign languages. [2]

The term "Arabization" is derived from "Arabic" language, which is the official and primary language in Arab countries and is widely spoken and spread around the world. Although its origins are a subject of debate, Arabic is considered the language of the early Arabs and Islam.

The Arabic language comprises two elements:

Language: According to Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-Arab*, the term (language) "لغة" derives from "لسن" (tongue). Its original form "لُغوة" (lughwa) follows the pattern "فُعلة" (fu'la) from "لغا" (lagha), which means to speak. Ibn Jinni describes it as sounds used by people to express their purposes [3]. Language serves as a means of communication among humans but also represents a fundamental part of cultural identity. Each nation has a language that distinguishes it from others, acting as the foundation of culture, civilization, and shaping society [4]. In other words, language mirrors a society's or civilization's thoughts, culture, and meanings [5]. Thus, language is the agreed-upon system among the members of a single nation, distinguishing them from others and forming the individuals and the basis of their society.

Arabic: The term "Arabic" pertains to the Arabs, signifying the barren, arid land devoid of water or vegetation, and indicates to the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula known as Arabs [6]. Consequently, the Arabic language is inextricably linked to the Arabs. It was the primary mode of interaction and communication among the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, reflecting their communal sounds, words, and meanings. This led to the emergence of the Arabic language, which God Almighty distinguished as the language of Islam, the Quran, and the people of Paradise.

Arabic is considered the most widely used Semitic language, and it is crucial to preserve its classical form, which serves to strengthen and enhance relations among Arab countries, encourage unity, and foster

solidarity, equipping them to confront and repel adversaries. Preserving Arabic is crucial because it is a fundamental component of Arab identity and cultural heritage [7].

As a primary reference for Arab identity, alongside Islam, Arabic plays a significant role in defining cultural and national identity among nations. It is the foundation of Arab civilization, preserving its rich heritage, poetry, literature, and scholarly works. As the language of the Quran, Arabic is considered one of the most accessible and fluid languages for human communication. It is also one of the richest and most extensive languages, making it the most prevalent Semitic language globally. Despite its unique features, Arabic requires continuous support and defense to prevent its decline and extinction. It must thrive and grow through the process of Arabization [4].

3. Key Characteristics of the Arabic Language

3.1. Grammar

The grammar of the Arabic language is a critical area of study, encompassing the principles and rules derived from analyzing native Arab speech to understand its true nature and structure [8]. Grammarians have explored this field extensively, leading to the development of various schools of thought and comprehensive research. Esteemed scholars have introduced different perspectives and methodologies dedicated to preserving the Arabic language and safeguarding the Quran from distortion.

Etymologically, the term "نحو" (Nahw) is derived from the root ن-ح-و (n-h-w), meaning "to direct towards" or "to aim at." This origin underscores the concept of guiding or structuring language in a particular manner. Therefore, the primary objective of Arabic grammar "نحو" is to emulate the authentic speech patterns of native Arabs, despite regional dialectal variations, thereby ensuring precision and correctness in communication.

There have been numerous debates among grammarians, particularly between the Basra and Kufa schools. One significant debate revolves around whether the subject (mubtada) is nominative due to its initial position, as the Basrians argue, or if the predicate (khabar) makes it nominative. These discussions, including the terminology for particles (ḥurūf) and tools (adawāt), are unique to Arabic and not found in other languages [9].

This is one of the controversial issues that grammarians have extensively delved into without much benefit, and it is considered a grammatical complexity. Despite its virtues in studying Arabic at various levels and aspects, Arabic grammar has been criticized for its difficulties and intricacies. However, these complexities are regarded as distinguishing features of the Arabic language, its issues, and matters that do not exist in other foreign languages. Simultaneously, it is considered as one of the most prominent obstacles to the automatic processing of Arabic.

When grammar is incorporated into the field of computing, it becomes a complex and difficult problem that requires significant input and careful preparation, bringing together the expertise of both grammarians and computer scientists. This necessitates the use of mediation and an aptitude for simplification in complex and contested issues and selectively avoiding some of them when necessary [10].

3.2. Diacritical marks and vowelization

Diacritical marks and vowelization hold significant importance in Arabic as they are used to denote particular grammatical cases and have a direct impact on the meanings and intentions of words. This characteristic is particularly noteworthy in Semitic languages, with Arabic being a prime example, and it is one of the most prominent differences between Arabic and Latin languages. [11]

The Arabic language is characterized by a high degree of precision, which requires meticulous attention, as the form and movement of letters are contingent on their context. Vowelization also undergoes changes

based on its position in the sentence and the grammatical case, leading to interactions between word endings and subsequent words. [10]

A single change in the diacritical mark can completely alter its meaning. For instance, "نَابَ" (naaba) means to substitute, while "نَابٌ" (naabun) refers to a long, sharp tooth. Similarly, "رَجُلٌ" (rajulun) means man and "رِجْلٌ" (rijlun) means leg, "جَبَلٌ" (jabal) means mountain and "جَمَلٌ" (Jamel) means camel, demonstrate how altering one letter can change the meaning entirely.

This highlights another unique feature of Arabic: its system of diacritical marks and vowelization, which sets it apart from Latin and other languages, including other Semitic languages, alongside its grammatical structure.

3.3. Derivation

Derivation in Arabic refers to the process of creating new words from existing ones, in which both words share the same root and common general meaning. This process ensures that all the derived forms retain the core meaning of the root. For instance, the words "كتاب" (kitaab) means book, "كتب" (kataba) means wrote, "مكتوب" (maktoob) means written, "يكتب" (yaktubu) means writes, "اكتب" (uktub) means write, and "كاتب" (kaatib) means writer, all stem from the root "ك-ت-ب" (k-t-b), which is related to writing. Each form serves a different grammatical function, such as the first being a noun, the second a past tense verb, the third a passive participle, the fourth a present tense verb, the fifth an imperative verb, and the sixth an active participle. [12]

Derivation also includes other forms, such as intensive forms, instrument nouns, descriptive adjectives, comparative and superlative adjectives, and nouns of time and place. This process is a key feature of Arabic, significantly enriching the vocabulary with a vast array of words.

3.4. Phonetic Characteristics

The Arabic language, commonly referred to as the language of Dhad, encompasses twenty-eight sounds generated from 17 points of

articulation, which are categorized into five distinct types: oral cavity sounds, throat sounds, tongue sounds, lip sounds, and nasal sounds. [13]

- a. **Oral Cavity Sounds:** These sounds are produced within the mouth and throat, and they comprise the vowels - ا (a), و (w), and ي (y).
- b. **Throat Sounds:** Six sounds originate from the throat, including - ء (hamza), ه (h), ع (ain), ح (h), غ (gh), and خ (kh).
- c. **Tongue Sounds:** Ten articulation points produce eighteen sounds, among which are - ق (q), ج (j), ش (sh), ي (non-vowel y), ض (dh), ل (l), ر (r), ط (t), د (d), ت (t), س (s), ص (s), ظ (dh), ذ (dh), and ث (th).
- d. **Lip Sounds:** These consist of - ف (f), ب (b), م (m), and و (non-vowel w), all of which are articulated using the lips.
- e. **Nasal Sounds:** These sounds exhibit nasal resonance, particularly when tanween is present, such as ن (n) and م (m) when they are in a state of sukoon and not pronounced clearly. [14]

The distinctive features of Arabic, including its extensive range of phonetic sounds and intricate phonetic system, distinguish it from other languages. Its structural complexity, which includes nouns, verbs, and particles, as well as the construction of nominal and verbal sentences using prefixes and suffixes, further emphasizes its uniqueness. Arabic is a language that deserves preservation and celebration, rather than being overshadowed by less significant languages. Despite the passage of centuries, Arabic has maintained its core characteristics and structure, offering the unique features that establish it as a preeminent global language.

These qualities have inspired native speakers, both men and women, to passionately defend their language, both individually and collectively. This defense has also been extended to social media, a platform of the contemporary era that has been widely utilized by advocates of Arabic and Arabization.

4. Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms are digital tools and websites that enable communication between individuals in an online community. They provide a space for people to exchange opinions, share information, and

represent their communities. According to Melony Krichmer [15] and Zahir Radi [16], these platforms allow users to create personal profiles and connect with other members through posts, comments, images, and messages. Social media applications also facilitate communication through group accounts, enabling socialization and the spread of knowledge.

Social networks are electronic systems that enable subscribers to interact with one another through various forms of communication including posts, comments, images, and messages. They can be used for a variety of purposes, including socializing, spreading knowledge, and advocating for causes such as the Arabic language and Arabization.

Social networks are websites that facilitate specific types of social relationships, such as cooperation, friendship, and advice among groups of people. These relationships are formed through communication on the network and are therefore informal and unofficial. Social networks consist of virtual groups and pages that connect individuals and allow them to mutually benefit and assist one another through individual and collective action. [17]

A social network can be defined as a collection of social entities, including individuals and groups, that are connected through websites and pages. These connections are formed through social interactions with members regularly engaging in these pages to discuss topics of interest. [18]

There are many social networking sites and platforms, the most important of which are:

4.1. Facebook

It is the most widely used social networking platform globally and in Algeria. It is an Internet-based application designed to foster and enhance connections among individuals and facilitate communication across the world. It enables the creation and nurturing of relationships, locating people, engaging in commerce, and exchanging ideas [19]. Established in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg to connect university students, it swiftly expanded to other academic institutions and ultimately became

a global phenomenon, amassing billions of users by 2007. Originally intended for sharing personal photographs and communication, Facebook has evolved into a marketing platform for both individuals and major corporations, as well as a venue for the exchange of diverse ideas and viewpoints. One of its key features is the provision of personal profiles, which can be genuine or fictional, as it is an unofficial platform. Users can add companions, establish groups, and establish friendships. [20]

4.2. Twitter

depicted by a blue bird, is named after the term "tweet." It enables users to send or post short text messages, known as tweets, to friends, with a constraint of approximately 140 characters. Launched about two years after Facebook, it gained popularity the following year. Twitter is a widely utilized official platform by politicians, journalists, businesspeople, and ordinary individuals. [21]

4.3. YouTube

it is a platform that specializes in sharing videos and short films. Users can log in with their email addresses to comment on and follow videos as well as upload and download them. The platform also allows for the creation and subscription of channels, making it a social media platform that facilitates monetization. [22] Other platforms that are widely used include Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Snapchat. According to the statistics provided by Wikipedia for the period 2022-2023, the following platforms are the most popular and ranked according to their global usage [23]: Facebook: 2.91 billion users; YouTube: 2.56 billion users; WhatsApp: 2 billion users; Instagram: approximately 2 billion users; Messenger: 1.3 billion users.

According to Start2Apps, Facebook was ranked as the top platform by the end of 2023, with the remaining top five platforms being as follows [24]: Facebook: approximately 3 billion users; WhatsApp: more than 2 billion users; Instagram: over 1 billion users; WeChat: over 1 billion users (primarily in China); TikTok: nearly 1 billion users.

Statistics from dolphinuz showed [25]: Facebook: 2.91 billion users; YouTube: over 2 billion users; WhatsApp: 1.93 billion users; Messenger: 1.5 billion users; WeChat: over 1 billion users.

Consequently, data from three distinct sources indicate a shared characteristic: Facebook persistently ranks as the top social media platform, despite fluctuations in the figures. This steadfastness is the primary reason Facebook was selected as the sample for our investigation. It is also the reason advocates of Arabic and Arabization favor it over other platforms, as it has the largest global user base. This perspective is corroborated by numerous international studies, including three separate studies cited in our research.

The Arabic language enjoys extensive use on social media, particularly on Facebook, surpassing French—the language of the former colonizer—in the number of speakers and users. This prevalence illustrates the impact of Arabization initiatives and the role of social media in promoting the Arabic language. According to various sources, Arabic ranks among the top five languages utilized on the internet, in the following order [26]: English (25.9%), Chinese (19.4%), Spanish (7.9%), Arabic (5.2%), Portuguese (3.7%), Indonesian (4.3%), French (3.3%), Japanese (2.6%), Russian (2.5%), German (2.1%).

The efforts of Arabization campaigners and those who champion the Arabic language have proven fruitful. This can be seen in statistical data and rankings, where Arabic holds the fourth position (marked in purple), signifying its enhanced status and future potential. This success can be attributed to the dedicated supporters of the Arabic language and the advocates of Arabization on social media, whose campaigns have garnered a diverse following. This is evident in various instances, such as the page of Professor Sharif Jouda from Algeria, who is actively involved in Arabizing public spaces, such as shop and clinic names, and in using Arabic in scientific and medical contexts. He also focuses on converting personal names from Latin to Arabic script on Facebook [27].

Additionally, Professor jouda is a prominent member of the National Campaign to Arabize Facebook Account Names, a group with

hundreds of members that continues to grow and attract professionals from various fields, including doctors, educators, merchants, and business owners. The response has been overwhelming, with many young, educated individuals joining daily. Some have even changed their shop signs to Arabic, and doctors have started writing prescriptions in Arabic.

One of their notable initiatives involves the translation of personal social media usernames into Arabic, such as "Al-Arabi Al-Arabi" and "Amer the Nationalist." These efforts have garnered widespread approval and significantly advanced the Arabization cause. They also advocate for the Arabization of education in all fields in Algeria, including scientific subjects, similar to countries like Syria, where medical sciences are taught in Arabic. Furthermore, the "Popular Campaign for Empowering and Developing Our National Language," with almost 6,000 subscribers, calls for Arabic to be designated as Algeria's official language in all domains.

The promotion of Arabization transcends Algeria's borders. Devotees of the Arabic language who wish to preserve it actively participate in campaigns on social media platforms, such as Facebook. Arabization is a vital component of our identity, as it is the language of our religion, the Quran, and our daily prayer. Therefore, it is imperative to support and join these initiatives. For instance, the "Arab Platform Group" in Morocco, which advocates for the Arabization of the Moroccan environment, boasts approximately 2,500 members. Additionally, the "Speak to Me in My Moroccan Language" page has 4000 followers. Across Algeria, Morocco, and the Arab world, various individual and group pages are dedicated to the Arabization of their respective environments and sciences, with the ultimate goal of making Arabic the universal language for Arabs.

The revival of the Arabic language can be achieved through concerted campaigns and the unwavering support of governments, language experts, and the public. To ensure its continued growth and evolution, it is necessary to establish strict legislation and foster a

commitment to its preservation. By making Arabic the language of communication in various media, such as television programs, advertising, and Internet platforms, its potential for renewal and self-adaptation can be fully realized. The Arabic language possesses the capacity for growth and evolution, and it is imperative that it be given the recognition it warrants. [28]

5. Conclusion

In summary, the importance of Arabization cannot be underestimated. It is essential for the preservation of the Arabic language by promoting its usage and introducing new terminology that strengthens its framework. The distinctive features of Arabic make it inherently valuable, and it is a collective responsibility to protect it from extinction. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, have been pivotal in promoting Arabization, with a growing number of advocates pushing for its preservation in various aspects of the environment, such as signs, page names, and medical prescriptions.

The key findings emphasize the critical role of Arabization in safeguarding Arabic from alteration and extinction. Arabic holds a significant position among the languages used on social media, ranking fourth globally, with platforms such as Facebook playing a substantial role in its promotion through diversified campaigns. These efforts, supported by notable individuals, including physicians, professors, and intellectuals, aim for the comprehensive Arabization of the environment, a goal that is progressively being realized as more individuals join the movement.

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