

January 2016:



Remarks on the World Arabic Language Day

Dr. Abdallahi Hamdy



UN Arabic Language Day is a proclaimed day from UN as a reminder of the importance of the Arabic language and its culture of each year. This year, December 18th, 2015, the Arab world and Arab communities in the West have celebrated this great event through lectures, cultural events, and concerts. There is no doubt about the importance of these activities, but how to turn the recommendations of these activities from words to actions, and how we can transform ideas and wishes to programs and plans in order to face the challenges posed to this language. In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate this occasion by recalling some of these challenges that impede our development and reduce the effectiveness of teaching this language in our schools.

The first challenge: is the lack of interest in learning Arabic among young people and parents in the Arab world, which demonstrates the high failure rates in the final exams in some Arabic's junior high schools. In this context, I would like to recall the statement of Minister of Education Lebanese Hassan Diab during an earlier interview with (BBC Arabic) that the failure rates during the past five years amounted to 60% in Junior high schools in Lebanon, which warn all of us about the future of our language. This situation urges us to study the causes of this crisis and develop a new strategy to preserve this language.

The second challenge: is to encourage the teaching of local dialects and mix the Arabic language with foreign languages in daily communication such as (ARABIZI). In addition to that, there are several voices in some Arab countries calling for teaching local dialects in elementary schools and pushing youth to start using ARABIZI, which is widely spread among young people nowadays as an alternative to the standard Arabic especially on the net and through social media. Moreover, the used French vocabularies in some Arabic Maghreb countries daily language are uncountable. This great challenge is isolating the majority of people of these countries from tasting and using modern standard Arabic.

The third challenge: is the weakness of the Arabic curriculum and the lack of developing a new approach in teaching Arabic Language in our schools. The most Arabic textbooks in Canada are very difficult and hard to be understood from the non-Arab speakers. This situation built a barrier between people and Arabic language and caused the deployment of the wrong perception that the Arabic language is complicated and difficult to learn. In addition to that, most of the teachers of this language are not specialized in teaching it and did not get enough training in order to achieve their goals and ensure the effectiveness of their efforts. As a result, many people discontinue showing interest in learning this language.

The fourth Challenge: is the inability to persuade the non-native Arabic speakers of the Muslim community that the Arabic language is a language of a great civilization and not a sectarian or a national language only. This is supported by the idea that the Islamic civilization has absorbed all races and merged them in one pot that make them proud of Al-Quran and its language. Many non-Arab Muslim scholars from those nations defended this language and published books to preserve it as the language of Al-Quran such as Sibawayhi, Al-Kisai, Al-Fara, and Abu Ali, who are of Persian origins. Moreover, the famous linguistic author Ibn Jeni is of Roman origin. In addition to all of that, several non-Arab speakers served this language with proud in Africa, especially in Mauritania such as El Haj Omar Al- Footy, Abdel Kader Kane, and Mahmoud Ba.... Etc.

Finally, I would like to mention that the Standard Arabic language will remain strong as the language of this nation despite all challenges, whether local dialects or foreign languages. It has lovers who are ready to protect it and it is like any other civilized language may weaken but will not vanish or die as some promoted. Therefore, we should be proud of our language and share its beauty with others. We should take into account that the secret behind the development of Japanese, Chinese, Koreans and Turks is that they have studied sciences and knowledge in their native languages and tied their generations on the glories of those languages and cultures.

So, are we able today to introduce the standard Arabic language to the world and share its contribution to the human civilization?

Are we able to build bridges of communication with the non-Arab speakers in order to motivate everyone to take his responsibility to preserve this language and to develop a creative and interactive learning approach to make Arabic accessible to all institutions and individuals?