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The Impact of Arabic Diglossia on First Grade Learners'
Academic Achievement

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Dedications

*To my lovely parents to whom I owe gratitude and insightful
respect and estimation*

*To my husband Nassim who has been a great source of
motivation and inspiration*

*To my adorable sisters and brothers for their help and patience
without forgetting my pretty niece Radjaa*

To all who believe on the value of knowledge

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support and care*

To my lovely brothers Hichem and Mohammed

To my sister Hadjer

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Abstract

The current study revolved around diglossia. The end was to highlight the effects of Arabic diglossia on quality education, precisely at primary levels. The study attempted to examine the extent to which early exposure to Standard Arabic may reduce diglossia's negative repercussions on education. As such, the research took place in two primary schools of which one provides preparatory classes to learners before school-age. The research built on a mixed methods approach to data collection in which classroom observation and mixed questionnaire were used. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the vast majority of teachers have strong tendency to alternate between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic. It has also demonstrated that preparatory classes that are offered to learners before the age of official schooling are of significant importance. Besides preparing young learners to school environment, their linguistic abilities are also fostered in that they are exposed to recurrent use of Standard Arabic. Therefore, learners who enroll in such classes have been found to perform linguistically better than learners who miss pre-schooling linguistic preparation.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

One of the most important issues that characterize the Arab world, including Algeria, is the co-existence of two varieties of the Arabic language introducing a sociolinguistic phenomenon known as diglossia. Standard Arabic is the High variety, being a language of literature and literacy, whereas Dialectal Arabic reflects the role of the L variety, being attached to informality.

This research work examines Arabic diglossia with focus on its impact on quality education, especially the repercussions it has on young learners who generally only have control of the dialectal form. The fact that Standard Arabic is the mother tongue of no one, as it is a learned variety that is usually accessible through schooling, makes it of paramount importance to investigate learners' academic attainment and the extent to which they understand their teachers when they first join schools. In order to answer the above-raised problematic, two research questions have been formulated, as sketched below:

1. What are the linguistic difficulties that learners are faced with during their first grade?
2. How can we help learners overcome the linguistic difficulties they encounter?

The hypotheses suggested for such research questions are ordered as follows:

1. The difficulties are basically lexical as Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic display many different equivalent items with identical meaning.
2. Early exposure to standard Arabic, i.e., promoting SA in the contexts of DA, may rationalize the diglossic issue as the child will have the opportunity to acquire almost naturally the literary language.

As for the organization of the research work, three chapters make up the construct of this work. The first chapter goes around the relevant literature and sets the explanatory frame of other chapters. A characterization of Arabic diglossia is provided. Moreover, the effects of diglossia on education are discussed from a broader perspective.

Chapter two is about the methodology followed in the conduct of the case in point. It, therefore, summarizes the overall methodology approach in terms of the study design, sample population, research site, and types of data (qualitative and quantitative). It also sketches the techniques used for data elicitation. The study builds on mixed methods to collect sufficient data, and allow cross-verification of the findings which renders generalizability of the results a possible option.

As to the third chapter, it is meant to analyze, discuss and interpret the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the research instruments. Statistical methods are used so as to boost the validity of the findings. Of course, this chapter is intended to answer the research questions raised above, and to validate, or nullify the associated hypotheses that have been put forward.

Chapter One : Overview of Related Literature

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Diglossia

1.2.1 Ferguson's Conceptualization of Diglossia

1.2.2 Fishman's Extended Diglossia

1.3 The Arab World : A Diglossic Context

1.4 Varieties of Arabic

1.4.1 Standard Arabic

1.4.1.1 Classical Arabic

1.4.1.2 Modern Standard Arabic

1.4.2 Dialectal Arabic

1.5 Arabic Diglossia and its Impact on Quality Education

1.6 Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

Sociolinguistics emerged as a counter reaction against the weaknesses of asocial linguistics which is concerned with the internal structure (competence) to the exclusion of the social functions of language (performance). One of the topics central to sociolinguistic investigations is language contact. Among the outcomes of such a contact is 'diglossia'. From an education standpoint, diglossia has a strong impact on literacy in the sense that the language of the school (H variety) is significantly different from day-to-day medium of communication which the child acquires as a mother tongue. As such, the diglossic issue must be taken at a high esteem if the final end is to achieve quality education. In what ensues, we provide a general overview about the relationship between diglossia and literacy with focus on the Arabic language.

1.2 Diglossia

According to Zughoul (1980), the commonly accepted view in the literature is that the term diglossia was first coined by the French linguist William Marçais (1930) who defines it as a scholarly competition between the written language and the vernacular sometimes exclusively spoken. However, it was with Ferguson (1959) that the concept of diglossia gained a widespread and intense interest. In his article entitled 'diglossia', Ferguson (1959) dealt with four linguistic situations which display a diglossic character: Arab World, Modern Greece, German-speaking Switzerland and Haiti. Ferguson called the superposed variety 'High', or 'H' (for example, Classical Arabic) and contrasted its use with the 'Low' variety, or 'L' (e.g. Dialectal Arabic). Central to diglossia is the functional specialization of each variety. In this respect, Ferguson (1972) sees diglossia as a situation "where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play" (p.232). Commenting on Ferguson's article, Hymes views diglossia as "an excellent example of coexistence in the same community of mutually unintelligible codes" (1964: 389).

According to Ferguson (1972), diglossia comes into being when there is a sizable body of literature in a language closely related to (or even identical with) the indigenous language of a community and when literacy in the community is limited to a small elite and a long period of time, of the order of several centuries, has followed the establishment of literacy and its written literature.

1.2.1 Ferguson's Conceptualization of Diglossia

Ferguson (1959) defines diglossia as:

A relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified [...] superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature [...] which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for an ordinary conversation (p. 36).

Ferguson¹ proceeds to explain diglossia under nine rubrics, as discussed below:

1. **Function:** one of the most important features of diglossia is the specialization of function for H and L. In one set of situations only H is appropriate and in another only L is used. To put another way, the two varieties are found in complementary distribution. Slight overlapping does exist, however. The H variety is reserved for formal settings, whereas the L variety is assigned to informal contexts. With reference to, for example, the Arab World, Standard Arabic is the H variety used in literacy and literature, delivering political speeches, mosques and other formal contexts. Dialectal Arabic (the many regional dialects) is rather the L variety used in casual conversations and everyday communication in the street, market, home, etc.

2. **Prestige:** the H variety is perceived more prestigious and is highly valued. The L variety is seen less worthy and is named by the degrading label 'dialect'. With reference to Arabic, Standard Arabic is the elevated variety

especially that it is associated with the Quran (Muslim's Holy Book) and a respected body of literature. Dialectal Arabic is perceived as a broken variety and a deviation from the norm though it is the mother tongue. This is a societal judgment, however. On linguistic grounds, H and L are of equal status as long as they fulfill communication tasks.

3. **Literary heritage:** generally, the L variety exists orally, and therefore in most diglossic communities literature is available exclusively in the H variety. The exception may relate to caricature captions and folk literature which may be written in the L variety. Even in such cases, the alphabet system of the standard variety is used. As far as Arabic is concerned, the pre-Islamic literature to the most contemporary writings are documented in Standard Arabic.

4. **Acquisition:** a significant distinction between the H and L varieties is the way of acquiring each one. On the basis of the distinction between acquisition and learning, we argue that L is an acquired variety, whereas H is a learned one. It implies that L is the genuine mother tongue of people in diglossic communities. This fact covers the Arab World too where Dialectal Arabic is acquired first at homes, and Standard Arabic is learned later at schools.

5. **Standardization:** one of the major characteristics of H is the grammar system. Ferguson (1959:435) observes that H is "grammatically more complex" as a result of the standardization process it has undergone. With reference to Arabic, Kaye (2001:124) argues that "SA may be viewed as a 'marked system', and the colloquial Arabic as 'unmarked'". In other words, Standard Arabic (SA) variety marks many more categories of grammar: normative, generative and accusative cases, duality in the pronoun, verb, and adjective. None of the Arabic dialects has retained these grammatical categories.

6. **Stability:** diglossia is usually an enduring linguistic phenomenon rather than a short-lived condition. In this respect, Wardhaugh (2006:89) reports that "diglossia is not ephemeral in nature", but "it appears to be a persistent social and linguistic phenomenon".

7. **Grammar:** as mentioned above, H has grammatical categories not present in the Low variety and vice versa. The H grammar is more complex than in

L's. For example, in Arabic both nominal and verbal sentences are used in SA and DA as well.

8. **Lexicon:** an explicit feature of diglossia is the existence of paired lexical items, where L and H varieties have different terms for the same object. For example, the Arabic standard word for 'knife' is /sikki:n/, whereas its dialectal equivalent is /xudmi/. Also, H includes some terms which have no equivalents in L, which makes L users code-switch to compensate the lexical gaps. Generally, but certainly not always, H has a richer dictionary.

9. **Phonology:** the H variety has preserved its phonological system, while the L variety has diverged from it with relative change in the phonological elements. With reference to Algerian Dialectal Arabic, one can argue that such a variety has phonemes which are not part of the phonemic system of Standard Arabic. For example, the dialect includes sounds like /p/, /v/, which are actually absent in the standard variety though [p] may occur as a realization in some words (allophonic variation). The existence of such foreign sounds in the dialect is a result of the contact with other languages, namely French.

1.2.2 Fishman's Extended Diglossia

Ferguson regarded his study of diglossia as preliminary (1996:26) and concluded his paper with "an appeal for further study of this phenomenon and related ones" (p. 38). By 1967, Fishman extended the concept of diglossia to bilingual communities in which one finds a hierarchical evaluation of languages. Fishman (1967) proposes that diglossia may be, in addition to Ferguson's original idea, extended to cover even situations where two (or more) genetically unrelated or at least historically distant language varieties occupy the H and L niches (Schiffman:2004). Fishman (1971:75) refers to Paraguay as an example of a diglossic community where H and L are Spanish and Guarani, an Indian language unrelated to Spanish- exist side by side. Spanish is used in literacy and for literary purposes, whereas Guarani remains the basic medium of communication among the population.

However, Fishman (1967) emphasizes a neat distinction between diglossia and bilingualism, arguing that the former is a feature of society to be dealt with by sociologists and sociolinguists, whereas the latter is a matter for psychologists and psycholinguists as it refers to an individual's ability to behave linguistically in more than one code.

The point which should be emphasized is that both linguists, i.e., Ferguson and Fishman, insist on the core theoretical claim, with H being reserved for formal contexts and L designed for informal situations, and as Fasold (1984: 53) puts it, "only function remains unchallenged; it is the very heart and soul of the diglossia concept". In what follows, we discuss Arabic diglossia with reference to Algeria as a case in point.

1.3 The Arab World: A Diglossic Context

Arabic is a diglossic language, i.e, a language with two distinct forms: a standard language shared by all the Arab nations (*lingua franca*), and many regional vernaculars. According to De Silva (1975), Arabic is a classical case of diglossia in which day-to-day conversation is impracticable in the standard variety and is therefore conducted in the vernacular. Bentahila (1991) confirms this arguing that the duality of having on the one hand a formal written language and, on the other hand, an everyday spoken language exists in each Arab country.

1.4 Varieties of Arabic

Native speakers of Arabic are aware of the existence of two variants of the language: standard and dialectal. However, contemporary literature on Arabic recognizes a number of varieties, each with a different label. Not all native scholars share the view about the real existence of more than two variants, however. CA, MSA, and DA are the usually acknowledged variants of Arabic, as discussed below.

1.4.1 Standard Arabic

Some scholars argue that Standard Arabic (*Al Fusha*) branches of into Classical Arabic (henceforth CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (hereafter MSA).

1.4.1.1 Classical Arabic

Classical Arabic is the language of the Quran (also called Quranic Arabic). This variety existed well before Islam. It is the language of Quraish, a famous tribe in Mecca. It was regarded as the superposed variety, and hence was used for presenting poetry and for communicating with people who came to Mecca. Later, the Holy Quran was revealed in this variety.

In fact, CA remains the most prestigious variety of Arabic. Such high prestige is in part due to this ‘cherished’ relationship between Arabic and the Quran which makes it a sacred language. In other words, CA holds a religious value.

1.4.1.2 Modern Standard Arabic

Modern Standard Arabic, as its name indicates, is the modern counterpart of CA. MSA, if it is regarded different from CA, is more or less a simplified version of CA. Both variants must be better treated as very close forms instead of being significantly different from one another. The point here is that the main difference is a question of vocabulary. While CA has a considerably large body of vocabulary, MSA has a relatively smaller lexicon which is mostly taken from the mother source. Employing less vocabulary items is especially to meet learners’ academic needs. In terms of morphology and syntax, CA and MSA share the same rules, with CA which is regarded as the norm. Modern Standard Arabic is the variety of Arabic most widely used in print media, official documents, correspondence, education, etc.

1.4.2 Dialectal Arabic

Dialectal Arabic incorporates the many *regional* dialects scattered throughout the Arab World. Such dialects form a geographical continuum in which mutual intelligibility is deeply affected (Youssi, 1992); the further we move from

one point to another in a particular direction, the larger linguistic differences will become. Within the same Arabic-speaking country, there may exist a variety of regional dialects with slight to significant differences at one or more levels of linguistic analysis.

1.5 Arabic Diglossia and its Impact on Quality Education

According to a 1985 UNESCO publication, the incidence of illiteracy in the Arabic-speaking countries is the highest in the world, amounting to 56.5% among Arabs aged 15 years and over. While various reasons can be given as an explanation for the high rate of illiteracy in the Arab World (varying from political, to social, to economic), the researchers will focus on one factor which is to a large extent responsible for the persistence of illiteracy, namely the mismatch between Spoken Arabic (local vernacular) and Standard Arabic. It is high time to demonstrate how and to what extent the phenomenon of diglossia in the Arabic-speaking countries contributes not only to illiteracy, but also to poor scholastic attainment of Arab learners.

Maamouri (1998) draws the attention to the relationship between low quality results and the linguistic distance between the various Arabic colloquial forms and Standard Arabic. He mentions that one of the consequences growing out of the dramatic diglossic situation in Arab schools could be “the growing use of the colloquial forms in formal and non-formal education and in other numerous daily activities” (Maamouri, *ibid*: 68). The gap between the colloquial forms, which are the mother tongues of speakers, and SA causes many problems to educationalists and even to writers. Although it is assumed that in an educational setting only SA is used in order to render the curriculum accessible to all, actually it is not the only discourse produced (Tamer, 2003). Courses are delivered regularly in SA, yet explained in the dialect to help students understand and acquire easily (that sometimes SA is used only in writing). Therefore, pupils come across many difficulties of receiving the lecture in one variety and then reading or writing in the other. Haeri (2000:71) argues that “this dual instruction created numerous problems

rooted in the difficulty of the grammar and orthography of Classical Arabic”. Sometimes even the teachers’ remarks to attract the pupils’ attention and monitor classroom activities are given in the dialect. Similarly, the pupils respond to their teachers in the dialect with more freedom (Tamer, 2000).

Mammouri (1998) and Ayari (1996), among many others, argue that learners display low results due to the use of SA in classrooms as this variety is nobody’s mother tongue and children in most cases are exposed to it until formal education age. Colloquial Arabic, in contrast, is the true mother tongue that is naturally acquired and used in daily life. Another major reason is that DA is very different from literary Arabic (e.g. Abu-Rabia, 2000; Saiegh-Haddad, 2003).

Because of such challenging situation, many linguists and language educators posit that SA represents a hurdle to both teachers and learners. Moreover, many researchers (e.g. Maamouri, 1998; Saiegh-Haddad, 2003) argue that the best way for efficient literacy is to teach through the dialect (the mother tongue). In this vein, the child would face no comprehension problems. It would be almost less challenging to learn to read (and write) a form of a language which is similar to the language he has already grown up speaking as this child is in a way connecting written symbols with the verbal sounds he already knows (Verhoeven 1994a:10).

The situation must be harder when the school language is significantly distant from the colloquial. Taking the example of Algeria as a diglossic community, DA shows many differences from SA at all levels of linguistic analysis. In terms of vocabulary, for example, colloquial words like /luṭu, karṭab/, to name but a few, have entirely different standard equivalents /sijjarah, miḥfaḍah/ (car, school-bag, respectively). Also, many loanwords are part of Algerian Arabic and do not exist in the standard variety. Examples like /farḷiṭa, ṭabla, kuzina/ etc, are frequently used by Algerian speakers, being educated or not or bilinguals. Such loanwords are not incorporated in SA. Subsequently, it is expected that young learners will find the school vocabulary ‘alien’ which leads to an effort-demanding and time-consuming learning condition for the child who is required to learn

simultaneously the new words and their graphic representation instead of only linking the written form to what he already has stored its oral representation.

The language education policy in the Arab World is in sharp contrast to the policies in many of the ex-Soviet Republics, like Moldavia and Georgia, which have developed a language education policy in which the Standard language (the medium of instruction) is not far from the local spoken dialects (Pool, 1978; Simon, 1991). The Arab World is also different from standard-with-dialect communities like France and England, where the standard language is the mother tongue of a portion of the whole population. In this sense, Myhill (2009) reports that “(t)he countries with situations of this type which I was able to investigate have basic literacy rates of around 99% [...], and I was not able to find studies suggesting that basic literacy is lower in such countries for people who speak non-standard dialects than for people who speak the standard dialect” (p.11). Myhill illustrates the impact of diglossia on quality education and high illiteracy rates using three language pairs: Maltese with Arabic, Tajik with Persian, and Demotiki with Katharevousa. The first variety of each pair represents the dialect and the second is the Standard language. At a given time, Arabic, Persian, and Katharevousa were used as media of instruction in Malta, Tajikistan and Greece, respectively. Then, the dialects have been standardized based on the local spoken varieties and used for literacy. Today, the literacy rate for Maltese is 87.9%; Tajikistan, 99.5%; non-diglossic Greece (2006), 96%. The diglossic counterpart of each example where the ‘H’ variety is still used as medium of instruction shows lower literacy rates: 70.3% in the Arab states; 82.4% in Iran; 86% in diglossic Greece of the year 1971 (Myhill, *ibid*). Commenting on such findings, Myhill (*ibid*: 16) has this to say:

My best guess at present is that this is because in these cases—and only in these cases—the standard (H) language is not based upon any group’s contemporary usage but rather upon older texts and grammatical rules which grammarians have constructed, in principle upon the basis of these texts. It may have been the case that these texts were based upon an earlier spoken version of the language, although it is not clear that this is the case.

1.6 Conclusion

In sum, diglossia is a sociolinguistic condition worthy of investigation. From a learning standpoint, the distance between the H variety and the L variety has serious negative repercussions on quality education. The diglossic question must be taken at the highest regard as it is through language that education is furnished.

Chapter Two : Methodology Considerations

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Preliminary Issues

2.2.1 Qualitative Research

2.2.2 Quantitative Research

2.3 Site of Research

2.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

2.5 Data Collection

2.5.1 Quantitative Data

2.5.2 Qualitative Data

2.5.3 Data Collection Tools

2.5.3.1 The Questionnaire

2.5.3.2 Classroom Observation

2.6 The Subjects

2.7 Ethical Considerations

2.8 Conclusion

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the overall methodological approach of the study. It reviews the fieldwork procedures and methods. It therefore portrays a thorough, explicit and systematic account of the study design and the approach followed in data preparation and analysis, the type of data required (qualitative and/or quantitative), the site in which the research was conducted, the target population from whom the data was obtained, and the research instruments that were utilized.

2.2 Preliminary Issues

It is significant to give a broad idea about the meaning of research and its different types. Goddard and Melville (2005:1) observe that “research is not just a process of gathering information, as it is sometimes suggested; rather it is answering unanswered questions. In many ways, research can be seen as a process of expanding the boundaries of our ignorance”. There exist many types of research. We list two types, as mentioned below.

2.2.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is the approach usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality (Alzheimer Europe, 2013). It is about recording, analyzing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviour and experience, including contradictory beliefs, behaviours and emotions. Researchers are interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of people’s experience and not in obtaining information which can be generalized to other larger groups.

Gay (1996) points out that qualitative research generally includes the following matters:

a. Case study: it seeks to shed light on a phenomenon by studying in-depth a single case example of the phenomena. The case can be an individual person, an event, a group, or an institution.

b. Grounded theory: it aims at understanding the social and psychological processes that characterize an event or a situation.

c. Phenomenology: it describes the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines.

d. Ethnography: it focuses on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of socio-cultural phenomena. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community.

e. Historical: a systematic collection and objective evaluation of data is related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects, or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events.

2.2.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is generally associated with the positivist/post-positivist paradigm. It usually involves collecting and converting data into a numerical form so that statistical calculations can be made and conclusions drawn.

There are four main types of quantitative designs: descriptive, co-relational, quasi-experimental, and experimental. Figure 2.1, sketched below, summarizes such types.

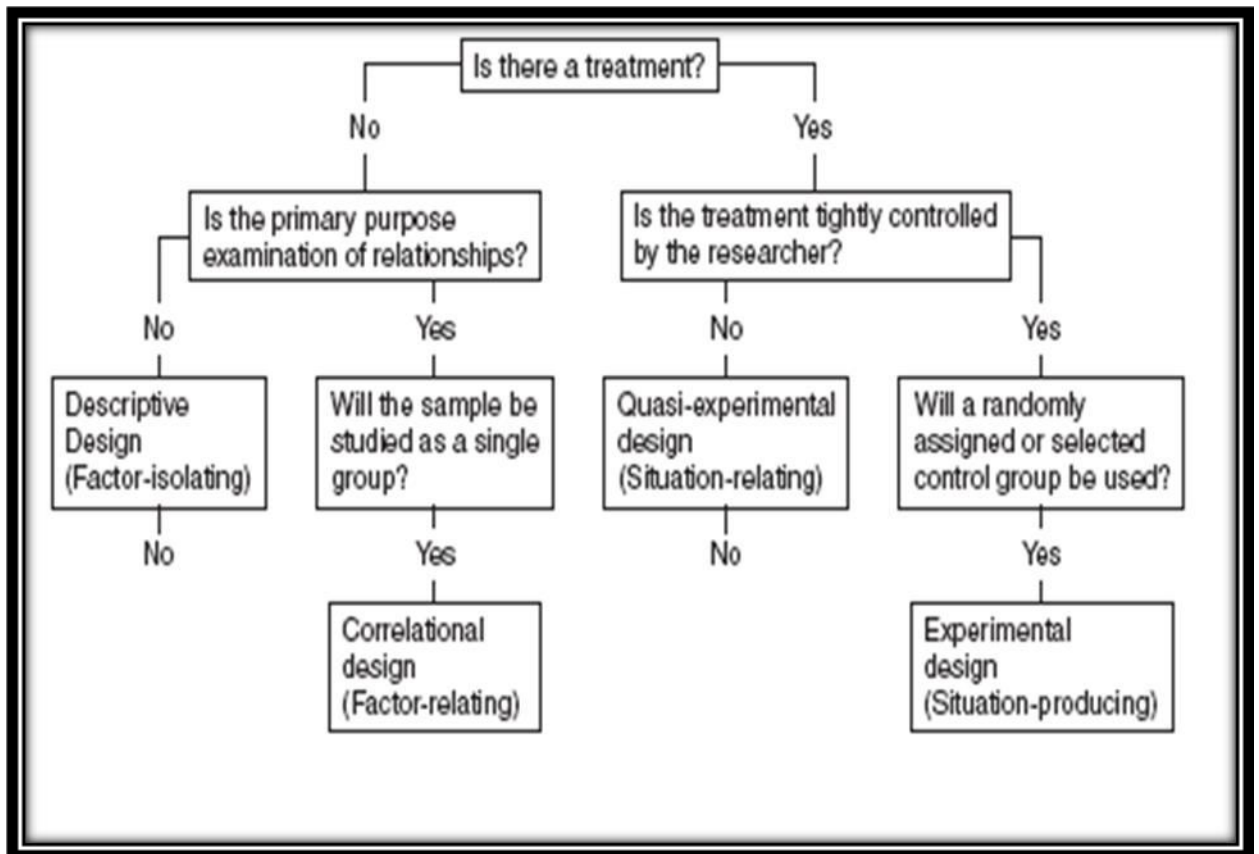


Figure 2.1 Decision tree matching research design to category of research question_(adopted from, samples.jbpub.com)

2.3 Site of Research

This study revolves around the influence of diglossia characteristic of the Arabic language on quality education in the Arab World, especially young beginning learners. To limit the scope of research, the study will attempt to make a detailed comparison between academic attainments of first grade learners in two primary schools in the city of Tlemcen, Algeria. The point is that in GHITRI Ahmed primary school, which is situated in Ain-Defla (Chetouane), learners have undergone a whole year of preparatory classes before the enrolment in official schooling, i.e., before the age of six. Learners of the other school, named El-Chahid Ben ZIANI Idris located in El-Mafrouche, have not gone through the same experience.

The top end of the study is to compare the linguistic behaviour of both teachers and learners in the classroom. To say it in another way, the objective is to focus on the linguistic variety which is mostly used during verbal interaction.

2.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The fact that Arab children, like children in other diglossic communities, acquire the vernacular as a mother tongue and only learn the literary language when they join schools, it is normal to expect that they will be confronted with potential linguistic obstacles when they start their academic career. In the case of Arabic, young learners are required to cope with the significant linguistic differences between Standard Arabic (language of the school) and Dialectal Arabic (day-to-day medium of interaction), especially in terms of vocabulary. Such state of affairs drove the researchers to pose the following questions:

1. What linguistic difficulties do pupils face in their first year?
2. How can we help pupils overcome the linguistic difficulties they encounter?

The hypotheses suggested for each research question are ordered as follows:

1. First grade learners grapple mostly with vocabulary items as many items of the standard form have entirely different dialectal equivalents.
2. Learners who undergo preparatory classes are expected to perform better at school as they are exposed to Standard Arabic before school-age. On the contrary, learners who do not go through preparatory classes are severely affected by the use of Standard Arabic.

2.5 Data Collection

Before sketching the methods used to gather data for the current study, it is good to mention the types of data, i.e., quantitative and qualitative data.

2.5.1 Quantitative Data

In fact, quantitative methods rely on statistics and statistical techniques that are employed for the description and the analysis of information. In this line, Thomas (2003:1) argues that “quantitative methods [...] focus attention on measurements and amounts (more and less, larger and smaller, often and seldom, similar and different) of the characteristics displayed by the people and events that the researcher studies”.

Quantitative methods are beneficial for the researcher as a first step in the investigation through the use of descriptive statistics which include frequencies, percentages, tabulation, graphic representation, and measures of central tendency.

2.5.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative methods formulate textual information provided in the form of texts. They rely on the use of the technique of coding which means summarizing the content of each response and classifying answers together according to their contents. To provide more explanations, the researcher may use tables or diagrams to summarize and recapitulate the main points listed previously within the text. In this vein, Denzin and Lincoln (1999:2) maintain that “qualitative methods are multiple methods which involve studying events through stories and interviews [...]”.

In many times, the one and the same research may be built on both quantitative and qualitative approaches, i.e. a mixed method approach.

2.5.3 Data Collection Tools

There are many instruments that the researcher can use in order to collect the data. In the current study, the data were collected by means of the questionnaire and classroom observation. In other words, both qualitative and quantitative methods were jointly used.

2.5.3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is an important research instrument as it supplies information about people's beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and preferences. In fact, the questionnaires are becoming of crucial importance. Seliger and Shohamy (1989:172) define questionnaires as "printed forms for data collection, which include questions or statements to which the subject is expected to respond, often anonymously". The design of good questionnaire items is necessary since the quality of data is affected by them. Consequently, to formulate good questions the researcher must consider the language of the questions. In fact, short and precise questions are favoured to achieve rich answers. In this vein, Kumar (2011) proposes that in a questionnaire, the researcher should take extra care to the words he uses so that his respondents will understand without explaining the questions to them.

As far as the present research is concerned, the questionnaire was administered to thirty (30) teachers working in different primary schools. The questionnaire items were composed in Standard Arabic because this is the language all the teachers understand. In terms of the structure, it was opted for a mixed questionnaire, i.e., the questionnaire is made up of closed-ended and open-ended questions. As far as closed-ended questions are concerned, most of the items were designed on a polytomous scale where informants have more than two options to choose among what best reflects their opinions.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the teacher's bio data which includes, for example, age and professional experience. Of course, it is anonymous with the aim not to influence the informant. The second part looks for the linguistic variety which is used in the classroom on the part of the teachers as well as the learners.

2.5.3.2 Classroom Observation

To have a clear idea of any concrete situation, classroom observation is a useful tool to gather realistic, yet reliable data. It is a practical means since it helps

to provide direct information about a given teaching or learning situation. Mason (1996:60) posits that “observation are methods of gathering data which involve the researcher immersing himself or herself in a research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, actions, events, and so on within it.”

Generally, observation can be of two types: non-participant and participant observation. The former implies that the observer does not participate in the observed situation; he can rather observe from distance. Non-participant observation neither requires the subject’s cooperation nor does it affect their behaviour (e.g. Liu & Maitlis, 2010). The latter relies on the observer’s presence or participation in the situation as he takes part in the activities or interactions under investigation. He inserts himself as a member of the group to the extent that he may be required to live in the area of research. In the present study, the researchers relied on non-participant observation for the subjects’ behaviour will not be influenced by their presence.

The aim of including classroom observation in the current study is to have a clear idea about the core of the research. In the present investigation, classroom observation took place in two different primary schools. The observation process lasted for a whole trimester (from the first week of October to the mid of December) during which observation was carried out on a regular basis. The purpose was to examine the linguistic behaviour inside the classroom, i.e., the variety of Arabic which is mostly used by teachers and learners as well. While observing, the researchers used to sit at the back of the classroom. Focus was on every linguistic transaction, not least language difficulties of learners, their degree of motivation, etc. After each observation session, a report containing the most important notes was drafted.

The process of observation was managed as follows:

- The researchers did follow classroom ethics, being punctual (always on time) and staying until the class period ended. The timing was on the morning and the afternoon on a regular basis each Thursday.

- How often: a day per week (in the morning and the afternoon).
- When: the observation took place in the morning from 8:00 to 11:00 in Ben Ziani Primary School, and from 10:15 to 12:15 in Ghitri Ahmed PS. In the afternoon, observation lasted from 12:30 to 15:00 in Ben Ziani PS, and from 14:45 to 16:15 in Ghitri Ahmed PS.
- Permission: permission to conduct classroom observation could be met on the part of the headmasters and teachers of first grade in the two schools.
- Data recording: researchers depended heavily on note taking. Note taking requires that the observer should be present to record and collect the most important notes for later recall. Being present is also beneficial in the sense that it allows the researchers to observe nonverbal behaviour (facial expressions, eye-gaze, etc) and activities performed during the session. While taking notes, the researchers put much emphasis on the data collected that specify what language variety is used. Recording was selective and went around points that the researcher wanted to answer (especially those indicated in the observation grid).
- Who to observe: subjects were first grade learners of primary school and their teacher.

The purpose of the present research was accomplished through the use of an observation grid that summarizes the major points undertaken for the observation process. The grid is divided into two parts. A close examination of such grid was around which variety is used by both teacher and learners in different contexts.

2.6 The Subjects

The subjects are one of the main concerns in conducting a fieldwork. The researcher has to clearly define the target population relevant to his research. It is necessary to review two fundamental, interrelated concepts encountered when dealing with subjects: population and sample. In general terms, the population refers to all the subjects (persons, objects, events) that belong to some category one wants to study. More often than not, the population is too large making it

challenging to survey all of its subjects. Subsequently, a sample that reflects the characteristics of the population as whole is very often chosen. A sample is therefore a small division of the population. Hence, sampling is, as Gay (1987:101) observes, the process of “selecting a group of subjects for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected”. McMillan (1996) reports that selecting appropriate subjects is an implication of a crucial importance in identifying the factors which can influence the subject performance.

In sampling, the researcher chooses between two sampling paradigms: the information rich sampling paradigm and the representative sampling paradigm. The current research built on the latter paradigm, i.e., the aim is to seek generalizability of the findings. Moreover, in scientific research there are two types of sampling methods: probability and non- probability sampling. The former is based on random selection of the informants. In this vein, Robson (1993) argues that “random sampling involves selecting at random from a population list” (p.137). The latter relies on the selection of elements having specific criteria which means that some members have no chance of being chosen. Because the end in the present research is to generalize the findings on the whole population, it was opted for probability sampling in which every member of the population has equal chance to participate.

As far as the questionnaire is concerned, it covered 30 teachers working in different primary schools, with particular focus on those teachers who have an experience with first grade learners. As for the return rate, all the questionnaires could be obtained and almost all the questions were answered.

Classroom observation sampling was carried out with two teachers in two different primary schools. One female teacher works in Ghitri Ahmed PS and the other male teacher works in El Chahid Ben Ziani Idris PS. Concerning the total number of learners, in Ghitri Ahmed PS there were 25 (17 girls and 8 boys). In Ben Ziani Idris PS, there were 18 learners (5girls and 13 boys).

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are seen as one of the crucial parts in any research work that dissertations and theses may be even destructed to failure if this part is missing. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), there are ten principles of ethical considerations which have been compiled as a result of analyzing the ethical guidelines of professional social sciences and research associations. Among these one can list:

➤ Research participants should not be subjected to harm in any ways whatsoever. In our research, this element was automatically guaranteed as part of confidentiality, as discussed below.

➤ Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study. As for our research, informed consent elements (capacity, information and voluntariness) on the part of the participants, whether teachers or learners were all considered. Regarding *capacity*, all the teachers are *competent* subjects being adults able to retain and evaluate information. As for learners, who were subject to observation, consent was met from the school administration and the classroom teacher. As far as *information* is concerned, it was the responsibility of the researcher to make the participants understand the purpose of the study, its procedures, and its expected benefits, with focus on the demands built upon them as informants. Because the participants should consent on a *voluntary* ground, no pressure was put on any informant.

➤ The protection of the privacy of research participants has to be ensured. In the present study, the type of data collected (biodata, attitudes, beliefs and opinions) made ensuring privacy for the participants a first priority. Smyth & Williamson (2004) observe that anonymity is a means by which confidentiality is operationalised. Therefore, the questionnaires of the present study were anonymous. Unlike the questionnaires which are self-completed, classroom observation certainly excludes anonymity. Therefore, the teachers who were subject to observation were guaranteed confidentiality.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter was devoted to methodological concerns related to the present research work. It first shed light on the research objectives linked to the pre-stated research questions and hypotheses. Then, it described research instruments employed in the study namely the questionnaire and classroom observation. The questionnaires were administered to primary school teachers and observation was carried out in two primary schools in Tlemcen. The following chapter proceeds to analyze the data and discuss the main research findings.

Chapter Three : Data Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Data Analysis

3.2.1 The Questionnaire

3.2.2 The Classroom Observation

3.3. Discussion of the Questionnaire Findings

3.4 Discussion of Classroom Observation Findings

3.5 Discussion of the Main Findings

3.6 Conclusion

General Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendices

3.1 Introduction

While chapter two provides the methodological design of the current study, this chapter exposes thorough analysis, discussion and interpretation of the results. To put it in another way, this chapter attempts to afford adequate answers to the questions driving this research. The results achieved through the two research instruments, i.e. classroom observation and questionnaires, will be presented separately.

3.2 Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be displayed according to the instrument used, as sketched below.

3.2.1 The Questionnaire

❖ Part One : Teacher's Biodata

Of the whole sample population of teachers, 76% are young and novice in the domain of teaching (16% between 20 and 30 and 60% are between 30 and 40 years old. Aged, experienced teachers form no other than a minority (24 %). Work experience of the teachers participating in the current study is displayed in figure 3.1, mentioned below:

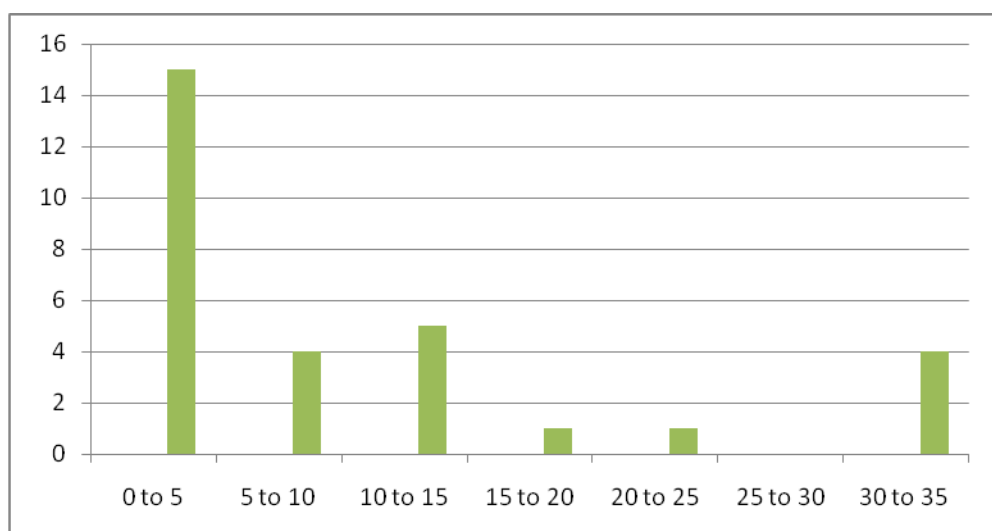


Fig. 3.1 Teacher's Professional Experience

Of importance to our research is the teaching experience with first grade learners. The results are shown in Table 3.1, which demonstrates that the vast majority of teachers (27 out of 30) have little experience with beginning learners.

Table 3.1 Teachers' Experience with the First Grade

	Years of teaching experience			
	0 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 15	16 and above
Number of teachers	27	1	0	2

❖ **Part Two**

➤ **Quantitative Analysis:**

Question 1: I find it, linguistically, extremely hard to communicate with first grade learners.

Of the questioned teachers, 17% claimed that they come across some linguistic difficulties when addressing their learners. 37% others argued that they do not face such kind of difficulties. The remaining teachers (46%) revealed that they only sometimes confront linguistic obstacles. The results are graphically represented in figure 3.2

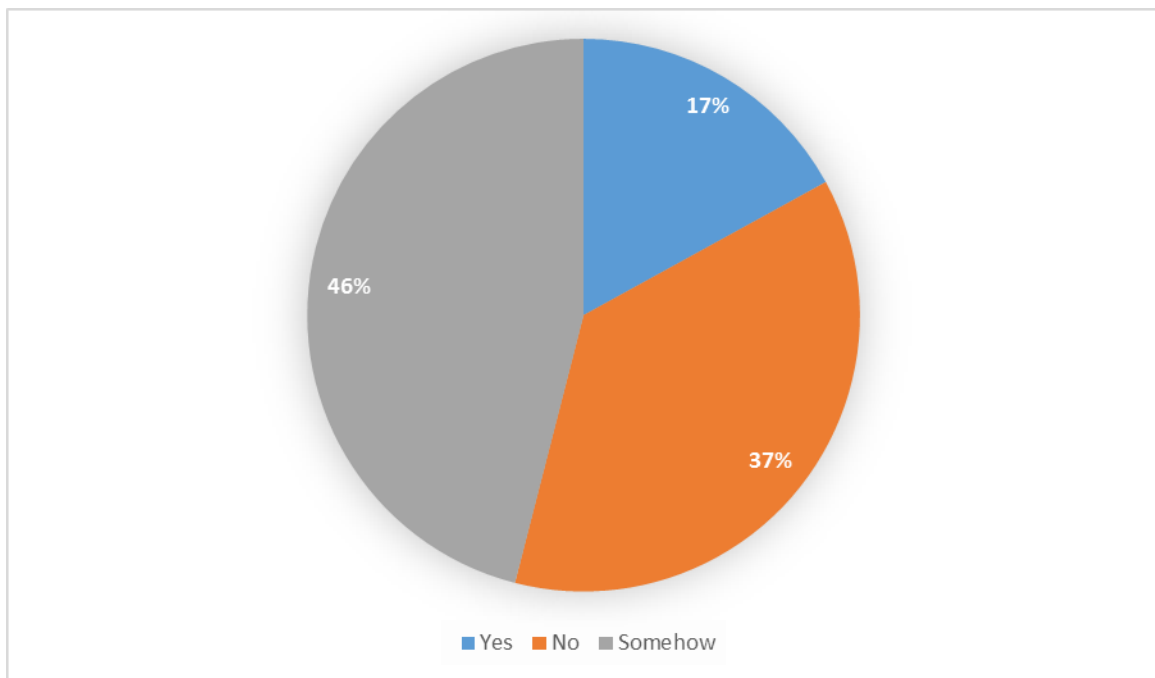


Fig. 3.2 Teacher's Frequency of the Linguistic Difficulties

Question 2: What language variety do you often use with first grade learners during the first contacts?

The majority of teachers representing 83% of the sample population argued that they use a mixture of SA and DA. 13% mentioned that they use SA, and only 3% claimed to use DA. The results are graphically presented in figure 3.3

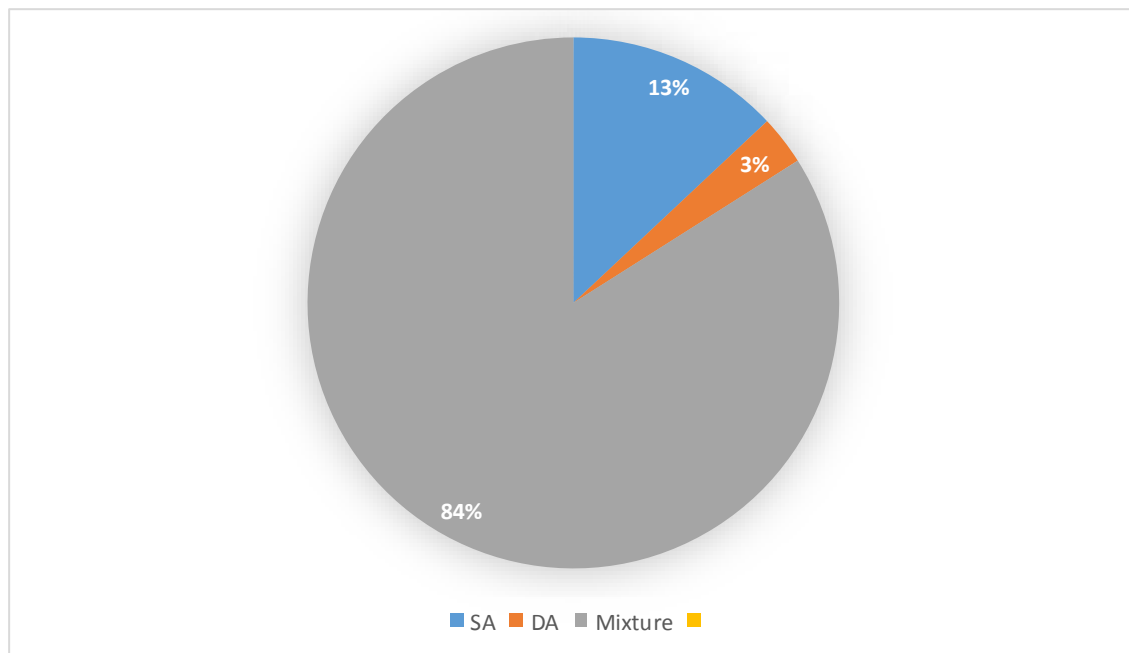


Fig. 3.3 Teacher's Variety Use in the First Contact

Question 3: To deliver lectures, what do you often use?

The results revealed that a clear majority of teachers (67 %) use a mixture of SA and DA to dispense the lectures, whereas 33% proclaimed to rely solely on SA. None of them was found to use DA, however. The results are presented in the following figure.

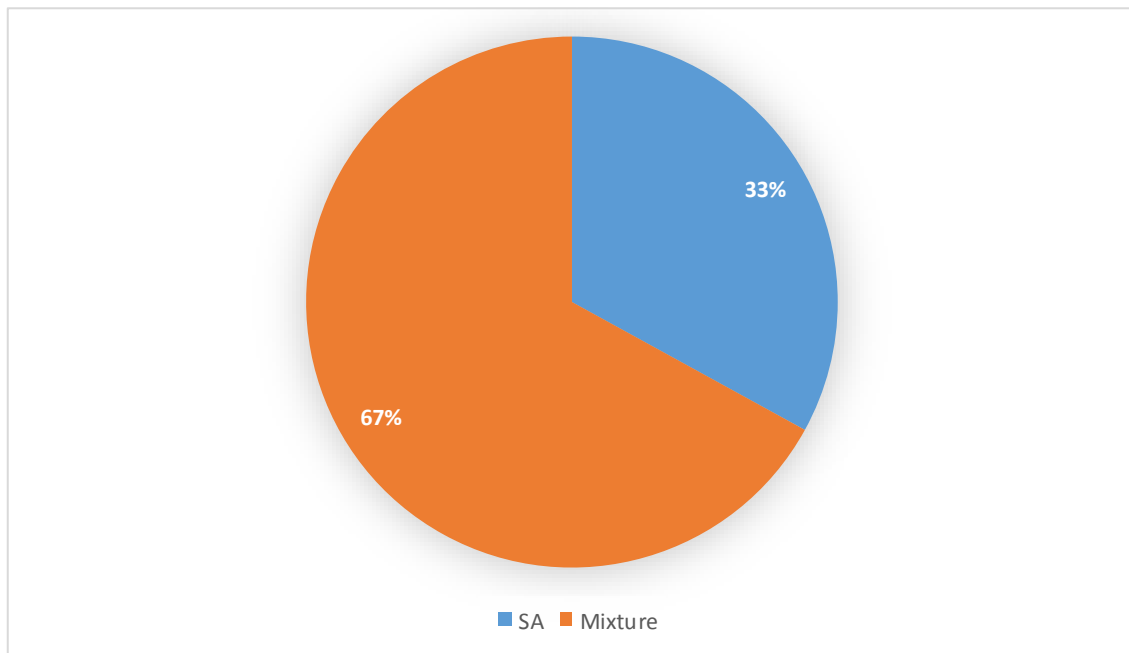


Fig. 3.4 Teacher's Variety Use to Deliver Lectures

Question 4: If learners do not understand you in SA, in what language variety will you try to clarify?

Of the 30 respondents, 40% argued that they tend to rely on internal or, say, diglossic code-switching, i.e., alternating between the H variety (SA) and the L varieties (DA). The remaining teachers were equally divided: 30% proclaimed to use only the standard form; 30% confessed to opt directly for DA to clarify the idea. Figure 3.5, sketched below, exposes the frequency of the language variety used by teachers.

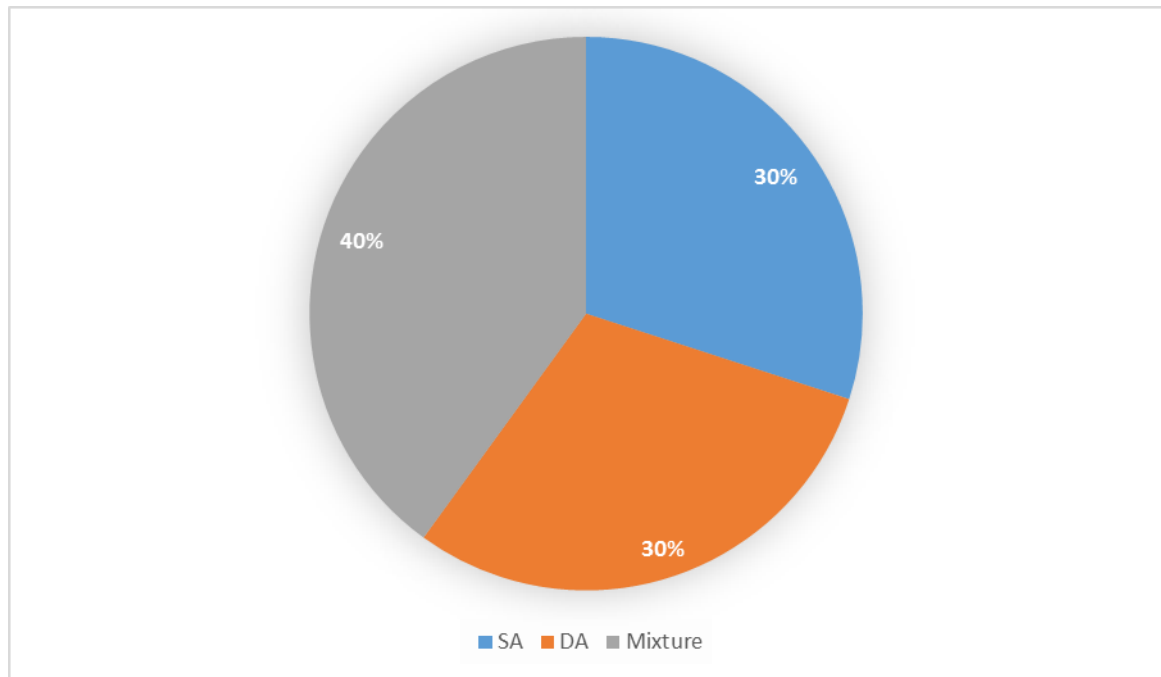


Fig. 3.5 Teachers' Variety Use for Clarification

Question 5: To interact and talk in the classroom, my pupils use.

When teachers were required to mention the variety used by beginning learners while interacting verbally in the classroom, 60% of them divulged that their learners behave linguistically in a mixture of SA and DA. A percentage of 30% proclaimed that learners use SA; 10% of the teachers argued that DA is the frequently attested variety on the part of learners. The results are exposed in figure 3.6:

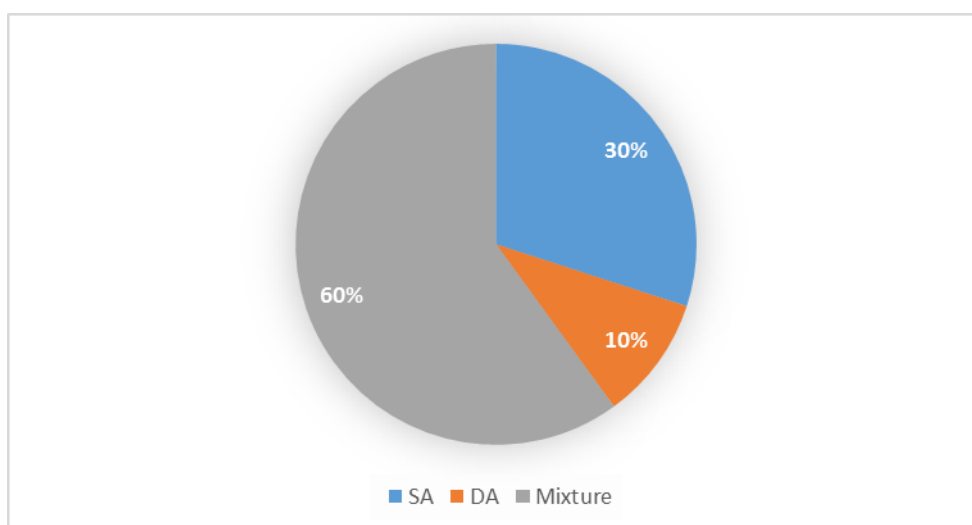


Fig.3.6 Learners' Variety Use in the Classroom

Question 6: I switch to dialectal Arabic.

When the teachers were questioned whether they switch to Dialect Arabic or they rely exclusively on Standard Arabic during classes, the vast majority of respondents argued that they make use of the dialectal variety. Those who do not switch to the L variety form no other than a marginal population, as shown in figure 3.7:

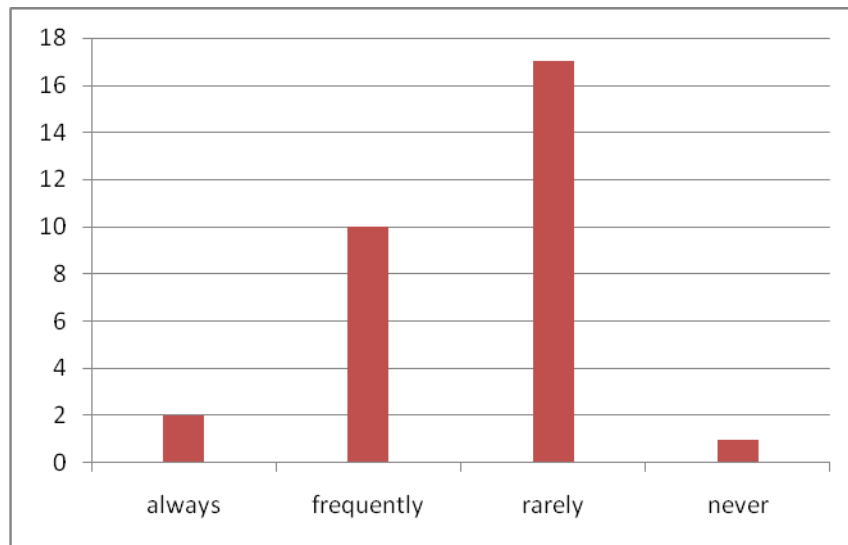


Fig. 3.7 Frequency of Teachers' Use of Dialectal Arabic

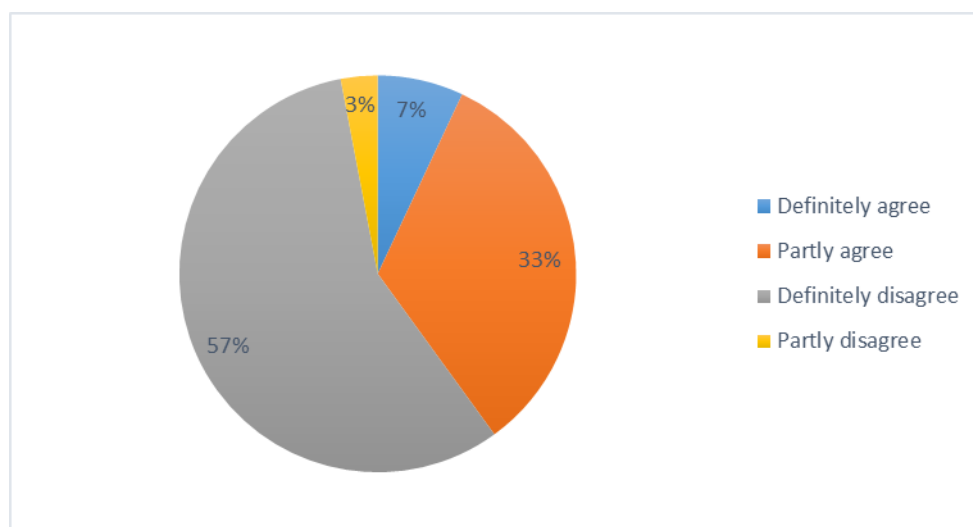
Question 7: I think that switching to DA is more beneficial than the exclusive use of SA.

Fig. 3.8 Teachers' Standpoints about the Use of DA in the Classroom

Figure 3.9 blatantly indicates that a clear majority of teachers did not approve of the use of DA in classes. Those who definitely refuted the advantage(s) of using Dialectal Arabic (57%) outnumbered those who ascertained that switching to DA is beneficial (7%). Teachers who partly agree formed an important population (33%); such teachers neither approved of the use of the dialect in the classroom nor refused it: they might think that the use of the L is beneficial when ambiguity rises.

Question 8: Using DA as a medium of instruction in the primary school is the optimal option.

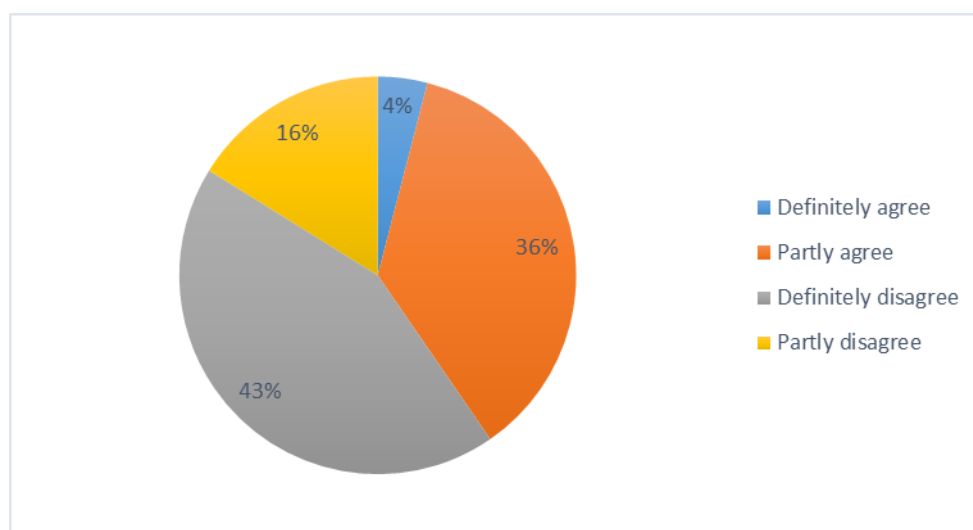


Fig. 3.9 Teachers' Perceptions of DA as a Medium of Instruction

On the basis of the results presented in figure 3.9, the use of Dialectal Arabic as a medium of instruction is not really welcomed by the important community of teachers. To the exception of 4% who totally agreed with lecturing in the dialect, 43% of the respondents strongly opposed such a scheme. Although 33% of the teachers revealed their partial agreement, this does not translate straightforwardly that DA is appreciated. Such teachers might think that incorporating DA, alongside SA, is the optimal option to reach high understanding of lectures, especially during the beginning years of schooling.

Question 9: My learners attended preparatory classes before their formal schooling at the age of six.

This question goes around whether learners passed through preparatory classes before the age of formal schooling (i.e., the age of six), or not. The results are shown in figure 3.10.

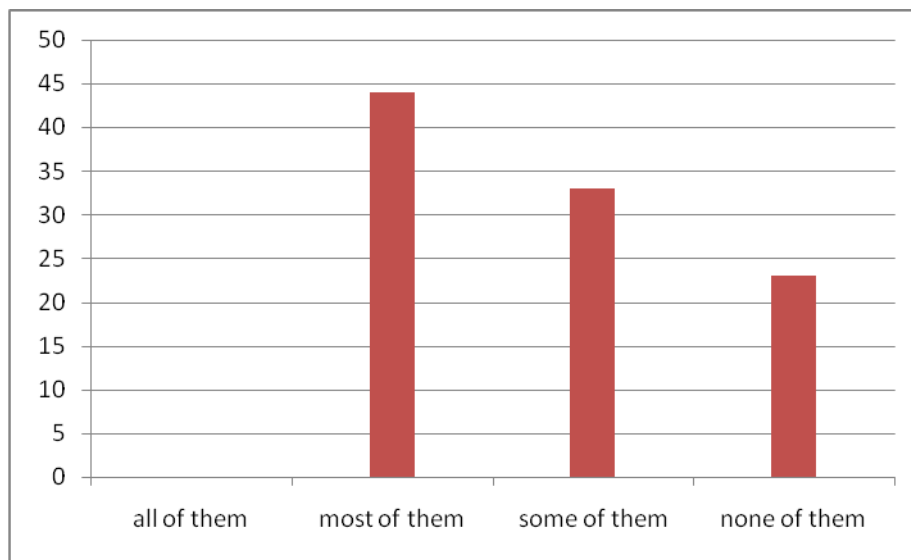


Fig. 3.10 Learners' Experience with Preparatory Classes

Question 10: I could notice that learners who underwent preparatory classes before the age of formal schooling do better at school.

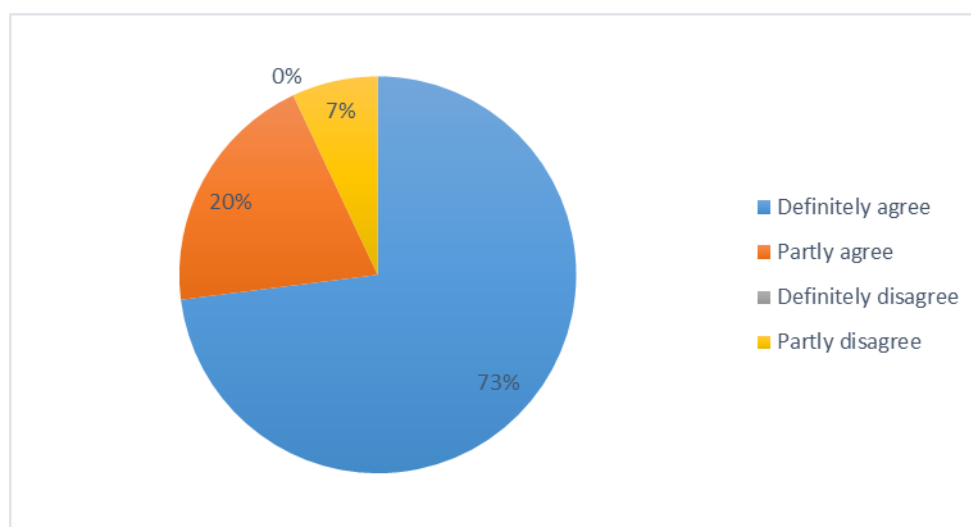


Fig.3.11 Teachers' Beliefs about the Benefits of Preparatory Classes

Figure 3.11 tells that the vast majority of the respondents (80%) agreed that learners who enrolled in preparatory classes show better performance at school compared to their counterparts who did not undertake such classes.

Question 11: Regardless of how much the learner is intelligent, the more he knows SA, the less difficult it is for him to perform academically.

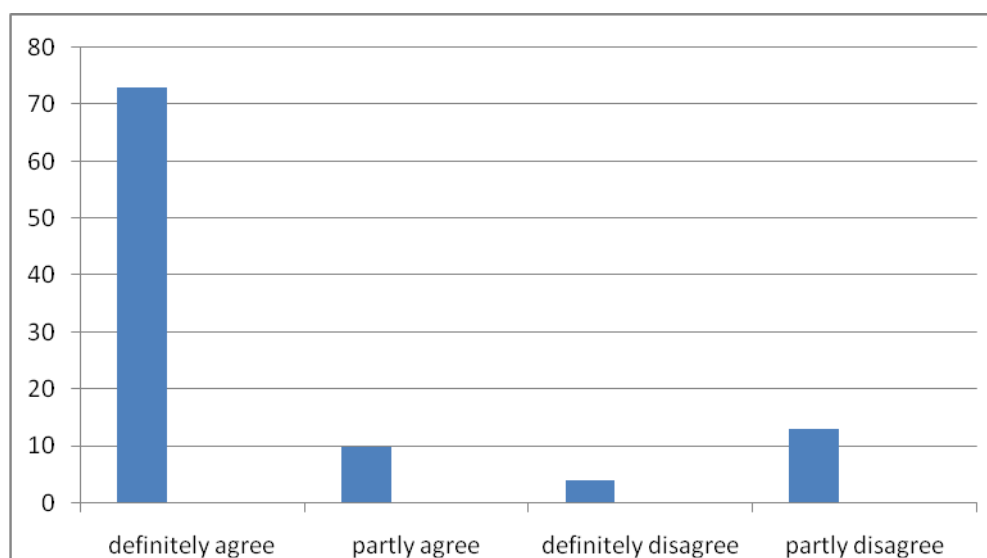


Fig.3.12 Advantages of Frequent Exposure to Standard Arabic

Here again, agreement with the statement marked a high rate. Those who believed that increased familiarity with SA has no positive impact on learners' academic attainment were the exception rather than the rule.

Question 12: Exposure to SA until formal schooling-age constitutes a serious hurdle to learners and teachers alike.

As for such item, the results demonstrate that many teachers either partially (54%) or completely (26%) agree that delayed knowledge of literary Arabic (until the age of six) does introduce serious problems for learners, and hence their teachers.

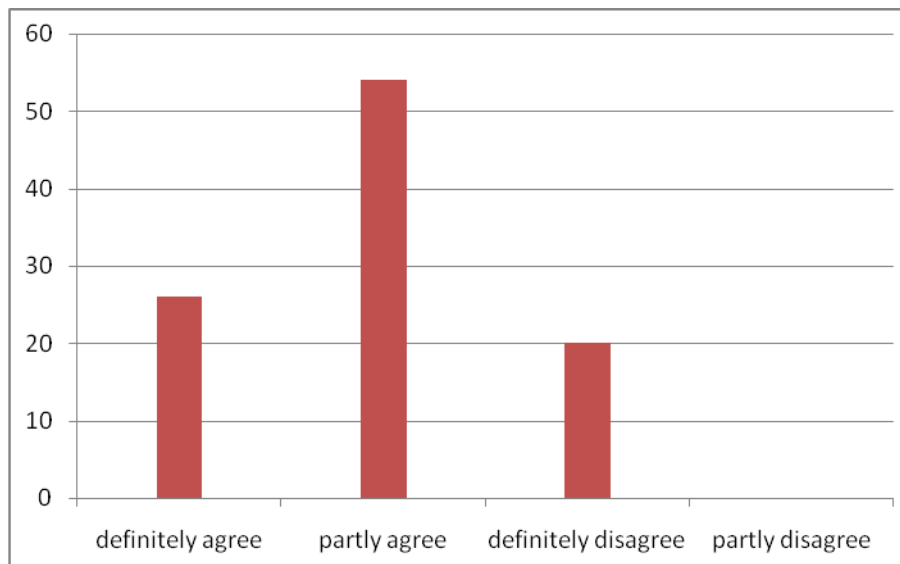


Fig.3.13 Outcomes of Late Exposure to SA

Question 13: Though it depends on a number of factors, learners can bypass the linguistic difficulties regarding SA in a relatively short time.

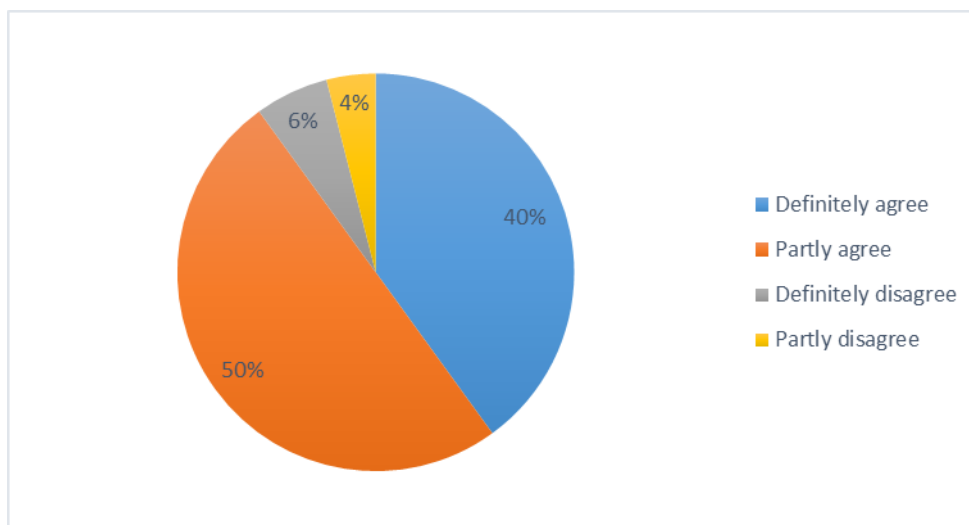


Fig.3.14 Learners' Adaptation to SA

Figure 3.14 obviously indicates that the majority of respondents agree that learners can overcome the linguistic issue in a relatively short time. Those who did not agree form no other than 10% of the sample population.

Question 14: The linguistic issue remains unsurmounted even at advanced levels (e.g. 5th grade).

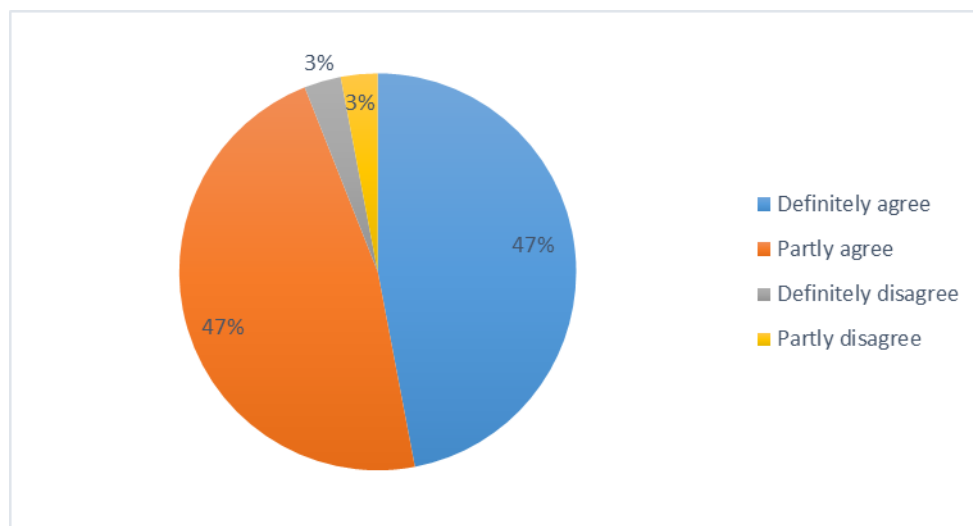


Fig. 3.15 The Occurrence of Diglossia at Advanced Levels

Figure 3.15 signals an interesting fact. It shows that most teachers see that learners' literary Arabic remains undeveloped on their leave of the primary school (5th grade). In fact, if we compare answers to such item with answers to the previous item (item 14), we notice a significant mismatch.

➤ Qualitative Analysis

The research findings mentioned above do not reveal clear differences between the two primary schools though exceptions still exist. In general, teachers divulged that they *de facto* use DA during classes to interact with learners. However, this does not imply that DA is a/the medium of instruction. They also add that learners are allowed to use DA in the classroom as they do not yet possess competence which permits them to behave linguistically in SA.

When the teachers were required to list the difficulties they come across when they make use of SA with beginning learners (item 6), most of them revealed that learners do not understand them perfectly as they grapple with the school vocabulary of which many items have entirely different dialectal equivalents. Teachers also made it clear that one of the major obstacles is that learners find great

difficulties in the production of many words. In what ensues, we list a number of other difficulties mentioned by teachers:

- Learners mix between sounds and letters especially those that have the same place of articulation.
- Learners mispronounce some words or find them hard to articulate.
- Learners interact and answer or even provide examples using AA.
- Teachers face many difficulties to transmit knowledge to their learners.
- Learners appear to be unmotivated and careless towards some activities.

Responses to the questionnaire item 9, which goes around the reasons that drive teachers to switch to Dialectal Arabic, revealed a general agreement among teachers about the necessity to alternate between the standard and the dialect. Such diglossic code switching can be used as a linguistic aid to back up beginning learners who are still unfamiliar with SA.

As for item 15, which revolves around the benefits of preparatory classes, teachers argued that the first and foremost end of such classes is psychological. To put it another way, preparatory classes are meant to help young learners settle down in the new school environment which requires a socialization process. Moreover, such classes help young children learn how to behave with both teachers and classmates. Furthermore, learners are taught Arabic alphabet and numbers, and they are trained to recite some verses of the Qur'an (Muslims' holy book). This implies that preparatory classes do not take the linguistic dimension, i.e., increased familiarity with SA, as the top end.

Responses to the last item, which requires teachers to furnish some proposals that may help to get around, or at least rationalize, the diglossic linguistic issue and its impact on quality education, provided a variety of answers. Some teachers argued that Standard Arabic must be exclusively used in the classroom to allow learners to reach maximum linguistic exposure. Others suggested that learners must be punished for any use of DA. According to them, punishment is one way to lead young children to use SA extensively. Still other teachers raised the point that

children must be familiarized with SA before school-age, beginning from the home. Exposure to SA can be realized through listening to short stories, reciting the Qur'an in the mosque, watching the TV, etc. The point which should be stressed is that all the teachers recommended that young learners must undertake preparatory classes for at least one year.

3.2.2 Classroom Observation

Classroom observation was conducted in two different primary schools. Ten consecutive sessions were under observation in each school, as mentioned below.

Results from Ghitri Ahmed Primary School:

In what ensues, we provide some excerpts which are meant to provide an idea about what Arabic variety is used on the part of the teacher as well as on the part of learners.

➤ Example 1:

During a reading comprehension session of a text entitled /Reda jura:ziçu durusahu"/ (Reda revises his lessons). The teacher asked her learners if they read the text at home with the help of their parents and she tried to stimulate learners' attention by throwing up questions which are obviously in Standard Arabic. Among the questions (Q) and their associated answers (A), we mention some excerpts below:

Q: /li ?ajji sababin attilmi:du jura:jiçu duru:sahu/ (For what reason does the learner revise his lectures?)

A: /li?a zli an jusbiha muçalliman aw řabi:ban/ (in order to become a teacher or a doctor).

Q: /li ?ajji sababin la: jazibu çala: attilmi:di an jura:kima duru:sahu/ (For what reason the learner should not accumulate his lectures?)

A: /?azli an la: jazida řuçu:ba:t jawma almura:zaça(h) (in order not to find difficulties the day of revision).

➤ Example 2:

Question: Fill in the incomplete letter with these sounds /m, b, d/:

Words are (da)rsun, maqça(du)n, (mu)rabbacun, (mi)fta:ħun

➤ Example 3:

The teacher required a learner to brush the slate this way:

/imsaħi: allawħa(h) waktubi: alkalima(h)/ (Erase the slate and write the word).

The learner answered: /muçallima(h) ana: anhajt/ (Miss! I have finished).

The blatant remark is that most of the learners' interaction with their teacher out of the topic of discussion, such as for permission, were mostly done in Standard Arabic.

➤ Example 4:

Other examples included the use of a mixture of SA and DA on the part of the learners, as it is shown in the following examples (DA in italics):

/muçallima(h) *kammalt*/ (Miss! I have finished).

The teacher replied the learner using the equivalent Standard Arabic word:

/mu?alima ?anhajt/

Another learner said: /muçallima(h) nažlas *lhi:h*/ (Miss! can I sit there?).

The teacher also asked a learner if she had written her lectures or not: /*Ktabti* adduru:s *nta:çak*/ (Have you written your lectures?)

Other examples included:

/muçallima(h) *ana dirt* attamri:n/ (Miss! I have done the exercise).

The teacher responded: /ažlas *fi bla:řtak* ħatta *nzi nra:qbak*/ (Stay at your place until I come to verify).

Another learner wondered: / tsalfili: assijja:la(h) *alçađra:?*/ (Can I borrow your green pen?)

➤ Example 5:

The teacher was blaming her learner exclusively in DA: / ʃa: gu:tlak dir qra: ma nalaçbu:ʃ fi lqism hna: nzi:w naqraw walli jabyi yalçab yugçad fi da:rhum/ (I asked you to learn. We do not play in the classroom. Here, we come to learn, and the one who wants to play stays at home).

Table 2.2 portrays the results obtained through classroom observation. However, this is only a general account of the frequently attested features, i.e., the results sketched below do not portray the exact findings of each observation session.

Table 3.2 Classroom Observation Results at Ghitri Ahmed School

Elements of observation	Practical observation
Number of learners	25 (17 girls and 8 boys)
Materials	Board, chalk, slates, pictures to visualize, textbooks, etc
Cases in which SA is used by learners	- reciting the Quran -asking questions or asking for permission. - responding to the teacher's questions - discussing in certain situations to get teacher's attention (during complains).
Cases in which DA is used by learners	- interacting - complaining -sometimes when responding to questions
Cases in which SA is used by the teacher	-lecturing -asking questions -correcting learners' mistakes -ordering learners to do something
Cases in which DA is used by the teacher	-giving remarks -checking learners' understanding -correcting learners' mistakes

Cases in which both varieties are used (teacher and learners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -when learners try to fulfill certain functions -while the teacher emphasizes certain points. - responding - When learners do not know the standard items -when there is no complete understanding
General picture about the teaching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The method of teaching was good in many ways. The teacher uses SA while lecturing and from time to time she switches to DA, especially when there was no complete understanding for the majority of learners. -The teacher also tries to explain by giving concrete examples that the pupils face in everyday life. -The teacher also uses some techniques like illustrating through pictures where learners are asked to comment what they see.
General picture about the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a misconception of right and left in writing numbers - mixing letters that have the same shape sometimes or when they are written with their different diacritics -learners learn through group correction -learners often show high degree of participation

Results from Chahid Ben Ziani Idris Primary School:

Here again, we provide some excerpts with the aim to examine the variety of Arabic which is mostly used in the classroom, as shown in the different examples, mentioned below.

Example 1: instructions

The teacher: /*gu:tlak akitab waskut*/ (I told you write and shut up).

The teacher: /*qbal ma nakkatbu: ngu:lu: bismialla:h*/ (Before we write, we say *bismillah*)

➤ Example 2: explaining how to write letters

The teachers proceeded to explain that /m/ is /*kima aṣṣifr w fi:ha: xaṭ ajhawwad maltaht*/ (m is (written) like (symbol) zero but we add a line which moves down).

➤ Example 3: teaching sounds

The teacher asked: /*ki] nanṭqah ha:d alharf?*/ (How do we pronounce this letter?)

/*warri:ni alkalma(h) alli fiha harf adda:l*/ (Show me the word that carries the letter ‘d’).

➤ Example 4:

/*agbaḍ allawḥa(h) waḥbad kita:b alqira:ʔa(h)*/ (hold the slate and take the textbook).

Learners answer: /*kitab Reda*/ (The book of Reda)

Learners were found to name the textbook after the first text it contains (Reda jura:ziḡu durusahu)

➤ Example 5:

It was noticed that through the lines, learners become used to some frequently employed expressions of SA, as shown below:

/*χud allawḥa(h)*/ (take the slate) instead of the previously used sentences which included dialectal words (in italics) /*hawaddi allawḥa(h)*/ or /*gbaḍ allawḥa(h)*/.

What should be stressed is that the teacher of the first grade in this primary school has a strong tendency to use DA. In fact, DA is sometimes used at the cost of SA even when explaining and is not restricted to classroom instructions.

Table 3.3 summarizes the observation process at Ben Ziani Idris Primary School.

Table 3.3 Classroom Observation Results at Ben Ziani Idris School

Elements of observation	Practical observation
Number of learners	18 (5girls and 13 boys)
Materials	The same materials
Cases in which SA is used by learners	- reciting the Quran - reading words relying on visualization to learn and remember how they are written.
Cases in which DA is used by learners	- speaking with one another - asking questions -asking for permission
Cases in which SA is used by the teacher	-lecturing
Cases in which DA is used by the teacher	- delivering the lecture - when pupils do not understand - giving remarks
Cases in using both varieties are used (teacher and learners)	- to emphasize a point -when learners do not know the standard items
General picture about the teaching process	The dominant linguistic variety in the classroom is a mixture of SA and DA. In other words, diglossic switching is the common behaviour of the teacher.

General picture about the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misconception of sounds -Ignorance of the right order especially in mathematics sessions -Learners show high degree of motivation and engagement
--	--

3.3 Discussion of the Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire was submitted to primary school teachers to come up with answers to the questions driving such a study. Items 1 to five revealed that the linguistic variety which prevails in the classroom draws from both Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic. It is obvious that the sole use of SA is the exception rather than the norm. The teachers reported that exclusive use of SA makes the learning situation extremely difficult as learners are faced with a language variety which can be identified as a second language: a variety significantly different from their mother tongue. Besides grammatical differences, learners confront many vocabulary items which they have no prior knowledge of. To put it another way, the standard lexis has different dialectal equivalents.

Although they acknowledged the difficulty that SA constitutes for beginning learners, the majority of teachers (over 55%) proclaimed to rely extensively on SA; switching to DA is kept as a final aid employed only when learners go blank. The interesting point is that teachers know that DA can be used as a facilitating means when ambiguity arises and they further use it, but the majority of them denounced the idea of integrating DA in formal schooling. Understandably, teachers do not oppose switching to DA to achieve particular aims, such as clarification, but they object on the use of DA as medium of instruction at the cost of, or in parallel with, SA.

The focal point of the study was to examine whether preparatory classes are linguistically efficient or not. It was found that learners who attended such classes perform academically better as they are habituated to the classroom vocabulary before school age. Those who did not attend preparatory classes, due to the absence of such classes in some schools countrywide, find more difficulty as they are

confronted with a situation similar to learning a second language. The problematic relates to how much time is required to bypass the language barrier which constitutes a serious hurdle to efficient learning.

3.4 Discussion of Classroom Observation Findings

The results obtained from classroom observation helped the researchers to conclude that the difference is clearly noticeable between the two primary schools involved in this study. Pupils from Ghitri Ahmed primary school, which provides preparatory classes for young learners before formal school age, attempted to communicate in SA. When the teacher asked questions, the learners generally responded in SA. Such learners have actually a strong tendency to use standard structures and vocabulary to the extent that some of them have developed spontaneous use of SA. The point which should be raised is that even the teacher emphasized the use of SA; example 4 obviously shows how the teacher corrected the learner's dialectal items through her adoption of the standard equivalent items. In fact, SA is the dominant medium of instruction. This does not annul the verity that DA is also used, though occasionally, on the part of both the teacher and the learners.

By contrast, the pupils in Chahid Ben Ziani Idris primary school, which does not furnish preparatory classes to young learners, communicate mostly through DA. This is not surprising as DA is the variety the learners are most comfortable with (mother tongue). The astonishing fact is that the teacher was found to make extensive use of DA to the extent that it can be considered as the main medium of instruction. The teacher builds on the belief that DA is a facilitating means which allows quick understanding to take place.

3.5 Discussion of the Main Findings:

The present study addresses the impact of diglossia characteristic of the Arabic language on young learners in two primary schools in Tlemcen. The results obtained via the questionnaire and classroom observation unveiled that in both schools teachers switch back and forth between the acrolect (SA) and the basilect (DA). Switching is meant to achieve academic ends, such as clarification and

facilitation. In this vein, Al Batal (1992) argues that “a colloquial and MSA should be taught in the classroom to reflect linguistic reality of the Arab world today”. Younes (1995) goes in the same line when he argues that learners “should be introduced to both a spoken Arabic dialect and [Standard Arabic] from the beginning of an Arabic course if they hope to function competently in Arabic” (p. 233).

It has been shown that undertaking preparatory classes before first grade is beneficial for young learners. While learners from Ghitri Ahmed primary school demonstrate a spontaneous readiness to behave linguistically in SA as they are introduced to this variety earlier, learners from Chahid Ben Ziani Idris proved to depend on DA extensively to express themselves. Such learners, who did not attend preparatory classes, make great efforts to communicate in SA. They actually miss the advantage of early exposure to the school language. The problem is more pronounced when the teachers also make use of DA leading to a delay of the acquisition/learning of SA upon which literacy is based.

3.6 Conclusion

The present chapter is concerned with the analysis of an empirical study investigating the theme of the Impact of Arabic Diglossia on Learners’ Academic Achievements at the lower primary level in Tlemcen dealing with two primary schools involved namely Ghitri Ahmed and El Chahid Ben Ziani Idris. The data required in this study have been gathered through a set of research instruments mainly the questionnaire and the classroom observation that allow researchers to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Hence, researchers have analyzed and interpreted the data required in a systematic way.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The overall aim of the present research work is to understand the sociolinguistic phenomenon named ‘diglossia’ and its impact on primary-school learners with reference to Algerian school-children. This implies that the research concerns Arabic which exhibits two varieties: Standard Arabic fulfills the H variety functions, including literacy, and Dialectal Arabic which represents the L variety.

Diglossia has been conceived as one of the major obstacles which confront education in the Arab World. Indeed, it is regarded by many linguists and educators as a barrier that distracts learners’ language proficiency. This issue depends on a number of factors including the linguistic environment in which children live as they do not grow up speaking Standard Arabic. Once enrolled in schools, they are faced with a real linguistic context wherein Standard Arabic is the medium of instruction.

Building on this situation, the crux of this study is first to determine the kind of the linguistic difficulties encountered by primary-school learners and to provide solutions to overcome, or at least rationalize, these difficulties. To achieve the objectives of the study and attain answers to the research questions, a set of research instruments have been used. On the one hand, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of thirty teachers working in different primary schools. On the other hand, classroom observation was carried out in two primary schools in the town of Tlemcen where one school furnishes preparatory classes to young learners before the age of official schooling and the other does not. The choice of such different schools was motivated by the belief that early acquaintance with Standard Arabic is one way to reduce the heavy impact on learners.

The data, which were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, yielded important conclusions. It has been found that teachers have strong tendency towards diglossic switching, i.e., frequent alternation between Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic. To say it another way, code switching is used as a medium of instruction. Opting for code switching builds on the teachers’ beliefs that first grade learners are

not linguistically equipped to receive instruction solely in the H variety. When ambiguity arises, suffice it to switch to the learners' mother tongue, i.e., the L variety.

On the part of learners, the results revealed that young learners grapple a great deal with the school language, especially at the lexical level in the sense that Standard Arabic contains many items with entirely different dialectal equivalents. The point which should be stressed is that learners from the primary school where preparatory classes are offered have demonstrated better linguistic performance compared to their counterparts in the other school and who did not attend such classes. Learners in the first school are used to the school vocabulary before beginning the first grade. Preparatory classes furnish a kind of linguistic support as learners are pre-prepared to schooling. Learners in the second school are deprived from such advantage.

Building on the aphorism “the younger=the better”, one would argue that early exposure to Standard Arabic, being the language of the school, is a prerequisite to get around diglossia's negative repercussions on quality education. Introducing children to Standard Arabic can be successfully implemented as a two-way process. In a top-down fashion, education authorities must establish preparatory classes for children below six. Teachers in such classes must be trained to focus on the linguistic dimension as a crucial part in the preparation of young learners.. In a bottom-up fashion, the parents are required to provide their children with maximum exposure to Standard Arabic since the early years to ensure a natural acquisition of this variety. Children come to the world equipped with an innate predisposition to acquire language (Chomsky, 1965:25). However, psycholinguists agree that such capability is very high at early ages to the extent that two or more languages can be simultaneously acquired (e.g. Paradis, 2010). But researchers found that the brain's plasticity to acquire languages decreases after about age five to six as the brain moves to cognitive development (Paradis, 2004). Therefore, an early contact with Standard Arabic must take place before school-age. As linguistic aid resources, the media (including educative TV channels) and kindergartens can help develop language awareness. Quranic schools are also of paramount

importance as children can learn a wide range of vocabulary items that they encounter during their first grade.

What was noticed in the schools under investigation is that preparatory classes do not take the linguistic question as a top priority. This is perhaps because the teacher who is reserved to such classes is not aware of the diglossic issue. Therefore, further research may cover such crucial area.

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Appendices

Teachers' Questionnaire

The aim is to examine the extent to which Standard Arabic is found to act as an obstacle to efficient learning. Primary school teachers, professionals who can best serve the purpose of our study, are kindly invited to answer the following questions (tick where appropriate) and add what reflects their beliefs and convictions.

Part I: Teacher's Biodata

Age:

Professional experience:

How many times did you teach first grade learners?.....year(s).

Part II

1. I find it, linguistically, extremely hard to communicate with first grade learners.

a- Yes

b- Somehow

c- No

2. What language variety do you often use with first grade learners during the first contacts?

a- SA

b- DA

c- Mixture of the two

3. To deliver lectures, what do you often use?

a- SA

b- DA

c- Mixture of the two

4. If learners do not understand you in SA, will you try to clarify in:

a- SA

b- DA

c- Mixture of the two

5. To interact and talk in the classroom, my pupils use:

a- SA

b- DA

c- Mixture of the two

6. What are the frequently attested obstacles that you encounter when using SA for the first times ?

.....

.....

.....

7. I switch to Dialectal Arabic.

a- Never

b- Rarely

c- Frequently

d- Always

8. I think that switching to DA is more beneficial than exclusive use of SA.

a- Definitely agree

b- Partly agree

d- Definitely disagree

c- Partly disagree

9. For what reason(s) do you switch to Dialectal Arabic?

.....

.....

10. Using DA to teach at primary schools is the optimal option.

a- Definitely agree b- Partly agree

c- Definitely disagree c- Partly disagree

11. My learners attended preparatory classes before their formal schooling at the age of six.

a- All of them b- Some of them

c- Most of them d- None of them

12. I could notice that learners who underwent preparatory classes before the age of formal schooling do better at school.

a- Definitely agree b- Partly agree

c- Definitely disagree d- Partly disagree

13. Regardless of how much the learner is intelligent, the more he knows SA, the less difficult it is for him to perform well academically.

a- Definitely agree b- Partly agree

c- Definitely disagree d- Partly disagree

14. Exposure to SA until formal schooling age constitutes a serious hurdle to learners and teachers alike.

a -Definitely agree b- Partly agree

c- Definitely disagree d- Partly disagree

15. How can preparatory classes help learners?

.....
.....
.....
.....

16. Learners can bypass the linguistic difficulties regarding SA in a relatively short time.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| a- Definitely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | b- Partly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c- Definitely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | d- Partly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

17. The linguistic issue remains unsurmounted even at advanced levels (e.g. 5th grade).

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| a- Definitely agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | b- Partly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c- Definitely disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | d- Partly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> |

18. What are your suggestions to overcome the diglossic language barrier?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much

استبيان خاص بمعلمي الطور الابتدائي

معلومات شخصية حول المعلم

- السن :
- الخبرة المهنية : سنة.
- كم مرة قمت بتدريس السنة الأولى ابتدائي ؟ مرة.

1- أواجه لغويا صعوبات كبيرة للتواصل مع تلاميذ السنة الأولى.

- نعم
- لا
- بعض الشيء

2- ما هو النمط اللغوي الذي تستعمله مع تلاميذ السنة الأولى في أول تواصل معهم ؟

- الفصحى
- العامية
- مزيج بينهما

3- لإلقاء الدروس، ماذا تستعمل عادة ؟

- الفصحى
- العامية
- مزيج بينهما

4- إذا لم يفهمك التلاميذ و أنت تستعمل اللغة الفصحى، هل تعيد عن طريق:

- الفصحى
- العامية
- مزيج بينهما

5- للمشاركة أو التكلم داخل القسم، يستعمل التلاميذ :

- الفصحى

- العامية

- مزيج بينهما

6- ما هي أغلب الصعوبات التي تواجهها عندما تستعمل اللغة الفصحى مع التلاميذ خلال الأشهر

الأولى ؟

.....

.....

.....

7- ألبأ إلى العامية.

- مرارا

- دائما

- لا أستعملها

- نادرا

-

8- أعتقد أن استعمال العامية أفضل من الاستعمال الحصري للغة الفصحى.

-أوافق جزئيا

-أوافق كليا

- أعارض جزئيا

- أعارض كليا

9- ما هي الأسباب التي تدفعك إلى اللجوء إلى العامية ؟

.....

.....

.....

10- استعمال العامية للتدريس في الطور الابتدائي هو الاختيار الأمثل.

-أوافق كلياً -أوافق جزئياً

- أعارض كلياً - أعارض جزئياً

11- تلقى تلاميذي تعليماً تحضيرياً قبل التمدرس القانوني أي قبل سن السادسة

- كلهم - معظمهم

- بعضهم - لا احد منهم

12- عادة ما يظهر التلاميذ الذين تلقوا تعليماً تحضيرياً نتائج أفضل

- أوافق كلياً - أوافق جزئياً

- أعارض كلياً - أعارض جزئياً

13- بغض النظر عن مدى ذكاء التلميذ، كلما تعرف أكثر على اللغة الفصحى هان عليه

التعلم.

- أوافق كلياً - أوافق جزئياً

- اعارض كلياً - اعارض جزئياً

14- التعرف على و التعرض الى اللغة الفصحى حتى سن التمدرس يشكل هاجسا كبيراً

للمعلم و التلاميذ على حد سواء.

- أوافق كلياً - أوافق جزئياً

- أعارض كلياً - أعارض جزئياً

15- كيف تساهم الأقسام التحضيرية في مساعدة التلاميذ؟

.....

.....

.....

16- بمقدور التلاميذ تخطي الصعوبات اللغوية فيما يخص اللغة الفصحى خلال مدة زمنية

قصيرة نسبيا.

- أوافق كلياً - أوافق جزئياً

- أعارض كلياً - أعارض جزئياً

17- يبقى المشكل اللغوي سائداً حتى في مراحل متقدمة (السنة الخامسة مثلاً)

- أوافق كلياً - أوافق جزئياً

- أعارض كلياً - أعارض جزئياً

18- ماذا تقترحون كحلول لهذه الثنائية اللغوية

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شكراً

Table 3.2 Classroom Observation Results at Ghitri Ahmed School

Elements of observation	Practical observation
Number of learners	
Materials	
Cases in which SA is used by learners	
Cases in which DA is used by learners	
Cases in which SA is used by the teacher	
Cases in which DA is used by the teacher	
Cases in which both varieties are used (teacher and learners)	
General picture about the teaching process	
General picture about the learning process	