

الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية  
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Université Abou Bekr Belkaid  
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جامعة أبي بكر بلقايد

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**Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria**

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

**University of Tlemcen**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of English**

***The Acquisition of Morpho-syntax as a Component of Literacy  
Development in Algeria: Case of First Grade Classroom in  
Meddah Kaddour Primary School (Ain Temouchent)***

Dissertation submitted as a partial fulfilment in candidacy for the degree of  
MASTER in Language Studies

*Presented by*

Salma BENSAAD

*Under the Supervision of*

Prof. Zoubir DENDANE

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**2015/2016**

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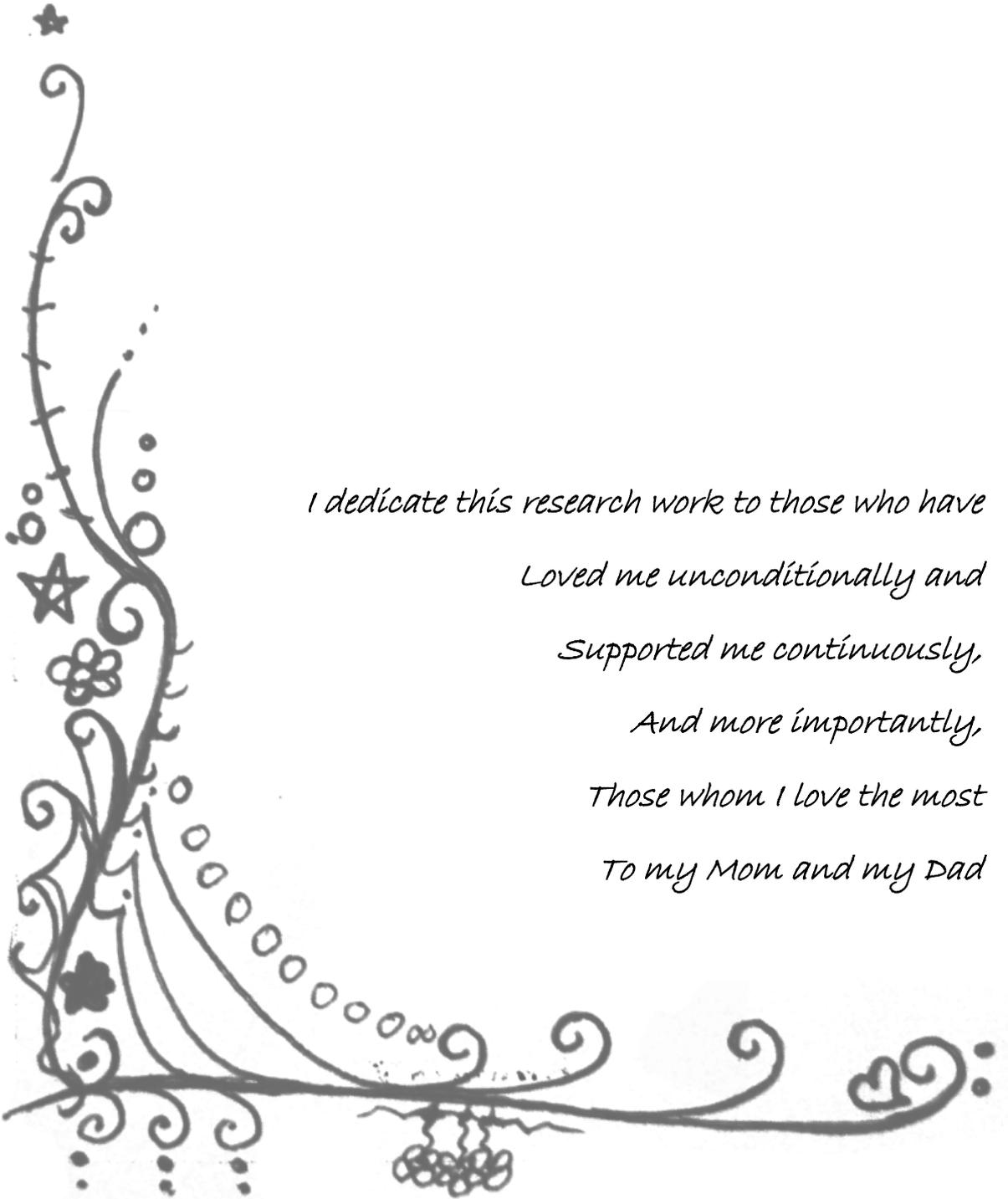
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## Dedication



*I dedicate this research work to those who have  
Loved me unconditionally and  
Supported me continuously,  
And more importantly,  
Those whom I love the most  
To my Mom and my Dad*

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First and foremost, I thank and praise Allah, the almighty, the merciful, the only and most powerful, for granting me the will, the ability and more importantly the passion to accomplish this.

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I am sure that I would not have been able to accomplish this without the most beautiful support of my dearest friends; I cannot thank you enough, but still...

Thank you.

## Abstract

The present research work highlights the impact of the diglossic linguistic situation in the Algerian community on the field of literacy development and second language acquisition of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). In the Algerian primary classrooms, teachers resort, in some cases, to Algerian Arabic (AA) when interacting with their pupils instead of using MSA, the language of instruction. Psychologists argue that this creates an intimate relationship between the teachers and their pupils which results in better teaching/learning circumstances. Previous exposure to MSA is yet another reason which alleviates the transition between primary and secondary socialization. This is mainly achieved through parents' individual efforts and participation in their children's language development, by introducing them to some linguistic elements of MSA during domestic interactions; in addition to the benefits of media such as televised programs, animations, and storytelling. For the sake of accomplishing the above purposes, a forty mixed ability classroom containing first grade pupils from both genders was observed and subjected to an experiment. To obtain information about the pupils' grammatical achievements, an analysis was conducted on their documents. Teachers too provided a substantial amount of information, which stems from their experience in the field of education; data was gathered by means of a questionnaire and a set of two interviews. Research findings suggest that parents are unaware of the importance of pre-school MSA exposure for their children. Literacy in Algeria is restricted to the two skills of reading and writing, which are *more or less* developed successfully by pupils. Relying on a model of acquisition for grammar teaching is likely to succeed, however results indicate a lack of resources; this entails teacher preparation and environment shaping.

## **List of Acronyms**

AA=> Algerian Arabic

AL=> Academic Literacy

CAH=> Critical Age Hypothesis

DA=> Dialectal Arabic

EL=> Emergent Literacy

FL=> First Language

H=> High

L=> Low

MSA=> Modern Standard Arabic

SL=> Second Language

SLA=> Second Language Acquisition

TL=> Target Language

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## List of Symbols Used for Arabic Script

Letter	IPA	Letter	IPA
ء	ʔ	ض	ð
ا	ā	ط	t̤
ب	b	ظ	z̤
ت	t	ع	ʕ
ث	θ	غ	ɣ
ج	dʒ	ف	f
ح	ħ	ق	q
خ	x	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	ð	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w/ū
ش	ʃ	ي	y/ī
ص	ʂ		

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# General Introduction

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## General Introduction

A nation rises and flourishes as a result of positive contributions made by its members. This positive contribution comprises such domains as politics, economy, social participation, family life, etc. (Dugdale and Clark, 2008). Nevertheless, were individuals to participate in the wellbeing of their nation, they must resort to successful scientific strategies. In other words, ‘we need knowledge-based societies’<sup>1</sup> which refer to scientific methods when attempting to solve problems; i.e., we need *literate* societies.

Literacy refers to the possession of two skills: writing and reading. It is developed through schooling; however, its preliminaries are set earlier, i.e., in the family environment. Since Arabic societies are diglossic, literacy entails knowledge of the standard which is taught in schools, i.e., Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Nevertheless, not all the citizens have full access (if at all) to literacy, thus one cannot expect illiterate parents to prepare their children for academic literacy (AL) and school enrolment, let alone the resulting linguistic problems pupils may face in classrooms which may comprise different areas, such as, language comprehension, language acquisition, and language production.

The present study is conducted with the purpose of exploring the intricacies involved in the process of literacy development in the Algerian primary school as well as the role that pupils’ prior-to-school experience plays in their school enrolment. Concerning the linguistic aspect, this paper examines the pupils’ grammatical achievements in MSA, particularly in the first grade; then through the years on a more general basis. All-in-all, this research seeks to answer these two questions:

1. In what set of circumstances does literacy development proceed in the Algerian primary school?
2. To what extent could the process of morpho-syntactic acquisition by Algerian primary school pupils be characterized as easygoing?

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<sup>1</sup> Benrabah, 2016 : a conference in Tlemcen University on April 27th.

As an attempt to formulate a preliminary answer for these questions, the researcher hypothesizes the following:

1. In Algeria, literacy is developed in diglossic circumstances; this affects the learners' psychological state and academic achievement.
2. Pupils acquire morpho-syntax during the five years of primary schools, and they are likely to encounter difficulties which stem from several sources, such as not being accustomed to MSA, mother tongue transfer, and pedagogical issues.

In order to answer the research questions and test the relevance and validity of the hypotheses, a triangulation of data collection methods was employed. Learners were subjected to observation, which focused on the levels of comfort they display in the classroom, as well as their linguistic achievements. Another means of data collection which was interested in learners was the experiment; by providing an unusual set of classroom circumstances, mainly exhibiting a text in AA on the blackboard. This method allowed the researcher to assess the learners' reactions, thus come up with subject-relevant conclusions. The researcher resorted to learners' document analysis as well, which provided an insight into their linguistic achievements regarding the morpho-syntactic level, by verifying the types of grammatical errors and mistakes they made. A close- and open-ended questionnaire was administered to a set of teachers; it focused on some pedagogical issues such as teacher preparation, literacy development and morpho-syntactic acquisition. And finally, two different interviews were addressed to two different teachers, the first focused on the teacher's experience in teaching, whereas the second was interested in teacher preparation.

The sample for this study comprised a forty-pupil mixed-ability first grade classroom; it was selected via non-probability procedures. It also comprised a set of eight female teachers who represent the whole working-staff of the targeted primary school. All the teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaire, i.e., they were randomly selected. Conversely, the interviews were conducted for a more specific

purpose, thus two teachers were selected because their profiles showed that they were the most adequate.

The research paper comprises two chapters, which deal with the subject from two different perspectives. The first chapter displays the theoretical basis for the research and thus is organised in the form of a literature review. It provides definitions for several notions such as: diglossia, literacy, and morpho-syntax; and it describes their application in the Algerian context, for instance how diglossia functions in Algerian society, the way literacy development proceeds, and the methods used to teach grammar in the Algerian classroom.

On the other hand, the second chapter provides information about the methodology used to answer the research questions and to explore the issues dealt with; such as data collection and analysis, which were both qualitatively and quantitatively conducted. It also discusses the main results in order to draw adequate interpretations and conclusions.

# Chapter One

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## **Morpho-syntactic Acquisition as a component of Literacy** **Development in Algeria**

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## 1.1. Introduction

Secondary socialization generally refers to the placement of children in school, an entirely new environment, in which they are expected to adapt and integrate; they are also expected to develop a set of competencies which include literacy. Literacy development is not an easy process; especially in Algeria which is diagnosed with diglossia, the case of all Arab societies. This chapter aims to discover the intricacies involved in the learning of Standard Arabic in primary schools as a part of literacy development. It first investigates the methods used in the fulfilment of this purpose, reviewing the psychological impact of diglossia on primary school pupils. Secondly, it reviews the main steps pupils undergo when acquiring the grammatical system of MSA, and the main difficulties they face. The reason behind selecting the morpho-syntactic structure is that it has been subjected to different pedagogical changes in the search for the most adequate method to teach it. The current trend tends towards making learners acquire the system rather than learn it, i.e., the debate is whether grammar should be explicitly or implicitly instructed.

## 1.2. The Notion of Academic Literacy

In folk linguistics<sup>1</sup>, and for a long period of time, the definition of literacy stated that it is the ability to read, write and calculate. Collins (2006: 246) states that the fact that “literacy understood as the making or interpreting of inscriptions has a history of many millennia, and is closely associated with long-term and large-scale enterprises, such as cities and states, armies and schools, extensive markets and world religions”. However, it is hardly sufficient to consider someone literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century only because they can associate between symbols and their corresponding sounds. In fact, the true meaning of literacy extends to include such skills as: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing, thinking, and critically analyzing school subjects (Cooper, 1997; Wang, 2015).

The belief that literacy development starts in school is misleading. Literacy is an ongoing process, which begins in the early childhood and continues all the way

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<sup>1</sup> Folk linguistics studies the overt knowledge and comments about language from non-language specialists. (Preston, 2006)

through adulthood; in order to fully explain this idea, a distinction between Emergent Literacy (EL) and Academic Literacy (AL) must be made. When children first realize that sounds are somehow reflected in print, they are developing an EL, which may thus be defined as the initial awareness of an existing connection between sounds and print (Wang, 2015). Were parents to contribute in their children's EL development, it is important that they arrange a print-rich environment for them through activities such as: providing them with print materials and reading to them on a daily basis. Children who have successfully acquired EL are observed to show more tendencies towards reading and learning. The task of EL, thus, lies in preparing children to be future learners, particularly by initiating their AL development, whereas AL, as its name implies, is strongly related to academic settings, particularly schools. AL entails that students possess a set of linguistic skills: such as field-specific vocabulary, explanation and argumentation, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, and the like.

### **1.2.1. The Scope of Academic Literacy**

AL is not solely regarded when one looks at what pupils write, but also when listening to their utterances, apparently, the later is restructured when the skills of literacy are being developed. In this vein, Michaels (1981: 424) states that "in order to be regarded as literate in school, children must be able to shift from the face-to-face conversational discourse strategies appropriate in the home, to the more written-like strategies of discursive prose." She further explains her view by revealing the skills that characterize literate speech, namely that children rely on grammar and lexicon to communicate information usually comprehended via nonverbal cues such as intonation, stress and pitch register; and that they adopt a 'non-face-to-face perspective' by declaring all the subject-relevant information, without regard neither to the interlocutor nor to the fact that they knew the information being delivered.

The level of literacy children develop defines the success of their school achievements, i.e., if pupils fail to understand the language used to instruct them, how can one expect them to grasp the subjects taught? This view was attested by many scholars (such as Wong-Fillmore, 2007). Wang claims that academic language, which he defines as "the language used in school to learn content in various subjects" (2015:7), is a basic element in academic literacy. He even describes it as its 'important

groundwork'. In the same line of thought, Richards and Schmidt (2002: 2) claim that academic language involves “learning specific terms, text types, discourse features and speech registers in different fields of study (e.g. history, maths)”, and associate its mastery with literacy and academic achievement. If indeed, the reliance of literacy development on academic language is as strong, then what are the methods most suitable to build this skill? And what role do educators and learners play in the fulfilment of such task?

Academic literacy is acquired through teacher-learner daily interactions, which occur face-to-face within classroom settings; it requires that all the actors in this situation, namely educators and children, invest whatever means needed for success. The teachers' responsibility lies in selecting the most adequate methods for the majority of students, taking into consideration their linguistic backgrounds as well as their differential access to literacy. Michaels (1981, 424) for instance, observed that some children have less to learn than others because they “[...] come to school with a discourse style that is closer to the literate standard”; thus, teachers need to adapt and simplify their style to meet that of their learners. Children, too, have a significant role to play, for they must be active elements who engage cognitively in the learning situation, it is their job to develop an academic language which directs them towards educational success.

The importance of academic language as a skill of literacy is in no way taken for granted, this is applicable to all educational settings in all societies, including Algeria. So how does literacy development proceed in Algeria? And what are the main social factors that influence the development of this process?

### **1.3. Literacy Development in Algeria**

In order to understand the course of literacy development within schools in a specific society, one must first draw on an analysis of its linguistic situation.

Nowadays, Algeria is a multilingual country wherein “at least three languages are in competition” namely Arabic, French (the colonial linguistic heritage), and Berber (the language of the indigenous people of North Africa) (Aitsiselmi, 2006: 159). According to the constitution, MSA is the only official language of the country

despite the fact that it is not the native tongue of Algerians; this paradox may be explained using Ferguson’s terminology.

In his article entitled ‘Diglossia’ Ferguson (1959), reported on a study attesting that Arabic is a diglossic language. This entails that it exists in at least two divergent varieties within the same speech community, which are complementarily distributed, i.e., each one performs a certain set of functions in the society. The two varieties are named in terms of high (H) and low (L) and are marked by some unique characteristics, which are clarified in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 a Comparison between the High and the Low Varieties of Diglossia  
(Adapted from Ferguson, 1959)

The High Variety	The Low Variety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It holds official status;</li> <li>• It is used for formal situations;</li> <li>• It is more prestigious;</li> <li>• It has a long literary tradition;</li> <li>• It is learnt through formal instruction;</li> <li>• It is standardized</li> <li>• Not likely to change over time (stable).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No official status;</li> <li>• Used for social interactions;</li> <li>• It is highly underestimated;</li> <li>• Its literature takes an oral form, i.e., Folk literature;</li> <li>• It is acquired;</li> <li>• Its grammar is not recorded;</li> <li>• Highly unstable (varying over time).</li> </ul>

In Algeria, the H variety is MSA whereas the L is AA, their functional distribution is extremely visible, but is hardly noticed by the community, Ferguson claims that this situation is regarded as the norm rather than a ‘problem’ until the appearance of ‘some trends’; among these trends is directed towards literacy.

In order to be regarded as literate in Algerian schools, children must possess competence in MSA, which functions as the official language of instruction, because “[N]onstandard varieties are not acceptable in the classroom and are not written” (Miller, 2006: 662). Children, before school, are rarely or never acquainted with MSA (Abu-Rabia, 2000); this is due to the fact that AA is the language acquired and used by Algerians within their social environment, which includes interaction between family members, among friends, and even with strangers. Thus children are only, extensively, introduced to MSA during educational enrolment; this is likely to make the task of

literacy acquisition more difficult for such children chiefly “[B]ecause nonstandard and standard differ massively in syntax and vocabulary” (Miller, 2006: 662). This language ‘*of school*’ is also the means in which new content on various school subjects is delivered, which is likely to delay the learning rate. Nevertheless, it is possible to avoid this setback by using adequate methods to equip children with the necessary linguistic elements, which bridge the gap between the language of home and that of school. One of these elements is grammatical structure, which embodies one of the most striking differences between H and L; Ferguson (1959: 32) maintains that “H has grammatical categories not present in L and has an inflectional system of nouns and verbs which is much reduced or totally absent in L.”

#### **1.4. The Grammatical Dimension of Literacy**

Grammatical competence in a language (also called structural competence) refers to the possession and fluent manipulation of its grammatical system; it is an integral component of literacy because a literate speech requires correctness and precision which is mostly accomplished through the rules of grammar. Snyder (2008: 14) defines grammar as “the art of speaking and writing correctly and the art of speaking and writing well”. Nonetheless, not any grammar is suitable for literate language contexts; Miller (2006), for instance, makes a distinction between home-language grammar and school-adequate grammar:

Unplanned speech is distinguished by simple syntactic constructions, a restricted range of vocabulary, and the extensive use of fixed expressions and collocations. In contrast, theories that invoke rich innate knowledge are based on complex generative models of grammar designed to handle the most complex constructions. These complex constructions occur not in unplanned speech but in written language. The latter is, arguably, learned rather than acquired. (P, 663-664)

The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, defines grammar as “the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences.” This definition suggests that a sound grammatical investigation should include two layers of language structure, namely words and sentences; word-level grammar is called ‘Morphology’ whereas ‘Syntax’ is interested in sentence structure.

### 1.4.1. Branches of Grammar

Morphology is the branch of grammar that deals with the internal structure of words. Morphemes, the minimal distinctive units of grammar, are the raw material of morphological analysis. One of the fields receiving major interest in morphology is word formation which, as stated by Crystal (2008: 523), “refers to the whole process of MORPHOLOGICAL variation in the constitution of words<sup>2</sup>”. The use of ‘morphological’ here entails the two generally recognized processes of word formation:

- Inflections signal grammatical relationships of a word without changing its lexical category, as in: changing verb tenses to the past or present participle (include → included → including).
- Derivation changes the lexical categories of words through adding affixes such as: deriving verbs from nouns (e.g. danger → en-danger) or deriving nouns from verbs (e.g. write → writer).

Booij<sup>3</sup> (2006) mentions many differences between the two processes, which are identified in Table 1.2

Table 1.2 Comparisons between Derivation and Inflection

Category of Difference	Derivations	Inflections
1. In Dictionaries	→ have independent lexical entries	→are put under the same entry as that of the stem
2. Functional	→change lexical categories	→change grammatical relationships
3. Arrangement	→follow the stem directly	→may follow the stem, but are peripheral to derivations if the two processes co-occur
4. Resulting elements	→create stems from stems	→create word forms from stems
5. Obligatoriness	→ optional	→ obligatory (necessary)
6. Syntactic Relevance	→ irrelevant <sup>4</sup>	→relevant (particular word forms may be required by syntactic context).

<sup>2</sup> Capitalized In the source

<sup>3</sup>G Booij, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

<sup>4</sup> Booij (2006) claims that one the possibility for derivation-syntax relevance must not be completely denied, considering that the fact that derivation indicates the syntactic categories is ‘already of relevance to syntax’.

Syntax, the second branch of grammar, is also interested in words, although it perceives them from a different angle. It is concerned with the structures that can be made from words rather than the words themselves, i.e., “the ways in which words combine to form sentences” and the rules which govern the formation of sentences, making some sentences possible and others not possible within a particular language.” (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 535). Syntax is also used to refer to the sets of rules which describe and explain sentence structure, making some sentences possible and others not possible within the framework of the language in question (Koenig<sup>5</sup>, 2006; Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Several competing suggestions for an exhaustive grammatical theory have been formulated with the aim of explaining all the existing natural languages, not without some inconvenience, however. Such rules include models like: Phrase Structure Grammar; Transformational Grammar (Government and Binding); Transformational Grammar (Minimalism); Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar; Lexical Functional Grammar, etc. (Müller, 2016).

Despite the fact that syntax investigates, and formulates, language structure, its functional importance lays rather in meaning; i.e., a syntactically incorrect form of language is consequently marked by semantic ambiguity and indistinctness. Thus, if a speaker wishes the expression he/she utters to deliver the intended meaning appropriately, the “lexical items must *fit into particular slots* in the syntactic structure of that expression.” (Hinzen, 2006:150). The study of the relationship between form and meaning is undertaken under the heading ‘Syntax-Semantics Interface’ (Koenig, 2006: 428).

#### **1.4.2. The Importance of Grammar in Literacy**

Grammatical knowledge is, of course, not the only requirement for the accomplishment of a literate oral and written discourse, Cushing-Weigle (2005), for instance, mentions many others, such as having a ‘fluent access’ to vocabulary and orthography. However, the lack of the grammatical constituents in a sentence is indeed very striking, and may limit speech comprehension. Swan (2002) states that educators must not ignore grammar teaching for two ‘good reasons’, the first being *comprehensibility*, by which he means that no speaker utters speech unless they intend

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<sup>5</sup> J-P Koenig, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY, USA

to be understood by their audience. As a result, being understood (as well as understanding what is being said) entails learning certain grammatical structures and applying them in conversation. Whereas the second reason is *acceptability*, i.e. the desire to be acknowledged as a competent speaker by specific groups of people, which may be compromised if one ignores the rules responsible for the correct combinations of linguistic elements.

### **1.5. Grammar Within The Arabic Linguistic Tradition**

Kempson<sup>6</sup> (2006: 449) states that a grammar of a language is “[...] a formal model of the properties of language that are intrinsic to the words of the language and the way they can be combined”. Within the framework of such definition, then, a sound grammatical theory would be one that can describe its word structures and the patterns in which they are arranged. However, he continues to raise the dilemma as to whether the scope of grammatical theory was really as limited “Is it enough to provide a formal account of language structure, or should a grammar reflect general cognitive underpinnings, with the theory of grammar seen as part of a theory of mind?” (2006:450).

This question highlights two views of linguistic (grammatical) theory; the first, considers that the structure of separate languages must be seen as part of the whole entity of ‘human language’ which is capable of drawing on an understanding of the development of the cognitive language faculty. The strongest representative of this vein is that of Chomsky, who argues that the grammatical theory must extend beyond a structural description of language to include setting an ‘explanatory’ basis for grammar within human underlying cognitive system; he states that:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors [...] in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (Chomsky, 1965:3)

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<sup>6</sup> R Kempson, King’s College London, London, UK

The world witnessed the first indication for a potential relationship between grammar and the brain in Chomsky's review of Skinner's 'Verbal Behaviour' (1959), where he argued that there is an innate predisposition in the human brain, which is responsible for language-related cognitive activities, i.e., that the linguistic capacity to acquire and produce language is a biological endowment. By so doing, Chomsky was the first to defy the behaviourist view of language acquisition, which suggests that it occurs by means of imitation and habit-formation (Newmeyer, 1996). In 1965, Chomsky elaborated his idea by introducing the terms *competence* (the speaker's ability to produce and understand correct sentences) and *performance* (the externally visible output of such competence), which entails that the grammar used in speech generation may assist in answering the eternal question of how the brain functions. Chomsky's approach considers grammar to be an observable behaviour which provides the opportunity to investigate a non-accessible internal faculty; grammar thus permits us to cast a glance inside the human brain. The second view, on the other hand, is interested exclusively in describing the structural aspect of language; it is particularly represented here by the Arabic linguistic tradition.

### **1.5.1. The Arabic Linguistic Tradition**

In this school, syntax represents a structural mapping of the language being investigated; its role is to formulate rules that distinguish grammatical sentences from non-grammatical ones. Thus, syntax is a systematic procedure whose sole objective lies in constructing combinations of phonological complexes and denotational<sup>7</sup> contents, for linguistic units that are likely to enlarge progressively, from words to sentences (Kempson, 2006).

Arabic grammar is structural in nature, i.e., its task is limited to the description of word forms and explanation of word formation processes; this is mainly due to the fact that it was conducted for the purpose of preserving the Arabic language, the medium in which the Qur'an is written. Ryding (2005: 3) affirmed that "Arabic was [...] permanently sacralized; as the chosen language for the *Qur'ān*, it became the object of centuries of religious study and exegesis, theological analysis, grammatical

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<sup>7</sup> Denotation is used as part of classification of meaning; a denotational meaning of a word is equal to its literal meaning (dictionary meaning). It is usually opposed to Connotation, which refers to the association of a specific word to personal or social entities, phenomena or incidents.

analysis and speculation.” The focus at first was on meaning clarification, and on composing correct explanations for the divine texts; it was the appearance of Sībawayhi’s (8<sup>th</sup> C) language treatment, that paid explicit attention to the grammatical aspect of Arabic.

The Arabic linguistic tradition is strongly attributed to Sībawayhi’s analysis of Arabic in his *Kitāb* (i.e., book), which was primarily inspired from the teachings of his mentor Al-Khalil<sup>8</sup>. It “covered the entire structure of the language” (Versteegh<sup>9</sup>, 2006: 435) and remains till the day “the authoritative source for all succeeding [Arab] grammarians” (Ibid). Sībawayhi’s<sup>10</sup> work was written in a very simple style, designed in the form of an explanation directed to an interlocutor. It was categorized in successive chapters, which described the structure of Arabic and explained its different linguistic phenomena.

In the Arabic linguistic analysis, ‘*Naḥw*’ is the word considered equivalent to grammar, the same term, however, is used to refer to one of its subfields, namely syntax. Morphological analysis, on the other hand, is undertaken within the framework of ‘*Ṣarf*’. The two branches of grammar were dealt with thoroughly in different sections by Sībawayh, as he talked about syntax from pages eight (8) to two hundred and eighty four (284), while morphological analysis extended from page two hundred and eighty five (285) to four hundred and seventy six (476).

Sībawayhi’s book is perceived as the first comprehensive work which, although not limited to the structural aspects of the Arabic language, managed to describe and explain all its specificities. Nowadays, besides being an all-inclusive course book of Arabic, it has major contribution in the western linguistic theorising; Aronoff (1994: 3) maintains that “all Western linguistic morphology is directly rooted in the Semitic grammatical tradition.”

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<sup>8</sup> Abu ‘Abd-al-Rahman al-Khalil ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Amr ibn Tammam al Farahidi; he compiled the first dictionary of Arabic: *Kitāb al-‘Ain*.

<sup>9</sup> University of Nijmegen, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

<sup>10</sup> Sībawayhi’s *Kitāb* was re-published by al-khandji library, Egypt (3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 1988). Realized and explained by Abd-Essalam Mohamad Haroun.

## 1.6. Grammar Development in Algerian Schools

Algeria is a diglossic society; this entails that almost all its population possesses grammatical competence in two different varieties of the same language: AA and MSA. Nevertheless, the attained levels of proficiency are likely to be uneven. This is due to the fact that the grammars of the two systems were accumulated in different periods of the child's age via different processes. AA is the acquired first language of Algerians; it develops by means of primary socialisation, i.e., the process of first language acquisition (FLA); it proceeds through five stages. (Shown in figure 1.1)



Figure 1.1 First Language Acquisition Stages

When grammaticalization is completed, one may proclaim that the child has successfully acquired his/her mother tongue; the only remaining task is the lexical expansion, which is a process that continues progressing through the lifespan. Children's lexicon may expand cross-linguistically, i.e., as part of second language acquisition (SLA) along with its morphology and its syntax, were they to choose to learn a second language. However, acquiring a second language (SL) is not a matter of choice for Algerians; they rather have to learn it when they are enrolled to schools.

### 1.6.1. Second Language Acquisition

SLA research is interested in the psychological development of any non-native language, regardless of whether such a language is attributed any status in the learner's locale or not. The distinction between consciously learning and unconsciously acquiring a second language was first made by Krashen in (1981). Acquisition is different from learning, because it is similar to the process by which children learn their native tongue, relying mostly on social interaction. The concern of the language acquirer is delivering the message fluently rather than accurately, i.e., on content rather than form; thus neither errors nor mistakes are deliberately corrected by the teacher.

The difference between errors and mistakes, here, is rather strict, i.e., they are not considered as synonyms. Errors are systematic; they occur because of the learner's unawareness of the correct forms, which is either due to the fact that they haven't dealt with the lesson yet, or that they have learnt the incorrect form. Whereas mistakes occur in the form of slips of a tongue, i.e., the learner forgets and is likely to self-correct right after committing the mistake. Rather than dictating grammar rules, teachers and care givers set up an input-rich linguistic environment for learners who, by means of exposure to authentic language, accumulate the feeling of a correct linguistic element, rather than a knowledge of the rules that constitute its correctness.

Besides putting a distinction between learning and acquiring, Krashen's theory involves four other aspects; the first, called *the natural order* hypothesis, states that SLA proceeds following a predictable order by all learners, on a scale from easy to difficult. The extensive exposure to the target language may result in the acquisition of some incorrect forms; Krashen claims that it is the role of the language *monitor*<sup>11</sup> to rectify such false learning. Furthermore, the *input* hypothesis states that learners should be exposed to an *i+1*, i.e., a 'comprehensible input' which is above their levels of understanding, in order to push them to the next level of acquisition. The final hypothesis as suggested by Krashen is that of *the affective filter*, it refers to the affective factors which may affect the process of acquisition, such as the levels of anxiety and the quality of motivation. According to Krashen then, SLA should first proceed in a teaching-free language environment, which allows acquirers to construct fluency and an understanding in the target language. The acquired system undergoes a structural revision and improvement through direct instruction of rules, resulting in a refined language output, and thus signalling a successful SLA. (See Figure 1.2)

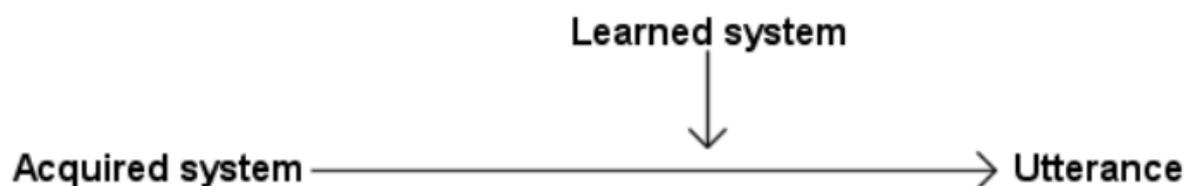


Figure 1.2 Model for Adult Second Language Performance (Krashen, 1981)

<sup>11</sup> The language monitor plans, edits and correct the acquired forms.

### **1.6.2. Second Language Grammaticalization**

An acquisition-based Second Language Grammaticalization would proceed through the following stages:

- Intensive exposure to the target language (TL);
- Encouraging acquirers to perform activities in the TL;
- Acquirers manage to build the basic linguistic skills in the TL;

During the first stages of SLA, structure is rarely emphasized, mainly because of the efforts to assimilate it with FLA, Nassaji and Fotos (2004: 127) state that “similar processes underlie both first and second language (L2) learning and that, if first language (L1) learners do not require formal instruction to learn languages, neither should L2 learners.” However, once the acquirers are noticed to have acquired TL fluency and understanding, they are ready to receive some direct grammatical instruction, mainly regarding inflectional morphology (verbal and nominal categories) and syntactic structures.

### **1.7. Grammaticality in the Arabic Varieties of Algeria**

Algeria is a multilingual society where a set of diversely-originated languages coexist, such as Berber (Kabyles; Chaouias; Touaregs; Oasis Berber<sup>12</sup>); and Indo-European (French); Semitic (Arabic) (Aitsiselmi, 2006). Each of these languages occupies a special position in the society, Berber, for instance, is spoken regionally, whereas French functions as the second language of the Francophone community of Algerians; the same, however, cannot be said about Arabic, because of the diverse forms it takes and the limitless functions it fulfils.

Basically, there are three forms of Arabic in all the Arab-world: Arabic, MSA, and Dialectal Arabic (DA). The domain of Arabic is restricted to religious and literary situations, MSA is functional in written and formal speech, whereas social interactions are carried out by means of the various dialects; nevertheless, this classification is still non-consensual among Arabic linguists. The main controversy results from the fact that Arabic and MSA share the same structural properties: phonological, morphological, and syntactic. Indeed, MSA evolved as a result of the “adaptation [of Arabic] to the needs of modern culture by the introduction of new terms, deep changes

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<sup>12</sup> Map of the Berber-speaking Region of North Africa (S. Chaker, 2006: 739)

in phraseology, and marginal ones in syntax” (Bau, 1969: 1). Thus, the differential between the two varieties lies merely on the stylistic and lexical levels: MSA writing uses less complex forms; and some lexical items of Arabic (Classical) may be regarded as old-fashioned by MSA either because they are not used at all, or they were replaced by loan words from foreign origins (Ben Zerrouq, 2006)<sup>13</sup>. This section describes the morpho-syntactic system of MSA. It then reviews the aspects in which AA, the language imprinted in the mind of all Algerians, diverges from MSA.

### 1.7.1. Morphology of Modern Standard Arabic

Being a member of the Semitic language family<sup>14</sup>, Arabic shares its morphological system, which is mainly characterized by the derivational process of root-and-pattern (Hackett, 2006). Aronoff affirms that:

The formative nature of linguistic morphology is especially clear when we look at the Semitic languages, where roots are mere collections of consonants from which all individual word forms are quite dramatically given form by the laying of templates and affixes. (1994: 3)

The root is by definition a stable consonantal sequence, which expresses the content meaning of the word; whereas the pattern is usually a sequence of vowels and consonants which carries the functional meaning (Watson, 2006). Indeed, almost all lexical items of the language are obtained from the interspersing of a set of patterns within the triconsonantal roots of the language, where roots behave as preliminary raw material that is subjected to the shaping and moulding of the patterns; exhibiting a “rigorous and elegant logic” (Ryding, 2005: 45). The Arabic roots are usually triconsonantal<sup>15</sup>; they take a specific order which cannot be modified, for that would jeopardize its meaning. This does not, however, reject the possibility of the existence of bilateral lexemes indeed some complete words in Arabic have only two consonants, such as: أخ (*?ax*=> brother); أب (*?ab*=> father); اجداد (*?jad*=> grandfather); etc. Patterns, too, are bound morphemes made up of an organized set of vowels, which are inserted within the root consonants; they can also contain additional consonants such as ! (*i-*),

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<sup>13</sup> The original text is in Arabic: PhD dissertation year (2006/2007).

<sup>14</sup> Semitic languages are part of the Afro-asiatic language family. Cf., see: Concise Encyclopedia of Languages of the World (929: 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Very few roots are quadriconsonantal and fewer are quinquiconsonantal.

إست (*ista-*), etc. The root-and-pattern combination represents the foundation of a rich lexicon, comprising verbs (various types) and nouns (verbal nouns, active participles, names of instruments, etc.) which, along with particles, form the three categories of speech that constitute the language. Because grammatical categories can only be operational on verb and noun stems, derivation in Arabic is prior to inflection. Arabic inflectional processes indicate eight grammatical categories, namely, number (singular, dual, and plural); gender (male and female); case (nominative, genitive, and accusative)<sup>16</sup>; tense/aspect (perfect and imperfect); mood (indicative, subjunctive, and jussive); voice (passive and active); state (definite and indefinite); and person (أنا => *anā*, هي => *hiya*, أنتم => *antumā*, etc.).

### 1.7.1.1. Verbal Derivation

Most Arabic verbs are derived from tri-consonantal roots (with a few quadric-consonantal ones) through introflexion and/ or affixation, and are then subjected to inflectional processes in order to indicate grammatical categories. For deriving verbs, a set of ten patterns (الأوزان => *al-awzān*) is widely used with triconsonantal roots, whereas another three are employed in the few cases of quadriconsonantal ones. For instance, the verb *kataba* is the result of applying the pattern *aaa* on the root  $\sqrt{ktb}$  (cf. See Ben Zarrouq, 2006). The process of verbal derivation entails that Arabic is a highly systematic language (Ryding, 2005); however, there are some exceptional types of verbs which cause a derivational change, in other words, an irregularity. On one hand, there is an irregularity within the sound verbs, particularly: hamzated verbs and doubled (or geminated) verbs, whose derived structure diverges from that of the regular sound verbs, e.g., أخذ (*ʔaxaḏa*: he took) => يأخذ (*yaʔxuḏu*: he takes). The second category expressing derivational irregularity is the weak verbs, which, by definition, are those containing the weak consonants ‘w’ and ‘y’, e.g., باع (*bāʕa*: he sold) => يبيع (*yabīʕu*: he sells).

Arabic passive form is constructed through the process of *Ablaut*, which is a set of word-internal vowel changes, Richards and Schmidt (2002: 1) define it as: “a process by which an inflected form of a word is formed by changes in the vowel of the stem. For example, the past tense of sing is sang and the plural of goose is geese.” In

most cases, ablaut occurs through changing ‘a’ for ‘u’ and ‘i’ for ‘a’, e.g., رَفَعَ (*rafaʿa*: he lifted)=> رُفِعَ (*rufiʿa*: it was lifted)=> يُرْفَعُ (*yurfaʿu*: it is being lifted).

### 1.7.1.2. Verbal Inflection

Arabic is a highly inflectional language; in verbs, inflection indicates six grammatical categories:

- Tense/aspect: there are two tenses in Arabic: the Perfect which indicates a complete action; whereas the Imperfect indicates an ongoing action. The future is formed through adding the prefix سَ (*sa*) or the particle سوف (*sawfa*<sup>17</sup>) to the imperfect form
- Person: verbs in MSA inflect for 13 persons (Table, 1.6)
- Gender: MSA add the prefix (-t) to the feminine verbal inflection in order to discriminate it from that of the masculine.
- Number: inflection in MSA indicates three numbers, which are singular, dual, and plural
- Mood: whereas the perfect is static, the imperfect form of Arabic verbs has four different moods, which are differentiated by means of different suffixes: indicative (-u); subjunctive (-a); jussive and imperative share the same suffix marking (Θ); and the energetic, which is mostly used in Arabic.
- Voice: MSA verbs are inflected in both the active and the passive voices.

### 1.7.1.3. Nominal Derivation

Arabic pronouns are differentiated according to the number (singular, dual and plural) and gender (masculine and feminine), which excludes *anā* (I) and *antumā* (the two of you). However, in AA the dual is completely abandoned, and the feminine does not inflect in plurals (consult Table 1.7).

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<sup>17</sup> May be considered equivalent to the English *will*.

Table 1.6 Personal pronouns of MSA

	Singular		Dual		Plural	
	independent	Suffixed	Independent	Suffixed	Independent	Suffixed
	ʔanā (أنا)	-nī (ني) /-ī (أي)	/	/	naḥnu (نحن)	-nā (نا)
2 MASC	ʔanta (أنت)	-ka (ك)	ʔantumā (أنتما)	-kumā (كما)	ʔantum (أنتم)	-Kum (كم)
3 FEM	ʔanti (أنت)	-ki (ك)	ʔantumā (أنتما)	-kumā (كما)	ʔantunna (أنتن)	-Kunna (كن)
3 MASC	Huwa (هو)	-hū /-h (ه)	Humā (هما)	-humā (هما)/ himā (هما)	- Hum (هم)	-hum (هم)/-him (هم)
4 FEM	Hiya (هي)	-hā (ها)	Humā (هما)	-humā (هما)/ himā (هما)	- Hunna (هن)	-hunna (هن)/ -hinna (هن)

The most remarkable feature in the nominal system in SA is the existence of a diverse set of noun forms. Each form (*wazn*) is used to express a category of nouns; Some of these forms are demonstrated in Figure 1.

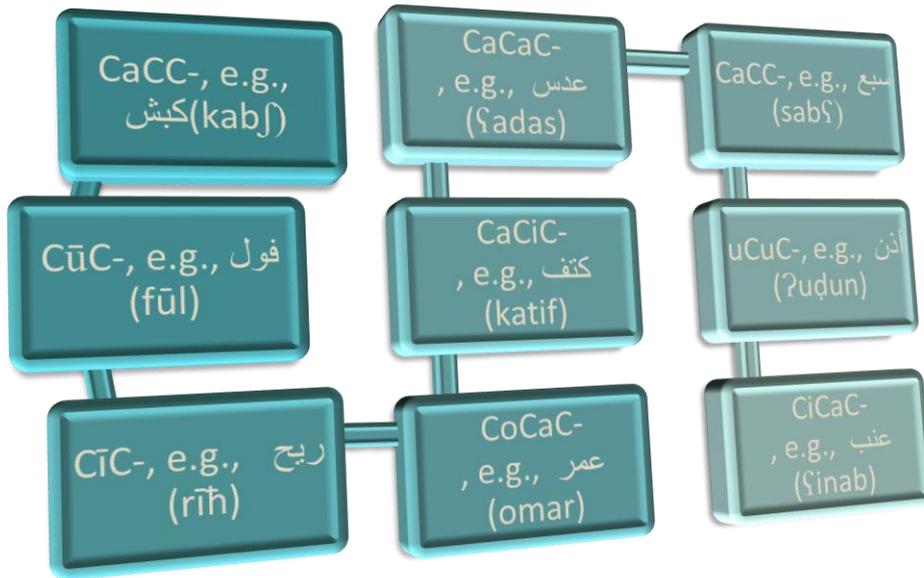


Figure 1.3 Some Arabic word forms.

In addition to the several nominal forms seen above, Arabic resorts to derivation for lexical expansion. Thus, big chunks of the Arabic lexicon are generated by means of root-and-pattern. This category of nouns is called substantives; which is “traditionally defined as ‘substances’, i.e. names of persons, places, things, etc.”

(Crystal, 2008: 463). Some of the substantives which exist in MSA are *the active participle* كاتب (CāCiC- => kātib: writer), *diminutives* كتّيب (CuCaiC- => wulaid: little book), *nouns of place* مكتب (maCCaC- => maktab: office), etc.

#### 1.7.1.4. Nominal Inflection

Nouns in Arabic comprise adjectives, substantives and numerals; they inflect four grammatical categories: gender, number, case, and definiteness/ indefiniteness:

- Gender: in Arabic nouns, including those signifying objects, are also marked as either being masculine or feminine; however, a distinction is made between genuine and metaphorical gender. An example of genuine female is امرأة (*imraʔa*=> woman) which is contrasted with رجل (*radjul*=> man), whereas باب (*bāb*=> door) is considered masculine, as opposed to نافذة (*nāfida*=> window).
- Number: there are three nominal numbers in Arabic: the singular is not subjected to any marking; the dual is indicated by the suffix (ān); the and plural: Sound Masculine Plural كاتبون (kātibūn=> male writers) Sound Feminine Plural كاتبات (Kātibāt=> female writers), and the Broken Plural which exists in several types<sup>18</sup>.
- Case: three cases may be attributed to the noun in Arabic: nominative ضمة (-u); accusative فتحة (-a), and the genitive كسرة (-i);
- Definiteness/ indefiniteness: definiteness in SA is expressed by the prefixation of the definite article (*al-*), whereas indefinite nouns are nunated<sup>19</sup>; e.g., شربت من الكأس (*faribat minal-kaʔsi*=> she drank from the cup) (definite) as opposed to: شربت من كأس (*faribat min kaʔsin*=> she drank from a cup) (indefinite).

#### 1.7.2. Syntax of Modern Standard Arabic

Arabic linguistics categorises sentences depending on the word with which they begin; in this respect, there are two main structures: a) those beginning with a noun, they are called *جمل إسمية* (*jumal ismyya*: nominal sentences) and take the SVO word order; there are cases when it is rather VOS, particularly when the subject is not emphasised (Prochāzka, 2006). b) Sentences which begin with a verb, i.e., *جمل فعلية* (*jumal fiʔlJJa*: verbal sentences) and are in the form of OVS. This classification, however, does not take into consideration sentences which do not contain a verb,

<sup>18</sup> There is a large number of broken plural patterns, such as CuCuC; CuCaC; CuCūC; etc.

<sup>19</sup> Nunation (tanween) is the addition of a final (-n) to a word in order to indicate its indefiniteness.

Abboud and McCarus maintain that “Arabic sentences are of two types, those with verbs, called verbal sentences , and those not containing verbs, called *equational sentences*” (emphasis in original; 1983, Part 1:102). Equational sentences take very simple structures, containing a definite noun called المبتدأ (*al-moubtada*: subject or topic) and an indefinite one which is الخبر (*al-xabar*: predicate). Both constituents in an equational sentence take the nominative case, e.g., اليوم جميلٌ (*al-yawmu djamīlun*: the day *is* beautiful). However, there are some structural additions which change the case of either the topic or the predicate to accusative, particularly: *kana wa aḥawātuhā* for instance, كان اليوم جميلاً (*kana l-yawmu djamīlan*: the day *was* beautiful); and إن وأخواتها *inna wa aḥawātuhā*, e.g., *inna l-yawma djamīlun* (for more forms, see Ryding, 2005: 59).

The Arabic sentence structure is ruled by two main principles: *the government principle* which entails that some elements (governors) make others behave in a specific way, Ryding maintains that “[T]ypical ‘governors’ (عوامل ؟wāmil) in Arabic are verbs, prepositions, and particles” (2005: 58). Verbs, when transitive, govern objects into the accusative case, such as: كتب عمر الدرس (*kataba omaru a-ddarsa*: Omar wrote the lesson), Prepositions such as حروف الجر (*ḥurūf al jar*) and which changes the case of the following word to genitive, e.g., في البيت (*fil-bayti*: at home), تحت الطاولة (*taḥta aṭṭāwilati*: under the table); and حروف الجزم (*ḥurūf al dǧazm*) which change it to the jussive, e.g., لم يذهب (*lam yaḍhab*=> he did not go) *lam yaf’al*. The second principle is *the agreement principle*, which states that some words share the same properties as others, such as verb- subject agreement (regarding number and gender) and النعت و المنعوت (*an-naḥt wal-man’ūt*: adjectives) case agreement.

In MSA, negation is formed when the one of the particles لم (*lam*), لن (*lan*) is added to the verb in question, e.g., لم يذهب إلى المدرسة (*lam Jaḍhab ilā l-madrasah*: he did not go to school).

As for Question formation, it occurs through adding several types of question words (or particles), such as, من (*man*: who), أين (*ayna*: when), متى (*matā*: when), etc. Each question word is used to inquire about a particular part of speech, such as, the subject and object, the place, and the time. For instance,

من الطارق؟ (*man atṭāriq* : who is at the door)

أين يسكن عمر؟ (*ayna yaskunu Omar*: where does Omar live)

متى جاء عمر؟ (*matā dǧāʔa Omar*: when did Omar come)

### 1.7.3. Algerian Arabic Particularities

Because AA is one of the many dialects of Arabic, the manner in which the two diverge from each other is very feeble; both on the morphological and the syntactic levels (Ibrahim, 2003).

#### 1.7.3.1. Morphology

Regarding derivational processes AA is in most part identical to SA, except for a few structural changes and omissions which are caused by the dialectal tendency towards ‘*extreme*’ simplification (Zerrouq, 2006). Procházka maintains that “Morphological derivation by applying the principle of root and pattern has been slightly simplified (there are fewer patterns compared to CA), but has remained productive.”(2006: 428). Indeed, in all the derived verb forms, AA *agrees* with SA; although with variable rates of use, and some slight structural differences, mainly restricted to vowels (such as replacing *u* and *i* by *a*), vowel quality (AA assimilating *a* to *ə*), vowel and consonant omissions, as in: استسقى (*istasqā* => *stasqa*: he asked for water) (Zerrouq, 2006). As for verbal inflections, it is noted that the passive form of verbs is completely absent in AA; if an AA speaker wished to express passive meaning, however, the pronoun *hūma* would be used to replace any agent, e.g., قيل (*qīla*=> it was said) => قالو (*qālū*) or يقولو (*yqūlu*=> they say). Concerning tense/aspect, AA shares the same regular and irregular patterns as those of SA, proving further how similar the two varieties are (Zerrouq, 2007). Verbal conjugation to the future tense takes the same form as that of SA, however different particles are used according to the dialectal belonging, such as: راح (*rāḥ*); رايح (*rāyah*); ماشي (*māshī*); غادي (*yādi*<sup>20</sup>).

There are only *ten* personal pronouns in AA, this is due to the lack of the dual form and the plural feminine, in most the dialects (Procházka, 2006) (See table, 1.7).

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<sup>20</sup> May be equivalent to the English “going to”

Table 1.8 Personal Pronouns of AA (dependent and independent)

	Singular		Plural	
	independent	Suffixed	independent	Suffixed
	‘āna	-nī /-ī	ḥnā	-nā
2 masc	Nta	-k	Ntūma	-kum
3 fem	nti	-ki	Ntūma	-kum
3 masc	huwa	-h	Hūma	-hum
4 fem	Hiya	-ha	Hūma	-hum

Feminine marking in AA takes the same form as that of SA, i.e., by adding the prefix *t-*. Due to the omission of case marking (final-consonant movement) and the employment of *sukūn* instead<sup>21</sup>, thus AA has no case system Prochāzka (2006: 428) attests that “[T]he most striking morphological difference between CA/MSA and all dialects is the lack of a case system.”

The absence of the definite article *l-* is the only marker for indefiniteness in AA, mainly because nunation does not occur in the dialects, e.g., شربت ماکاس (*farbat mel-kās*: she drank from the cup) (definite) as opposed to شربت مکاس (*farbat m-kās*: she drank from the cup) (indefinite)

### 1.7.3.2. Syntax

In AA, both SVO and VSO are used, e.g., محمد وصل (*Mohammad wsal*), and وصل محمد (*wsal Mohammad*) (Mohammad arrived); their use is not done randomly, however, Brustad (2000: 361) claims that “VSO represents the dominant typology in event narration, while SVO functions as topic-prominent typology that is used to describe and converse” (qd in Prochāzka, 2006: 430)

AA also manifests this phenomenon; however it only employs some of the sisters of kana (کان *kāna*; ظلّ *zalla*; بات *bāta*; أصبح *asbaḥa*; مازال *māzāla*; مادام *mādāma*).

<sup>21</sup> (al-djazm):The absence of consonant movement.

Furthermore, the neglect of AA towards consonant movements does not show such particularities, e.g., كان ليوم شباب (*kan lyūm chbab*<sup>22</sup>). Indeed, one of the features that are known to AA is that it eliminates almost all consonant movements, thus all the words in the sentence take the unvowelled form which is marked by a pausal form.

The process of forming negation in AA proceeds through adding the particle ما (*mā*: not) before the verb, to which is the suffix ش (*ʃ*) is added, e.g., ما جاش (*mā dʒā*) => ماجاش (*mā dʒāʃ*: he did not arrive). As for Questions, there are several particles to use depending on the part of speech around which the question revolves, for instance, شكون (*ʃkun*: who) is used for the subject, واش (*wāʃ*: what) is used to inquire about the object, and علاش (*ʃlāʃ*: why) is used to ask the question why. E.g., شكون جاش؟ (*ʃkun dʒāʃ*: who came)?

### 1.8. Grammar Instruction

Within the field of language education, grammar instruction seems to be the most controversial; for it has been viewed differently, ranging from the two extremes of being the *raison d'être* of language teaching to being completely neglected. In the pre-communicative era of language teaching, language was viewed as a “formal system of rules or structures to be mastered” (Wesche and Skehan, 2004: 208), thus language teaching was practiced through direct instruction of grammar rules. However, with the communicative turn in language teaching (Hymes’ communicative competence), grammar was understood as an obstacle to the acquisition of fluency (Krashen, 1981), consequently, grammatical form was completely neglected and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was thoroughly implemented in schools. Richards observes:

Grammatical Syllabuses were superseded by communicative ones based on functions or tasks; grammar-based methodologies such as the Presentation-Practice-Production (P-P-P) lesson format underlying the situational approach gave way to function- and skill-based teaching; and accuracy activities such as drills and grammar practice were replaced by fluency activities based on interactive small-group work. (2002: 153)

Through time, however, the focus on function with the complete neglect of form proved to be inefficient. Indeed, empirical research showed that implementing form

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<sup>22</sup> Chbab is the dialectal synonym of *djamīl*

consciousness in language instruction (even within a communicative context) was actually beneficial for learners. The current trends of second language teaching methodology agree that some form of grammatical instruction is necessary (Brown, 1994). In this vein, Schmidt (1990) promotes the notion of consciousness, or *attention*, rising.

### **1.8.1. Methods Used in Algerian Elementary Schools**

It is an inescapable fact that literacy requires from Algerians to '*learn*' a second language, i.e., MSA: the medium through which formal instruction is carried out. Nevertheless, being only encountered by children at school at a relatively late age (compared to its immeasurable importance) makes the process of transmitting it somehow problematic. For this reason, the curriculum designers have opted for different approaches through time, in their search for the most suitable one. In 2002, The Competency Based Approach (CBA) was adopted in the Algerian schools; it focuses on developing a set of skills rather than abstract learning. In the introduction of the first grade copybook, it is stated that it:

It has been designed using a learner-centred approach, and in accordance with the recent language-learning methodologies which is represented in competency-based and content-based approaches. Its contents are organised in a way that is suitable to the mental, psychological, and emotional state for the pupils in this age. (2011: 3)

Within this approach, pupils are faced with the challenge of acquiring one skill at the time, beginning from the easiest to the more challenging ones; whereas teachers are required to achieve the educational goals. The curriculum sets two types of goals for the teachers; the first type is general and is achieved by the end of the school year or semester. On the other hand, there is a specialized goal behind each course. To achieve high levels of literacy, the curriculum is designed in such a way that focuses on content rather than form, and fluency rather than accuracy; while delaying conscious knowledge of language form to later years. Two reasons have been set to justify why the awareness of forms is delayed in the Algerian school, mainly that learners take the necessary period of time to get used to the target language and its grammatical patterns; and secondly that their cognitive growth is completed, which

enables them to understand the notions of rules and correct forms<sup>23</sup>. However, it is not whether to advance or delay grammar instruction which sets the levels of proficiency, but the methods used to deliver courses and rules (Ouhida, 1997).

In the Algerian classrooms, grammar is taught through content, i.e., learners use grammatical structures while they are not aware of the grammatical categories. Language forms are taught indirectly, with reference to various subjects in the different modules instructed. Indeed, whatever the levels of proficiency pupils attain at home in Arabic; it is the *only* recognized medium of instruction since the first grade<sup>24</sup>. During the first and second grades, pupils are required to unconsciously solve grammatical tasks, such as ordering letters to make up words and words to formulate sentences, putting diacritics on words to demonstrate their grammatical categories, and placing the adequate particles. This method aims to get the learners used to the potential forms that the language takes, and the patterns in which it occurs. It is only by the third year that the direct instruction is carried out. In this stage pupils have accumulated enough input which is likely to enable them to go further in their learning. They are also expected to go to the next level of language learning (i.e., conscious knowledge of forms) because their cognitive abilities have grown and matured enough, which enables them to grasp the concept of rule; thus they are presented with direct grammar courses.

### **1.8.2. Teacher-related Issues**

Teachers are the direct link between the pupil and the school; they are the first to develop children into participant pupils. Thus the role they play cannot and should not be underestimated. The importance of teachers lies in the fact that delivering the various courses of the subject matter is their duty, achieving the different educational goals successfully depends on the techniques they employ; Qalli and Hannach (2009: 52) claim that “a good teacher can influence pupils positively even when the curriculum is poorly designed”. They further state that there is a set of *basic features* which must characterise any teacher of our time, they are summarized as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> The book of General Education (1975, 173; qd in Ouhida, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Theoretically no other language may be used. In practice however, teachers are confronted by some situations where their only solution is to resort to AA, mainly for achieving educational goals.

- Good temper;
- Proficient manipulation of the subject matter;
- Employing suitable teaching methods;
- Knowing the learner characteristics, differences, and different preferences.

The classroom performance of teachers who own this set of characteristics is expected to be positive and successful, because they will:

- Succeed in drawing the attention of their learners;
- Know about the subjects they are teaching, thus know how to teach it;
- Deliver the courses in a simple and interesting manner;
- And finally, know which techniques to employ within their mixed ability classrooms.

Because of the various and crucial roles teachers play, they must be attributed the attention they merit through teacher preparation and training. Teacher preparation refers to the act of certifying and recognising qualified teachers (Brumfit, 2006). Brinton et.al maintain that whenever a curricular or methodological change occurs a teacher training must be administered; they state that:

Unless adequately prepared for their new teaching duties, teachers will invariably have to fight the urge to rely on their traditional teaching techniques as well as on materials and lesson plans developed over the years for a different audience\_ many of which may be inconsistent with the goals of the content-based program. (2003: 74- 75)

There are two types of teacher training, namely pre-service training, and in-service training. Pre-service training consists of providing teachers with the necessary skills to facilitate their entry into the classroom setting, and to develop their child-handling talents, whereas in-service training entails continuous and ongoing sessions, where teachers may report on the difficulties they face with their learners; thus it represents a refuge for them to seek. Indeed, a good teacher is the teacher who never stops learning, either from their own mistakes and successes, or from those of others; Brown (1994: 426) maintains that: “the complexity of the dynamic triangular interplay among teachers and learners and subject matter continually gives birth to an endless number of questions to answer, problems to solve, issues to ponder”. In Algeria, teachers are

trained in the high school of teachers (*Ecole Normale*), which prepares them for the psychological, curricular, and pedagogical classroom challenges. However, teachers are not solely recruited via such schools, which is where the problem is centred. Many teachers are recruited through contests, thus they enter classrooms without any prior training or with slight theoretical knowledge. They are required to learn the preliminaries of teaching while they teach; which leads to question the efficiency of the education offered to Algerian pupils.

### **1.8.3. Learner-related Issues**

Algerian children are usually enrolled to school by the age of five, it is only by age six that they begin their first year. The reason behind that is that five year old children are enrolled to kindergarten classrooms, which *prepares them* for their first year. There are some cases, however, where children do not get the chance to experience the preparatory stage; this may be due to the lack of parental awareness, a shortage in finance, or overloaded kindergarten classrooms<sup>25</sup>. There are several central aspects to consider when children are enrolled to school, which merit being at the centre of attention because of the major impact they may have on their learning, particularly at the first stages. They may be summarized in the form of the following questions:

- Does the child suffer from any health problems which may hinder his/her learning, such as hearing, sight, etc.?
- What is the extent of the social and financial wellbeing of the child?
- Has the child been psychologically prepared before being placed in the school setting?
- Is the child exposed to MSA in his/her home environment?
- Has the child accumulated linguistic knowledge of MSA?
- Does the child have any particular learning style? Etc.

Answering these questions serves the teachers greatly and facilitates their tasks; because it helps them diagnose existing problems and thus cure them employing the suitable methods. One of the problems which delay, limit and may, in its strongest

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<sup>25</sup> The Ministry of education limits the number of pupils in each kindergarten classroom to twenty five, thus some children do not get to be enrolled.

state, cause a learning deficit for pupils is the low language comprehension of MSA. Mainly, because it is the language used to instruct all the school subjects; thus, low achievements in MSA entail low achievements in the other subjects. Nevertheless, being at the age of five, children have greater chances to successfully acquire the linguistic system of MSA (and generally any other language), which is due to the flexibility of their brain and the strength of their cognitive abilities. This stage in the child's development is known as the critical period hypothesis (CPH) which signifies a "period in the child's life when L2 learning happens smoothly and almost inevitably, resulting in native-like or near-native-like proficiency" (Dörnyei, 2012: 236). Thus, if provided the adequate environment for acquisition (extensive exposure to TL) and surrounded by well trained teachers, Algerian pupils will acquire the full form of MSA.

### **1.9. Probable Grammar Learning Difficulties**

Pupils are likely to encounter several difficulties when learning (or acquiring) the grammatical system of an SL. These difficulties are the direct cause for learning deficiencies or delays; thus SLA researchers have always opted to explore them, attempting to find adequate resolutions and better SL learning. Analyzing these difficulties has been approached by various fields, such as Interlanguage studies, and Error Analysis. Naturally, Algerian pupils are not an exception for learning the grammar of MSA for them is peripheral to that of, thus one cannot deny the possibility of an FL transfer. On the other hand, the grammar of SA is not free of complexities, and may thus subject the novice learners to some kind of confusion.

#### **1.9.1. Contrastive Analysis**

It is natural to suppose the existence of many external linguistic factors that affect SLA. One subject that has strongly been advocated is that of the mother tongue influence. Robert Lado (1957) was the first to set the foundations of the technique of *Contrastive Analysis (CA)*, which denotes that the cross-linguistic differences between the native language (NL) and the target language (TL) are the chief cause for errors made by second language learners. This theory was strongly welcomed in the field of applied linguistics and second language research, for it offered a magical solution for second language errors; indeed, a curriculum that is designed in accordance with the

cross-linguistic differences and a *prediction* of difficulties, would have made the teaching profession less challenging and the learning achievements more promising. Consequently, the focus of researchers at the time was on Interlanguage (IL), which refers to the in-between system developed by SL learners and occurs when they attempt to express meaning using the TL. IL belongs neither to the FL nor to the TL; however, it carries linguistic features from both systems (Tarone, 2006). First, it was found that there were several causes for mistakes and errors, and that the NL influence was merely one factor; other findings indicate that the influence which stems from the native language is restricted in some cases to very few grammatical constituents, mainly word order. And more importantly, practice in real language teaching contexts indicates that several mistakes which are predicted by CA rarely occur, whereas many errors were made though CA failed to predict them. This does not deny the contribution of CA in SLA research; one of the facts that were revealed by IL analysis is that of *fossilization*, which refers to the *static* state IL takes, while preserving some features from FL. It is argued, that no matter how much effort the teacher invests for the sake of correcting learners, it is impossible to overcome.

### **1.9.2. Error Analysis**

Error Analysis (EA) emerged as a reaction to the shortcomings expressed by CA; it proceeds by analysing learner language (LL), which is the level of proficiency second language learners accomplish. Conducting a LL analysis requires the researcher (or educationalist) to take many aspects into consideration, including: errors learners make and the way in which they change over time, describing the order and the stages of language development in accordance with the acquisition of specific grammatical forms and features, or it may inspect and compare different learner language samples in order to check occurring variability (Ellis, 1997).

### **9.1.3. Language-external Difficulties**

Nevertheless, it cannot be estimated that the sole source behind such difficulties is linguistic. In fact, there are others, such as pedagogical and methodological glitches. Ouhida (1997: 98-99) cites several reasons for the difficulties pupils encounter when learning grammar, which are summarized as follows:

- Separating grammatical structures from the subjects taught in other activities, such as reading and writing activities;
- Not practicing the learnt structures using actual authentic language;
- Teachers neglect for the potential mother tongue influence;
- Not attributing grammatical structures to the meanings they entail;
- The elements included within the curriculum, or the order they take, may not be suitable for learners.

### **9.1. Conclusion**

This chapter has laid down the theoretical background for this research work, by first describing the circumstances which characterise the process of literacy development in the Algerian primary school. It focused on the psychological impact of diglossia on the achievements of pupils. It also sought to investigate the process through which the acquisition of the grammatical system of MSA is undertaken. Consequently, this chapter serves as an introduction to the following chapter, which portrays the empirical study conducted for the aim of discovering how the theory operates in a real educational context.

# Chapter Two

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## **Research Methodology and Data Analysis**

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## **2.1. Introduction**

Diglossia influences literacy acquisition rates and levels within societies; and the mother tongue influence on the learner language of Algerian children, despite the fact that it is not as strong, should not be ignored. The descriptive basis for these ideas was set in the first chapter. This chapter, however, is dedicated to the practical part, as it includes information about the methodology employed to answer the research questions; this entails details regarding the different data collection and interpretation techniques and explanations, such as situation analysis, sampling procedures and data interpretation.

## **2.2. Methodology and Research Design**

This section is mainly descriptive; it provides information about the research format, the methods for data collection, the target setting, and the studied sample.

### **2.2.1. Research Design**

The overall aim of doing research is finding an answer to a certain question. Nunan (1992: 3) claims that “research is a process of formulating questions, problems, or hypotheses; collecting data or evidence related to these questions, problems, or hypotheses; and analysing and interpreting these data.” However, this task is not to be performed randomly, but is subjected to a set of norms, and takes different forms or *designs*. Research designs are the “plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis” (Creswell, 2009: 3). Different research designs provide answers for the different types of questions; thus researchers are confronted firstly by selecting the most adequate method for their work, i.e., the one that leads to valid and adequate answers, in the most appropriate manner.

The nature of the present research topic opts for a case study, wherein “one or a few instances of a phenomenon are studied in depth” (Blatter, 2008: 68). This is particularly because it emphasises the way things work in particular contexts (Mason, 2002). Things, in the current framework, refer to the development of literacy and the

acquisition of the grammatical system of MSA by first grade pupils, whereas context entails the elementary school wherein this study was conducted. In the APA manual, case studies are defined as “reports of case materials obtained while working with an individual, a group, a community, or an organization.” (2010: 11), i.e., the researcher who chooses to write a case study relies heavily on data obtained from a sample using clinical observation, questionnaires, tests, and the like. In this case, the researcher has opted for a mixed-method approach, as data are collected and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

### **2.2.2. Sampling Procedures**

This section describes the criteria that were involved during the selection of the research participants. Mainly, the data for this research were accumulated from two different types of sources: a sample, and a set of informants. The reason behind this categorization lies in the different data the two types provide; the sample is the case of interest, i.e., the person(s) being studied or “the set of actual data sources” (Morgan, 2008: 797). Informants, on the other hand, participate in the research rather as experts and specialists; they “know and understand the kind of information that is of interest to researchers.” (Ogden, 2008: 430).

The sample is the first grade classroom in the elementary school called *Meddah Kaddour*, which is situated in *Sidi Safi, Beni Saf, (Ain Temouchent)*. It was drawn from the larger population of pupils which comprises all the different levels (from level 1 to level 5); by means of a non-probability procedure, i.e., “they were chosen because they meet preestablished criteria” (Saumure and Given, 2008: 562). Such choice was due to the fact that first grade pupils are recently put in the educational se

#### **2.2.2.1. Teachers’ Profile**

Whether using the questionnaire, or by means of an interview, the teachers of *Meddah Kaddour* were the sole informants for this study. The seven teachers are all females, aged between 31 to 52 years old. More than half of the informants are university graduates who have received high education in the stream of Arabic language and literature; an exception is made for three young teachers who have been

trained in the Teacher Preparatory School. This category was selected as a source of information because it can provide two types of information: firstly, teachers perform the teaching tasks, thus they are seen as field specialist. Secondly, teachers are the chief care givers of children, they taught them from kindergarten to Level 5; this entails that they have observed them learn and grow in the academic setting, which is the core interest of this research.

#### **2.2.2.2. Pupils' Profile**

The targeted sample of the present study is a mixed ability first grade classroom, comprising a collective of 40 first grade boys and girls, aged between 5 and 6 year old. Except for four, all pupils were enrolled in kindergarten. First grade pupils are selected for this study because they are more likely to show psychological responses as a result of school integration; their unfamiliarity with the classroom setting and the standard form of Arabic is what this case study aims to discover and investigate.

#### **2.2.2.3. Context Description**

The study was conducted in *Meddah Kaddour* primary school, a setting that is relatively small, as it consists only of 7 rooms among which there is only 1 first grade classroom (1 preparatory classroom and the rest are grade classrooms arranged numerically). The working staff includes 7 teachers of Arabic, 1 teacher of French, and several care givers who help the teachers in classrooms. The location of this institution in a rural area is the fundamental reason for its suitability to the present study which would allow us to see the kind of language developed by children of non-urban regions.

### **2.3. Data Collection Instruments**

In order to answer the research questions, researchers seek a set of tools which provide them with the needed subject-related data. Such tools are called *data collection instruments*; they are defined as “the means (physical or nonphysical) of

producing quantitative<sup>1</sup> or qualitative<sup>2</sup> data to be analyzed and interpreted.” (Griffie, 2012: 128). The purpose of conducting data collection is to prove one’s theory (Nunan, 1992), this entails that the methodology must be closely related to the research questions; thus the tools must be attentively chosen in order to fulfil its objective. The tools that are thought to be adequate for the present topic are: an experiment; Interviews, Questionnaires, Observations, and document analysis.

The research question number one is interested in the effect of diglossia on elementary education; the different ideas which are invoked within this scope are summarized in table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Linking the Methodology to the Research Question One.

Research Question	Data Sources and Methods	Justification
In what set of circumstances does pupils’ literacy development proceed in the Algerian primary school?	Learners’ Experiment Teachers’ Questionnaire Teacher A’s Interview Teacher B’s Interview	The children’s reaction provides information about their awareness of diglossia. Teachers’ answers give insight about classroom practices; the Algerian learners’ profiles and difficulties; the influence of diglossia on learning. Teacher A’s responses represent a rich source of information about the curriculum; the role of kindergarten in elementary education; and the learners’ linguistic achievements before and through elementary education. Teacher B’s responses report information about the training she has undergone.

The second research question is more specific, it seeks the cross-linguistic influence of the Algerian pupil’s mother tongue on the learning of SA grammar. To inquire about this subject, different sources are employed, mainly observation, questionnaire, and interview; the rationale behind such choice is clarified in Table 2.2.

<sup>1</sup> Data in a numerical form (numbers and statistics).

<sup>2</sup> Non-numerical data: verbal (words) and non-verbal data (such as observation).

Table 2.2. Linking the Methodology to the Research Question Two.

Research Question	Data Sources and Methods	Justification
To what extent could the process of morpho-syntactic acquisition by Algerian primary pupils be characterized as easygoing?	Observation Questionnaire Interview Documentation	Permits the researcher to learn about the learners' classroom linguistic behaviour; as well as their grammatical achievement and performance. Reports information about the methods used in the instruction of grammar; the mother tongue interference; and the grammar learning difficulties and deficiencies pupils face. Informs us of the grammar teaching stages in the Algerian school; methodology used for explanations; and the main sources of problems children face. Allows the researcher to see and compare the pupils' SA expression, based on their understanding of a text in AA.

### 2.3.1. Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers are the core of any educational institution, mainly elementary schools where children become pupils for the first time, as they are put in an academic context. Ollington (2008: VII) maintains that "If the future of any society can be pinpointed, it is with the teachers who help form the citizens of tomorrow. Sometimes their impact is equal to the parents and sometimes surpasses it by not a small measure." These circumstances build a strong link between the teacher and the learners, allowing the former to attentively and carefully observe the latter's cognitive, psychological and linguistic growth. For these reasons, it is a necessity that the researcher opts for a teachers' questionnaire. Questionnaires are "written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers." (Brown, 2001, p. 6, qd in Dörnyei, 2003: 6)

The questionnaire was administered to the 7 teachers. However, being in their working hours, it was preferable to collect them back later, in order not to waste valuable classroom time. It is comprised of 22 subject-related questions, which were organized under three separate, yet related, headings (*rubrics*). Rubric one consists of 6 questions, its main interest is the teachers' as well as the curricular efforts, which are invested in dealing with first grade pupils. Rubric two also contains 6 questions; it seeks information about the influence of diglossia on the development of literacy by the Algerian child, by covering different scopes such as emergent literacy practices; academic literacy development; and classroom literacy practices and difficulties. Rubric three however is more specific, aiming mainly at discovering the extent of cross-linguistic interference (AA to MSA) and the quality of learner-language (MSA) accomplished by Algerian elementary pupils.

### **2.3.2. The Interview**

An interview is a research tool which is carried out orally; the researcher's (interviewer) questions are directed to the informant (interviewee). "An interview can cover any number of content areas and is a relatively inexpensive and efficient way to collect a wide variety of data that does not require formal testing." (Marczyk et al, 2005: 117)

The present research is interested in what the teachers have observed and experienced through the years they have spent in the domain of elementary education. Because "the researcher should identify key participants in the situation whose knowledge and opinions may provide important insights regarding the research questions" (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006: 39), the researcher opted for interviewing two different teachers about different subjects.

#### **2.3.2.1. Teacher A's Interview**

Teacher A is a 51 year old female teacher, who has been in the domain of elementary education for 29 years. Due to the number of years she spent in the service, the expertise she gained cannot be underestimated; for this reason, interviewing her seems a more adequate reason to benefit from this expertise. The interview was semi-

structured; this refers to “the agenda being set by the researcher’s interests yet with room for the respondent’s more spontaneous descriptions and narratives.” (Brinkmann, 2008: 470)

The interview entails four headings, namely:

- The quality of language children develop in the pre-school period;
- The role of kindergarten in literacy development and elementary education;
- The stages of MSA teaching in elementary school (with emphasis on grammar);
- The reasons behind the difficulties pupils encounter when learning (acquiring) MSA grammar.

Teacher A’s answers and explanations would enrich the current study regarding the following areas:

- The role parents in the society in question play in their children’s literacy development;
- The kindergarten activities which develop literacy skills;
- The methodology employed by the teachers in the instruction of grammar, and the extent of its reliance on the curriculum.
- Trying to understand reasons behind educational failure, or delay, for some pupils.

#### **2.3.2.2. Teacher B’s Interview**

Teacher B is a 34 year old teacher, who has been an elementary teacher for 9 years. The reason she was selected to be interviewed is because she participated in a recent teacher-training, which consisted of training teachers of first and second grade classrooms. Because the researcher has no idea about the training contents, the interview is structured. It seeks information about: the period and frequency of the training; the scopes this training covers; the aspects it intends to change in the teaching of grammar to the first and second grade classrooms; and whether it emphasised any child psychology elements. This interview aims to discover the efforts invested by the curriculum designers to provide specialised training for first-stage teachers.

### **2.3.3. Classroom Observation**

Learners are the *raison d'être* of education, they represent the one and only reason to build schools and recruit teachers. Thus it is beneficial for the present study that the researcher dedicates time to *observe* and learn from their classroom experiences. Observation is a research instrument which relies on direct examination; this entails that the researcher be in direct contact with the targeted sample (or phenomenon. Marczyk et al (2005: 119) proclaim that “This approach is an efficient way to collect data when the researcher is interested in studying and quantifying some type of behavior.” In the framework of the current study, observation was conducted for the purpose of discovering the intricacies of teaching a first grade classroom in an Algerian elementary school; this comprises different elements. However, the researcher was interested in a limited set of aspects:

- The level of comfort revealed by the pupil towards being in the classroom;
- The extent to which is AA used in the classroom by both the teacher and the pupils;
- The methods used to instruct the grammar of MSA;
- The features of the pupils' MSA.

In order to perform a systematic observation, the researcher (observer) visited the observed setting on a daily basis for a period of two weeks, both in mornings (from 8 to 11) and afternoons (from 1 to 2:30). The contribution of the observer was very limited, as she was placed in the end of the classroom and took notes; no participation of any kind took place.

### **2.3.4. Pupils' Experiment**

An experiment is “an empirical study in which the researcher deliberately intervenes in the situation to change it in a crucial way” (Howitt and Duncan, 2000: 23). When the experiment (also intervention) is chosen as a research tool, the researcher manipulates the situation in question by creating or altering a set of circumstances (the independent variables), in order to examine the resulting output (dependent variables). In the present research, the experiment involved exposing 40

first grade pupils to an unusual type of text, under the same conditions of their usual teaching:

- The same setting (place and time);
- Their teacher wrote on the blackboard ;
- The teacher read the text after she finished writing it;
- Pupils were asked to read the text.

The text was unusual because it was not in the standard form of Arabic (SA), which is the language normally used in classrooms; it was rather in Algerian Arabic. The text is entitled “*Yasminatou Selma*” (Selma’s Jasmine Tree), it was adapted from the currently used First Grade School Book (p, 84); however, it was preferable that the researcher cut a part of the text (from line 1 to line 4), mainly because of time constraints. As expected, the pupils were familiar with the text, because it had been dealt with earlier (in SA) by their teacher. Pupils were appointed to read the text which was written on the board, and then they were asked a few related and attitudinal questions. Finally, all pupils were handed a piece of paper, and were asked to translate the text into the standard form. (See section 2.4.3.)

The purposes of conducting such an experiment were as such:

- To see children's reaction to writing the dialect on the blackboard;
- To see if they understood the difference between the dialectal and the standard form of Arabic;
- To measure the level of their awareness that AA does not belong in the classroom, but is only spoken outside for social communication;
- To be able to analyse the translated forms, thus assess their grammatical inadequacies.

### **2.3.5. Documentation**

A document is a written source of data which are analysed, in order to allow the researcher details which cannot be traced to previously made studies, i.e., primary data. This study makes use of the paragraphs which were written by the first grade pupils (details in section 2.4.2.); it seeks to investigate their content, with a focus on discovering the learner’s grammar acquisition outcome.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

After obtaining the data for the study, a procedure of data analysis and result interpretation is carried out by the researcher. It is “an integral part of qualitative research and constitutes an essential stepping-stone toward both gathering data and linking one’s findings with higher order concepts” (van den Hoonaard and van den Hoonaard, 2008: 186). In the present research, data analysis aims to understand the particularities involved in the Algerian elementary school, and discover the difficulties encountered by both teachers and learners in the educational setting.

### 2.4.1. Questionnaire

The first two questions of the questionnaire aim to gain knowledge about the teachers rather than from them. The first question was about the teachers’ age, the second one inquired about their work experience. Results revealed that most teachers were in their 30s, whereas only two were in their 50s; as for the number of years they spent in service, it was logically uneven (depending on age and year of recruitment) (see figure 2.1.).

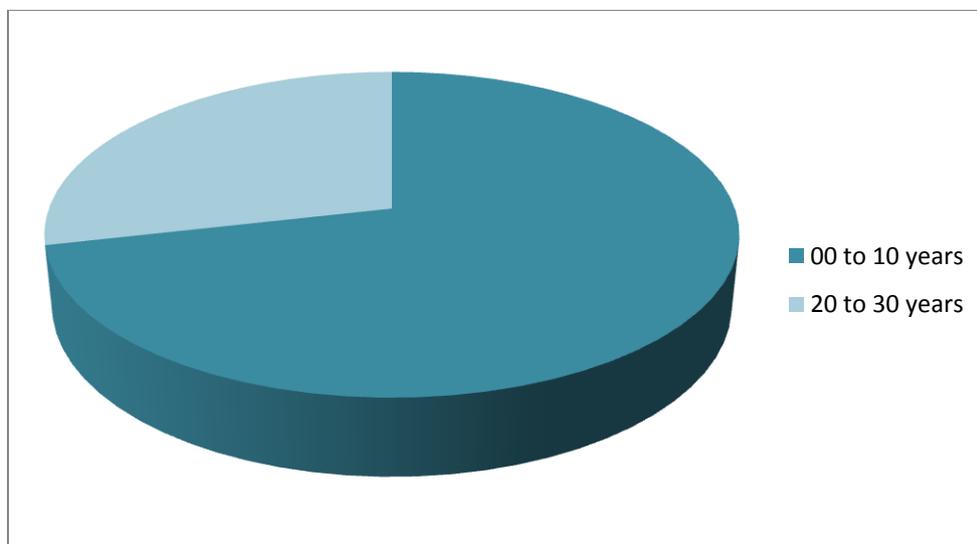


Figure 2.1. Teachers’ Work Experience.

#### 2.4.1.1. Rubric One: Teacher Experience and Teacher Training.

1. The first subject related question inquires about the first grade instruction frequency for each teacher, during their career. Two teachers stated that they had a one year

experience, three teachers maintained that it was a two year-experience, whereas the other three said that they taught three first grade classroom.

2. Regarding what distinguishes first grade classrooms from the others, all the informants agreed that there is a richness of features which are specific to it. Mainly, the consensus was that it is the starting point in the child's learning experience, which is why it is the most delicate and sensitive educational stage they undergo. Classroom language use was the most cited factor, which entails that teachers speak to children using AA, in order to maximise comprehension. Multiple other elements include: facing more difficulties (educational, interactional, behavioural, and linguistic).
3. The third question invoked by this section concerns with whether the teachers have been subjected to any specialised training before teaching first grade classrooms, 71% answered with a negative, whereas only 29% stated that they did. The training consisted primarily of psychological concerns, which are summarised in figure 2.2

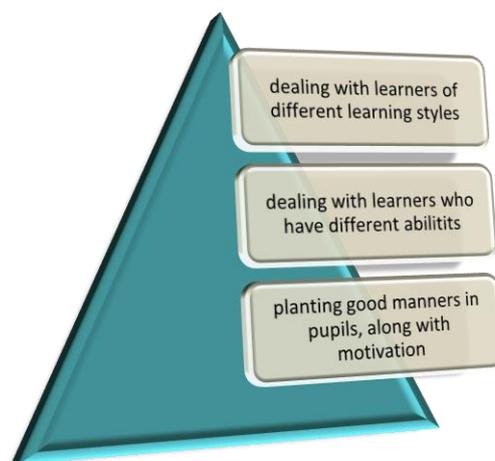


Figure 2.2. The Elements Comprised in the Teacher Training.

4. The fourth question seeks to discover the special techniques teachers employ in the first grade classrooms, the answers contained varied methods with different objectives, which are summarised in table 2.3

Table 2.3 Techniques Employed with First Grade Classrooms.

Objective	Techniques
Maximise comprehension	The use of the blackboard, pictures, ... The use of a simplified language.
Attract attention	The use of material, e.g., colourful drawings; Separating the different activities to avoid boredom;
Maintain classroom order	Being nice and strict at the same time;
Motivation	Encouraging them to read and draw;
Help children integrate	Minimising fear and anxiety through creating a comfortable atmosphere.

5. The final question of this rubric dealt with difficulties teacher encounter with first grade pupils, and how these diminish through their advancement in school. The difficulties cited vary from social, psychological and linguistic, thus they can easily be categorised and summarised. (See Table 2.4)

Table 2.4 Categorisation of Difficulties

Social	Psychological	Pedagogical	Linguistic
Integration	Learner differences	Moving around	MSA Writing: linking letters to form words.
Social problems (family and surroundings)	Uneven abilities	Talkativeness	SA reading: confusing symbols
	Fear, anxiety, and crying	Not sitting correctly.	MSA speaking: unfamiliarity with the sounds of SA
			The use of AA in classroom
			The complete absence of MSA linguistic items in some cases.

#### 2.4.1.2. Rubric Two: The Impact of Diglossia on Literacy Development

1. The first question inquires about pupils' reaction when placed in schools; mainly *fear* was the most cited element. The answers are summarized in figure 2.3.

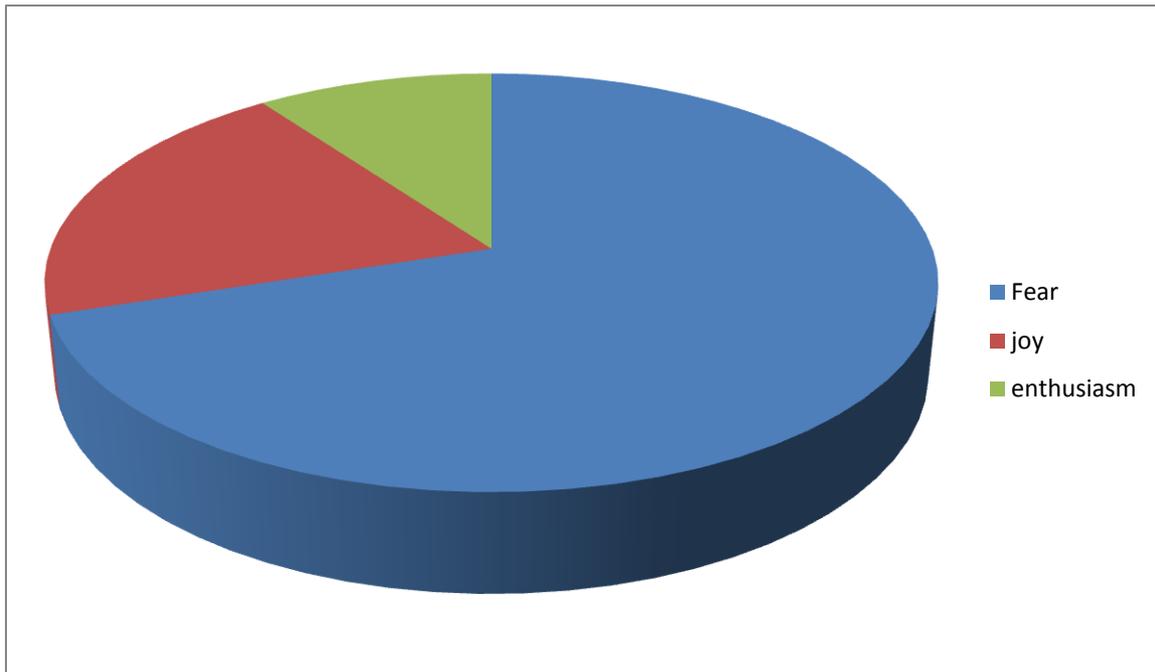


Figure 2.3 Pupil's Reaction to School Enrolment.

Teachers were requested to justify their choices; they revealed a more or less similar set of factors. Fear was said to be due to being placed in an entirely new environment and where they are restricted to a set of rules; another reason that has been mentioned was the lack of psychological preparation. Joy, the informants claimed, stems from being surrounded by many others of their age, thus the desire to play emerges. Despite the fear and anxiety, novice pupils are also enthusiastic about being in the school; this enthusiasm is said to stem from the stories they were told about being in schools, either from their parents or from older children.

2. The informants were then asked whether first grade pupils manifested any tendencies towards printed material, i.e., whether they showed a desire to read, 100% of those who had experienced first grade teaching answered with a *yes*. Accordingly, they manifest such tendencies in several ways (See Figure 2.4)

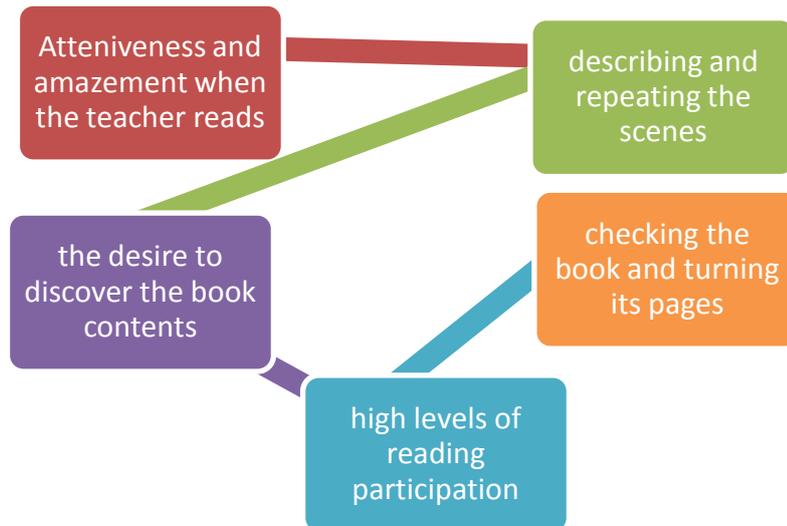


Figure 2.4 Pupils’ Demonstration of Print Tendency.

3. Regarding the period children usually require to develop writing and reading, they answered that it is accomplished when children possess a full manipulation of the letter symbols, which takes from one to two school years, depending on individuals.
4. The fourth section seeks to discover the difficulties pupils usually face during the development of literacy; informants cited many elements which are categorised in figure 2.5 according to type, mainly: linguistic and pedagogical

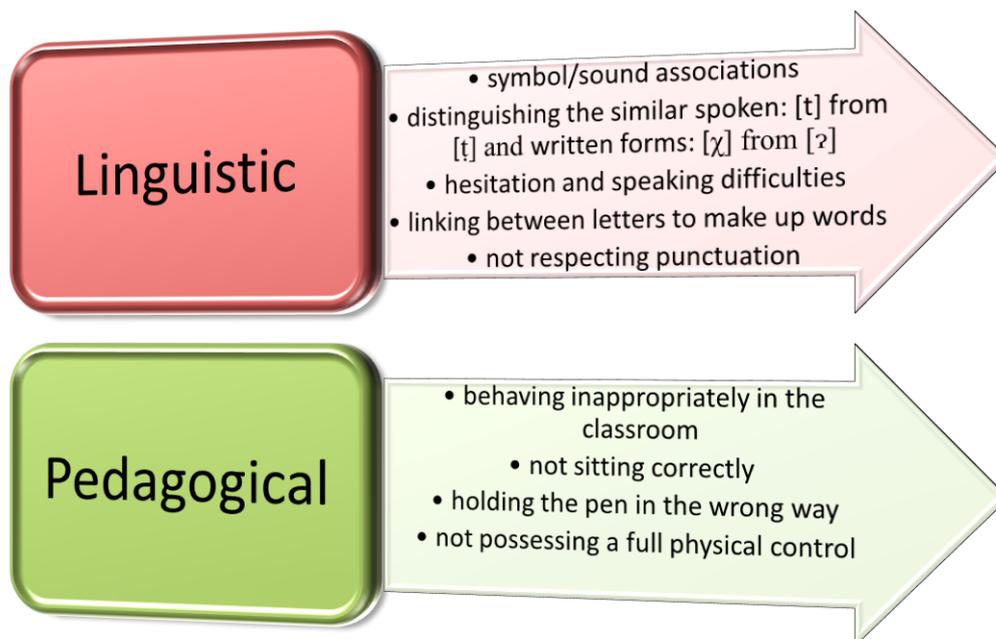


Figure 2.5 Literacy Development Difficulties Encountered by Pupils

5. All the informants complained about the range of difficulties they face when teaching their children how to read and write, i.e., the two main skills of literacy. As a result, they maintained that they employ an interestingly varied set of strategies to facilitate the task. On the one hand, the activity of reading was made interesting; as pupils are entitled to role play, repeat the scenes, reading after the teacher (the role model) out loud, conversational exchanges between pairs, in addition to encouraging them to read at home. For improving writing, on the other hand, the methods suggested were more print-specific, such as dictating letters and words, reading on the Table of Letters<sup>3</sup>, calling pupils' attention for texts written on the blackboard, the use of cards to organise the alphabet letters, and finally motivating pupils and creating a competitive atmosphere between them by exhibiting the well-written pieces on the blackboard.

#### 2.4.1.3. Rubric Three: The Cross-linguistic Influence of AA on SA

1. The first information sought under this heading is whether children possess the knowledge of any SA linguistic items, answers differed from *yes*, *no*, and *partial yes*; See Figure 2.7

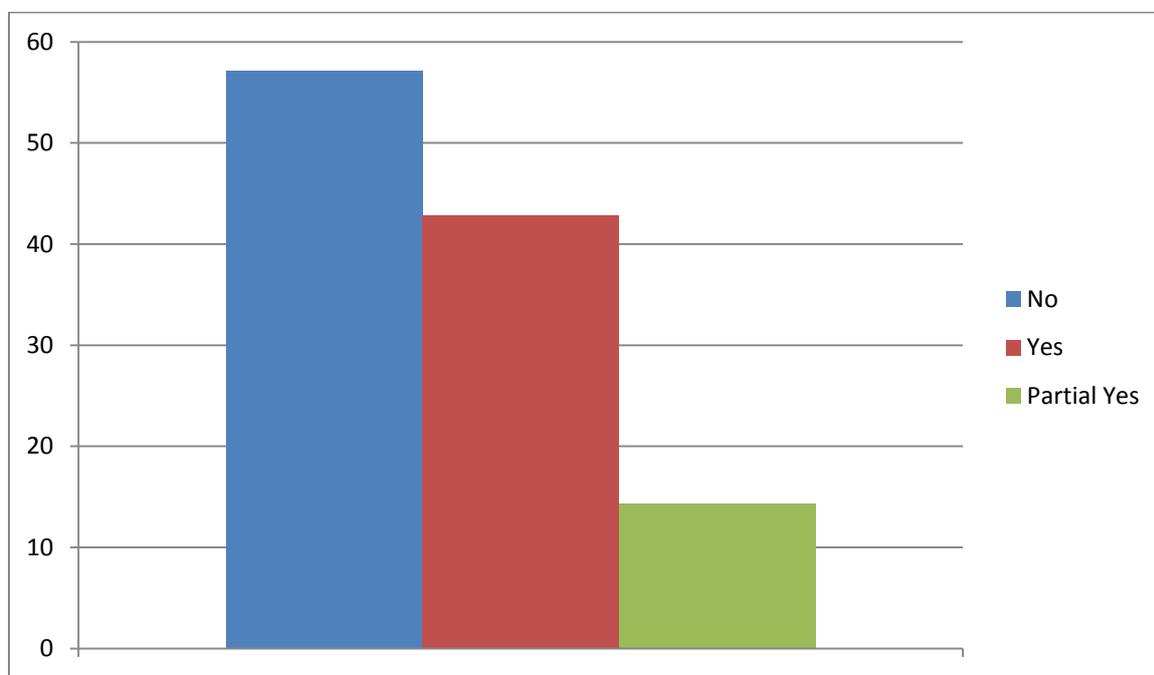


Figure 2.6 Pupils' Possession of SA Linguistic Items.

<sup>3</sup> A table drawn on the back side of the blackboard, contains all the letters with the different diacritics (both short and long)

The teachers who answered with ‘yes’ provided explanations about the sources from where children acquired such linguistic knowledge, such as:

- Family surroundings: emotional and material encouragement;
- Kindergarten;
- Qur’anic school, Qur’ān memorisation, and Mosque lectures;
- The availability of technology, mainly TV and electronic tablets.

On the other hand, those who answered with ‘no’ what according to them, were the reasons why children failed to develop preliminary knowledge of SA, the main cited ones were: skipping kindergarten; and parents not paying enough attention to their children’s literacy development skills (reading to them and arranging a print-rich environment for them)

2. In order to describe the frequency of AA use in classrooms, teachers were provided a scale from *never* to *always*, the answers were as summarised in figure 2.8.

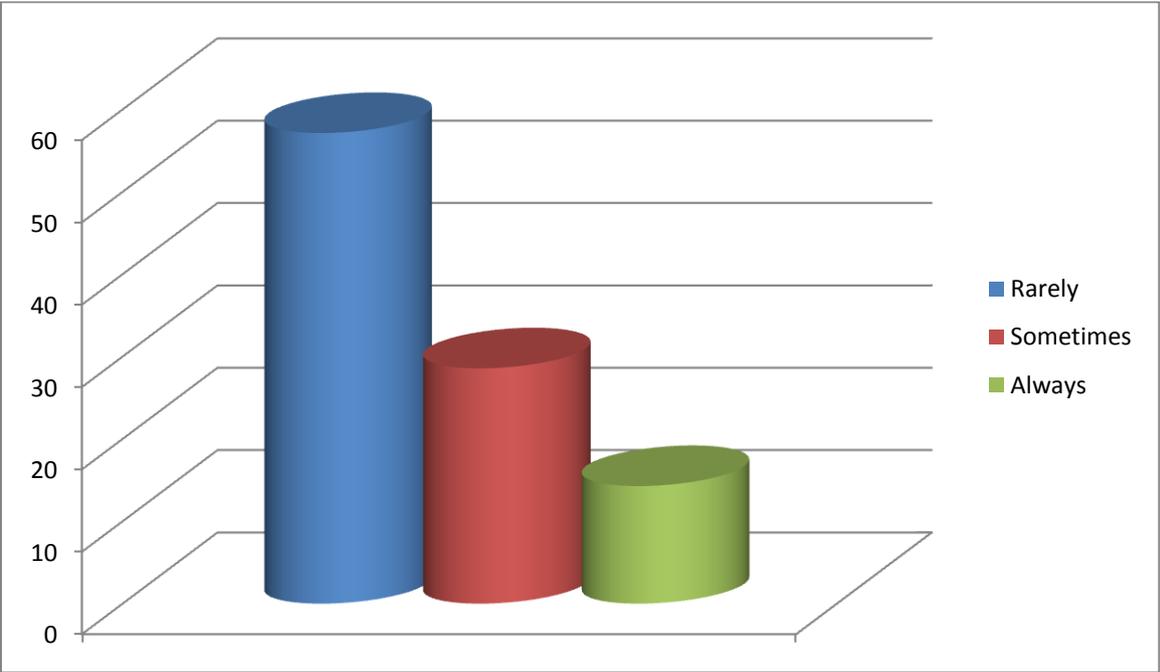


Figure 2.8 Teachers’ AA use in Classrooms

3. When informants were asked about the reasons that cause the use of AA in classrooms, their responses were centered around maximizing the pupils’ comprehension by using a simplified language; delivering the full idea to learners; meaning clarification; emphasising an element by making it marked using AA; and finally to reach the educational objective (as set by the curriculum).

4. Since AA is often used for semantic reasons, teachers were asked about the extent to which their pupils understood SA, answers were organised on a scale from low to very high. (See table 2.7)

Table 2.7 Pupils' level of MSA Comprehension.

Level	Number	Percentage
Low	01	14.2%
Average	05	71.4%
High	01	14.2%
Very high	00	00%

Since MSA is acquired by Algerians as a second language through formal education, it is expected that pupils transfer some features from their mother tongue. The aspects which were reported by the teachers were: lexical (dialectal and sometimes French words); and grammatical (such as I'rāb).

5. In the sixth question, teachers were offered a set of options comprising different types of grammatical errors; and were asked to select the ones which are likely to persist during elementary school. Although several types were selected, teachers explained that through time, repeated explanations and intensive practice learners do overcome such error-making. (See Table 2.5)

Table 2.5 The Frequency of occurrence of the Learners' Mistakes.

Type of mistake	Frequency
Pronoun differentiation	2 times
Definiteness/ indefiniteness	1 time
Verbal sentence word order	2 times
Nominal sentence word order	2 times
Diacritics: verbs	4 times
Diacritics: nouns	3 times
Dual formation: nouns	5 times
Dual formation: verbs	4 times
Plural formation: verbs	3 times
Feminine/ masculine differentiation: verbs	3 times
Feminine/ masculine differentiation: nouns	2 times
Verbal inflection: imperfective	2 times

6. Some of the examples of pupils' grammatical mistakes which were provided by the respondents are:
- riḍā wa leilā dhahaba ila lmadrasa => رضا و ليلي ذهب إلى المدرسة;
  - souāda qaṭafa lazhār; => سعاد قطف الأزهار; etc.
7. The seventh question addressed to the informants was concerned with teachers' techniques in correcting their learners' mistakes; teachers' answers revealed that they follow a similar procedure. If a spoken error is made, the teacher appoints another pupil to correct their mate's error. On the other hand, if the mistake is in the written form, the procedure contains more steps. First the pupil who made the error is asked to stand by the blackboard, where the mistake is written; the teacher then allows him/her to make an attempt in correcting the mistake they made. In case their attempt is unsuccessful, the teacher goes to the next step, which is reminding them of the rule and providing them with further explanations when necessary.
8. The next question was about the learners' capacity of overcoming their errors, particularly after the process of error correction. 5 of the informants stated that pupils are noticed to overcome the mistake, whereas the other 2 maintained that there are some cases where pupils never learn the correct form. Consequently, systematic errors<sup>44</sup> emerge in the learner language of Algerian pupils.
9. To test the teachers' knowledge of the problems which result from second language acquisition, they were asked to explain the reason why some pupils show reluctance to learning correct forms of language. they mentioned the following reasons:
- Lack of focus and attention;
  - Lack in comprehension;
  - Learners are reluctant to revise lessons;
  - The curriculum is over loaded;
  - Questions are not understood accurately.

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<sup>44</sup> Errors are systematic, i.e., they develop as part of the learner language. in contrast to mistakes, which are made on a rather unconscious level.

Unfortunately, only one teacher mentioned that it is due to the problem of error *fossilisation*.

## **2.4.2. Interviews**

### **2.4.2.1. Teacher A**

1. The first subject invoked by the researcher considers the type of language children bring from home to the classroom, which had a heavy impact on literacy development. Teacher A maintained that the child's family and surroundings are at the *core* of this element, who plant the seeds of literacy when they direct speech to their children using SA, in addition to encouraging them to read and approach print. However, the informant claims that the extent to which MSA is spread amongst novice pupils is *unfortunately* low. This stems from the poor parental engagement in the learning of their children, mainly by not providing them with the necessary technology (e.g., electronic tablets and computers) and printed materials (books and the like).
2. Kindergarten, according to teacher A, is a must for any pupil's learning. In the Algerian school, kindergarten plays two important roles: firstly, it represents the transitional stage by placing the child in a learning setting for the first time after being used to the home environment. This transitional phase prepares children for school integration by teaching them its adequate behaviour, which comprises: language use; overcoming fear and anxiety, integrating with pairs and friends, etc. Secondly, it establishes the preliminary knowledge of school language (MSA), which entails creating future learners who are capable of: inter-pair communication; clearly and freely expressing their needs and desires; and capable of producing correct language<sup>5</sup>.
3. When asked about the acquisition of grammar within the educational context, teacher A affirmed that, when the accurate methodology is employed, it is not impossible for children to attain a full grasp of rules. Grammar teaching begins when the child is enrolled in the classroom, even if it is implicit in the first two years. In the first grade, pupils are required to pay attention to the grammatical elements, such as word internal order (word structure); word external order (sentence structure); and diacritics (*I'rāb*).

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<sup>5</sup> The informant refers to MSA as the correct language; in contrast to AA which is regarded as an incorrect form of SA rather than a different language.

In the second year, teachers work on emphasizing the same elements that were pointed at during the first year, though with a little *confirmation*. It is only by the third grade, that direct rule teaching takes place through using teacher A's wording, '*explaining and justifying using the rule*'. To further explain her view, the informant made use of an example; she wrote a sentence which had misplaced final-word diacritics on the board, to be exhibited on 4<sup>th</sup> grade pupils: 'qaṭafat souada wardatun'. Later, she appointed her '*weakest*' pupil to go to the board, who was able not only to identify and correct the mistake, but also to explain why. The informant then mentions the problem of over-generalisation of rules, which must be avoided, through rule construction, followed by a process of rule alteration.

4. The last concern of the interview was the reasons behind educational deficiencies. Teacher A claimed that the educational failure may stem from three different factors, namely: the curriculum; the teacher; or the pupil. She maintains that the curriculum does not follow a step-by-step order (from easy to difficult), such as the placement of the passive agent course in a prior position to the passive verb formation course; this fact may cause confusion and hinder, or delay, the learning of grammatical rules. As a result, she affirms that the curriculum must allow teachers to freely manipulate *the order*<sup>6</sup> in which its contents are organized; because even if it was designed in the most flexible way it is not possible for it to suit all children. When the teacher is the reason behind the learning difficulty, this is due either to the absence of the methodological training, the lack of awareness of child psychology; or to poor lesson preparations. Finally, teacher A maintains that the last cause of learning difficulties/ failure is the learners themselves; she further justifies her view by citing the ways such thing may occur. Children may be unable to learn (or learn quickly) either because of internal problems, such as mental, emotional, or physical disabilities; or because of external problems, which entails family, and social inadequacies.

#### **2.4.2.2. Teacher B**

When the interview questions were addressed to teacher B, it was unfortunate to hear her answers; accordingly, there has been only two sessions for this training so far.

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<sup>6</sup> She insists on the order of contents not the content itself.

The period through which the training will persist is in no way clear, and neither are the domains it intends to change. However, teacher B maintains that the only subject tackled during the two sessions she has attended to-date are concerned with curriculum design and organisation; in her own words, it offers nothing but *a change in the terminology*. Thus there has been no emphasis of any psychological aspects, nor of any language-related particularities, such as the use of AA or MSA.

### 2.4.3. Classroom Observation

For the present study, two aspects of pupils' behaviour were observed in the classroom setting: the linguistic behaviour; and their psychological behaviour.

1. In observing the linguistic behaviour, the researcher seeks to discover the ways in which AA influences the learning of MSA. The focus was mainly on teachers' use of AA, learners' use of AA, grammatical activities, and the features of AA which transfer to MSA. Mainly, the teachers' use of AA is restricted to: repeated error correction; to explain relatively ambiguous concepts; and finally to attract learners' attention after calling to them twice in MSA. Learners, in contrast, rarely use AA; in fact they laugh when the teacher addresses speech to them in AA, perhaps because they relate AA to social talks and the classroom setting to MSA.

Although grammar is not taught explicitly to first grade pupils, its fingerprint over the classroom activities is very evident; such activities include:

- Putting letters (which contain diacritics) in the correct order to make up a word, e.g., رَ - فَ - طَ => ظَرْفٌ (*r-fun-da*); حَ - صَا - نٌ => حِصَانٌ (*ṣā - ḥi - nun*)
- Word-order activities, e.g., الْحَيِّ - تَنْظِيفِ - عَلَى - تَعَاوَنَ - الْأَطْفَالُ (alatfālu-ta'āwana- 'alā- tanḍīfi- alhayyi )
- Set the correct diacritics on the words, e.g., مَكْتَبٌ => مَكْتَبٌ (mktb).
- Put the correct particle, e.g., دَهَبَ رِضًا إِلَى دَارِ الْبَلَدِيَّةِ => دَهَبَ رِضًا.... دَارِ الْبَلَدِيَّةِ (*dhahaba Ridā ... dāri al-baladiJJati*); etc.

The pupils' learner language comprised many mistakes, such as:

- Using the wrong diacritics (or consonant movements), e.g., أُطِيعُ, or resorting to pausal stops, e.g., نُشَاهِدُ فِي الصُّورَةِ رَجُلٌ يَقُودُ الْجَرَّارَ.

- Word order: most learners' sentences begin with a noun rather than a verb, e.g., رِضًا جَاءَ (*Riḍā jāʔa*). When pupils observing the sentence order suggested by the words they were offered above (Riḍā ...), many of them provided the (wrong) structure: تَعَاوَنَ عَلَى تَنْظِيفِ الْحَيِّ الأَطْفَالِ and only one answered with: تَعَاوَنَ عَلَى تَنْظِيفِ الْحَيِّ الأَطْفَالِ which though correct, was assessed as wrong by the teacher.
  - Attributing the wrong particles to sentences, e.g., some pupils were offered two particles: أنا and هذه (*anā* and *hāḍihi*) and were designated to select which one is the most suitable for the sentence: فَرَأَشَتْ جَمِيلَةً ... (*..farāʔatun dʒamīlatun*). More than half the pupils answered with هذه, while others said that أنا was the suitable answer.
2. On the other hand, psychological behaviour observation is concerned with the extent of learners' integration in classroom, amongst their mates and their teacher. The learners seem at ease in the classroom; to some extent, they are free to move around; they are allowed to talk to their mates (sometimes); to address the teacher for questions; to make comments; they frequently laugh; they respect the classroom rules such as keeping quiet when the teacher or a classmate reads and salute whenever a guest enters the classroom.

This tool did not exclusively reveal information about the learners, but was also beneficial regarding the aspects of teachers' linguistic behaviour in the classroom, mainly the cases in which they use AA. Results show that teachers exceptionally employ AA either to attract the attention of their learners or to make an idea accessible to the entire audience. To attract the behaviour the teacher used several expressions such as, تبعو معايا (*tabʔū mʕāJā<sup>7</sup>*) and خليوها (*χallīwhā<sup>8</sup>*); whereas she used: نشوفو فالجدول (*nʕufū fal Jadwal<sup>9</sup>*) and شاندير عند النقطة؟ نصير قليلا (*ʕāndīrū ʕand nnoqṭa? naʕbir qalīlan<sup>10</sup>*) to remind the pupils to look at the table of letters, or of an earlier dealt with notion. Accordingly, pupils show a reaction to their teacher's calling, by silencing the noise and responding *using MSA*.

<sup>7</sup> Follow with me!

<sup>8</sup> Let her (finish on her own)

<sup>9</sup> We look at the table (of letters)

<sup>10</sup> What do we do by the dot? We pause a little.

#### 2.4.4. Experiment

When performing the experiment, the researcher made sure to make the situation as familiar as possible, in order to get accurate results; thus the teacher wrote the text on the blackboard, whereas the researcher observed the pupils. As the teacher wrote, they read in a relatively low voice expressing confusion; however after the meaning of the writings became obvious, pupils began to laugh. When the teacher finished writing the text she read it to the pupils who kept laughing; later on she asked who wanted to read, participation was high as usual: everyone wants to read. Eventually, a collective of six pupils were appointed to go to the blackboard; when they read, all of them added diacritics to make their reading as standard-like as possible.

When the pupils finished reading, they were asked some questions in the form of an oral questionnaire; their answers are summarized in figure 2.3.

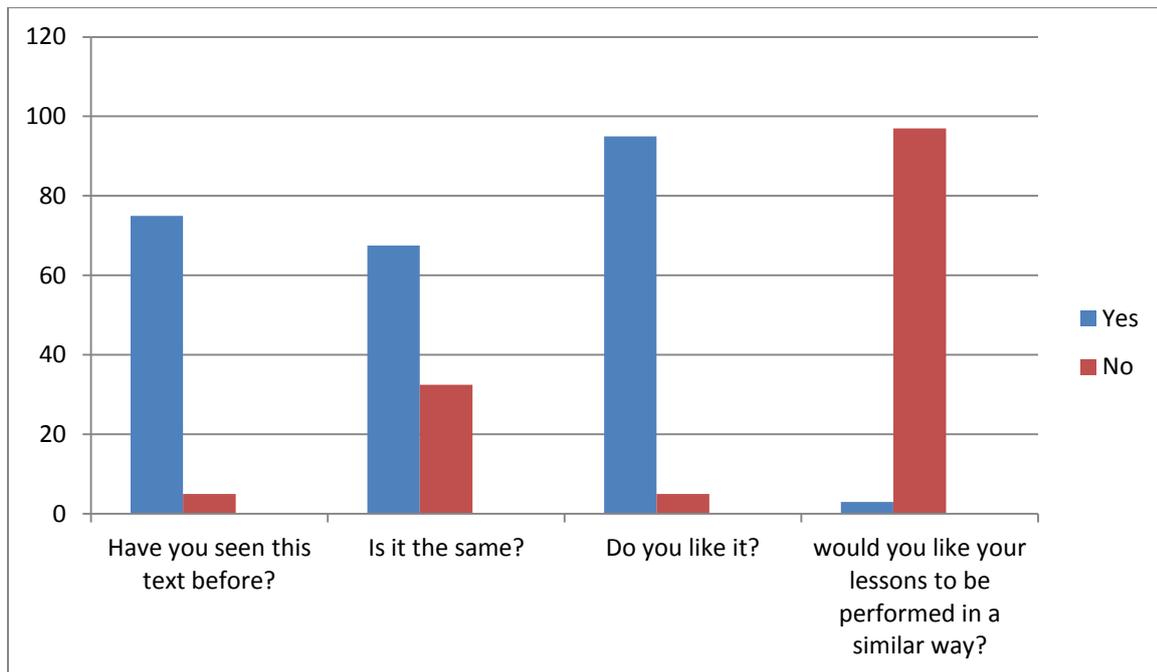


Figure 2.9. Pupils' answers: Yes or No

The pupils were asked to justify their answers, their responses were:

1. We have seen it in *ياسمينه سلمى (Yāsmīnātu Selma)*.
2. No it is not the same: this one is longer; this one is in the dialect (الدارجة)

3. Yes we like it; it is *funny*.
4. We can't have lessons in the dialect!

Consequently, it was necessary to ask them what they meant by *dialect*, the correct answer was: اللّٰي نَهْدُرُوها بَرًّا (li nahadrouha barra<sup>11</sup>).

#### 2.4.5. Document Analysis

Analysing the pupils' translated texts provided a rich set of data, including lexical and semantic items; however the only aspects which are of relevance to the present study are the grammatical errors. Whereas some pupils managed to put the forms correctly, many others kept several forms in the text the way they were presented to them, such as: *lawraq tā' chajara* instead of *awrāqou achajarati*. Many others attributed incomplete case endings to words and nouns, which are known as 'pausal forms' <sup>12</sup>e.g., *choujeirati lyāsmīna* instead of *choujeyrati lyāsmīnati*; etc. The different mistakes made are summarized in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9 Learners' Mistakes: Drawn From the Document Analysis

Error Type	Example	Frequency
Personal pronouns	Rāhā instead of innahā	65%
Diacritics	Takhbirou	58%
Sukūn in final consonants (nouns)	Al-yāsmīn	69%
Plural formation	Lawraq instead of awrāq	
Verbal inflections (pronouns)	Nasqīhā instead of asqīhā	37.5%

Table 2.9. Pupils' Mistakes

#### 2.5. Interpretation of Main Results

Data interpretation is the process of constructing meaning from the research findings. Firmin (2008: 459) claims that it "involves helping the readers to make sense of the findings produced in a research study." In contrast to data analysis, data interpretation permits the researcher to associate a subjective understanding of the

<sup>11</sup> What we speak in the outside.

<sup>12</sup> Pausal forms occur when the speaker ignores the word's final consonant movement . Teachers maintain avoiding pausal forms is preferable in order for pupils to acquire the full grammatical structure.

results. The different interpretations are organized in terms of subject-relatedness instead of data source.

### **2.5.1. Diglossia in the Algerian Mind**

Results from the conducted observation and the experiment on pupils show that diglossia is indeed regarded as the norm (Ferguson, 1959). People accept it and do not regard it as abnormal; they also transmit it to their children. This was especially evident in the pupils' reaction (laughter) towards writing a text in AA on the blackboard. It is, thus, not imaginable for pupils to be taught by means of AA.

The teachers' use of AA in the classroom is strategic, because they employ it as a technique intending to attract the learners' attention; thus it is regarded as marked code-switching (Myres-Scotten, 1993).

### **2.5.2. Emergent Literacy Acquisition**

The results from the questionnaire and the interview reveal many facts about the development of EL in the society in question. For instance, one of the reactions pupils are said to manifest when the teacher reads is '*amazement*', which may be attributed to the possibility that they have rarely or never been in the company of someone reading in their surroundings. Another result reveals that only a small portion of learners come to school with a pre-school knowledge of MSA; this entails a weak exposure to the standard at home.

This speculation, if correct, indicates a serious problem occurring within the Algerian families. Indeed, the low levels achieved by children may indicate that parents do not fully contribute to the cultural and educational development of their children. This may be due to several factors such as:

- Illiteracy: both parents may be illiterate or at least the mother, who is usually in charge of the children.
- Time: parents may be literate; however the time they spend with their children is restricted and thus insufficient to grow their cultural tendencies.

- Parents may be both literate and capable of spending time with their children; however the lack of resources may hinder them from providing their children with the environment they need to develop an EL.
- Parents may have all that their children require to achieve EL; however they lack cultural awareness and thus transmit it to their children;
- Some Algerian families tend to give more importance to French, thus insist on teaching it to their children instead of Arabic.

### **2.5.3. Child School Integration**

Children are observed to exhibit fear when first enrolled to school, thus they are likely to encounter some school integration difficulties; the latter may stem from several reasons, which are:

- The unusual nature of the school setting which is characterised by the presence of people with whom children are unfamiliar (other pupils, teachers, administrative staff), rules for pupils to follow, norms not behave according to, etc.
- The lack of psychological preparation, which is the role of parents. Before placing their children in classrooms, some parents may not be capable or willing to prepare their children psychologically and emotionally to face and embrace the academic life.
- Moving children directly from the home environment to the school setting, without going through any transitional phase, mainly kindergarten which prepares the child psychologically as well as linguistically (by introducing them to the relationship between symbols and sounds). This is likely to cause the child to be shocked, which may result in damaging effects on more than one level (emotional; mental; etc.); thus hindering, or at least delaying, their learning.

In addition to fear, pupils are also observed to show joy and enthusiasm in the classroom; this feeling must be the result of:

- Being surrounded by a number of children of the same age with whom they have much in common, such as belonging to the same environment, being exposed to similar entertaining activities (for instance, animation and video games), the desire to play, etc.

- The stories they heard from their parents, relatives, or mates, which stimulated their learning motivation.

#### **2.5.4. Pedagogical Concerns**

Regarding pedagogy, teachers have mentioned many aspects of their pupils' behaviour, such as moving around, talkativeness, not sitting correctly, not knowing how to hold the pen, etc. These aspects indicate that the learners are not accustomed to using writing instruments such as the pen and the copybook; and that they have no idea whatsoever about the adequate way to behave in the classroom. It may also be attributed to not going through the stage of kindergarten which, by introducing such notions and behaviours to pupils, it serves as a preparatory stage.

#### **2.5.5. Academic Literacy Development**

Mainly, there are two highly acknowledged skills of literacy, i.e., writing and reading. As a result of the importance fairly attributed to them, these two skills represent the *raison d'être* of education during the first 2 years. Other than that, no consideration of expanding this notion has been manifested by the curriculum of elementary education.

Teachers mention the several techniques they employ when attempting to overcome the difficulties they encounter with their pupils, whom they train to build the skills of literacy. These techniques comprise:

- Extensive letter reading and writing (training regularly);
- Motivation and encouragement.

This entails that teachers know that the method to grow a skill and imprint it in the mind of their pupils is constant practice and continuous training. On the other hand, that they are aware of the importance of motivation for learners.

#### **2.5.6. Language-related Issues**

Teachers attest that they use AA inside the classroom; they justify their choice by stating that they do it to facilitate the language and fully deliver the message. This entails that learners suffer from low levels of language comprehension of SA, which may be due to the state of being unaccustomed to it. The reason behind that may be the weak or complete absence of exposure to MSA.

Another difficulty encountered by the learners is confusing between letters when both attempting to write and read them, especially those which share similarities. This indicates a weak exposure to printed material both in the preschool stage and during school. Another factor which may cause this difficulty is the fact that pupils are neither encouraged (by those in their surroundings) to revise their lessons, nor are they intrinsically motivated to do it on their own.

The lack of linguistic elements from MSA in the pupils' language, and complete absence in some cases, was another point about which the teachers complained. This may stem from the rare exposure to MSA in the home environment, i.e., that the parents do not address their children using MSA. This entails that they may not be aware of the importance of doing so, or that they are not engaged in their children's literacy development and educational enrolment.

#### **2.5.7. Developing the Grammar of Standard Arabic**

Mother tongue (AA) transfer is not very apparent in the Algerian pupils' learner language (MSA). However, the features of MSA which do not exist in AA are learnt with a relative extent of difficulty. For instance, most teachers mentioned dual formation and putting diacritics as the most occurring difficulties among pupils; this may be directly attributed to the lack of the dual feature in AA.

Rule-learning through acquisition has a number of shortcomings, such as the problem of error fossilisation; nonetheless, the majority of teachers seem to be unaware of such phenomenon. Thus, they may resort to inconvenient ways to treat them, as a result their attempts end in failure. This is likely to be due to the lack of teacher training in the field of teaching a second language.

Observing the classroom activities, gave important insights to this research work. For instance, pupils were appointed an exercise where they were entitled to re-order the letters provided to make up a word. The fact that most the pupils' answers were correct unveils several facts about the process of their acquisition for the grammar of MSA. For instance, that they re-organise the letters: فـ - ظ - رُ to make up the word ظَرْفٌ entails their awareness that a word in Arabic never begins with a sukūn, nor with a nunated consonant.

Another activity that was assigned to pupils in the classroom was to reorder the words to make up a correct sentence (see p, 58). One of the mistakes that were made by many pupils was the structure: الأَطْفَالُ تَعَاوَنَ تَنْظِيفِ عَلَى الْحَيِّ (ʔlʔfālu taʕāwana tanḏīfi ʕalā al-ḥajji) (children cooperated together to clean the neighbourhood). This interestingly suggests that the learners are in fact aware that 'عَلَى' serves as a particle which governs the following word by making it into the genitive case. Thus their judgment was to put a word which had a genitive case ending, i.e., كسرة (kasra). The reason why they selected الْحَيِّ 'al-ḥajji' instead of تَنْظِيفِ 'tanḏīfi' though both are in the genitive case, may be that they confused the latter for its verb: نَظَّفَ 'naḏḏafa'. As for the second structure: تَعَاوَنَ عَلَى تَنْظِيفِ الْحَيِّ الأَطْفَالُ (taʕāwana ʕalā tanḏīfi al-ḥajji ʔfālu), which, despite being correct, was rejected by the teacher, it may be justified as a teacher's fear that the pupils over-generalise the new structure, thus she prohibited.

#### 2.5.8. Teacher-related Issues

All the teachers express sensitivity towards the first grade classroom; this entails that they are aware that it is different from the other grades, and that it has a direct impact on the pupils' future achievements. The engagement and persistence indicated by the teachers regarding the improvement of the accomplishments of their pupils entails that they consider themselves fully responsible for their education.

The majority of the teachers deny that they received any training, which is an unfortunate fact considering the utmost importance of primary education in general and first grade classrooms in particular. Nevertheless, the results show that all the teachers employ a special set of techniques with the case in question; which stems from their experience in the field and their individual efforts (such as reading about pedagogy). This implies that the teachers are keen on doing their job and fulfilling their duties towards their pupils appropriately.

From a distance, it seems that the ministry of education is not paying any attention to the need for teacher training, or is probably aware but not willing to spend time, efforts, and financial support on it. This is an unfortunate fact indeed, because it is taking place despite the importance specialists attribute to the teachers; and how they affect the achievements of their learners positively because they are aware of the

psychological, pedagogical, social, and finally linguistic intricacies involved in the process.

All the informants maintain that they use a simplified language with their first grade pupils. This infers that the teachers express tolerance and acceptance towards their learners' linguistic abilities and backgrounds. If teachers have a strong sense of involvement in the education of their pupils, they will not fail despite all the difficulties pupils may face.

### **2.5.9. Methodological Issues**

Results indicate that the teachers follow the teaching stages as presented by curriculum, which seems to be centred on transmitting the full form of MSA and on avoiding the problem of error fossilisation. This is evident when:

- The teacher insists on pupils to put and fully pronounce vowelings;
- The mistakes (mainly of diacritics) are corrected at once by the teacher; though she employs an indirect method where the pupil is unaware that they are being in the process of correction.

The shortcomings which diagnose the curriculum may be due to the fact that those who are in charge of designing it did not have experience in the field, i.e., they did not actually teach. Thus it is impossible for them to understand how teaching proceeds in practice; they rather rely on the theory. Or they did not conduct a teachers' and learners needs analysis, which allows curriculum designers to assess the accessibility of the areas dealt with in the curriculum for pupils, and the suitability of the method and order in which they are addressed for teachers.

### **2.6. Suggestions and Recommendations**

This section suggests solutions to the problems which have been diagnosed within the case of question; which stems from the researcher's subjective interpretation of the results.

### **2.6.1. Emergent Literacy Development**

Raising parental awareness of the importance of pre-school literacy practices; and encouraging them to take part in their children's learning by reading to them as well as urging them to read.

### **2.6.2. Creating a Transitional Phase**

In the Algerian educational system, kindergarten is the sole transitional phase which serves psychological, pedagogical and linguistic purposes; which is not sufficient from an educational psychological point of view. In order to make the home-school transition easier for pupils, there must be two pre-school stages:

- The first is kindergarten, where children play, draw, be introduced to print, etc. These types of activities fulfil two purposes, namely that children be integrated in the school setting and become accustomed to the fact that they are surrounded by many teachers and peers. The second purpose is that they develop an emergent literacy especially because of the weak levels achieved at home. Emphasis here is on school integration.
- The second is a school-preparatory stage; it prepares pupils for the next year by introducing letters and their corresponding sounds to them. Pupils must make attempts at writing and developing a control of their hand writing, they learn how to hold the pen properly and the techniques of writing. In this stage, pupils need to be exposed to large chunks of MSA in order to raise their comprehension and set the preliminary mindset for their SL acquisition of MSA, thus prepare them linguistically for the next years.

### **2.6.3. Academic Literacy Development**

It is high time for an elevation of the educational and cultural levels in Algeria. We cannot expect our nation to rise, economy to develop, and politics to become more credible unless we make an attempt at growing knowledge and awareness. Thus the notion of literacy needs to be expanded to include more than the two skills of reading and writing.

#### **2.6.4. Curriculum Design**

- The curriculum must be designed based on a needs analysis, which includes both the teachers' and the learners' needs.
- Teachers need to be allowed to manipulate the order in which the contents of the curriculum are organised.
- Instead of being provided with a list of lessons to teach, it is more suitable that teachers receive a list of goals to achieve, accompanied with the list of lessons and skills pupils must acquire by the end of the school year/ semester.
- The components of the curriculum need to be ordered logically according to a scale from simple to complex, easy to difficult, most frequent to rare, relevant to irrelevant, etc.
- All the contents of the curriculum must revolve around the skill being taught within each unit. For instance, if the Arabic lesson is about the imperfective verbal inflection, then the lessons of *Islamic Education*, *Mathematics*, *physics*, etc. need to provide a rich set of contents for pupils.
- Selecting the contents which are most suitable to the pupil's needs and interests.

#### **2.6.5. Teacher Preparation**

An adequate, sufficient and reliable teacher training must take into consideration these aspects:

- A training regarding the new implemented program (CBA), it must deliver information about the curriculum, the goals and the methodology.
- Preparing teachers to deal with the child's sensitive psychology, i.e., a pedagogical training.
- Explanations about the potential extra-linguistic influences on the learners' achievements, such as physical, psychological and social problems.
- Explaining the notion of diglossia to the teachers; this would help them employ more flexible and adequate tools when attempting to fix their pupils' lacks and problems.

- Giving them background knowledge about the notion of second language acquisition and instruction, as well as the potential deficiencies which may result.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

As Ferguson stated, diglossia is a long-lasting language phenomenon; and as he anticipated, it is going to last longer. Perhaps it is a forever-unchangeable situation, whose influence on several sectors in the society will continue, particularly on that of education. This chapter investigated to the extent to which the particularities of diglossia are evident in the Algerian primary classrooms, as well as what language learning deficiencies may result because of it; putting particular emphasis on the morpho-syntactic level. Results show that diglossia is not a real hindrance for the development of education in Algeria. It is fair to say, however, that the educational system of Algeria seems to facilitate such details and not pay them the attention they merit. Thus were we to revolutionise the field of education, and eventually all the sectors of the country, it would only be done if we stopped accepting the minimum and made more efforts to take our expectations to a higher level. If we were to rise with our nation, the programme design, implementation and presentation methodology need to be improved to meet international standards.

# General Conclusion

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## General Conclusion

In 1990, the UNICEF established that all the world citizens have the right to be literate by launching the Education-for-All programme<sup>13</sup>. On this ground, the Algerian government sought to increase the rates of literacy among its population, through building schools, recruiting more teachers, eliminating illiteracy among the elderly, etc. This operation could not proceed without any hindrance, however; one of the main factors to which this may be directly attributed is the linguistic situation of the Algerian community, diglossia, i.e., the use of two varieties in different situations to fulfil separate functions is seen as problematic to the field of education (Ferguson, 1959) because it may cause school deficiencies and/ or delays. This is mainly because the children's use of AA, the language of social interaction, is absolute or major in the pre-school stage; they are rarely exposed to MSA, the language of instruction, and thus are not accustomed to it.

In addition to limiting access to literacy, this lack of familiarity with MSA may increase pupils' encountered difficulties when attempting to learn its linguistic system. One of the domains that are most controversial in language instruction is that of grammar (Richards and Renandya, 2002), mainly because of its structural nature which tends to be taught explicitly through rule dictation, it is argued. Nevertheless, the emergence of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) and second language acquisition research (Krashen, 1981) revolutionised the methodology opted in language teaching all over the world. Today, Algeria employs the competency based approach (CBA) which is mainly based on the idea that learners construct linguistic knowledge. Accordingly, grammar teaching proceeds implicitly throughout the first two years of primary education, allowing children to get accustomed to MSA and to construct its grammatical knowledge. Later on, by the third year their consciousness is raised, and rules are directly stated in the classroom.

On theoretical grounds, the two processes of literacy development and morpho-syntactic acquisition seem to proceed smoothly; however one cannot rely on theory, but must inspect and examine the intricacies involved in real classroom contexts, to

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<sup>13</sup> Jomtien, Thailand

explore any difficulties and/ or hindrances. Based on this background, thus, this study has aimed to discover the circumstances underlying literacy development by Algerian primary school pupils, shedding light on grammar instruction and learning difficulties.

For the sake of exploring and investigating the intricacies involved in the Algerian primary classroom regarding MSA grammar acquisition, and in relation to literacy development, a sample of 40 first grade pupils was selected, in addition to the teaching staff in the targeted school which comprises 8 female teachers, who provided this research with a rich set of data.

This dissertation comprises two chapters; the first is entitled ‘Morpho-syntactic acquisition as a component of literacy development in Algeria’, it served both as a literature review and as a description for the applicability of such notions in the Algerian context. The second chapter dealt with methodological issues regarding this research work, it includes information about the case study, data analysis and interpretation, and a final section is dedicated to a set of recommendations and suggestions.

In order to collect information about the subject in question, the researcher opted for a variety of methods and techniques, namely a teachers’ questionnaire, interviews, classroom observation, an experiment and document analysis. The findings validated, to some extent, the two hypotheses put forward. Regarding the issue of literacy development, results revealed that pupils eventually manage to adapt and integrate in the school setting despite the difficulties they face in the beginning. The level to which pupils develop an emergent literacy at home is very weak compared to the standards as designated by specialists. Furthermore, the results revealed curricular shortcomings which may hinder learning and unavailability of materials which makes the task of the teachers more difficult. As for the second question, results revealed that the content used to implicitly instruct grammar rules in the two first years seems to work for some pupils but not for others. By the third year, when direct grammar instruction is carried out, pupils encounter slight difficulties in rule learning, and are thus immediately corrected by the teacher who relies on his/ her judgement to decide which method is best. Learners are likely to develop systematic errors through the

process of fossilization, which cannot be overcome no matter how persistent the teacher is.

All in all, learners move on whether carrying a complete acquisition of the system of MSA or not. Nevertheless, this does not eliminate the possibility for future adjustments. For instance, one may argue for an expansion of the notion of literacy to comprise more than the two skills of reading and writing, such as to developing social, political, and economic literacies. The ministry of education should keep a close eye on child psychology and teaching methodology. Furthermore, the language-external factors which influence language learning, such as diglossia, must be highlighted. Consequently, one may conclude that the development, improvement, and the modernisation of the domain of education require the contributions of all the parties involved. This entails the ministry, education specialists, school-staff, care givers, and more importantly, parents.

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# Appendices

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**II. The Influence of Diglossia on Literacy Acquisition**

7. Do children manifest any awareness of being in an educational situation?

Yes  No

Justify,  
.....

8. Do they show any tendencies towards printed material?

Yes  No

If yes, how do they indicate such tendencies?  
.....

9. Are young learners enthusiastic about reading?

Yes  No

If yes, how do they manifest such enthusiasm?  
.....

10. Do they possess any knowledge of Standard Arabic?

Yes  No

If yes, what does this knowledge comprise?  
.....

11. How fast do children develop reading skills?  
.....

12. What are the difficulties faced by children when learning to read?  
.....

13. What methods do you employ to help them overcome such difficulties?  
.....

**III. The influence of Algerian Arabic on Standard Arabic**

14. To what extent do you use Standard Arabic in first grade classes?

Very often  Sometimes  Rarely

15. How well do children understand speech in Standard Arabic?

Very well  Well  Poorly

16. If they do not understand something said in SA, how do they ask for an explanation?  
.....

17. When learning Standard Arabic, do pupils transfer any features from Algerian Arabic?

Yes  No

If yes, please provide examples .....

18. How strong is the grammatical transfer from AA to MSA?

Very strong  Strong  Weak

19. What kind of grammatical mistakes do they make?

Distinguishing personal pronouns

Word order within verbal sentences

Word order within nominal sentences

Placement of particles

Verbal conjugation to the imperfective

Final consonant movement of verbs

Final consonant movement in nouns

Dual transformations of nouns

Dual transformations in verbs

Plural transformations in verbs

Plural transformations in nouns

Differentiating verbs from nouns

Differentiating feminine from masculine

Differentiating single and dual from plural

20. Please provide examples of AA grammatical transfer to SA

.....

21. When a pupil makes a mistake, do you correct it?

Yes  No

If yes, how do you correct it? .....

22. When corrected, does a child:

Learn the correct form

Make that mistake again

23. In the cases where they make the mistake repeatedly, why do you think that happens?

.....

أعزائي هيئة المدرسين،

يتناول هذا البحث موضوع التأثيرات السيكولوجية للوضعية اللغوية في المجتمع الجزائري المتمثلة في ازدواجية اللغة ما بين العربية الدارجة و العربية الفصحى. على عملية تعلم الكتابة و القراءة في المدرسة الابتدائية. كما أنه يفحص الاختلافات النحوية و الصرفية بين اللغتين , هادفاً بذلك إلى اكتشاف أهم نقاط الاختلاف التي قد تؤدي المتعلمين إلى ارتكاب الأخطاء التي قد تسبب لهم معيقات دراسية.

يرجى اختيار الإجابة المناسبة حسب رأيك (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من إجابة واحدة أو الإجابة بحرية )

### 1. تكوين الأساتذة و تجارب القسم

1. كم عدد السنوات التي اشتغلتها في التدريس؟.....

2. كم عدد المرات التي درست فيها أقسام السنة الأولى؟.....

3. هل توجد أي صفات تميز قسم السنة الأولى عن بقية الأقسام بيداغوجيا؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم, الرجاء التوضيح.....

4. هل تلقيت أي تكوين رسمي متخصص قبل تدريس أقسام السنة الأولى؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم, ماذا تضمن هذا التكوين؟.....

5. هل تلجأ إلى تقنيات خاصة للتعامل مع تلاميذ السنة الأولى؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم , رجاء حدد هذه التقنيات.....

6. في مسارك المهني, هل واجهتك أي صعوبات غير اعتيادية مع تلاميذ السنة الأولى؟؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم, رجاء اذكر ما استطعت منها.....

### 2. تأثير ازدواجية اللغة على تطوير القراءة و الكتابة

7. هل يدرك الأطفال عند دخولهم المدرسة أنهم متواجدون في مؤسسة مدرسية؟ نعم  لا

8. هل يظهرون أي ميول نحو المواد المطبوعة؟؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم , كيف يعبرون عن هذه الميول؟.....

9. هل يتحمس الأطفال ليقروا في القسم؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم , كيف يعبرون عن هذا الحماس؟.....

10. كم يستغرق الأطفال في تعلم و تطوير القراءة؟.....

11. ما الصعوبات التي يشهدها الأطفال في تعلم القراءة و الكتابة؟.....

12. ما الوسائل التي تعتمد عليها لمساعدتهم في التغلب على هذه الصعوبات؟.....

### 3. التأثير اللغوي للعربية الداريجة على العربية الفصحى

13. هل يمتلك الأطفال أي مكتسبات لغوية في العربية الفصحى عند الدخول المدرسي؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم. أعط أمثلة عن هذه المكتسبات.....

14. إلى أي مدى تستعمل العربية الداريجة داخل قسم السنة الأولى؟

نادرا  قليلا  كثيرا  مطلقا

15. ماهي الأسباب التي تدعوك إلى استعمال العربية الداريجة في القسم؟.....

16. ما مستوى فهم التلاميذ للغة العربية؟

منخفض  متوسط  مرتفع  مرتفع جدا

17. أثناء تعلم العربية الفصحى. هل ينقل الأطفال أي مميزات من لغتهم الأم؟؟ نعم  لا

إذا كان الجواب نعم , رجاء قدم أمثلة.....

18. ما مدى امتداد المميزات النحوية و الصرفية العربية الداريجة في لغة التلاميذ الفصحى؟

ضعيف  متوسط  قوي

19. ما نوع الأخطاء النحوية و الصرفية التي يرتكبها الأطفال؟

التفريق بين الضمائر المنفصلة

التفريق بين الضمائر المتصلة

اعراب الأفعال (الحركات)

اعراب الاسماء (الحركات)

ترتيب الكلمات في الجملة الفعلية

ترتيب الكلمات في الجملة الاسمية

التحويل إلى المثني في الافعال

التحويل إلى المثني في الاسماء

التحويل إلى الجمع في الأفعال

التحويل إلى الجمع في الأفعال

تحويل الأفعال إلى المضارع

موضع الحروف و الأدوات

المعرفة و النكرة

تمييز المؤنث من المذكر في الافعال

تمييز المؤنث من المذكر في الاسماء

أخطاء من أنواع أخرى , الرجاء التوضيح

.....

20. رجاء قدم أمثلة عن هذه الأخطاء

.....

21. عندما يرتكب التلميذ خطأ , هل تصححه؟

لا

نعم

إذا كان الجواب نعم , كيف تصححه؟

.....

22. عندما يصحح الطفل , هل:

يتعلم القاعدة الصحيحة

يرتكب الخطأ نفسه بشكل متكرر؟

23. في الحالات التي يكرر فيها الأطفال الخطأ , إلى ما يعود ذلك حسب رأيك؟

.....

Teacher A's Interview

1. Tell me about the pupils' linguistic experience in their pre-school stage and whether it entails any modern standard Arabic (MSA) or not.
2. What is the Role of Kindergarten for Algerian Primary Education?
3. What is the method used to Instruct Grammar in the Algerian Primary School? And what are the stages of Grammar Acquisition undergone by Algerian primary school pupils?
4. What are the reasons that may result in a deficiency of acquisition for the grammar of MSA?

Teacher B's Interview

1. What is this Training you're taking centred on?
2. When did it start and how long will it last?
3. How many sessions have you attended so far? What did they entail?
4. In your view, what will change after this training?

حوار المعلمة أ

1. حدثيني عن تجربة التلاميذ اللغوية في مرحلة ما قبل التمدرس و إن كانت تتضمن تطوير أي مكتسبات لغوية خاصة بالعربية الفصحى؟
2. ما الدور الذي تلعبه مرحلة الدور التحضيري في ما يخص الأطفال؟
3. كيف تتم عملية تدريس النحو و الصرف في المدرسة الجزائرية؟ و ما المراحل التي يمر بها تطوير هذه المعارف اللغوية من قبل التلاميذ؟
4. ما هي الأسباب التي قد تسبب ضعفا أو عجزا لغويا لدى الأطفال أثناء اكتسابهم قواعد نحو و صرف اللغة العربية؟

حوار المعلمة ب

1. حول ماذا تتمحور هذه الدورة التكوينية؟
2. متى بدأت و متى تنتهي؟
3. كم من حصة حضرت حتى الآن؟ ماذا تناولت هذه الحصص؟
4. حسب رأيك, ما الذي سيتغير عقب هذه الدورة؟

### Appendix Three : Pupils' Experiment

حَلَّتْ سَلْمَى النَّافِذَةَ وَ شَافَتْ لُورَقَ تَاغِ شَجَرَةِ الْيَاسْمِينِ، وَ مَشَاتْ تُجْرِي عِنْدَ مَامَاهَا تُخْبِرُهَا:

مَامَا مَامَا لُورَقَ تَاغِ الْيَاسْمِينَةِ وَلَاؤُ صُوفَرُ وَ ذُبَالُو!

أَهْ نَسِيْتُ بَاشْ نَسْقِيهَا، رَاهَا عَطْشَانَةٌ.

رَانِي رَايْحَةَ نَسْقِيهَا.

The page from which the text was drawn: (from the first grade pupil's book)

المحافظة على المحيط

## ياسمينه سلمى

1 2 3 4

■ **أشاهد و أستمع**

فَتَحَّتْ سَلْمَى النَّافِذَةَ، وَ رَأَتْ أَوْرَاقَ شُجَيْرَةِ الْيَاسْمِينِ، فَأَسْرَعَتْ إِلَى أُمِّهَا تُخْبِرُهَا:

– ماما، ماما، أَوْرَاقُ الْيَاسْمِينَةِ صَفْرَاءُ ذَابِلَةٌ !

– آه. نَسِيْتُ سَقِيهَا، هِيَ عَطْشَانَةٌ.

– أَنَا ذَاهِبَةٌ لِأَسْقِيهَا...

ظَلَّتْ سَلْمَى تَعْتَنِي بِالْيَاسْمِينَةِ وَ تُحَافِظُ عَلَيْهَا كُلَّ يَوْمٍ، حَتَّى كَبُرَتْ وَ أَعْطَتْ أَزْهَارًا كَثِيرَةً، نَظَّمَتْ مِنْهَا عَقْدًا جَمِيلًا وَ رَاحَتْ تُعْنِي:

« الْمَاءُ سِرُّ هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ  
بِهِ الْبَقَاءُ وَ بِهِ النَّمَاءُ  
لِحَيَوَانِ الْأَرْضِ وَ النَّبَاتِ  
وَ مِنْهُ جَاءَ الْحُسْنُ وَ الْبَهَاءُ ».

■ **اكتشف**

نَظَّمَتْ	سَلْمَى	عَقْدًا	بِأَزْهَارِ	الْيَاسْمِينِ
نَظَّمَتْ				الْيَاسْمِينِ
نَظَّ				يَا

■ **أقرأ**

ظ - ظ - ظ	ظا - ظو - ظي	ظا - ظ - ظ
ي - ي - ي	يا - يو - يي	يا - ي - وي

■ **أثبت**

ظَلَّتْ - نَظَّمَتْ - تُحَافِظُ - شُجَيْرَةٌ - يَاسْمِينَةٌ - هِيَ

– يُحَافِظُ زَكَرِيَّا عَلَى شُجَيْرَتِهِ وَ يَسْقِيهَا، فَظَلَّتْ جَمِيلَةً بِأَزْهَارِهَا.

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