Promoting Arabic Literacy in Primary Schools in the United Arab Emirates through the Emirati Dialect

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Abstract: Globalization has had an impact on the education system in the UAE, where increased use of bilingual curriculum (Arabic-English) is held in high regard. Nevertheless, literacy among Emirati children and teenagers remains low. This study uses a 15-item, open-ended questionnaire completed by Emirati parents and an 8-item, open-ended questionnaire completed by Emirati primary school children from 8 to 11 years of age, and compares the translation of The Little Prince into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and into the Emirati dialect. The results suggest that not only the Emirati dialect, but any Arabic dialect (in its respective Arab country) could be used in primary schools to motivate children to read in Arabic and bridge the gap between their spoken language (dialect) and formal written Arabic. Not only must an Arab child learn how to read, but also, they have to understand a very formal language system that they are not used to speaking at home, i.e., Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Having books in their own dialects may make children more interested in reading, as they can understand them more easily.

Keywords: translation; children literacy; fostering reading; Arab countries; MSA or dialect; UAE; primary schools

1. Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) were constituted in 1971 after oil had been found in the region, which led to massive immigration, mainly to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, where more than 89 percent of the current population is foreign-born [1–3]. A need for international schools was clear, and English started being used in most public places and services, such as bars, movie theaters, grocery stores, taxis, gas stations and shopping malls, where often Arabic is not spoken by the staff at all. In order to compete in a globalized world, the UAE government has invested heavily in the education system, changing from instruction in Arabic to a bilingual curriculum where Arabic and English share the same importance [4]. Furthermore, Arab parents prefer sending their children to private schools [5–8], and most of these treat English as the standard, with British- or American-based curricula. This shift from public, free-of-charge Arabic schools to private schools has resulted in a negative effect on young Emiratis’ view of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), as Arabic is not at the forefront of education anymore. The reason why many parents are sending their children to private schools is to ensure that they can attain the TOEFL or the ILETS score required by Emirati universities [9]. Al-Hussein and Gitsaki [10] also point out that this shift is also due to social status. In the UAE, MSA is only present in religious contexts, in the news (but not in local TV programs) and in textbooks at school, when these books are not written in English.

There is a lack of motivation among students regarding reading in the Emirates and the Arabic World in general. Presently, Arabic students around the globe prefer to read in English or French rather than in Arabic [11–14]. Therefore, we would like to propose the reading of books in the primary
schools in the dialect of each Arabic country, because children speak their dialect and do not have active contact with Modern Standard Arabic; in other words, Arabic children never speak MSA, they only listen to it passively when they watch some cartoons (many cartoons are in the dialect), read books at school or when they are in contact with religious texts or prayers. Having books written in the language that the child speaks (i.e. his or her dialect), in the language in which he/she interacts with friends and even with the teacher, might increase children’s interest and self-confidence while reading. Reading in a language that is only passively received complicates understanding and may reduce students’ motivation.

2. The Triglossia in the UAE

In the Emirates, mainly in big cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Emiratis need to understand English if they want to eat out in most restaurants, if they need information in a shopping mall or when they are shopping in a grocery store, as more than 89% of the population is constituted of non-Arabs [1–3]. In an attempt to be served in Arabic at The Dubai Mall, we visited 15 different restaurants and fast-food restaurants, in January 2020; only three of these restaurants were employing waiters—one each in two establishments and two in the third restaurant—who spoke Arabic. None was an Emirati; one was from Morocco and two were from Egypt. How can an Emirati order in the other 12 establishments? Either in English or by mimicry. In public schools, since the 1990s, English lessons begin in the first year of primary education [15]. A survey carried out by Al-hussien and Belhiah [12] involving students ranging from 12 to 17 years of age, their parents and teachers, revealed that these students use mostly their dialect to communicate at home with family members and among their Emirati friends, while 98% prefer to use English when using the internet. Also, 85% prefer to read in English in lieu of Arabic. These figures are alarming and made us carry out this study in order to foster reading before secondary school. For Emirati students to start liking to read in their own language in the first years of school, we need to keep in mind, however, that the language they speak is the Emirati dialect, not MSA. Interestingly, 92.2% of parents and 100% of the teachers agreed with these figures. Some teachers said that the students were only interested in reading books in English. They believed that their students lacked knowledge of Arab writers and Arab literature. On the other hand, the students linked their preference to read and write in English with their daily exposure to English through the English curriculum, and to the fact that they were encouraged to use English at all times.

3. Alramsa (Alramsa Is the Name of the Dialect Spoken in the UAE) in Schools

Arabic dialects are not present in textbooks in the UAE or in any other Arab country. In the UAE, all textbooks are either in MSA or English in public schools. We have to keep in mind that teachers in the Emirates are mostly Arabic speakers from other countries, mainly from Egypt, but also from Palestine and Jordan [10]. For this reason, the use of Emirati Arabic by teachers is limited; the dialect is, however, used among Emirati students, as we found in our study (see Appendix A).

4. Publishing in the Emirati Dialect

Thanks to the Alramsa Institute and its founders Hanan Al-Fardan and Abdullah Al Kalbi, more than 20 books have been published in the Emirati dialect, most of which are textbooks for expats and even for Emiratis who want to dive into their own dialect [16]. Alramsa is an institute specializing in teaching the Emirati dialect. There are also books for entertainment, including the 2019 publication of The Little Prince in the Emirati dialect, which was used as the base of this study. Abdullah Al Kalbi also owns the Emirati publishing house Dragon Publishing, which has a collection of books in trilingual version: Emirati Arabic, MSA and English. It is important to highlight that the Arab world has a bias against publications in any Arab dialect, so Alramsa Institute and Dragon Publishing are a breakthrough in Arab society.
5. Lexical and Grammatical Differences in the MSA and the Emirati Dialect Version in the Book The Little Prince

We will analyze grammar and lexical differences in chapter XXI of the book The Little Prince (see Appendix B). This chapter was read by primary students and parents just before they were interviewed. Regarding lexical differences, we can separate them into two groups: phonological differences and words that are totally different in the Alramsa dialect, compared to MSA. We will start by analyzing the first paragraph:

“It was then that the fox appeared.”

“Good morning,” said the fox.”

The only parts that coincide in both versions in these two sentences are “said the fox” (qal altha3lib/الأخذل). “It was then” is expressed in MSA by a very formal expression anathaka (أنذال), this expression in MSA, however, is not used in any Arabic dialect. The Emirati version simplifies it by using fi hay allahitha (في هاي اللحظة), which literally means “at that moment”, the Alramsa version makes uses of simple words which are shared both in MSA and in the dialect, except for the word hay (هاي) which is a dialectal simplified version of the MSA word hathihi (هذه). The fox goes on with the phrase “good morning” in the following line, which is portrayed in MSA by the expression sabah Alkhair (صباح الخير), which literally means “wake up in goodness”. This expression is also used and understood in all dialects. Nevertheless, the dialectal version employs an exclusively and pure Emirati way of greeting in the morning: sabahak allah bialkhair (صباح الله بالخير), which literally means “May God wake you up in goodness”. The MSA version opted to maintain the original translation in order to answer this greeting: “the little prince answered politely “good morning” (Sabah AlKhair); however, it is rather unusual to answer “sabah Alkhair” by repeating the same expression; the most common answer is sabah alnoor (صباح النور) meaning “wake up in light”). The Emirati translation was loyal to the Arabic usage, and even added more charm to the answer: Sabah alnoor wa alsoooror! (صباح النور وอลورور), which means “wake up in light and in pleasure”. By adding this Emirati flavor, not only is the translator Abdullah Alkaabi more loyal to real Arabic structures, but also, he brings kids and characters closer, as these expressions are much more affectionate and are present and active in Emirati children’s vocabulary.

The following line reveals an enormous grammatical difference between MSA and all Arabic dialects. No dialects make use of the past tense lam + present tense, which is equivalent to didn’t + infinitive in English; instead, the dialects use the form ma + simple past, which also exists in MSA; nevertheless Abdullah used a very common way to report in the simple present, which brings the actions to the here and now of the listeners. While the formal translation of the MSA for he didn’t see anything is lam yara shayan (لير شيئ بعض), it became, in the Emirati version, wanna yashuf had (ما يشوف حد), which means “he doesn’t see anyone”. The verb for “see” (را’a) in MSA is never used in any Arabic dialect, which instead employ the verb shafa.

The Emirati translation is also much more active in changing the original word order and making the text easier to be understood by the children. In contrast, MSA keeps the original order: “I’m here,” the voice said, “under the apple tree.” Abdullah smartly changed the order here, and made it more authentically spoken: “He listened to a voice that said: I am here, look under the apple tree”. The words here and tree in the MSA version are respectively huna (هنا) and shajara (شجرة) and Abdullah used the pure Emirati words huni (هني) and shayra (شيرة) in his version.

The following line is 100% different in both versions. In order to express the sentences: “Who are you?” the little prince asked, (and added) “You’re very pretty . . .”, the MSA kept the same order and used words uncommon to dialects, i.e., “man anta?”, saalt Alamir Alsaghir wa adaaf “shaklak bihaja linatharin” which literally means: “Who are you?” Asked the little prince and added “your look is a delight to the lookers”. It sounds very poetic; however, it is extraordinarily complex for children to understand. The Emirati version chose the
direct speech: Qaal Alamir Alsaghir: man inta? Inta waid helu! (منو إنه؟ إنتو وأيدلوا قال الأمير أسمخير) which literally means: The little prince said: Who are you? You are really pretty! The word waid (أيد) is a khaleeji (Khaleeji refers to Arabian Gulf countries; not only the Emirates but also Doha, Oman and Bahrain use the word waid) way of saying “very much, a lot”; the MSA equivalent word is kathir ( كثير). The only remark regarding Abdullah’s translation concerns the spelling of the Arabic pronoun anta (meaning you, in the singular form) which is spelledinta in MSA. The same spelling could have been kept without bringing problems to children’s understanding and as a way to unite MSA and dialect whenever possible. Then, we would haveinta instead of jinta. The problem with the latter is that the Arabic letter attached to the end of a verb or a noun means “him”, even in Emirati Arabic. Both spellings have the same pronunciation in Emirati dialect, but the first one (إنت) is the one that children will find in their textbooks in MSA. Therefore, besides teaching the dialect, the translator would be reinforcing the MSA, which is required at school.

When the little prince says: “I am very sad”, the MSA book translates as ana fi muntaha ash-shaqaa’ (أنا في معتها الشقاء) “I am in extreme desolation”) while the Emirati translates: ana waid hazin (أنا ويد حزين), meaning “I am really sad”. Again, we see Abdullah’s proclivity to make simple and authentic sentences.

Continuing the chapter, we have the sentence: “I can’t play with you,” the fox said. “I’m not tamed.” The MSA version uses the verb astati3/أستطيع, meaning “can”, which is only used in MSA, while the Emirati version employs the verb aqdar/أقدر, which is used in most dialects and is also a synonym of astati3 in MSA. We believe that, as the book The Little Prince is read by many children, the MSA version could have employed synonyms that are present in dialects; this would facilitate reading and make it more pleasant for children, as it would be closer to their spoken language.

The chapter goes on with the answer “Ah! Excuse me,” said the little prince.” In the MSA version, we encounter an even more polite sentence than the original in French: ah! I3zrni min faDlik/أ! أحسنني من فذلك, which translates as “ah! Pardon me please, said the little prince.” The little prince in the Emirati version simply says: zain, assamuha mink/أعدني من فذلك which literally translates into “okay, excuse me” We have a much more colloquial little prince whose language is closer to the Emirati lexicon. The conversation follows: “You’re not from around here,” the fox said. “What are you looking for?” in MSA: wa anta la ta3ish huna, literally meaning “and you do not live here”; this was simplified in the Emirati version to inta mob min huni, sah?, literally meaning: “You are not from here, right?”.

The verb “look” for in MSA, abhath 3n, is substituted for the Emirati verb adawar 3n nas/أدوار 3ن nas which translates as “i look for”; this verb in the Emirati dialect is followed by 3la علی instead of 3n عن.

When the fox says that “People raise chickens. Are you looking for chickens?”, the MSA employs the word dejaj for chicken, substituted by the authentic Emirati variant deyay in the dialect version. The answer: “No,” said the little prince, “I’m looking for friends.” is translated in MSA by la, abhath 3n Ashiqa’, while the dialectal version is again loyal to its verb adawar and the word asdiqa’/أصدقاء friends) is substituted by a colloquial Emirati word rabi3/ربيع.

Next, when the little prince asks: “What does tamed mean?”, it is important to highlight that no dialect uses the MSA word “MA/من” for the interrogative word “what”; the dialects use shoo (شوء) in the Levantine and Khaleeji dialect, shnnoo (شنمو) in the Darija dialect (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia), or ee (إي) in Egyptian Arabic.

The translation into MSA could have opted for a simpler way to answer it means to create ties”. It was literally translated as “its meaning is to establish relationships” (m3nah iqama 3la’3l/معناء إقامة علاقات), however the word for relationship 3laqua (علاقة) has a very widely used
regular plural 3laqat (علاقات) and another very formal irregular plural 3lai’q (علاقته); the Emirati book simply reads “its meaning is to tie relationships” (m3nah rabaT 3laqat/معناه ربط علاقات); however, here, the word “relationships” is in its most known regular form.

This friendly and close approach in the Emirati translation runs through the whole book, while the MSA opts for a very formal and more distant translation. This distancing may be the reason why almost 90% of the children in this research preferred the Emirati version, which is in accordance with Al-hussien and Belhiah’s [12] research, which revealed that 85% prefer to read in English rather than in Modern Standard Arabic.

6. Methods

The participants in this study were 25 Emirati parents and 25 children whose age ranged from 8 to 11, all of whom were primary school students. Of the interviewed students, 21 go to private schools. The parents completed a questionnaire comprising 15 open-ended items (see Appendix C), while the children answered an 8-question open-ended questionnaire. Both parents and children were asked to read chapter XI of the book The Little Prince. One version was in MSA and the other in Alramsa (Emirati dialect).

7. Results and Discussion

Let us firstly analyze the 15 open-ended items for parents. Regarding questions 1 and 2, all of the respondents reported speaking Emirati dialect with their kids. No parents spoke MSA with their children. Nevertheless, four parents anticipated question 6 and admitted reading the Quran to their kids; however, there was no interaction in such readings, the children only listened to the holy book.

With regard to question 3, parents reported that their children watch cartoons in English, MSA and in the dialect. It was interesting because four parents had to ask their kids in which language the cartoons were. Two parents straightforward answered: “I have no idea”. Then they were kindly requested to ask their kids, one of whom answered that she watches most cartoons in English and another boy said he watched a potpourri of cartoons in the three versions. No children watch the cartoon in just one language, and all of them watch at least one cartoon in English.

In question 4, parents also confessed that their children talk to their friends exclusively in Emirati dialect; however, four of the kids went to international schools and they also spoke in English with some foreign classmates. No children spoke in MSA with their friends.

When asked in question 5 if parents sing to their children, the answer was positive except for one father who said that the mother and the nanny did so. The nanny sang in English, as she was from the Philippines, and the mother mostly in Arabic but also in English. Only four parents sang a mix of songs in English and Arabic; the remaining 60% sang to or with their children exclusively in Arabic. The program “the Voice kids” was also mentioned by one parent, who reported that the kids were really into it and sang along with the “little singers”. One parent confessed his kids’ passion for the Lebanese singer Majda el Roumi, as the father was also a huge fan, and Majda’s songs had rubbed off on his children.

In question 6, all parents reported that they read the Quran to their babies since they were born, and even when they were inside the mother’s womb. All of them agreed that such a practice helps children improve their MSA, as an answer to question 7.

Only 7 parents still read stories to their kids. Another 10 parents (40% of them) reported doing so when they were younger. Also, 20% of parents said that they read stories to their kids in English to help them at school, and two other parents said they would read whatever is available but usually in MSA or English, as books in the dialect are rare. It was interesting that four parents reported reading in MSA but explaining difficult words in the dialect.

Regarding question 10, which inquired about which languages the children read in, 80% of parents reported that they read in English because these books are a requirement of the school. Only 4% reported that their kids read for pleasure.
When it came to questions 11, 56% of the parents (14 parents) chose the MSA version for their kids, stating that this is the official language of the country and the language of the Quran. Also 32% of parents (8 participants) stated that kids have been listening to MSA since they were in the wombs of their mothers, when they were recited the Quran, and such practice has been repeated daily since then. There were some negative remarks concerning the dialectal version: “this language is wrong for books”, “we know this is not the correct way to write”, “at school they have to learn Arabic, not the dialect, the dialect they learn at home”. One parent went even further by reading the dialectal version and pointing out how it should be “we don’t say huni in Arabic, we know it is huna, it is not dejaj, it is dejaj, … and I want my children to learn the right words.” On the other hand, the remaining 44% who chose the Emirati Dialect version claimed that this would be easier for their kids to understand, or that this is the language they speak at home. It is important to highlight that 84% of the parents said that both versions were important, as one represents the union, the religion and the formal language, and the other represents local culture and autochthonous identity.

Regarding the subjects that students attend in Arabic (question 14) the 21 students that go to private schools have all their subjects in English except for Arabic Language Studies and Islamic and Social Studies. (These two subjects are compulsory in the UAE since 1999 to all muslim students in private schools [17]. The remaining four students have all subjects taught in Arabic except for English language and science. Concerning question 14, Arabic teachers of private schools tend to speak MSA 90% of the time, as books are all in Classic Arabic, and these teachers are in charge of teaching either the Arabic Language or Arab culture. A couple of parents reported that their kids were sometimes interrupted when speaking in the dialect and were asked to paraphrase using MSA.

The suggestions proposed by parents in order to boast about Arabic learning both at school and home were the following: 60% parents suggested more reading. One parent mentioned one activity carried out by the school which consists of reading a story and making a summary of it to the teacher who subsequently listens to and corrects it. Two parents suggested having more subjects in Arabic; they consider that only two subjects in MSA are not enough: “there should be a balance between how it was in the past (all in Arabic) and how it is now (mostly in English). Nevertheless, some parents said that what children learn at school and at home is enough, and no changes need to be made.

Concerning the children, all of whom were aged from 8 to 11 years old, 96% found it boring to communicate in MSA. Four children even said: “I don’t communicate in Fusha, it is just to read books at school and the Quran” and “We need Fusha to watch television sometimes and to read books” (Although Fusha is the variety of standard Arabic in the Quran and early Islamic writings, and MSA is the standardized, literary Arabic that developed in the Arab world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, native Arabic speakers use the term Fusha to differentiate any formal writing or speech from their dialects).

Question 2 was very much connected to the previous one. It inquired about whether students felt bored using MSA at school. Among the students, 72% reported that they do not communicate in MSA; some students added that even some of their teachers do not communicate in MSA. Additionally, 28% of the students said that it was difficult to communicate in MSA.

Question three was unanimously answered that students use only the dialect to communicate with their friends.

Concerning the fourth question, 96% of the children opined that reading the Quran is hard, and many times, their parents explain some words to them. Only 4% said that the language in the Quran was okay as they read it on a daily basis.

With regard to the fifth question, 88% of the children preferred the Emirati dialect version of the Little prince [18]. These children stated that this version was more authentic and easier to understand. Other kids expressed the same feeling (maybe “conveyed the same idea” is better than expressed the same feeling) by using other words: “They speak normally, like us”. A 10-year-old boy expressed “he is a boy, a boy says dyaj, not dejaj; dejaj would be a powerful old person speaking” (Dyaj is the Emirati dialect way to express chicken, the equivalent in MSA is dejaj. The child expressed the adequacy
of vocabulary with the age of the character, as all children communicate in the dialect instead of using MSA).

While reading the beginning of the text in MSA [19] “It was then that the fox appeared”, an eight-year-old boy did not understand the word anathak, which means “it was then”, and he asked his father in Emirati dialect: “what does anthak mean, dad? The father paraphrased the word in Emirati dialect.

Concerning the assignment of books in Emirati dialect by the school, the same results as in the previous question were obtained: 88% of students believed that the school should assign books in dialect. Three students also mentioned that the school only assigns books in English. In the following question, which inquires if it would be interesting to read in the dialect, 92% of the children answered “yes!”. It was surprising that four students said that they have never read in their dialect and it would be easier for them to understand.

The final question inquired if their teachers speak in MSA or in the dialect. All the students answered that their teachers speak in the dialect, and even that some teachers speak other dialects like Jordanian and Egyptian, as these teachers are not Emiratis; only the Arabic Language teachers speak mostly or solely in MSA.

8. Conclusions

In light of our results, it was clear that most parents were not sure about how exactly Arabic language should be dealt with at school. Although 84% believed that the dialect and MSA are important, 56% believed that MSA has to be the only Arabic source at school.

With regard to the children, it was shown that 88% of the children preferred to read The Little Prince in their own dialect, i.e., the language they speak daily, and they are confident with. The dialect is also the main language used by students and teachers to communicate, except the teachers that teach English or subjects in English. At school, MSA is restricted to the language written in the textbooks and in the Quran, as even some teachers use the dialect to communicate with their students. For these reasons, we believe that having books in the dialect could facilitate reading and make students more involved in the task. Reading in MSA is almost like reading in a foreign language for them. We do not have to look at books in dialect as a threat to MSA, but as a bridge to it, especially in the first years of primary school. Reading books in the dialect can be complemented in the classroom with exercises of word matching, for instance, deyay (“chicken” in dialect) and dejaj (“chicken” in MSA), huni (“here” in dialect) and huna (“here” in MSA); after reading the book in the dialect, students can be given passages in MSA and guess the meaning of the formal words, based on their knowledge of the dialectal version. The problem with the bilingual curriculum in the UAE is that some students are assigned many books in English, which are gradually superseding books in MSA. The UAE Ministry of Education has to be aware that the overuse of English in schools may, after some decades, create a generation of students that are not able to proficiently write and read in their own language.

Although this study is not in keeping with Kennetz and Carroll [20], who state that publishing companies publish books exclusively in MSA version, we agree that the majority of books are published in MSA. The Little Prince in Emirati Arabic is just one example of such an exception. Written Emirati dialect is slowly gaining ground in the UAE as we could confirm in an interview with the director of Dragon Publisher UAE, Mr. Abdullah Al Kaabi, who has published a collection of books available in a trilingual version, i.e., Emirati Dialect, English and MSA.

In conclusion, our study is in keeping with Al-Issa and Dahan, [13]; Al-hussien and Belhiah [12] and Al-Issa [14], as 96% of parents affirmed that their children prefer to read in English than in MSA. Additionally, 88% of the children in this study preferred the Alramsa version. These figures confirm that the dialectal version motivates children to read more than the MSA. In order to reverse the aversion to Arabic literature, reading in dialect might be an important bridge to Arabic literature, as we would have more motivated readers, readers who would understand the books and not see books in MSA
as being in a foreign language. The gradual introduction of MSA would ease the transition from the dialect to the MSA.

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**Appendix A. Questionnaire for Children, English Version**

1. Do you find it difficult or boring to communicate in MSA with your parents?
2. Do you find it difficult or boring to communicate in MSA at school?
3. What language do you use to communicate with your friends?
4. What do you think about the language in the Quran, is it difficult or do your parents explain it to you?
5. Read this short passage from the book the little prince, in MSA and in Colloquial Arabic, which one would you choose to your child and why? (chapter XXI, see below)
6. Do you think your school should assign books in Colloquial Arabic?
7. Would it be more interesting to read in Colloquial Arabic?
8. Do teachers at school speak in MSA or in Colloquial Arabic?

**Appendix B. Chapter Twenty One (English Version)**

It was then that the fox appeared.

“Good morning,” said the fox.

“Good morning,” the little prince answered politely, though when he turned around he saw nothing.

“I’m here,” the voice said, “under the apple tree.”

“Who are you?” the little prince asked. “You’re very pretty...”

“I’m a fox,” the fox said.

“Come and play with me,” the little prince proposed. “I’m feeling so sad.”

“I can’t play with you,” the fox said. “I’m not tamed.”

“Ah! Excuse me,” said the little prince. But upon reflection he added, “What does tamed mean?”

“You’re not from around here,” the fox said. “What are you looking for?”

“I’m looking for people,” said the little prince. “What does tamed mean?”

“People,” said the fox, “have guns and they hunt. It’s quite troublesome. And they also raise chickens. That’s the only interesting thing about them. Are you looking for chickens?”

“No,” said the little prince, “I’m looking for friends. What does tamed mean?”

“It’s something that’s been too often neglected. It means, to create ties...”

“To create ties?”

**Appendix C. Questionnaire for Parents English Version**

1. Do you communicate with your child in Arabic?
2. Do you use MSA or Colloquial Arabic with him/her? Does your child find it difficult or feel bored when you use MSA?
3. Does your child watch TV programs/cartoons in Arabic? Are these programs in MSA or colloquial Arabic?
4. What language does your child use to communicate with his/her friends?
5. Do you sing to/with your child? In what language are the songs?
6. Do you read the Quran to your child?
7. Do you think reading the Quran contributes to the development of your child’s MSA proficiency?
8. Do you read other books/stories to your child?
9. Are these books in MSA or in Colloquial Arabic?
Does your child usually read books? In which language are they?

Read this short passage from the book the little prince, in MSA and in Colloquial Arabic, which one would you choose to your child and why?

Do you think schools should assign books in Colloquial Arabic to primary students or only books in MSA?

What schools subjects does your child have in English and in Arabic?

Do teachers at school speak in MSA or in Colloquial Arabic?

What are the suggestions to encourage Arabic language in the home and at school?

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