

## **THE ISSUE OF PUPILS' EXPOSURE TO MODERN STANDARD ARABIC IN A DIGLOSSIC CONTEXT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present paper investigates effects of exposure to Modern Standard Arabic in the learning process in a diglossic situation among first grade pupils in two school settings, the aim being to demonstrate differences between them. Recently, clear deficiencies seem to have been noted in pupils' linguistic skills in Arab schools, particularly in first grade level, since most of them have relatively little or no contact with the official language of instruction before formal schooling. Children acquire a colloquial form of Arabic as a mother tongue, while Literary Arabic or MSA is learnt later on through access to formal instruction. The pupils' educational problems and the persistent feelings of linguistic insecurity are therefore directly attributed to the diglossia phenomenon. By means of a questionnaire and interview paradigms, the results of this study provide insight into the main language difficulties that pupils encounter in classroom interaction. The research shows that the pupils in one of the two schools are far better prepared for formal instruction and thus perform better in MSA than those of the other school because the former have gone through a one-year pre-school formation. What is suggested is that a systematic exposure to MSA uses two or three years before school age will be of great benefit to the learner.

**KEYWORDS:** Diglossia, MSA, Dialectal Arabic, Learning Process