The Use of the Media in Arabic Language Teaching and Research

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ABSTRACT

The role of media in the present-day world cannot be overestimated. They reflect key tendencies of the modern world in general and language evolution in particular. Spread of digital media opened new opportunities for linguistic analysis and provided new topics for investigation. The paper aims at analyzing the role of mass media in Arabic teaching and research, taking into consideration peculiarities of the language of the media and modern linguistic situation in the Arabic-speaking world. Recently media of the Middle East countries has undergone modernization changes due to transformations of political regimes, globalization, and technological advances. These changes affected the language of mass media, primarily its vocabulary. ICT development made the Arabic language to coin new terminology, "Arab spring" caused appearance of new meanings of words. These tendencies may be found in the language of media, which mirrors modern trends in the social development. That is why the use of media in Arabic teaching is compulsory, since it provides interdisciplinary approach, which is necessary for the training of highly qualified specialists, ready to problem-solving.

Keywords: Arabic, mass media, education, language.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern informational society creates new challenges both for research and education, which should be flexible, reflecting new achievements of science and tendencies in social development. Implementation of the latest results of scientific activity in pedagogical practice provides success in teaching any discipline. Today changes in dynamic world are most vividly reflected in the media, which has become a mirror of all spears of society evolution.

That is why the use of content analysis of the media when conducting research in various fields of science is widespread.

During the last decades, the media in the Middle East has undergone quantitative and qualitative modernization due to changes in political regimes, deep involvement of the Arab countries in the global system of international relations and technological and informational revolution. These changes consequently affected the language of the media.

The present paper aims at analyzing the role of mass media in Arabic teaching and research, taking into consideration peculiarities of the language of the media in general and modern linguistic situation in the Arabic-speaking world in particular. The following issues will be discussed in the article:

- language of media: interaction and relation;

- peculiarities of the language of the Arabic media in the course of the linguistic situation in the Arab world;

- importance of the use of the media in Arabic language teaching and its methodology (including social media).

The research is based upon personal authors experience with the regard of the literary review of the topic under discussion.

2. MEDIA LANGUAGE RESEARCH: KEY APPROACHES

Studying the language of the media can be the object of research for journalism, linguistics, sociology, history, etc. However, depending on the field of science in which research is carried out, its objectives as well as the methodology of the work may vary. Thus, the papers on media research focus on the subject itself, its emotional concepts and stylistics. Linguists in their turn are primarily interested in the features of the language on different linguistic levels (morphology, vocabulary, semantics, phonology, etc.).

The development of electronic media has contributed to the emergence of a new branch of scientific knowledge – media linguistics, which studies the functioning of the language of the media [1]. Professor A. Bell from the University of Auckland, who is especially well known for his pioneering work on media language and discourse, singled out the following issues, answering the question why to study media language:

- Accessibility of media as a source of data for some language feature we want to study.

- Interest in the way the media use some language feature, also found in ordinary speech.

- Interest in what media language reveals as a mirror of the "wider society" and culture.

- Interest in how media language affects attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues.

- Availability, media language is easier to collect than conversation.

- Media language can tell us things both about media and about language [2].

All of the issues mentioned above are extremely important when we talk about research of the media language as whole and the language of Arabic media in particular. However in reality we note that media linguistics studies how to produce media text (written or oral), rather than verifies real linguistic peculiarities. This circumstance is connected with the fact that the key works on media linguistics and the main editions of magazines with the similar titles go back to the departments of journalism (not linguistics or philology) and are written by specialists in this field.

Review of the available literature confirms the fact that in reality media linguistics is primarily engaged in the study of a features of the main types of media texts - news, advertising, various aspects media discourse in the context of intercultural communication, problems of reflection ideology in press, regards language use as an interface between cognitive and social, etc. (See, e.g. [1], [3], [4], [5]). Meanwhile for the linguists, media text is the source for the analysis of the language itself and its development. The latter entails a difference in the aims and objectives of different kinds of studies and methodologies used. For successful conducting of interdisciplinary research (which also includes studying the language of the media) it is extremely important to determine the main scientific area of its implementation.

In terms of our research we regard media language as a source of language data for research and teaching purposes.

3. LITERARY REVIEW

In addition to the works mentioned above different peculiarities of Arabic in media are described by R. Effat in the study "Media

Arabic". The author views Arabic as an important element in the effectiveness of a propaganda effort, he also regards such issues as the use of Arabic dialects in press and defines some peculiarities specific for media Arabic [6].

A comprehensive analysis of the interaction of the Arabic language and media is presented in the book "Arabic and the Media", edited by R. Bassiouney. The leading scholars examine various aspects of media Arabic (code-switching, language variation, orthography and constructions of identity). The work regards to what extent does the Arabic used in the media reflect social and linguistic realities of Arabic speaking audiences and how can our knowledge of the linguistic reality of the media in the Arab world contribute to teaching the media to foreign students who learn Arabic [7].

Another popular topic in this regard is research dedicated to borrowings in the Arabic media language (see, e.g. [8], etc.).

Due to the fact, that media provides an easily access to its content, it is often used in Big Data research. Such issues as modeling and visualization of media in Arabic [9], sentiment analysis, social media monitoring are also of popular nowadays.

A. Bill considers common theoretical issues, dealing with language and media interaction in his book "Language and the Media" [10].

Despite the fact that the language of the Arabic media has been thoroughly studied, this topic remains relevant. First of all, this is due to the fact that the media reflects the dynamic development of society, that defines new tasks for sociolinguistic researches, and it also leads to the evolution of the language of the media itself. In addition, the emergence of new methods of automatic processing of linguistic data opens new opportunities for carrying out linguistic studies that were previously impossible. And, finally, all of these tendencies should find their reflection in the foreign language teaching.

4. PECULIARITIES OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE ARABIC MEDIA

Mass media in the Arab world

Mass media (or mass communication) is the field of study, which deals with linguistics, political science, sociology, psychology, history, etc. It offers an interdisciplinary focus and is itself the object of interdisciplinary study. [11]. The language of the media serves the function of communicating cultural identity. In the case of the Arabic language it is inseparable from the Arabic culture, history, tradition, and religion [12]. In the last decades media of the Middle East has undergone both quantitative and qualitative modernization changes due to transformation of political regimes, deep involvement of the Arab countries in the global system of international relations, the technological advances of recent years. These changes affected the language of the mass media, primarily its vocabulary. Thus, ICT development made the Arabic language to coin new terminology as well as create approaches for the English borrowings adaptation [13].

The so-called "Arab spring" caused appearance of new vocabulary and new words meanings. In 2014 there was a project, titled "A Dictionary of Revolution", conducted by A. Hanafi [14]. The results of this investigation are available online and every registered user may trace evolution in the meaning of the words, dealing with political and social events, occurred in Egypt from 2011 to 2013 [15].

Speaking about the Arab Spring we should emphasize the significant role of media in general and social media in particular, which were used not only for information people of what was happening but social media was also among the tools used by protesters to organize themselves.

Linguistic Situation in the Arab World: the Case of Media Language Research

Another peculiarity of the Arabic media relates to the language situation in the Middle East, which is traditionally defined by co-existence of

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and dialects. The main difference between them lies in the functional area: dialects are mainly used as a mean of everyday oral communication, while MSA is primarily used in writing [16]. Traditionally the language of the Arabic media is considered to be Modern Standard Arabic. But in the real life, the situation is more complex. In fact, MSA is nobody's mother tongue, unlike the dialects. That is why we find traces of different dialects in official speeches and texts in MSA. In fact, this situation has historical roots. At the end of the 19th century, the Egyptian colloquial dialect began to be used along with Standard Arabic in the media like a new trend known as 'Folkloristic Journalism' [17]. With the spread of education, the tendency to use dialect in media reduced. Nevertheless, the issue, concerning language diversity of the media in different regions of the Middle East becomes extremely important. Available information on this subject is fragmented and rely exclusively on empirical data. Therefore, it is necessary to implement methods of mathematical analysis in order to obtain reliable results on the issue mentioned above.

In terms of present research, we conducted the research, analyzing the use of some words peculiar to the Egyptian dialect in the texts of electronic versions of three Arabic newspapers, they are "Al-Ahraam" (Egypt) [18], "Al-Maghreb" (Tunis) [19], "Al-Akhbaar" (Lebanon) [20]. The purpose of the study was to determine the specificity of the Arabic language of newspapers published in different countries of the Arab world. Details of the experiment will be presented in a separate paper. Here we just give the main conclusions. In conducting the study, we have chosen some of the most frequent words, typical for the Egyptian dialect, and by using the search function we tried to determine the probability of the occurence of the dialect vocabulary in newspapers published in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunis. The results demonstrated the fact that dialect vocabulary is present in the official media. However, in general, this is typical for

advertising, the transmission of fragments of political leaders statements[1], analytical notes. For example, the heading of the article in the section "Free opinion" has the negation /mish/, which does not exist in Modern Standard Arabic:

مصر مِشْ طابونة[2]

miṣr mish ṭābūna

"Egypt is not an oven."

The same article has other dialectal words:

زي /zey/ "as"

محدش /maḥadsh/ "no one".

It is interesting to mention that the lexicon peculiar to the Egyptian dialect was not found in the Tunisian edition. In the Lebanon newspaper "Al-Akhbaar", we found several Egyptian words, but only in articles, dealing with the descriptions of events taking place in Egypt. These conclusions verify the existence of regional language variation in the media of the Middle East. Implementation of the Big Data technics could prove this fact and give more accurate results.

5. ARABIC MEDIA IN THE CLASSROOM

The use of the different types of mass media in the language teaching became widespread. However, its methodology does not always consider specifics of the media language itself. The use of mass media in the language teaching is highly effective due to the following circumstances:

a)   It helps to get familiar with the Arabic culture, history, sociology, with the increasing level of fluency in Arabic. Regular watching of Arabic TV channels allows students to immerse themselves in the language environment.

b)   The language of the media reflects dynamics in social development, adopting and

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[1] http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/519664.aspx
Consulted online on 05.28.2017.
[2] http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/594438.aspx.
Consulted online on 05.28.2017.

creating a new vocabulary, thus reflecting recent changes in the society.

c) Methodology of media language teaching should be based on the principle of dynamism, which is determined by the need for regular modernization of curricula in accordance with the changes taking place in the world community.

d) Teaching media Arabic provides skills and knowledge which are necessary for understanding of international and regional events. At the same time the use of media in the classroom can be also a key factor in structuring and defining explicit spoken and written standards as goals for learners of Arabic [21].

e) The use of social media (i.e. Facebook, Tweeter) in the language teaching proved its effectiveness worldwide.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As a matter of fact, MSA used in the Arabic media proved to be somehow artificial one and covers only a limited sphere of communication. The completely homogeneous MSA remains a subject of a theory rather than objective reality, although the recent spread of education and the influence of pan-Arabic mass media may lead to the reduction of the dialectal speech usage in favor of MSA, which represents wider geographic range.

The Arabic language curriculum should be flexible and must reflect recent achievements in the Arabic language research. It should consider the latest changes in the linguistic situation. The language of the media mirrors modern trends in the social development. That is why the use of media in Arabic teaching is compulsory, since it provides interdisciplinary approach, which is necessary for the training of highly qualified specialists, ready to problem-solving.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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