

Teaching Colloquial / Oral Language in Classroom

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Preview

- Current FL teaching practices
- Models of diglossia in cryptologic languages
- Language and Culture
- Creating teaching materials in colloquial languages
- Teaching colloquial languages



Why Teach Colloquial Language?

- The US national security needs have changes since 9/11.
- Cryptologic linguists face radically different language and cultural situations in the field. [See # 3 & 4 in references]
- Native speakers and insurgents do not speak in the language of media, textbooks, or classroom.



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Foreign Language Education in the US

- Foreign languages are taught in the framework of English as a Second Language [ESL].
- It follows the conventions of standard American English, American approach to education, and urban American cultural thinking [Critical Thinking], not critical understanding of others.



Standard Language

- Standard language is shaped by mass education, literary practices, publications, technology, media, mobility, etc.
- Its writing conventions and grammar rules are standardized
- The dictionaries have clear and concise meanings of words



Classical, Standard, Colloquial, Local

- Earlier and current models of language teaching are based on the classical languages: Arabic, Greek, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit.
- Classical language is a dialect-neutral register.
- No one used classical languages at home, streets, and market place.
- People spoke in local dialects



Models of Diglossia in Cryptologic Languages

Arabic and Persian are used in diglossic context: a standard, high [H] variety and a low [L], common variety. The H variety is for literary & academic works, official relationships, respect, and keeping social distance.

Colloquial is the language of the family and home, street, market, in-group, intimacy, and friendship.



Language and Culture

Culture is directly related to colloquial language in which nearly all communications take place.

Essential cultural communication: euphemisms, humor, cursing, social media, texting, etc. all take place in colloquial and local language.



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Language Contexts in Middle East

Standard
Language

Regional Variety
of the Capital City

Local/Village



Examples - Arabic

MSA

- ↑ Gulf Arabic
- ↑ The Arabic of the capital, Muscat
- ↑ Arabic dialect of a village in Oman



Persian

Standard Persian – Literary, Academic

↑ Colloquial Persian of Teheran,
[standard model]

↑ Dialects of Isfahan, Mashhad,
Bakhtiari [tribal]



Dari: Afghan Persian

Standard Dari

- ↑ Colloquial Dari of Kabul, the capital
- ↑ Local dialects of Panjsher, Badakhshan, Herat,...



Pashto Dialects

Pashto does not have a long literary tradition. There are four regional standards / broad varieties of Pashto:

- Kandahar
- Central
- Nangarhar-Peshawar
- Tribal dialects of the mountainous region of Khost and Waziristan [oral]



Standard Pashto and Khost Pashto

- Standard Pashto
- *lās* [hand]
- *lāsuna* [hands]
- *mor* [mother]
- *xar* [donkey]
- *pašto*
- *zmā* [my]
- *stā* [your]
- *rāza* [come!]
- Khost / Waziri Pashto
- *lus*
- *lusina*
- *mer*
- *xār*
- *paxte/pašte*
- *imu*
- *itu*
- *ārtsa*



Why Colloquial Language

- Real native language
- Close to the people, their thinking, outlook on life events
- All insurgent groups and militants communicate in colloquial / local dialects



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MSA and Colloquial Arabic in Classroom [1]

- “Palestinians process MSA as a second language, similar to their processing of Hebrew, rather than as a first language.”



MSA and Gulf Arabic: Two Groups [1]

- Group 1 - first studied MSA for a year and then studied Gulf Arabic [GA]
- Group 2 - studied GA for a year and then MSA
- Group 2 had higher motivation, higher retention, more material covered than Group 1



Language and Culture [5]

Low Context [American]

- Meaning is given in the linguistic code, texts, dictionaries
- Literate culture, speaking is influenced by literacy
- Linear, logical, analytic, critical, straight

High Context [Mid-East]

- Meaning is created in interpersonal contexts of communication
- There is a high residue of traits of oral cultures
- Repetition, ambiguity, emotions, imagery, circular



Create Training Materials from Scratch

- Collect extensive samples from native speakers in TLs
- Personal narratives, processes, professions, instructions, current events, vocabulary lists / mind maps style, etc.
- Stories, historical events, religious views, etc.



Teaching Material from Scratch

- Develop teaching materials on sound system, word structure, vocabulary, grammar of the language
- Integrate the local culture in the language and communication style



In the Classroom

- Arabic: colloquial → MSA
- Persian: colloquial → regional colloquial
- Persian: standard → colloquial
- Pashto: standard → Waziri [a six-week add-on course for those with 2+/2 in listening and speaking in standard Pashto]



References

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