

Observations on teaching languages in diglossic environments

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diglossia

where two languages (or language varieties) are used
by the same language community

diglossic environments

Many languages spoken in communities where Chinese, Russian, Spanish, French, English, etc. are dominant or prestige languages

target language

- Typically presented in an artificially pure form to learners
- Learners become the sole speakers of this pure form of the language

problems for learners

- Unable to cope with unfamiliar borrowings
- Native speakers often assume the learner knows the dominant/prestige language and will switch to that language to communicate

instruction

- Should introduce learners to the diglossic nature of the target language, from general to specific
- Learners should be informed about degrees of bilingualism in the target language community

instruction

- Provides examples of how the languages are mixed
- Lets learners know how much they should know of the dominant language
- Points out where grammar and syntax are affected

instruction

- Loans with new or restricted meanings
- Neologisms and technical vocabulary
- Dominant language as the preferred mode



questions

- What other language instruction programs have dealt with this issue effectively?
 - (e.g. Lebanese/Tunisian/Algerian French/Arabic?)
- How else does diglossia affect learning a target language?
- Other feedback from learners?