The Diglossic Situation in an Algerian Language Teaching Context:  
Case of Tlemcen Primary Schools


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Abstract

The main goal of the present study consists of examining the impact of Arabic diglossia on formal education, focusing on the primary schools level in The Algerian Schools. It aims at underlining the sociolinguistic phenomenon of ‘diglossia’ and its impact on pupils’ linguistic performance. Recently, clear weaknesses seem to have been observed in pupils’ linguistic skills in all Arabic schools, principally at the primary level, for most of them have relatively little or no acquaintance with the official language of instruction outside the school context. In the Algerian policy, Modern Standard Arabic is said to have a high stance and function since it has become the prevailing language used for instruction; while children acquire Algerian Arabic as a mother tongue. The pupils’ educational weaknesses and the persistent feelings of linguistic insecurity are directly attributed to diglossia considering its impact on the learning/teaching process. Therefore, the findings obtained reveal that the teachers often have recourse to Algerian Arabic, which they find more appropriate to get the message across. What should be stressed is that the pupils’ linguistic weaknesses are essentially due to their lack of exposure to Modern Standard Arabic outside the school environment. Hence, this study examines the reasons behind shifting from a high to a low variety.