

Reading in Multiple Arabic's: Effects of Diglossia and Orthography

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Abstract : The study investigated the effects of diglossia and orthography on reading in Arabic, manipulating reading in Spoken Arabic (SA), using Arabizi, in which it is written using Latin letters on computers/phones, and the two forms of the conventional written form Modern Standard Arabic (MSA): vowelled (shallow) and unvowelled (deep). 77 skilled readers in 8th grade performed oral reading of single words and narrative and expository texts, and silent reading comprehension of both genres of text. Oral reading and comprehension revealed different patterns. Single words and texts were read faster and more accurately in unvoweled MSA, slowest and least accurately in vowelled MSA, and in-between in Arabizi. Comprehension was highest for vowelled MSA. Narrative texts were better than expository texts in Arabizi with the opposite pattern in MSA. The results suggest that frequency of the type of texts and the way in which phonology is encoded affect skilled reading.

Keywords : Arabic, Arabize, computer mediated communication, diglossia, modern standard Arabic

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