Writing sociology in the Arab world: knowledge production through *Idafat, The Arab Journal of Sociology*

Sari Hanafi*

American University of Beirut, Lebanon

This article analyses the 18 issues of *Idafat, The Arab Journal of Sociology*, published from 2008 to 2012, including some specific variables (submission data, author nationality, article keywords, use of references). While all published materials are analysed, only 120 articles written by Arab authors are scrutinized. The objective is to unfold the way Arab sociologists produce knowledge in sociology. A special focus will be placed on the language of citations and references. This article argues that some institutional settings in addition to the economy of knowledge production make the balanced use of references in Arabic and foreign languages difficult. What are the resources upon which they rely? To answer to this question, the article presents the results of an online 27-question survey about the use of references by researchers who hold a master's or a PhD degree from any university in the Arab world or who have dealt with a topic related to the Arab world.

Keywords: Arab *Journal of Sociology* 'Idafat'; citation; knowledge production; sociology; Arab world

Introduction

Idafat, The Arab Journal of Sociology (hereafter *Idafat*), is a new, refereed, academic journal published by the Arab Association of Sociology in cooperation with the Center for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS). The journal's main objective is to disseminate research in sociology and anthropology produced in the Arab world and to open debates about social and political problems from disciplinary, national and Arab perspectives. It also aims to introduce international works, in addition to new trends in sociology and anthropology, to Arab readers. It is published both as hardcopy and online.[1] Idafat intends to fill the gap within an academic field of Arab sociology in which there are very few journals that have regular periodicity and longevity (e.g. Kuwait University's *Journal of Social Science* and *Journal of Social Affairs*).[2] Some universities have journals for all sciences or for social science and they often serve the faculty within each university.

Every article or book review is sent to reviewers and is then presented to the *Idafat* Editorial Board and that of the CAUS journals (*Idafat*, *Arab Future*, *Arab Economic Studies*, *Arab Journal of Political Science*, and *Arab Journal of Translation*) for consideration. Most authors receive a decision on their article one to three months after being submitted. The delay is often due to the refusal of scholars to review or the non-respect of reviewers to the deadlines given. This reflects the weakness of

---

*Email: Sh41@aub.edu.lb

the professionalization of the scientific community locally and at the level of the region (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2013; Kabbanji 2010). Martín (2012a, 838) cites Albrow (1991) who suggests that 'unlike books, journals are a collective enterprise, one that also requires collaboration to maintain the collective'.

Idafat, which was launched in 2000 as a non-periodic journal (a sort of annual book), published five issues then stopped for three years before restarting again as a regular journal in the spring of 2008 (with four issues per year). Readers of *Idafat* are not only sociologists, but also a wider public, as evidenced by many indicators: assigning articles in syllabi; some articles were browsed by readers 1500 times in the last two years; and the journal is sold in both bookshops and newspaper kiosks. There are also a few cases in which articles received feedback and counter-arguments.

This article analyses the 18 issues published from 2008 to 2012 by looking at some variables such as submission data, author nationality, article keywords and the use of refer-ences. The objective is to unfold the way Arab sociologists produce knowledge in soci-ology. A special focus will be placed on the language of citations and references. This article argues that some institutional settings, in addition to the economy of knowledge production, make the balanced use of references in Arabic and foreign languages difficult. What are the resources upon which they rely? To answer this question, this article will present some of the results of other research I have undertaken in 2011, specifically an online 27-question survey about the use of references by researchers who hold a master's or a PhD degree from any university in the Arab world or who have dealt with a topic related to the Arab world, no matter from which discipline. The conclusion extrapolates such results highlighting the crisis of the refereed academic journals.

Who are the authors of *Idafat*?

As Table 1 shows, of the 584 items received by the journal – which include, in addition to numbers of articles, book reviews, review articles and workshop reports, and the issues' editorials – 248 are articles that were selected as the subject of this study. Some 42.5% of submitted manuscripts were published in general, but what is relevant is the rate for authors coming from the Arab world, which is 39.0% as others are often invited to submit papers. It is a rate higher than the 15.5% of papers accepted by *Current Sociology*, a journal of the International Sociological Association (Martín 2012b).

As can be noted in Table 1, the acceptance rate ranged between one-third and one-half of the foremost countries, according to the nationality of the first author (and not one's place of institutional affiliation). In fact, one cannot rush to the conclusion that this reflects the quality of published manuscripts, as there are three rules of thumb which determine the editorial board decision to accept or reject manuscripts: first, and the most important criterion, is the manuscript's quality in terms of topic, method-ology and theorization; second, the distribution of manuscripts according to countries and subject; and finally, affirmative action as a policy adopted by *Idafat* in favour of young researchers who wish to publish their first study. This article distinguishes between Arab nationalities and others for analytical reasons. Most articles published by foreign authors are requested from them. *Idafat* translated those articles into Arabic as a policy that sought to introduce new methodologies, approaches and theories in sociology to Arab readers.

To study the distribution of manuscripts, according to the nationality of the first author, it was decided to analyse only the articles. They are 57% of the total items

Table 1. Distribution of submitted pieces by nationality of the first author.

Country of nationality	N	%	Number of submitted papers	Accepted papers (%)
Morocco	42	16.9	108	38.9
Palestine	39	15.7	96	40.6
Lebanon	32	12.9	98	32.7
Tunisia	30	12.1	61	49.2
Algeria	20	8.1	56	35.7
Egypt	16	6.5	46	34.8
Iraq	14	5.6	39	35.9
Bahrain	3	1.2	7	42.9
Jordan	3	1.2	8	37.5
Saudi Arabia	3	1.2	5	60.0
Kuwait	2	0.8	4	50.0
Libya	2	0.8	4	50.0
Oman	2	0.8	2	100
Syria	2	0.8	5	40.0
Mauritania	1	0.4	3	33.3
Qatar	1	0.4	1	100
Sudan	1	0.4	4	25.0
United Arab Emirates	1	0.4	1	100
Subtotal for the Arab world	214	86.2	548	39.1
France	14	5.6	14	100
USA	5	2.0	5	100
Germany	3	1.2	5	60.0
Switzerland	2	0.8	2	100
Singapore	1	0.4	1	100
Pakistan	1	0.4	1	100
Netherlands	1	0.4	1	100
Austria	1	0.4	1	100
Canada	1	0.4	1	100
Denmark	1	0.4	1	100
Europe	1	0.4	1	100
Iran	1	0.4	1	100
Jamaica	1	0.4	1	100
Japan	1	0.4	1	100
Subtotal for other countries	34	13.6	36	94.4
Total	248	100	584	42.5

(141 articles) (Table 2). Another restriction is adopted by analysing only manuscripts whose first authors are Arabs (120 articles). These come from across the Arab world, except Yemen, Djibouti and Comoros.

As can be seen, the three Maghreb countries of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria have had more contributors to *Idafat* than others. They published 22, 18 and 17 articles, respectively, constituting 18%, 17% and 15% of the total number of published articles.

Table 2.   Types of published pieces.

	N	*%*
Articles	142	57.3
Book reviews	87	35.1
Conference reports	9	3.6
Editorials	9	3.6
Other	1	.4
Total	248	100

This might be attributed to two factors: the quality of local university education in the social sciences compared with national universities in the Arab East; and a more balanced use of Arab and foreign references, as will be elaborated below. It is not contended that French sociological schools in which the Maghreb scholarship is imbued fit better with the problems of these countries, and perhaps with the Arab world, than the other Western schools. This goes beyond the scope of this study as this hypothesis needs further in-depth research.

Lebanese sociologists (who are also under the French influence) ranked fourth (17 articles, representing 14%) followed by Palestinian sociologists, whether from Palestine or the diaspora (13 articles, representing 9%) (Table 3).

In terms of co-authorships, this is rare and rather specific to social science in the region; and when there is co-authorship it is local and demonstrates the lack of

Table 3.   Distribution of published articles by the nationality of the first author.

Nationality	*N*	*%*
Tunisia	22	18.3
Morocco	20	16.7
Algeria	18	15.0
Lebanon	17	14.2
Palestine	13	10.8
Iraq	10	8.3
Egypt	8	6.7
Jordan	3	2.5
Bahrain	2	1.7
Libya	2	1.7
Kuwait	1	0.8
Mauritania	1	0.8
Qatar	1	0.8
Saudi Arabia	1	0.8
Sudan	1	0.8
Total	120	100
Other nationalities	22	
Total	142	

Table 4.   Co-authoring in *Idafat*.

Number of authors	N	%
1	133	94.3
2	5	3.5
3	2	1.5
4	1	0.7
Total	141	100

transnational collaboration. This is contrary to the international trend. Some 94% of the articles (133 articles) are written by a sole author (Table 4).

Concerning the nature of published research, only 29% of the articles (37 articles) are based on field research, while similar numbers are based on readings (30%), and the rest (40%) are discussion articles (essays).

Some 84% of the articles in *Idafat* are written in Arabic compared with 16% that have been translated from French or English publications written either by foreigners or by Arab diasporic sociologists. The translation process has enabled broader exposure of the Arab reader to classic literature in sociology.[3]

Topics covered

Political sociology and the sociology of immigration (24 times each[4]) are two major themes. This is not surprising, given that the Arab world lives under a severe political crisis since the independence of these countries and many of them are ridden with poverty. This has prompted many Arabs to migrate. These countries have also constituted an attractive place for Arab and Asian labour migration. The other topics covered are social theory (20 articles) and historical sociology (18 articles), which also includes theoretical studies about Arab or foreign authors that have contributed to the establishment of Arab and Western sociology. The sociology of religion (13 articles) is also covered because of the importance of the question of religion in Arab culture and the Islamism in the region. This makes sense, as one cannot imagine a study of the social and political phenomena in the region without taking into account religion as a variable, especially in societies that have not yet completed the process of separating between religion and state. This topic becomes particularly salient after the surge of Arab uprisings.

Critical studies of the nature of knowledge production in a specific country, or across the Arab world, have occupied the minds of some authors of *Idafat* (nine articles). There are another eight articles on the theme of 'youth', six in the genre of gender studies, five on the Arab revolutions, another five relating to culture, and four on colonialism (Table 5). Concerning gender, it should be admitted that it is still under-represented in the Arab world and it is not mainstreamed in articles dealing with social phenomena. Also rare are studies that deal with social divisions in the Arab world, and particularly the social class division, where each received only one paper.

This article now turns to a very compelling issue which is the references used by researchers in their articles. Here the focus will be only on the language of references, leaving aside the network analysis of authors who cite each other throughout *Idafat*.

Table 5. Topics covered in *Idafat*.

Topic	Number
Political	24
Migration	24
Theory	20
Historical	18
Religion	13
Knowledge	9
Youth	9
Gender	6
Arab revolutions	5
Culture	5
Colonialism	4
Ethnicity	4
Islamism	4
Sexuality	4
Social movements	4
Children	3
Civil society	3
Economic	3
Forced migration	3
Literature	3
Semiotics	3
Tunisia	3
Algeria	2
Citizenship	2
Democracy	2
Education	2
Lebanon	2
Morocco	2
Media	2
Methods	2
Sociology of science	2
Trade and worker unions	2
Aesthesis	1
Tribes	1
Corruption	1
Cosmopolitism	1
Criminology	1
Demography	1
Egypt	1
Elderly people	1
Family	1
Fashion	1

(*Continued*)

Table 5.   (*Continued*).

Topic	Number
Health	1
Identity	1
Ideology	1
Iraq	1
Linguistics	1
Memory	1
Palestine	1
Palestinians	1
Profession	1
Racism	1
Rural	1
Social classes	1
Social division	1
Social psychology	1
Urban	1
Violence	1
Total	220

This is still under examination and it allows one to draw conclusions about whether *Idafat* sparks dialogue and debate among sociologists and intellectual communities.

Table 6 shows there is, in general, a modest place for the Arabic language versus English and French, as the average use of references in Arabic is 7.4 per article against 7.0 for English, 4.9 for French and 0.3 for other languages, i.e. those in Arabic represent around one-third of the references.

This was the case despite the relentless efforts made by the *Idafat* Editorial Board to request authors who had not performed a literature review of the Arabic scholarship to do so. Board and reviewers thus often suggest additional references in Arabic.

It may be useful to examine the distribution of the average use of the references in issues, according to the nationality of the first author, and in an attempt to understand the relationship between university and languages used in the literature.

One may note evidence from Tables 7 and 8 that authors in the Arab East generally refer more to Arabic references (except Lebanon) compared with the Maghreb authors. How can this trend be explained? To do so, one should go back to the question of why the Arab sociological community conducts its research and the resources upon which it relies. The following section will present some of the results of other research

Table 6.   Language of references used in the articles *Idafat*.

	References in Arabic	References in English	References in French	References in other languages
N	142	142	142	142
Mean	7.39	6.99	4.87	0.289

Table 7.   Distribution of the language of references used in *Idafat* articles by the first author's nationality (only Arabs).

Nationality		References in Arabic	References in English	References in French	References in other languages
Algeria	Mean	8.61	2.94	7.44	0.056
	N	18	18	18	18
Bahrain	Mean	0.00	14.50	5.00	0.000
	N	2	2	2	2
Egypt	Mean	8.50	7.00	1.13	0.125
	N	8	8	8	8
Iraq	Mean	13.90	1.70	0.10	0.100
	N	10	10	10	10
Jordan	Mean	17.33	0.00	0.00	0.000
	N	3	3	3	3
Kuwait	Mean	16.00	0.00	11.00	0.000
	N	1	1	1	1
Lebanon	Mean	5.06	9.76	2.59	0.000
	N	17	17	17	17
Libya	Mean	3.50	4.50	0.00	0.000
	N	2	2	2	2
Mauritania	Mean	22.00	2.00	12.00	0.000
	N	1	1	1	1
Morocco	Mean	8.30	2.70	7.05	0.200
	N	20	20	20	20
Palestine	Mean	13.08	10.31	1.08	0.000
	N	13	13	13	13
Qatar	Mean	8.00	0.00	0.00	0.000
	N	1	1	1	1
Saudi Arabia	Mean	24.00	3.00	0.00	0.000
	N	1	1	1	1
Sudan	Mean	31.00	0.00	0.00	0.000
	N	1	1	1	1
Tunisia	Mean	3.09	3.05	7.09	0.000
	N	22	22	22	22
Total	Mean	8.43	4.92	4.43	0.058
	N	120	120	120	120

performed by the author in 2011: it is an online 27-question survey about the use of references by researchers who hold a master's or a PhD degree from any university in the Arab world or who have dealt with a topic related to the Arab world, no matter from which discipline.[5]

Language of references in research

The questionnaire was filled in by 165 people, half of whom attained a master's degree; the other half were PhD holders (56.5% and 43.5%, respectively). Amongst the target pool, 66% earned their degrees from universities in the Arab world; the rest earned their degrees, which were primarily PhDs, with topics concerning the Arab world from foreign countries.

Table 8.   Percentage of language of references used in *Idafat* articles by the first author's nationality (only Arabs).

Nationality	References in Arabic	References in English	References in French	References in other languages	Percentage of Arab references
Sudan	31	0	0	0	100
Jordan	17.33	0	0	0	100
Qatar	8	0	0	0	100
Saudi Arabia	24	3	0	0	88.9
Iraq	13.9	1.7	0.1	0.1	88.0
Mauritania	22	2	12	0	61.1
Kuwait	16	0	11	0	59.3
Palestine	13.08	10.31	1.08	0	53.5
Egypt	8.5	7	1.13	0.125	50.7
Morocco	8.3	2.7	7.05	0.2	45.5
Algeria	8.61	2.94	7.44	0.056	45.2
Libya	3.5	4.5	0	0	43.8
Lebanon	5.06	9.76	2.59	0	29.1
Tunisia	3.09	3.05	7.09	0	23.4
Bahrain	0	14.5	5	0	0.0
Total mean	8.43	4.92	4.43	0.058	47.3
Total N	120	120	120	120	25

The survey was placed online for access and also sent to a sample of representatives in all Arab countries that covered private and public universities in the region. The responses and reactions were different across universities. They resulted in a 47% response rate from Arab public universities, 17% from private, not-for-profit universities, 2% from private, for-profit universities, and the remaining 44% from foreign universities. The research covered mostly the Arab East (53.4%) and less equally (12.3%) the Arab francophone countries like Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania; while the European and American universities constituted 23.3% and 10.4%, respectively. Surveys did not limit the target group to recent graduates, hoping to compare the use of references between those who graduated in the 1980s and 1990s with those who graduated at the beginning of the 21st century – 4.9%, 9.8% and 85.3%, respectively.[6] The research initially aimed to address all disciplines, but 85.7% of those researchers in humanities and social sciences replied in comparison with 5.0%, 3.7% and 5.6% for business and administration, natural sciences, and applied sciences, respectively.

The characteristic of the sample thus poses a concern as to what extent it represents researchers in the Arab world and this will be taken into account during the analysis.

Among those interested in the use of sources in English, JSTOR was the main database for reference, followed by Google Scholar, while the recent francophone graduates used Cairn and revues.org. These databases are used to search foreign academic journals. As for those interested in the use of sources in Arabic only, they mentioned United Nations reports and Google as points of reference, which are actually not academic databases. To the question about the Arab journals that the researcher has used,

Table 9.   Language of references used by type of degree.

Master's/PhD		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
Master's	Mean	29.3	50.52	1.24	1.91
	N	87	87	87	7
PhD	Mean	34.13	44.35	19.83	1.69
	N	68	68	68	68
Total	Mean	31.44	47.81	18.94	1.81
	N	155	155	155	155

some mentioned types of a specific academic nature (e.g. *Journal of the Social Sciences*; *Idafat, The Arab Journal of Sociology*, etc.) or journals addressed for general use (*al-mustakbal al-'arabi*) or newspapers (*al-safir, al-nahar*, etc.).

According to the responses, a total of 31% of master's and PhD holders used references in Arabic – 29% and 34%, respectively. That is significantly lower than the total use of references in English, 47.8%, but greater than the total use of references in French, 18.9%, or other languages, 2.8% (Table 9 shows the detailed results depending on the type of degree).

The respondents from the East and West of the Arab world use the same number of references in Arabic, which is about 40%. That is a significantly greater percentage than graduates from foreign universities: 11% in Europe and 17% in North America. The use of references in English is significantly apparent and higher in the Arab East, the United States and Europe, namely 50%, 73% and 53%, respectively, in comparison with 46% of references in French used in the Arab East (Table 10).

It is worth noting that among the respondents only graduates from the social sciences use references in Arabic to a reasonable extent, 34%, while the result decreases significantly for those who graduated from business administration, 18%, and from political sciences, 17%, and diminishes among graduates of applied sciences, such as engineering, medicine and nutrition. These three fields of sciences, however, reveal a reversed direction of results in the use of references in English: 60%, 83% and 76%, respectively (Table 11).

Table 10.   Use of references by geographical region.

Region		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
Arab East	Mean	39.95	50.35	8.75	0.95
	N	84	84	84	84
North Africa	Mean	39.84	7.63	45.63	6.89
	N	19	19	19	19
Europe	Mean	11.13	53.92	33.07	1.89
	N	36	36	36	36
North America	Mean	17.29	73.35	8.41	0.94
	N	17	17	17	17
Other countries	Mean	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
	N	1	1	1	1
Total	Mean	30.62	48.80	18.70	1.88
	N	157	157	157	157

Table 11.   Language of references used by field of sciences.

Field		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
Social Science and Humanities	Mean	34.23	44.43	19.49	1.86
	N	135	135	135	135
Business	Mean	18.38	63.00	16.25	2.37
	N	8	8	8	8
Basic Sciences	Mean	16.67	83.33	0.00	0.00
	N	6	6	6	6
Applied Sciences	Mean	0.00	75.63	21.88	2.50
	N	8	8	8	8
Total	Mean	31.00	48.45	18.70	1.85
	N	157	157	157	157

The research reveals that the use of references in Arabic has a connection to the language of instruction in universities. The percentage of references in Arabic decreased from 49% for graduates of national universities to 17% for graduates of private not-for-profit universities which use English or French as the language of instruction. The same applies for private, for-profit and foreign universities. The direction of the results is reversed with regards to the use of sources in English for graduates of these universities: 32%, 66%, 65% and 62%, respectively (Table 12).

The amount of references used in Arabic increases when the supervisor encourages his or her students to use them: 43% versus 14%. The weak use of references in Arabic cannot be linked back to one's proficiency in the language – only 6% are beginners at the language and only 3% cannot read it. The use of foreign references decreases when the language of instruction in high school or at the undergraduate and graduate levels of university is Arabic. The same direction could be found when concerning the relationship between the use of references and English as the language of instruction. The percentage, however, is not affected significantly when the language of instruction is both Arabic and English (Tables 13–15).

Although only 5% reported that they were unfamiliar with the English language, it is assumed that the percentage is much higher. These findings were followed up by investigating the references the respondents claimed they used in their master's and

Table 12.   Language of references used by type of university.

		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
National	Mean	48.82	31.89	16.69	2.59
	N	74	74	74	74
Private not for profit	Mean	17.11	66.15	16.74	0.00
	N	27	27	27	27
Private for profit	Mean	35.33	64.67	0.00	0.00
	N	3	3	3	3
University in a foreign country	Mean	12.99	61.98	23.12	1.91
	N	54	54	54	54
Total	Mean	30.90	48.65	18.58	1.87
	N	158	158	158	158

Table 13. Language of references used by language of instruction at the graduate level.

Graduate studies: language of teaching		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
Arabic	Mean	54.24	33.29	10.00	2.47
	N	38	38	38	38
Foreign language	Mean	8.99	69.27	20.26	1.48
	N	63	63	63	63
Both	Mean	40.88	35.45	23.24	0.43
	N	42	42	42	42
Total	Mean	30.38	49.78	18.41	1.43
	N	143	143	143	143

Table 14. Language of references used by language of instruction at the undergraduate level.

Undergraduate studies: language of teaching		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
Arabic	Mean	52.49	31.34	14.66	1.51
	N	47	47	47	47
Foreign language	Mean	9.51	71.00	17.45	2.04
	N	46	46	46	46
Both	Mean	27.24	47.87	24.53	0.36
	N	45	45	45	45
Total	Mean	29.93	49.95	18.81	1.31
	N	138	138	138	138

Table 15. Language of references used by language of instruction in high school.

High school: language of teaching		Arabic	English	French	Other languages
Arabic	Mean	47.24	39.78	11.30	1.69
	N	54	54	54	54
Foreign language	Mean	10.61	64.59	22.83	1.96
	N	27	27	27	27
Both	Mean	23.66	49.83	24.11	2.40
	N	53	53	53	53
Total	Mean	30.53	48.75	18.69	2.02
	N	134	134	134	134

PhD theses and it was noticed that many authors did not have an understanding of the foreign sources used.

Using references in Arabic and foreign languages: difficulty versus choice?

The respondents' reasons for not using a lot of references in Arabic were several and attributed to the difficulty of their use. The first complaint expressed by almost half of the respondents was that references in Arabic were not available and they do not find them easily at the university's library or the public library. A graduate from the Lebanese University expressed further:

> I looked in the following Arab Universities – University of Cairo, University of Jordan, most libraries of universities in Lebanon and Asad library [Damascus] for sources and literature that could help me in my research and I found a minimal number.

In the same framework, another researcher from Egypt who graduated in 2004 before the Internet became widespread stated the following:

> It was difficult to get sources in English that had direct relation to my main topic, if I was going to rely solely on the library of Ein Shams University [Cairo] or the public libraries like that of Alexandria. But, I had a subscription to the American University in Cairo's library, and if it wasn't for that, I really would not have been able to find the appropriate references.

The problem here becomes much more acute for those who studied in foreign countries where their libraries rarely procure references in Arabic.

The second reason, as reported by 43% of the respondents, was that the university library or public library do not subscribe to databases and academic journals in Arabic. As for those who graduated before the year 2000, they claim to be unaware of the availability databases. Many recent graduates complained about the unavailability of that service in their university libraries. A graduate in sociology from the University of Baghdad explains:

> I researched for the sources painfully inside and outside the university. Till this day, the university library does not have serious scientific international journals. Subscription to international journals has been restricted in Baghdad University since 1989. Many instructors are not concerned whether students get references or not. The university libraries are not qualified to offer books or journals for graduate students.

Moreover, respondents also reported that the references in Arabic are not related to the topics at hand and 40% of them did not find any references in Arabic when they tried searching web engines like Google or Yahoo. Finally, 35% of the respondents claimed that they do not resort to sources in Arabic because they do not find them beneficial. Accordingly, one of the respondents explained:

> most of the time, the sources in Arabic are either weak or poorly translated from rich sources or they don't provide in-depth and varying information as sources in foreign languages. […] Sociological and ethnographic writings and studies concerning migration in the Southern Maghreb are very limited.

A study being prepared by the author revealed the weakness in usage of references in Arabic in migration studies that concern the Arab world, to the extent that only 37% and 11% of the Arab references are in Arab journals and foreign journals, respectively. A graduate from Canada further attributes this to the fact that 'there is a reputation that what is written in Arabic is not refereed articles'. More than five researchers also mentioned the problem of translation, claiming that translation to Arabic is so poorly done that the texts are very difficult to read and there is an absence of standardization of the scientific concepts.[7] In my opinion this is a severe problem: the absence of legitimization of new concepts generates translated work that is not only difficult to read, but also has plenty of concepts left in a foreign language without translation. There is a low percentage (7%) of respondents who want to buy books or journals that they cannot find in public libraries, but cannot not due to their high cost. This could be attributed to the scarce sources of scholarship funds for graduate studies in the Arab world (Table 16). Some

Table 16.   Reasons for the difficulty of using sources in Arabic.

	Responses		Per cent of cases
	N	%	
Arabic references were irrelevant to my topic	43	17.9	41.7
I had difficulty finding them in the public/university library	51	21.3	49.5
I could not afford to buy Arab books	7	2.9	6.8
There were no databases from which I could get articles	44	18.3	42.7
I could not find references in Arabic when I used search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)	41	17.1	39.8
I did not find the Arab scholarship particularly interesting	36	15.0	35.0
My reading proficiency in Arabic is not adequate	18	7.5	17.5
Total	240	100	233.0

Table 17.   Reasons for the difficulty of using sources in foreign languages.

	Responses		Per cent of cases
	N	%	
Foreign references were irrelevant to my topic	17	14.8	30.4
I had difficulty finding them in the public/university library	31	27.0	55.4
I could not afford to buy foreign books	11	9.6	19.6
Public/university libraries do not have subscriptions for article databases	21	18.3	37.5
I did not find the foreign scholarship particularly interesting	6	5.2	10.7
My reading proficiency in foreign languages is not adequate	25	21.7	44.6
Other	4	3.5	7.1
Total	115	100	205.4

of the details the respondents presented revealed that the sources in foreign languages are primarily used for establishing the theoretical framework of the research.

Respondents also had several reasons for not using sources in foreign languages. A total of 55% of them claimed that they do not easily find sources in foreign languages in university or public libraries. Secondly, 45% of the respondents' abilities in foreign languages are weak and 37% of them stated that the university or public library did not have membership to databases that hold scientific journals (Table 17).

As for those who buy their sources in foreign languages, they have difficulty finding those sources. In the same connection, one of the respondents further explains:

> the most difficult issue I encountered in completing my research was the scarce availability of sources and their lack of relevance to my topic. Consequently, I was forced to frequently visit the national library of Algeria, the international book fair and request references from my friends that live abroad. Pierre Bourdieu's book *Cequeparlerveut dire* for instance I got hold of after having paid a Moroccan publisher in the book fair on the spot and he sent it to me later on. But these tricks for procuring academic references take time and affect one's thesis and stall the date of its completion.

Thus, this study clearly shows that graduate students face a fundamental structural problem. An important factor that constitutes the problem is related to the policy of language of instruction that universities in the Arab world adopt. In an interview conducted with the Chairman of Graduate Studies in the Education Department of one of the Gulf's national universities, he claimed that the quick shift from Arabic to English has had negative effects on master's-level students. First, many female trainees who want to improve their methods of teaching are not allowed entry onto the programme because of their weak proficiency in English. As such, the number of enrolled students in the programme, which was 35 in 2006, decreased to six students in 2010 after the programme's language of instruction changed. At another level, the teachers noticed that the students enrolled in the programme do not assimilate or absorb the content of their subject. The teachers made their claims based on observations that the students understood the theories being presented but could not use them in their research projects.

Throughout one of the consultation projects for evaluating sociology programmes that were directed in one of the universities in the Gulf (2008–2009), several problems in the curriculum were noticed. One of these was that the books being used were old and monotonous. It was suggested that a specialized committee be formed in each major field to review their curriculum and substitute their texts with current Arabic literature and translate foreign sources into Arabic where the gap needs to be filled. It was also suggested that the university assesses the enrolled students' proficiency in English as well as how well they can read and process sources in English when needed and translate some of the texts into Arabic. The university could offer a course or two that teach foreign texts in their original language. Unfortunately, none of these suggestions has been adopted and some of the departments in social sciences have been transformed into English. Some of the Gulf states are experiencing a loss of Arab identity and so they are deliberately focusing on the local folkloric culture, pushed by a mentality of minority; or they are driven by a fascination with globalization. In the latter case, they opt for an isomorphism to foreign institutions and the usage English.

This study clearly reveals that students who learned English through a programme that teaches in both English and Arabic in high school or university can use the academic references in a more balanced manner than those who learned only in one language, be it Arabic or English. As such, Arabic does not lose its value and the students benefit from foreign references that are characterized for their richness in theories, open to global debates.

Thus, it is not an either/or situation and the required solution is not a matter of studying either only in Arabic at the graduate level or only in English. The focus should be on how to rely on both languages in a transitional phase, and giving the Arabic language a priority in all departments and programmes, not just in social sciences. The author stresses this phase of transition because if the process of translation of books and journals into Arabic is accelerated and made available in public and university libraries and information centres, perhaps there will be no need to teach in any language besides Arabic, while maintaining the necessity for Arab students to learn at least one foreign language.

Although language is a highly symbolic marker of identity, multilingual scholars have multilayered identities which open the door to more expansive research agendas and a commitment not only to local and regional contexts, but also to international ones. The language of instruction cannot be chosen exclusively on the basis of political–cultural factors, which are related to identity formation on gaining political independence. There is also a political–economic component which involves recognizing problems related to the dearth of resources that limits the production of required

textbooks, as well as problems determined by the marketing strategies of international publishers from core universities (Sultana 1999, 31).

Different languages, therefore, call for different markets, which is what makes the English language extremely important as a tool for instruction. In the Arab states, however, Arabic has been substituted in recently established private universities. There is no plausible reason for the existence of a curriculum that is completely void of sources written in Arabic. A study of 30 syllabi of social science courses taught in Saint Josef University, the Lebanese American University and the American University of Beirut shows that it is extremely rare (only two references) to find Arabic references, even as secondary reading.

In guise of conclusion: the crisis of refereed journals

Writing is part of the research process. Publishing in journals becomes part of the basic infrastructure to encourage research. In this article and as an Editor of *Idafat*, I abstained from giving any judgment about this journal and whether it succeeds in its mission of fostering the scientific community and being one of the vehicles sparking debate and dialogue within it: readers are left to do this for themselves. *Idafat* continues to have a good inflow of submissions and the tendency is that this inflow will grow.

It is in all the sciences that the Arab world needs more journals to publish scientific results (Hanafi, 2011; Hanafi and Arvanitis 2013). The objective should be to create a dynamic of exchange between members of the scientific community locally and to mobilize allies from peers, the public and decision-makers. It should be noted that the main dynamic behind the publication of journals is the existence of a lively scientific community. Large publishing companies (Elsevier, Kluwer) have taken strong commercial positions, making the scientific community an instrument of commercial objectives. With the advent of Open Science, strong protests have emerged from working scientists who have used the force of 'social digital networks' to mobilize the community, giving way to a renewal of peer partnerships. The Arab world could profit intellectually from this movement.

In the meantime, Arab readers demand publication in Arabic not only for applied research, but also for theory and methodology. This would break from the famous division of labour between peripheral researchers dealing only with the first domain while Western scholars theorize in the social science (for the problem of Chinese sociological publication, see, for instance, Wu 2009; and Qi 2012). To break with this division, two conditions are needed: first, a group of scientists are demanding it as this requires a lot of work in peer reviewing; and second, to create such knowledge for the sake of it and not for the sake of faculty promotion. The main difficulty here is that academic institutions for reasons that are purely institutional have a tendency to promote departmental journals. These are strongly 'endogamic' journals, publishing articles only from the personnel who belong to the university. In very large universities that might make sense, while it is an absolute waste of time in smaller ones. Journals are better defended when they belong to a specific disciplinary group, focused on some very precise topics or on broader disciplinary areas, if the persons who want to defend the journal feel such a need. Moreover, universities and science councils should defend the popularization of science. A massive effort should be given to create a wider audience for science by creating lively journals, websites, films, documentaries and other dissemination tools for scientific activities. Citizens should not be kept in ignorance of what happens in their own countries in their laboratories, schools and universities.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. See http://www.caus.org.lb/Home/electronic_magazine_list3.php?CatID=4/. *Idafat* has benefited from funding of the Arab Cultural Fund (London).
2. To them one should add *Umran*, a newly established journal of social science published by The Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, based in Doha.
3. The Heinrich Boll Foundation – Middle East Office has funded the translation of some articles in recent years.
4. Each topic can cover more than purely one topic.
5. Questions revolved around: references that have been used in master's/PhD theses by language; the availability and accessibility of references; and collaboration with foreign institution during the preparation of master's/PhD theses. Some universities in the Arab world were selected. A letter was sent to chairpersons of some faculties and departments there, as well as to some informants that may disseminate the call to fill in this survey.
6. Concerning the qualitative analysis of references, see Badawi (2009) on the case of PhD thesis in sociology in Egyptian universities. Badawi notices that most of the references are old and there is a problem in hypotheses due to the absence of the accumulation of the theoretical production. In addition, the paradigms used are traditional, lack criticism and creativity, and not are always relevant to Egyptian society.
7. A recent effort worthy of mention and to be saluted comes from King Abdel Aziz City for Sciences and Technology which established the 'Saudi Bank of Concepts' (Basem) project which is the greatest such resource in the Arab world. It includes 750, 000 concepts in Arabic, English, French and German, but is not yet fully operational.

References

Albrow, M. 1991. "Internationalism as a Publication Project: Experience in Editing an International Sociological Journal." *Current Sociology*, 39 (1): 101–118.

Badawi, Ahmad Musa. 2009. *The Social Dimensions of Production and Acquisition of Knowledge: The Case of the PhD Thesis in Sociology in Egyptian Universities*. Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS).

Hanafi, Sari. 2011. "University Systems in the Arab East: Publish Globally and Perish Locally vs. Publish Locally and Perish Globally." *Current Sociology*, 59 (3): 291–309.

Hanafi, Sari and Rigas Arvanitis. 2013. *The Broken Cycle Between Research, University and Society in ESCWA Countries: Proposals for Change*. Beirut: ESCWA.

Kabbanji, Jacques. 2010. *Rechercher au Liban: Communauté scientifiques, chercheurs et innovation (Etat des lieux en sciences sociales.* Beyrouth: Publication du centre de recherches, Institut des sciences sociales, Université Libanaise.

Martín, Eloísa. 2012a. "Making Sociology Current Through International Publication: A Collective Task." *Current Sociology*, 60 (6): 832–837.

Martín, Eloísa. 2012b. "Report on *Current Sociology*." Paper presented at the ISA Annual Meeting, 2012.

Qi, Xiaoying. 2012. "A Case Study of Globalized Knowledge Flows: Guanxi in Social Science and Management Theory." *International Sociology*, 27: 707.

Sultana, Roland. 1999. "The Euro-Mediterranean Region and its Universities: An Overview of Trends, Challenges and Prospects." *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, 4 (2): 7–49.

Wu, X. 2009. "Between Public and Professional: Chinese Sociology and the Construction of a Harmonious Society." *ASA Footnotes*, 37 (5). http://www.asanet.org/footnotes/mayjun09/intl_0509.html/.