



The marginalization of the Arab language in social science: Structural constraints and dependency by choice

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Abstract

This article aims at questioning the relationship between Arab social research and language by arguing that many factors including the political economy of publication, globalization, internationalization and commodification of higher education have marginalized peripheral languages such as Arabic. The authors demonstrate, on the one hand, that this marginalization is not necessarily structurally inevitable but indicates dependency by choice, and, on the other hand, how globalization has reinforced the English language hegemony. This article uses the results of a questionnaire survey about the use of references in PhD and Master's theses. The survey, which was answered by 165 persons, targeted those who hold a Master's or PhD degree from any university in the Arab world or who have dealt with a topic related to the Arab world, no matter in which discipline.

Keywords

Arab social science, citation index, English as hegemonic language, internationalization of research, research practice, scientific publication

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Introduction

Publication is the main communication tool of scientific activity; it entails the diffusion of knowledge, training and the peer assessment of scholars. Publications have also been widely studied from a strategic evaluative perspective to identify and measure the productivity of laboratories, disciplines and countries (Arvanitis and Gaillard, 1992; Glänzel, 1996; Waast, 1996). They are currently used from a management and evaluative perspective in order to measure individual productivity and, as such, have become a management tool of funding agencies and policy institutions (Campbell et al., 2010). Additionally, the extensive commercial activity surrounding publishing scientific journals and producing large bibliographic databases further enhances non-scientific uses of scientific productions. The publication system in the social sciences, as in all sciences, is thus a global power structure (Alatas, 2003; Keim, 2008, 2011), which is very unequally distributed worldwide (Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson, 2010) and linguistically (Ammon, 2010).

By reconsidering publications in social sciences in Arabic, this study attempts to bring the publication practice to the forefront not merely as a diffusion instrument of research results but as an activity shaping the very core of research practice, which determines the research topic choices, the type of analysis and its writing (Pontille, 2003, 2004). We would like to place these issues in the global context of the production in the social sciences in the Arab world (Arvanitis et al., 2010; Hanafi, 2010, 2011; Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2014; Waast et al., 2010). Thus the objective of this article is to question the relationship between social research and language by arguing that many factors including the political economy of publication, globalization and commodification of higher education have marginalized the peripheral languages such as Arabic. This marginalization, we argue, is not necessarily inevitable but indicates a 'dependency by choice'.

Our reflections are based on a variety of data and fieldwork we have performed, as well as the personal, although different, experience of both authors on the structure of scientific research in Lebanon, and organizations performing research in the Arab world (Arvanitis, 2007; Arvanitis and M'henni, 2010; Hanafi, 2011; Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2014). We used a specific survey by questionnaire that serves the purpose of organizing the issues at stake. The questionnaire survey concerned the use of references in PhD and Master's theses and was answered by 165 persons who hold a Master's or PhD degree from a university in the Arab world regardless of discipline. This sample cannot be considered in any way representative of the Arab social sciences community, but it points to structural aspects concerning the use of Arabic vs foreign language sources in doing actual research.

We have used a variety of additional material (bibliometric analysis, interviews of academics in Lebanon and Jordan) in drawing out the hypothesis of this work, mostly from ongoing research that aims at understanding the research practices in all sciences in Arab countries, focusing on the universities, organization and promotion of research, as well as international scientific collaborations. The article does not follow the typical structure of an empirical work; rather the empirical material serves to support a mainly theoretical argument.

From the internationalization to the globalization of the social sciences and universities

In the process of internationalization of research (Larédo et al., 2009), language has been a central issue. The expansion of worldwide research projects and more frequent international collaboration has favoured English as the main collaborative language of research (Frenken et al., 2010; Wagner, 2008). At the same time, the publication system has been very much based on 'international' academic journals, that is journals published mainly in English, that became 'central' tools in the communication strategy (Meadows, 1974). The very notion of a scientific community is based on the structure of the publications; the notion of 'gatekeepers' and 'invisible college' (Crane, 1972) emerged from the examination of the work of peers acting as patrons or editors. Not all other languages became secondary in terms of frequency in the academic publications but any other language than English was considered 'provincialism' by the standards of the communication gurus of the day, who knew that the journals formed a very unequal system. Interestingly, this situation was exploited both politically and commercially (Garfield, 1996), leading to a worldwide reproduction of this inequality with the excuse of enhancing circulation and efficiency in science (see the arguments of this debate in Arvanitis and Gaillard, 1992).

The language issue is of particular importance for the social sciences (Ortiz, 2008), although it affects all scientific research. In the earlier stages after the Second World War, the social sciences were less affected, publishing more often 'locally' (in their own country), in the form of books, whereas other disciplines communicated mainly through academic journal articles. After this internationalization phase, scientific research entered a globalization process, where funding opportunities became available internationally on a larger scale than before. At the same time, profound changes affected the demography of scientific disciplines in the 1980s both on the American continent as well as in Europe (Pontille, 2004); as a result, scientists needed to be visible at a global level. Globalization raises issues immediately across the globe, and researchers feel the need to communicate with a variety of colleagues in faraway countries. This global view of research, contrary to the former trend of internationalization, has been directly affecting the social sciences, more than social scientists are willing to accept, and globalization became both an object of research and a way of working (Sassen, 2007). We can tentatively link this change to the fact that funding and resources, even in our own institutions, have become intensely dependent upon publication. The credibility cycle that Latour and Woolgar (1979) deciphered long ago (in the biological sciences) is in full swing today (in the social sciences), and influences the social sciences most profoundly, with the increase of project funding that is delivered worldwide. This worldwide research system is not, strictly speaking, 'internationalized'; rather it becomes an activity that is *ex ante* globalized. Questions and research issues have to be understandable in every part of the world. Large funding programmes and networks have expanded throughout the globe; and the wider the networks the more probable it is to find researchers from non-hegemonic countries. To be heard, this web of projects is speaking a unified language, English, that leaves little room for 'local' languages.

In spite of this globalization process, peripheries are still non-hegemonic, and their scientific production still struggles against marginalization. According to Keim (2008)

90% of the articles contained in the Social Science Citation Index originated from 10% of the world's countries. Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson (2010) show that, in the same database (WoS), in the 1998–2007 period, 94% of the social sciences were published in English. Ammon (2010), looking at a more balanced database (the International Bibliography for the Social Sciences [IBSS]), found that English represented 76% in 2005. The growth of other languages does not comprise Arabic. Worse, Arabic is not even among the 10 most frequent worldwide languages in the social sciences, which include among others Chinese, Dutch, Japanese and Polish in the Ulrich database. Chinese and Polish are absent from WoS in social sciences.

The language domination of English might be the result of the location of research, since most articles originate in Europe and North America, the latter being 'the largest producer of articles in the social sciences, with more than half of the total number of articles, and ... the only region publishing an average of more than 10,000 articles per year' (Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson, 2010: 151). Its share diminishes over time to the benefit of Europe, the second most important producer in social sciences. More disturbing is the fact that citations of articles written in Africa, Latin America and Oceania to other articles in the same region were halved in the last decade. The decline is even stronger in Asia. Europe and North America have experienced a small decline in references to articles coming from the same region, 'indicating better recognition of foreign contributions' (Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson, 2010: 153).

These proportions of language distribution depend a lot on the sources of data/databases used, but English remains a dominant language in all the files reviewed. For example, a very detailed analysis done by Keim (2010) shows that in *Sociological Abstracts* (1995–1998), 45% of the production (26,136 references) come from the US, 13% from the UK, followed by Germany (4.6%), Australia (3.9%), France (3.6%) and the Netherlands (2.9%). All other countries have fewer than 1% and 95 countries (out of 166 'peripheral' countries) have no reference at all. The African continent represents 1.3% – less than Spain – Asia 3% and Latin America 4.1%. The Arab world is practically absent from this database. Ten years later (2005–2008), the US represent 43.5% (23,475 references) and the UK 14% (7,573 references). Africa represents 2.5%, Asia 5.5% and Latin America 3.6%. English has been the dominant language since 1965 when *Sociological Abstracts* began, from 81.7% (1965–1970) to 85.5% (1995–1998); this database is probably the most balanced database in social sciences, along with IBSS reviewed by Ammon (2010).

To study this system, as a manifestation of globalization, we need to focus on the places of production and the way research is diffused and organized. As far as Arab countries are concerned, research is very much concentrated in universities (Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2014). Few countries have research centres, and very little research is done by private enterprises. Thus, research in Arab countries depends strongly on the university context where most are a laboratory of new globalized developments concerning the higher education system in which numerous new, mostly private, universities appear. In this setting the pressures of internationalization, privatization and globalization are very strong (Romani, 2012). In the Arab world, language issues are also very sensitive and political (Hitti, 2011; Suleiman, 2003). Particularly in the Middle East and Gulf countries, some universities teach in different languages, including English. Moreover, the

emergence of private universities, favouring English as a teaching language, has accelerated all issues related to recognition and access to funds and clients (students). These changes create a rift between the promotion systems that stress publication in ‘international’ refereed journals and community engagement. The evaluation of research production and academic endeavour favours publication in ‘high impact journals’, mostly in English (Hanafi et al., 2013). Thus the promotion system forces, to a certain extent, the marginalization of the Arabic language.

It is important to underline the coexistence of new and old universities in the Arab world. The older universities in the Middle East have been the site of production for different types of elites, and are major sites of struggle over the production of culture as well as social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1984; Ringer, 1991; Sabour, 1988). These are elite universities, old and well known, and the foreign language (English or French) is part of the identity of that elite. This is the case of the foreign-teaching universities, like the American University of Beirut (AUB) and Université Saint-Joseph (USJ) in Lebanon. In the Maghreb countries, French has long dominated the social sciences, well after the implementation of the ‘Arabization’ laws that imposed Arabic as the main teaching language. It also appeared that the new universities in the Maghreb responded to the demographic pressure, favouring Arabic as the main language, whereas the older universities and higher education schools (like, for example, the schools of Mines and the Institut Agronomique Hassan-II in Rabat, or Ecole Polytechnique in Algiers) which have stronger research activities, continued to use French both as teaching and scientific production language. This explains the coexistence of linguistically segmented social sciences, and still a strong pre-eminence of French in the social sciences. A series of factors can be mentioned that explain the lack of the use of Arabic references: globalization, the demise of the university as a public service (Hanafi, 2011), the commodification of higher education that translated into the multiplication of numerous small private universities (Kabbanji, 2012) and the compartmentalization of scholarly activities, all strongly affect the language distribution in the social sciences. Nonetheless, we argue that the language of instruction plays a crucial role.

Language of instruction and language of research

Following Ortiz (2008), we can identify two different critical questions under the language issue: the first one relates to how language provides for a ‘universal’ knowledge. Ortiz correctly points out that universality is a philosophical concept, not a sociological reality. However, globalization has affected the circulation of ideas and concepts in more intense ways than we are ready to accept. Arab countries, for a variety of reasons, have been completely subjected to this pressure. The second question relates to the capacity to think in one’s own words. Social sciences are particularly sensitive to the language in which the production circulates and the Arabic language is used very differently. Among Arab scholars, who have received in large proportions instruction in English, the issue is even more crucial: is the reality of their own societies understandable in a ‘foreign’ language? Can we split the use of language between two scientific ‘functions’, one that would relate to the dissemination of ideas and publication, the other that would relate to thinking about the societal issues in the ‘native’ language? Is it possible to split this

analytic capability which implies reading/writing in one language and speaking in another. Ortiz (2008), for example, rightfully reminds us that he has no more legitimacy, as a Brazilian sociologist, than a foreigner writing in English about Brazil. But he also clearly implies that language does force you to think differently.

In the Arab world a strange configuration is taking place: social sciences are taught in Arabic, in public (usually large) universities, while some exclusive universities use English or – more rarely – French. The phenomenon also concerns some newly created universities in the Gulf countries where well-known American or European universities have established branches.

Language of instruction is the product of both policy and history. In general, governments have not been consistent in their policy concerning language in the Arab countries, with some exceptions like Syria that required Arabic as the teaching language in all higher education institutions. History explains the persistence of French in Maghreb universities. The language of university teaching in Algeria has been, officially, Arabic since 1971 but was expanded to practically all disciplines in the social sciences only after 1984. In practice this has been a progressive move depending on the books available rather than policy (Guedjali, 2011). French is usually still frequently used in science, technology and medicine. The same is true for Tunisia and Morocco. In Jordan, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research acknowledged in 2003 the need to encourage the Arabization of science, and encourages scientific research in Arabic, but did not mention the language of instruction. The same happened recently in Saudi Arabia (Harbi, 2008).

When two competing languages are used in the same country, language has been used as a selection tool in the higher education system. This is the case in Lebanon and was the case for Algeria. Today, it is students of the lower classes in Algeria who are usually being integrated into the social sciences, which are more ‘Arabicized’ than medicine, engineering or natural and exact sciences. Interview data in economics, sociology and law (Benguerna, 2011) show the diverse effects of the Arabization policy. In practice, in many universities lecturers and students are switching between Arabic and English (or French), an ‘innovative accommodation’ as it has been called by Zughoul (2000). In North Africa language switching is not only frequent, but almost instinctive (Sultana, 1999: 32). In the Maghreb, language also affects the labour market, since companies prefer to hire young graduates speaking both French and Arabic rather than exclusively Arabic. It is also a sign of social recognition and identity.

In research, the relation between language and research topics is little known. To our knowledge, there exists only one such study, published in the World Social Science Report (Waast et al., 2010). It shows that the social science production in Maghreb countries emphasizes different research topics according to the language of publication. Topics from history, literary theory or political sciences are more frequently published in Arabic while other disciplines such as psychology, economics or sociology are more commonly published in French/English/Spanish.

The language issue does not only relate to topic choice, but also to the access to knowledge and exposure of other researchers both locally and globally, in the dissemination and discussion of research ideas. What some scholars have been denouncing for many years in the Arab world is that research production in Arabic has been slowly

Table 1. Arab researchers publishing language (MIRA survey).

	English	French	Arabic	Total respondents
Basic sciences	641	345	49	646
% of respondents in basic sciences	99.2%	53.4%	7.6%	100.0%
Applied sciences	145	77	15	150
% of respondents in applied sciences	96.7%	51.3%	10.0%	100.0%
Medical sciences	335	194	52	339
% of respondents in medical sciences	98.8%	57.2%	15.3%	100.0%
Social science and humanities	26	18	12	30
% of respondents in SSH	86.7%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total	1147	634	128	1165
% of respondents in all fields	98.5%	54.4%	11.0%	100.0%

Source: MIRA survey.¹ Calculations by the authors.

degrading. Ahmad Musa Badawi (2009) notes that the references used in the PhD thesis in sociology in Egyptian universities are old ones, using old theoretical paradigms, mostly lacking a critical stance and creativity; moreover, he considers that the topics are not always relevant to Egyptian society. Jad Melki (2009) notes that in most Lebanese universities, literature reviews and essays in media studies are confused with research. Kabbanji (2010) notes that research for a large majority of authors writing in the social sciences relates to individual essays, books and sometimes articles, mostly based on deskwork and probably related to promotion. Hanafi (2010) has denounced the fact that many research pieces are local, empirical and remain in the form of reports rarely diffused because they are addressed to institutional funders and not for academic purposes. At the same time, Arab scholars of great reputation are numerous in Europe and the United States, and in certain cases, the number of nationals of an Arab country among scientists abroad can be larger than the number of researchers in their home country (Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2014).

In research, the use of English is a generalized practice, even in the Arab world. Table 1 shows the use of English, French and Arabic in a large survey done within the framework of a European project called MIRA (www.miraproject.eu) answered by 4340 researchers from 38 countries (27 in Europe and 11 Mediterranean country partners of the EU), that have co-authored articles or have collaborated in joint projects (Gaillard et al., 2013). Researchers in the social sciences accounted for a small part of the sample since the sample was basically conceived through the Web of Science database.

It is apparent that in Arabic-speaking countries (1165 answering the language question of the questionnaire), social scientists use Arabic in higher proportions than in basic sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, etc.). Due to the limitations of the sample, it is difficult to assess whether the much higher proportion of Arabic production in the social sciences as compared to the applied (engineering) and medical sciences (biomedicine and clinical sciences) is statistically significant. But this survey also shows that *all* researchers having co-published with foreign colleagues in extremely high proportions in English, whatever the country of origin, nationality, country of residence, age, or

professional status. Their mother tongue, whether European, Arabic or other, is used in moderate proportions, and most often, as a secondary language to report scientific results. Science communicates in written English, even though it can be practised in the local language. Applied sciences communicate more (in a proportion of one out of 10) in the local language.

A survey on language use in Arabic research

The survey we performed was posted online between January and May 2012 and hard copies were sent to informants in all Arab countries to private and public universities in the region. Emails were sent once to students and professors in the social sciences that were identified through previous contacts with us (Hanafi is an editor of an Arab journal) and were asked to follow the link of the online survey. The questionnaire was filled out by 165 people; 87 had obtained a Master's degree (56%) and 68 were PhD holders (43%). Amongst the target pool, 66% earned their degrees from universities in the Arab world, and the rest earned their degree, primarily PhDs, from foreign countries with topics concerning the Arab world. We received responses mainly from Arab public universities (47% responses), 17% from private not-for-profit universities, 2% from private for-profit universities, and the remaining 44% from foreign universities. This reflects probably rather fairly the actual distribution of young social scientists doing research. Most of them are located in large public or some older and larger private not-for-profit universities or are doing their studies in a foreign country.

We had more answers from the Arab East (53.4%) and fewer (12.3%) from the Western Arab francophone countries like Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, while European and American universities constituted 23.3% and 10.4% of the answers respectively. Our bias against French-speaking Maghreb countries is a sign in itself: the survey was posted in Arabic and English and we know that many social scientists in the Maghreb countries do not feel comfortable in either of these two languages.

The questionnaire reached recent graduates (85.3% of our responses) and also some persons who graduated in the 1980s (4.9%) and the 1990s (9.8%). We wanted to do some comparative analysis to see if the situation was evolving. Unfortunately the low numbers make conjectures difficult; nonetheless, our own experience might be of some help. Also, our bias was largely in favour of the social sciences and humanities (85.7%), in comparison to business administration (5%), natural sciences (3.7%) and applied sciences mainly engineering (5.6%). This second bias was rather useful, since we have had no precedent of this kind of analysis in the social sciences.

As mentioned in the introduction, this sample cannot be considered in any way representative of the Arab social sciences, but points to some structural aspects concerning the use of languages as sources of research. The figures indicating the magnitude in the use of a specific language in scientific references gathered in this survey are unique, and draw attention to the use of English, French and Arabic comparatively by the same sample of people. Absolute figures are probably of less significance, although the results of the quasi-exhaustive coverage of the social sciences production in the Maghreb countries of Waast et al. (2010) makes us believe that we have a view that reflects the actual distribution in language use in the social sciences.

Table 2. Distribution of bibliographic references used in Master's or PhD theses, by language of reference.

Degree	Number of respondents	% of Arabic references	% of English references	% of French references	% of other languages references
Master's	87	29.3	50.5	18.3	1.9
PhD	68	34.1	44.3	19.8	1.7
Total	155	31.4	47.8	18.9	1.8

Table 3. Distribution of bibliographic references by language and country of graduation.

Region	Number of respondents	% of Arabic references	% of English references	% of French references	% of other languages references
Arab East	84	39.9	50.3	8.8	0.9
North Africa	19	39.8	7.6	45.6	6.9
Europe	36	11.1	53.9	33.1	1.9
North America	17	17.3	73.3	8.4	0.9
Other countries	1	0	100	0	0
Total	157	30.6	48.8	18.7	1.9

Using references in Arabic and foreign languages

According to the responses (Table 2), 31% of references were in Arabic – 29% for Master's holders and 34% for PhD holders. That is significantly lower than references in English (nearly half of the references). French occupies nearly one-fifth of the references; other languages only 1.8%.

As can be seen (Table 3) the use of Arabic references is the same whether they graduated in the Arab East or West, but French references are a bit higher in Maghreb countries (about 33%). Those graduates from foreign universities use significantly *fewer* references in Arabic: 11% in Europe and 17% in North America. Although we have a small number of respondents, the fact that Arabic references are lower in Europe as compared to the US/Canada is challenging, but is most probably explained by the fact that French-speaking Arab graduates tend to use more easily French-speaking references than Arabic ones, something we know from our Lebanese or Maghrebi colleagues.

It is worth noting that among the respondents, graduates from the social sciences use references in Arabic (34%) in larger proportions than those from other fields (close to 20%) (Table 4). Graduates from business administration cite only 18% of their references in Arabic as well as political sciences (17%). English is twice as frequently used in disciplines other than the social sciences and humanities. This distribution is confirmed by the MIRA survey in the Mediterranean Arab countries mentioned earlier (Gaillard et al., 2013) and by the Maghreb social sciences literature analysis (Waast et al., 2010).

Table 4. Distribution of bibliographic references by language and fields of science.

Field	Number of respondents	% of Arabic references	% of English references	% of French references	% of other languages references
SSH	135	34.2	44.4	19.5	1.8
Business	8	18.4	63.0	16.3	2.4
Basic sciences	6	16.7	83.3	0.0	0.0
Applied sciences	8	0.0	75.6	21.9	2.5
Total	157	31.0	48.5	18.7	1.9

Table 5. Distribution of bibliographic references by language and type of university.

	Number of respondents	% of Arabic references	% of English references	% of French references	% of other languages references
National	74	48.8	31.9	16.7	2.6
Private not-for-profit	27	17.1	66.2	16.7	0.0
Private for-profit	3	35.3	64.7	0.0	0.0
Foreign countries	54	12.9	62.0	23.1	1.9
Total	158	30.9	48.7	18.6	1.9

Interestingly, there is a close connection between the use of references in Arabic with the types of universities, which certainly resides in the universities' language of instruction (Table 5). The percentage of references in Arabic decreases from 49% for graduates of national universities to 17% for graduates of private not-for-profit universities. These are mainly the universities that use English or French as the main teaching language. The same applies to universities in foreign countries: studying in a foreign country greatly influences the language of references, as we have stated already, but rather by increasing the proportions of foreign references than by diminishing the Arabic references. Thus, around 80% of references are in a foreign language in foreign-language universities as well as universities in foreign countries, whereas in national universities the percentage falls to around 50%. This proportion is thus affected by the country and type of university of instruction. Respondents also mentioned that the amount of references used in Arabic increased when their supervisor encouraged the students to use them.

The weak use of references in Arabic cannot be linked to one's proficiency in the language – only 6% declared being beginner Arabic-speaking and only 3% cannot read the Arabic language. However, the language of instruction while studying is a very important factor in the choice of the language of references. Nearly 90% of references are in a foreign language when the language of instruction at the university is foreign in high school and at the undergraduate or graduate levels of university. We only present the results for graduate studies here, but percentages are very close for all three levels (Table 6). The percentage of foreign references, however, is much lower (around 60%)

Table 6. Distribution of bibliographic references by language and language of teaching at the university.

Language of teaching in graduate studies	Number of respondents	% of Arabic references	% of English references	% of French references	% of other languages references
Arabic	38	54.2	33.3	10.0	2.5
Foreign language	63	9.0	69.3	20.3	1.5
Both	42	40.9	35.5	23.2	0.4
Total	143	30.4	49.8	18.4	1.4

when the language of instruction is both Arabic and English, but still higher than when teaching was in Arabic only.

A review of 30 syllabi of social science courses taught at USJ, the Lebanese American University and AUB shows only two references in Arabic. It comes as no surprise that the graduates from these private universities that teach in English and French cite so few Arabic references in their own academic work.

Although only 5% of the persons surveyed reported that they were unfamiliar with the English language, we suspect this percentage to be much higher. In looking at the actual references the respondents claimed they used in their Master's or PhD thesis, we noticed that many authors did not seem to have a good understanding of the foreign sources they used. Moreover, as we show in the following pages, one of the reasons for using relatively more Arabic language references is a mediocre proficiency in reading in a foreign language.

Using references: Options and constraints

The respondents' reasons for not using a lot of references in Arabic were varied and attributed to the difficulty of access and, to a lesser extent, to issues related to content (Table 7). The first complaint expressed by almost half of the respondents was that references in Arabic are not available and they do not find them easily at university or public libraries. 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.' The same issue of access is given as a main reason for not using foreign references: libraries do not give satisfactory access to books and/or journals in foreign languages, except some universities, known for this high quality of their libraries, such as the American Universities of Beirut or of Cairo, and USJ.

Another researcher from Egypt, who had 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 Ain Shams University [Cairo] or the public libraries like that of Alexandria. But, I had a subscription to the American University in Cairo's library; if it wasn't for that, I really would not have

Table 7. Reasons for difficulty of using sources in Arabic.

Reasons	Answers concerning Arabic references		Answers concerning foreign references	
	N	%	N	%
I had difficulty finding them in public/university library	51	49.5	31	55.4
There were no databases from which I could get articles (only for Arabic references)	44	42.7	–	–
Public/university libraries do not have subscription for article databases (only for foreign references)	–	–	21	37.5
Arabic references (or foreign references) were irrelevant to my topic	43	41.7	17	30.4
I couldn't find references in Arabic when I used search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.)	41	39.8	–	–
I didn't find the Arab (or foreign) scholarship particularly interesting	36	35.0	6	10.7
My reading proficiency in Arabic (or foreign language) is not adequate	18	17.5	25	44.6
I couldn't afford to buy Arabic (or foreign) books	7	6.8	11	19.6

been able to find the appropriate references.' The problem becomes much more acute for those who studied in foreign countries where their libraries rarely procure references in Arabic.

The second reason, also related to access difficulties, as reported by 43% of the respondents, was that the university or public libraries do not subscribe to databases and academic journals in Arabic. Those who graduated before 2000 claimed to be unaware of these 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.'

More importantly, many respondents claim that the content of the references in Arabic (rather than access) is irrelevant to their topics (44%) and 35% of the respondents claimed that they do not resort to sources in Arabic because they do not find them of interest. 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 the sources in foreign languages ... Sociological

and ethnographic texts and studies concerning migration in the Southern Maghreb are very limited.' This claim is probably the one that needs some more investigation. This is striking because foreign language references are considered less relevant.

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. This is a severe problem: the absence of discussion – and thus the absence of legitimization – of new concepts generates translated work that is not only difficult to read, but also that leaves plenty of concepts in a foreign language without translation. Translators need thus to invent words on their own, or transliterate them.

Respondents also had several reasons for not using sources in foreign languages. Access is again the main reason: 55% of them claimed that they could not easily find sources in foreign languages in university or public libraries. Second, 45% of the respondents reported weak abilities in foreign languages and 37% of them stated that the university or public library did not have membership to databases that hold scientific journals (Table 7). Some of the details the respondents presented revealed that the sources in foreign languages are primarily used for establishing the theoretical framework of the research.

The databases mentioned in order to access foreign language academic journals were 'Jstor', followed by Google Scholar; the more recent francophone graduates used 'Cairn' and 'revues.org'. Arabic sources that were mentioned were the United Nations reports and Google, which are actually not academic databases. To the question 'what Arab journals did they use in their research', answers covered both academic journals (e.g. *Journal of the Social Sciences* or *Arab Journal of Sociology*) or more general content journals addressed to a wider audience (e.g. *al-mustakbal al-'arabi*) or newspapers (e.g. *al-safir*, *al-nahar*).

There was a low percentage of respondents who wanted to buy books and journals in Arabic (7%) or English (11%) they could not find in public libraries, but could not afford it due to the high costs. This could be related to the scarce scholarship funds for graduate studies in the Arab world.

As for those who can afford to pay for access to sources in foreign languages, they have difficulty finding those sources. In the same vein, 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, *Ce que parler veut dire*, for instance, I got hold of it after having paid a Moroccan publisher in a 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 stalls the date of its completion.'

Our study clearly shows that graduate students face a fundamental structural problem which relates to access to foreign sources of knowledge, as well as to an evaluation of the usefulness or relevance of sources. 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 were educated only in one language, be it Arabic or English. As such, the Arabic language does not lose its value and

the students benefit from foreign references that are characterized for their richness in theories, open to global debates.

Discussion and conclusion

In this article we did not want to refer to cultural ‘imperialism’ or some neocolonial effect as reasons to understand the predominance of the English language in research and, consequently, the marginalization of the Arabic language. Our limited data unfortunately confirm a limited use of Arabic references in the academic work that is written by young Arab scholars. We found also that the use of references is affected by the language of instruction in the university, and by access issues. We saw that a proportion of nearly 30% mention foreign language references as irrelevant, whereas 40% mention Arabic references as irrelevant. There is a gap of understanding and this makes us believe a much deeper process is at work in choosing/using references in one or another language: we believe there is a coexistence of different – and competing – legitimization processes at work in the social sciences in the Arabic-speaking countries.

Language is among the strong markers of different strategies of acceptance of what is important, meaningful and relevant knowledge inside and outside the academic arena. Foreign influence is decisive, and language of instruction makes professors and researchers in Arab countries more sensible of and receptive to the language they know better: professors who have had an education in English tend to disregard sources in Arabic. Those trained in Arabic seem to have difficulties accessing foreign language sources. Funding sources and promotion mechanisms in universities seem to be the two main mechanisms that influence the pressure towards publication in English and in core (that is, mainly American and European) journals, as we stated in the introduction to this article. Although not surprising, this does not explain alone the domination of Western sociologies over the national ones, nor does it explain this strange coexistence of different legitimization processes.

Arab social scientists might also be profoundly influenced by a tradition of public debate where the academic journal has no relevance. ‘Public’ social science, that is social science that has an non-academic public, is a way of writing and a form of intellectual engagement that cannot be accommodated in an international refereed journal, especially if one takes into account the delay (sometimes two years) in publication. Moreover, the debate will be in the local language, and probably what happens in the Arab countries is that they publish locally, in newspapers or other non-internationally recognized spaces, and are ‘dying’ internationally. Their institutions, especially those teaching in a foreign language, push for academics to publish exclusively globally which would lead inevitably to ‘perish’ locally. What is the interest of being a researcher who enjoys considerable international recognition by one’s peers for the high quality and impact of their recent research outputs while she or he is unknown locally? Many social scientists in Lebanon and the Arab world fall into this category.

In turn, there is a consequence of preferring English/French while abandoning the local debate in Arabic, that local journals, even when they exist, and even when produced to high standards, are not taken seriously since they are not taken into account in any of the promotion mechanisms applied by the universities locally. What really is being

discussed in not the quality of the local publications; what is at stake is its impact on promotion.

This marginality of the Arab language production in the global arena is accompanied by invisibility in international scientific fora. Few scholars coming from the Arab world attend international conferences. National universities rarely provide scholarships to attend them. For instance, there were only five, seven and 10 Arab participants respectively in the World Congress of the International Sociology Association in Madrid (1990), Bielefeld (1994) and Montreal (1998).

Finally, these issues in the Arab world are accentuated by the ongoing policies of promotion of foreign language teaching institutions and the existence of elite universities that teach in foreign languages. The language issue is a serious one: Louis-Jean Calvet (1987) reminds us that conflict over languages tells the story of social conflicts; and the wars of languages signal an underlying educational or economic war. The advocates of *teaching in English* (Salim, 2009) put forth the need for international academic cooperation, the necessities of the market whereby international and civil organizations' activities have increased, and these organizations are sponsored and funded by foreigners. Supporters of Arabization point out that most of the students are not sufficiently fluent in a foreign language to easily understand foreign references and that teaching in a foreign language may create a split personality, and consequently lead to certain isolation from the primary culture. Furthermore, these advocates argue that teaching in the mother tongue is time efficient and saves the effort usually wasted in understanding foreign texts. Arguments can become very sophisticated in favour or against the Arabic language as research and teaching language. The two camps opinions' can be summarized as follows: the supporters of instruction in foreign languages consider language a tool for communication, while the supporters of instruction in the Arabic language consider it a system of thought and carrier of culture.

In our opinion, students and researchers learn by practice to live in more than one cultural and intellectual system. Today, universities in Arab countries should go through a transitional period, where teaching depends primarily on the Arabic language along with some courses in foreign languages, in order to make sure that the student is capable of using references in both languages. Advancing research will never be achieved if the student does not become proficient in at least one foreign language. Finally, a real effort should be made in translating from and to Arabic to convey the Arab researchers' efforts to global audiences. The emerging trend of translation in the region comforts such analysis.²

The relative marginalization of the Arabic language in research is also a result of universities facing the pressures of globalization, which legitimizes research published in English and funded internationally. This has contributed to the silent spread of evaluation based on WoS/Scopus and other indicators, and pressure to 'publish in high impact journals' has been instrumented by many academic institutions, in particular those teaching in English. The move has enforced a management bias, and a neoliberal ideological background that puts emphasis on individual merits and market-like circulation of ideas (Abakumov et al., 2010; Gingras, 2008). In brief, the promotion system effectively internalizes the hegemony of 'central' social sciences, thereby deepening the divide among Arab social scientists. The dominating countries in this international

division of scientific work thus produce *peripheral science* (Losego and Arvanitis, 2008) and *peripheral visions* (Connell, 2009), reinforcing ‘academic dependency’ (Alatas, 2003). This rating system inhibits the emergence of autonomous sociological production, marginalizing it and not supporting work that is ‘more consequential’ (Appadurai, 2000: 3). Keim (2010) concludes that social scientists in peripheral countries should have the courage to refuse the worldwide rankings completely. To our knowledge, she has been the only advocate of this radical solution and her arguments are quite convincing.

What remains defines precisely what Losego and Arvanitis have called hegemony in science: the capacity to influence the choice of topics in the worldwide agenda. The agencies and organizations that evaluate projects are asking for international networking and, under the pretext of multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary and benefits of international comparison, they have been asking for larger and more extended project teams. English is always said to be the language of the response to calls for proposals, under the pretext that evaluators are ‘international peers’ and that English is the only common language. No effort is made to accommodate any foreign language or persons that would be of great value but have little or poor understanding of English. Given our experience as editors of academic journals, both authors of this article believe we have to be very cautious as to the degree of real understanding of English by foreign-speaking academics. Language is perhaps not exclusively an instrument of domination, but its unconditional use, really is.

If the idea of language-based marginalization has already been brought up in different settings, the most important findings we highlighted here are that universities that use both local and foreign languages for instruction train researchers better to use references in different languages and in a balanced way.

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Notes

1. We thank the MIRA project for offering the source data and respecting the anonymity of respondents.
2. Since 2006, the Centre for Arab Unity Studies has co-published with Routledge (London) the journal *Arab Contemporary Affairs*. The journal aims to present Arab social scientific knowledge translated into English to an international audience.

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Résumé

Cet article a pour objectif d'interroger la relation entre la recherche en sciences sociales dans le monde arabe et les langues. Il montre que de nombreux facteurs comme l'économie politique de la publication, la mondialisation, l'internationalisation et la marchandisation de l'éducation supérieure ont marginalisé les langues périphériques telles que l'arabe. Nous montrons que cette marginalisation n'est pas structurellement inévitable, mais qu'elle témoigne d'une dépendance par choix. Nous examinons ensuite comment la mondialisation a renforcé l'hégémonie de la langue anglaise. Cette contribution se fonde sur les résultats d'une enquête par questionnaire sur l'utilisation des références dans les mémoires de master et de thèse. Cette étude, à laquelle ont répondu 165 personnes, a été menée auprès de titulaires de master ou de doctorat

d'une université du monde arabe ou de personnes ayant travaillé sur un sujet lié au monde arabe, quelque soit la discipline.

Mots-clés

Sciences sociales dans le monde arabe, internationalisation de la recherche, langue anglaise hégémonique, indices de citations, pratiques de recherche, publications scientifiques

Resumen

Este artículo tiene por objetivo cuestionar la relación entre la investigación social y el idioma árabe, argumentando que la marginalización de los idiomas periféricos, como el árabe, se deben a varios factores que incluyen la economía política de la publicación, la globalización, la internacionalización y la mercantilización de la educación superior. Se demuestra, por un lado, que dicha marginalización no es necesariamente estructuralmente inevitable, sino que indica la dependencia por elección. Por otro lado, se muestra cómo la globalización ha reforzado la hegemonía del idioma Inglés. Este artículo utiliza los resultados de una encuesta sobre el uso de las referencias en tesis de doctorado y de maestría. La encuesta, respondida por 165 personas, estaba dirigida a quienes tienen una maestría o doctorado de cualquier universidad en el mundo árabe o se han ocupado de un tema relacionado con el mundo árabe, independientemente de la disciplina.

Palabras clave

Ciencias sociales árabes, internacionalización de la investigación, Inglés como idioma hegemónico, índice de citas, práctica de la investigación, publicación científica