

## Chapter 14

# Arabic in the diaspora

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This paper offers an overview of contact-induced change in diasporic Arabic. It provides a socio-historical description of the Arab diaspora, followed by a sociolinguistic profile of Arabic-speaking diasporic communities. Language change is analyzed at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical level, distinguishing between contact-induced change and internal developments caused by reduced input and weakened monitoring. In the course of the description, parallels are drawn between diasporic Arabic and other contemporary or extinct contact varieties, such as Arabic-based pidgins and Andalusí Arabic.

### 1 Current state and historical development

The terms *ARABIC IN THE DIASPORA* and *ARABIC AS A MINORITY LANGUAGE* have been used to designate two distinct linguistic entities, namely *Arabic Sprach-inseln* outside the Arabic-speaking world and Arabic in contemporary migration settings. The two situations correspond to the two major social processes that give rise to language contact: conquest and migration. In the former case, speakers of Arabic were isolated from the central area in which the Arabic language is spoken, exposed to a different dominant language, and consequently underwent a slow process of language erosion (and eventually shift) usually spanning across several generations. This situation often gives rise to long periods of relatively stable bilingualism, where contact-induced change is more noticeable (Sankoff 2001: 641). In migration contexts, on the contrary, language shift occurs at a faster pace, sometimes within the lifespan of the first generation and usually no later than the third (Canagarajah 2008: 151).

This chapter analyzes contact-induced change in migration contexts. Arab migration to the West started in the late nineteenth century, with the first wave of



migrants who left Greater Syria to settle in the United States and Latin America. The first migrants were mostly Christian unskilled workers, followed by more educated Lebanese, Palestinians, Yemenis and Iraqis after World War II. During the 1950s and 1960s, more migrants continued to settle in the US, while the unstable political situations in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq resulted in a fourth wave in the 1970s and 1980s (Rouchdy 1992a: 17–18). Because of the events that took place during the last two decades and that resulted in a further destabilization of the entire Middle East, immigration toward the US has never stopped, even though recent American policies have considerably reduced the intake of refugees and immigrants. In 2016, however, 84,995 refugees were resettled in the US, with two Arabic-speaking countries (Syria and Iraq) featuring among the top five states that make 70% of the total intake.<sup>1</sup>

Large-scale migration to western Europe from Arabic-speaking countries began in the wake of the decolonization process during the 1960s and mainly involved speakers from North Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). Following a common trend in labor migration, men arrived first, followed by their wives and children. In 1995, a total of 1,110,545 Moroccans, 655,576 Algerians and 279,813 Tunisians lived in Europe, mostly in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy (Boumans & de Ruiter 2002: 259–260). The socioeconomic profile of the first immigrants mainly consisted of unskilled laborers, usually with low education rates. After six decades from the first wave of immigration, however, most communities consist today of a first, second and third generation, while the political upheaval which started at the end of 2010 resulted in a new wave of young immigrants. Both old and new immigrants had to face the economic crisis that hit Europe in the early 1990s and, again, in 2007, with particularly harsh consequences for the immigrant population (Boumans & de Ruiter 2002: 261).

The sociolinguistic profile of Arabic-speaking communities in the diaspora is quite diverse in different parts of the world and can be analyzed using the ethno-linguistic vitality framework, according to which status, demographics, and institutional support shape the vitality of a linguistic minority (Giles et al. 1977; Ehala 2015). Arabic-speaking immigrants do not usually enjoy a particularly high status, while the level of institutional support is variable. The first waves of immigration to the US, for instance, had to face an environment that was generally hostile to foreign languages. The English-only movement actively worked to impose the exclusive employment of English in public places, while the immigrants themselves committed to learning and using English to integrate into mainstream

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<sup>1</sup>Data come from the US Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/266365.htm>, accessed April 2, 2019.

American life. Only in the aftermath of 9/11 did American policymakers begin to re-evaluate the importance of Arabic (and other heritage languages), considering it a resource for homeland security (Albirini 2016: 319–320). Other countries, such as the Netherlands, provided higher levels of formal institutional support, including Arabic in school curricula. These efforts did not achieve the desired goals, however, mostly because the great linguistic diversity of the Moroccan community living in the Netherlands cannot be adequately represented in the teaching curricula. Moroccans in the Netherlands, in fact, speak different Arabic dialects, alongside three main varieties of Berber, namely Tashelhiyt, Tamazight and Tarifiyt (Extra & de Ruiter 1994: 160–161). The voluntary home language instruction program, however, provides instruction in Modern Standard Arabic, even though writing skills are only taught starting from third grade (Extra & de Ruiter 1994: 163–165). This is not, of course, the language students are exposed to at home, but attempts to introduce Moroccan dialect or Berber are generally opposed by parents, who value Classical Arabic for its religious and cultural relevance. Similar Home Language Instruction programs are found in most European countries, even though their implementation is sometimes carried out by local governments (in the Netherlands and Germany), private organizations (in Spain) or even by the governments of the origin country (in France) (Boumans & de Ruiter 2002: 264–265). The Italian town of Mazara del Vallo in Sicily represents an extreme case, since the members of the Tunisian community obtained from the Tunisian government the opening of a Tunisian school, where a complete Arabic curriculum is offered and Italian is not even taught as a second language. Until the end of the 1990s, this school, opened in 1981, was the first choice for Tunisian families, who hoped for a possible return to Tunisia. When it eventually became clear that this was unlikely to happen, enrollments consequently declined, which means that Arabic teaching is no longer available to the community in any form (D’Anna 2017a: 73–77). Issues of diglossia and language diversity thus undermine Home Language Instruction programs, which usually occupy a marginal position within school curricula.

Given the generally low status of, and insufficient institutional support for, Arabic-speaking communities in the diaspora, demographic factors are often decisive in determining the ethnolinguistic vitality of the community. While speakers of Arabic are usually scattered in large areas where the dominant language is prevalently spoken, in some Dutch towns Moroccan youth make up 50% of the population of certain neighborhoods (Boumans 2004: 50). At the other end of the continuum, we find closely-knit communities, living in the same neighborhood, such as in Mazara del Vallo, where Tunisians hailing from the two neighboring towns of Mahdia and Chebba constitute up to 70% of the population of the

old town (D'Anna 2017a: 27). All things being equal, given the low status of the Tunisian community and the mediocre institutional support they receive, it is primarily demographic factors which have resulted in the preservation of Arabic in this community beyond the threshold of the third generation.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of what has been said above, and despite some notable exceptions, Arabic diasporic communities are characterized by relatively rapid processes of language shift, both in the US (Daher 1992: 29) and in Europe (Boumans & de Ruiter 2002: 282). This means that the processes of contact-induced change observed in diasporic communities of Arabic are generally the prelude to language loss. The importance of studying language change in migrant languages, however, also resides in the fact that the same changes usually take place, at a much slower rate, in the standard spoken in the homeland. Internally motivated change in diasporic varieties, from this perspective, often represent an accelerated version of language change in the homeland. Contact-induced change, on the other hand, sometimes suggests parallels with the socially different process of pidginization (Gonzo & Saltarelli 1983: 194–195). The study of Arabic-speaking diasporic communities, thus, can help us shed light on the more general evolution of the language, with regard to both contact-induced and internally-motivated change.

## 2 Contact languages

Contact languages for diasporic Arabic-speaking communities include, but are not restricted to, American (Rouchdy 1992b) and British English (Abu-Haidar 2012), Portuguese in Brazil (Versteegh 2014: 292), French (Boumans & Caubet 2000), Dutch (Boumans 2000; 2004; 2007; Boumans & Caubet 2000; Boumans & de Ruiter 2002), Spanish (Vicente 2005; 2007) and Italian (D'Anna 2017a; 2018). Some contact situations are better described than others, as in the case of English, French and Dutch. At the other end of the continuum, research on the outcome of contact between Italian and Arabic is extremely recent, and data on Portuguese are scarce.

In the following sections, we will draw from the sources so far cited to describe the main phenomena of language change occurring in diasporic Arabic at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical level, highlighting possible parallels with comparable changes in other non-diasporic varieties of Arabic.

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<sup>2</sup>Other factors also played a minor role in the preservation of Arabic in Mazara del Vallo (D'Anna 2017a: 80–81).

### 3 Contact-induced changes in diasporic Arabic

Despite the great variety of contact languages, it is possible to individuate a number of phenomena that predictably occur in diasporic Arabic-speaking communities. It is not always easy, however, to assess whether an individual phenomenon is due to contact or whether it is, on the contrary, the result of internal development (Romaine 1989: 377). Gonzo & Saltarelli (1977: 177) put the matter as follows:

While it seems clear that some types of changes are due to interference from the dominant language, and others may be attributable to sociological and other external pressures, there are some changes which are language-internal. The latter type is in accordance with a principle of regularization and code reduction which one might expect when the language is acquired in a weakly monitored sociolinguistic environment.

The concept of WEAKENED MONITORING, a situation in which a generally accepted standard and the reinforcement of correct norms are lacking, is an effective tool of analysis when investigating language change in diasporic communities (Gonzo & Saltarelli 1977; 1983). In a situation of weakened monitoring, processes of language change that are occurring slowly in other varieties of the language can be sped up.

In the following sections, interference between languages will be referred to as TRANSFER, which occurs from the SOURCE LANGUAGE (SL) to the RECIPIENT LANGUAGE (RL). If the speaker is dominant in the SL, transfer is more specifically defined as IMPOSITION. If, on the contrary, the speaker is dominant in the RL, transfer is defined as BORROWING (Van Coetsem 1988; 2000; Lucas 2015). While the concept of linguistic DOMINANCE will be extensively used in this paper, one final caveat concerns the difficulty of individuating the dominant language (which may actually shift) in second-generation speakers. Lucas identifies a category of 2L1 speakers, who undergo the simultaneous acquisition of two distinct native languages (Lucas 2015: 525). The linguistic trajectory of most second-generation speakers, however, usually involves two consecutive stages in which first the heritage and then the socially dominant language function as the dominant language. While the heritage language is almost exclusively spoken at home during early childhood, in fact, second-generation speakers gradually shift to the socially dominant language when they start school and consequently expand their social network.

### 3.1 Phonology

In the domain of phonology, diasporic varieties of Arabic generally go in the direction of the loss of marked phonemes (Versteegh 2014: 293). It is generally the emphatic and post-velar phonemes that undergo erosion, though the loss is usually not systematic, featuring a great deal of inter and intra-individual variation. In non-diasporic communities, adults, peers and institutions provide corrective feedback to children during their process of language acquisition, while in immigrant communities, due to the weakened monitoring mentioned above, the chain of intergenerational transmission is less secure. Some phenomena of phonetic loss thus have a developmental origin, and are equally common in pidgins and dying languages (Romaine 1989: 372–373). Consider the following example:

- (1) Tunisian Arabic, Mazara del Vallo (D'Anna 2017a: 85)
- |            |                 |       |     |             |              |       |      |
|------------|-----------------|-------|-----|-------------|--------------|-------|------|
| ʕala       | ħāṭr-i          | ʕarbi | u   | nnəžžəm     | naʕrəf       | aktər | wāəd |
| on         | thought-OBL.1SG | Arab  | and | can.IMP.1SG | know.IMP.1SG | more  | one  |
| mia        | lingua          |       |     |             |              |       |      |
| POSS.1SG.F | language        |       |     |             |              |       |      |
- ‘Because I’m an Arab and I can know above all my language.’

The speaker in sample (1) realizes the voiced pharyngeal fricative /ʕ/, one of the phonemes that are usually lost, but then fails to realize its voiceless counterpart /ħ/ in *wāəd* < *wāħəd* ‘one’.<sup>3</sup> Similar phenomena also occur, as noted above, in Arabic-based pidgins and creoles, such as Juba Arabic (Manfredi 2017: 17, 21; cf. Avram, this volume).

In the process of phonological erosion, therefore, contact languages seem to have a limited impact. If the dominant language does not feature, in its phonemic inventory, the phoneme that is being eroded, it fails to reinforce whatever input young bilingual speakers receive in the other L1 in the contexts of primary socialization. Reduced input and weakened monitoring, however, play a bigger role, allowing forms usually observed in the earliest stages of language acquisition by monolingual children to survive and spread. It is relatively common, for instance, to observe the presence of shortened or reduced forms, such as *qe* < *lqe* ‘he found’, *ħal* < *nħal* ‘bees’, *ləd* < *uləd* ‘kid’, which sometimes give rise to phenomena of compensation, such as in *uləd* > *ləd* > *lədda* ‘kid’ (Tunisian

<sup>3</sup>Similar phenomena of phonetic simplification occur in peripheral varieties of Arabic and *Sprachinseln*, such as Nigerian Arabic (Owens 1993: 19–20; this volume), Cypriot Maronite Arabic (Borg 1985; Walter, this volume), Uzbekistan Arabic (Seeger 2013) and Maltese (Borg & Azzopardi-Alexander 1997: 299; Lucas & Čéplö, this volume). The single varieties here mentioned vary with regard to the phonological simplification they underwent.

diasporic Arabic, Mazara del Vallo, Italy; D'Anna 2017a: 85). In diasporic communities, reduced forms are more easily allowed to survive and spread, occurring in the speech of teenagers, as in the examples reported here. Once again, the same phenomenon also occurs in pidgin and dying languages:

In the case of dying and pidgin languages it may be that children have greater scope to act as norm-makers due to the fact that a great deal of variability exists among the adult community (Romaine 1989: 372–373).

In conclusion, the phonology of diasporic Arabic does not seem to be heavily influenced by borrowing from contact languages. The combined action of reduced input and weakened monitoring, on the other hand, is responsible for the unsystematic loss of marked phonemes and for the survival and spread of reduced forms.

### 3.2 Morphology

The complex mixture of concatenative and non-concatenative morphology in the domain of Arabic plural formation has been one of the main focuses of research in situations of language contact resulting from migration. Once again, borrowing from contact languages and independent developments occur side by side.

In Arabic, both concatenative and non-concatenative morphology contribute to plural formation. Concatenative morphology, which consists in attaching a suffix to the singular noun, yields the so-called sound plurals, that is, in spoken Arabic, the plural suffixes *-īn* and *-āt* respectively. It has been argued that sound feminine plural is the default plural form according to the morphological underspecification hypothesis, even though masculine is the default gender in all other domains of plural morphology (Albirini & Benmamoun 2014: 855–856). While sound masculine plural is specified for [+human], in fact, sound feminine plural has the semantic feature [±human]. Non-concatenative, or broken, plurals require a higher cognitive load, since they involve the mapping of a vocalic template onto a consonantal root.<sup>4</sup> Sound feminine plurals are acquired by children by the age of three, while broken plurals involving geminate and defective roots are not mastered until beyond the age of six (Albirini & Benmamoun 2014: 857–858). After the age of five, however, heritage speakers of Arabic become increasingly exposed to their L2, which encroaches upon their acquisition of broken plurals. It has thus been convincingly demonstrated that heritage speakers display a better command of sound plurals and that, in the domain of broken

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<sup>4</sup>The notion of root and pattern, which has long been at the core of the morphology of Arabic, has recently been criticized (Ratcliffe 2013), even though psycholinguistic studies seem to confirm the existence of the root in the mental lexicon of native speakers (Boudelaa 2013).

plurals, some are more affected by language erosion than others (Albirini & Benmamoun 2014: 858–859). Across different varieties of diasporic Arabic, therefore, plural morphology displays both contact phenomena due to borrowing and internal developments that are akin to what might be called RESTRUCTURING, that is:

changes that a speaker makes to an L2 that are the result not of imposition but of interpreting the L2 input in a way that a child acquiring an L1 would not (Lucas 2015: 525).<sup>5</sup>

Borrowing from the contact languages can take two forms. In rare cases, the suffix plural morpheme of the contact language is directly borrowed, as in the examples *ħuli-s* 'sheep-PL', *ħmar-s* 'donkeys' and *l-ħud-s* 'the horses'<sup>6</sup> collected from one Moroccan informant in the Netherlands (Boumans & de Ruiter 2002: 274). Sometimes, however, transfer works in a subtler way, which consists in the generalization of the sound masculine plural suffix *-in*,<sup>7</sup> by analogy with the default form of the contact language, yielding *ħul-in* 'sheep-PL', *ħmār-in* 'donkeys', *ħewd-in* 'horses' (Boumans & de Ruiter 2002: 274). A study conducted by Albirini & Benmamoun (2014: 866–867) shows that L2 learners of Arabic usually tend to overgeneralize the sound masculine plural, wrongly perceived as a default form, while heritage speakers more often resort to the Arabic-specific default, i.e. sound feminine plural. The cases of borrowing reported above, therefore, represent an idiosyncratic exception.

On the other hand, the non-optimal circumstances under which Arabic is learned in diasporic communities often result in overgeneralization processes that cannot be directly attributed to contact. One of them is, as noted above, the generalization of the sound feminine plural *-āt*. In the domain of broken plurals, moreover, not all patterns are equally distributed. The iambic pattern, consisting of a light syllable followed by one with two moras (CVCVVC), is the most common among Arabic broken plurals (Albirini & Benmamoun 2014: 857). As a consequence, it is often generalized by heritage speakers of Levantine varieties (Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian and Jordanian) living in the US, yielding forms such as: *fallāħ* 'farmer', pl. *aflāħ/fulūħ* (target plural *fallāħ-in*); *šubbāk* 'window',

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<sup>5</sup>In this case, of course, the speaker would not be re-interpreting an L2, but an L1 learned under reduced input conditions and subject to language erosion.

<sup>6</sup>The target form here is *ħewd-an*, so that also vowel quality is not standard.

<sup>7</sup>The suffix for masculine plural *-in* is realized with a short vowel in the diasporic Moroccan varieties that are being discussed.

pl. *šubūk* (target plural *šabābīk*); *ṭabbāḥ* ‘cook’, pl. *ṭabāʔiḥ* (target plural *ṭabbāḥ-īn*) (Albirini & Benmamoun 2014: 865).<sup>8</sup>

Borrowing does not involve plural morphemes only, but other classes as well. In Mazara del Vallo, for instance, young speakers occasionally use the Sicilian diminutive morpheme *-eddru* with Arabic names, creating morphological hybrids of the kind illustrated in (2):

- (2) Tunisian Arabic, Mazara del Vallo (D’Anna 2017a: 107)  
 Grazie safwani-ceddruu<sup>9</sup>  
 thanks Safwan-DIM  
 ‘Thanks little Safwan.’

This type of borrowing, quite widespread among young speakers, seems to replicate another instance of contact-induced change that occurred in an extinct variety of Arabic. Andalusī Arabic, in fact, borrowed from Romance the diminutive morpheme *-el* (e.g. *tarabilla* ‘mill-clapper’ < *ṭarab+ella* ‘little music’), incidentally etymologically cognate with the Sicilian *-eddru* (Latin *-ellum* > Sicilian *-eddru/-eddu*) (University of Zaragoza 2013: 60). The behavior of the young Tunisian speakers of Mazara del Vallo, who use these Sicilian diminutives in a playful mode, might represent the first stage of the same process that resulted in the transfer of this morpheme into Andalusī Arabic (D’Anna 2017a: 108).

While plurals represent one of the most common areas of change in diasporic Arabic, morpheme borrowing is a much rarer phenomenon, which probably occurs in situations of more pronounced bilingualism. The above two examples, however, provide a representative exemplification of the effect of language contact in the domain of morphology.

### 3.3 Syntax

Borrowing and restructuring also happen in the domain of syntax. As has been noted both for Moroccans in the Netherlands (de Ruyter 1989: 99) and Tunisians in Italy (personal research), second-generation speakers tend to use simpler clauses than monolingual speakers, namely main or subordinate clauses to which no other clause is attached, as evident from the following sample:

<sup>8</sup>The overgeneralization of some broken plural patterns indicates that the root and pattern system is still productive in heritage speakers, as opposed, for instance, to speakers of Arabic-based pidgins and creoles. Recent studies, however, have advanced the hypothesis that the iambic pattern involves operations below the level of the word, but without necessarily entailing the mapping of a template onto a consonantal root (Albirini et al. 2014: 112).

<sup>9</sup>The utterance appeared as a Facebook post in the timeline of one of my informants and was transcribed verbatim.

- (3) Tunisian Arabic, Mazara del Vallo (personal research)

m-baʔd əl-uləyyəd rqað u l-kaləb zāda u l-žrāna  
 from-after DEF-boy.DIM sleep.PRF.3SG.M and DEF-dog also and DEF-frog  
 ḥaržət mən əl-wāḥəd ēh dabbūsa  
 exit.PRF.3SG.F from DEF-one HESIT bottle

‘Then the little boy slept and also the dog and the frog escaped from the hum bottle.’

Accordingly, they also display the effects of language erosion in establishing long-distance dependencies typical of more complex clauses (Albirini 2016: 305).

Palestinian and Egyptian speakers born in the US have also been found to realize overt pronouns in sentences that opt for the pro-drop strategy in the speech of monolinguals, which is probably due to the influence of English (Albirini et al. 2014: 283). Preliminary observations on second-generation Tunisians in Italy, in fact, do not show the same phenomenon. Since Italian is, like Arabic, a pro-drop language, the use of overt pronouns in American diasporic Arabic can be considered as a case of syntactic borrowing or convergence (Lucas 2015), depending on the speakers’ degree of bilingualism.

The syntax of negation is another area in which language erosion triggers phenomena that seem to be happening, albeit at a slower rate, in non-diasporic communities. Egyptian speakers in the US, for instance, seem to overgeneralize the monopartite negator *miš/muš* at the expense of the default discontinuous verbal negator *ma...-š*:

- (4) Egyptian Arabic in the US (Albirini & Benmamoun 2015: 482)

huwwa miš rāḥ l-kaftiria  
 3SG.M NEG go.PRF.3SG.M to-cafeteria

‘He didn’t go to the cafeteria.’

Example (4) represents a deviation from the standard Cairene dialect spoken by monolinguals. In Egypt, however, the negative copula *miš~muš* represents a pragmatically marked possibility to negate the *b*-imperfect (Brustad 2000: 302), while in Cairo it is now the standard negation for future tense (*miš ḥa-...*, contrasting with *ma-ḥa-...-š* in some areas of Upper Egypt (Brustad 2000: 285). More generally, therefore, *miš~muš* is gaining ground at the expense of the discontinuous negation (Brustad 2000: 285), so that what we observe in diasporic Egyptian Arabic might just be an accelerated instance of the same process.

Another major area of language change, documented in most diasporic languages, is the erosion of complex agreement systems (Gonzo & Saltarelli 1983:

192). In diasporic Arabic, heritage speakers show relatively few problems with subject–verb agreement, but struggle with the subtleties of noun–adjective agreement (Albirini et al. 2013: 8). While subject–verb agreement involves a verbal paradigm with a relatively large number of cells, it is nevertheless simpler than noun–adjective agreement, since plural nouns can trigger adjective agreement in the sound or broken plural or in the feminine singular, depending on factors involving humanness, individuation, and the morphological shape of both the noun and the adjective, with marked dialectal variation (D’Anna 2017b: 103–104). Heritage speakers thus perform significantly better when default agreement in the masculine singular is required (Albirini et al. 2013: 8), but display evident signs of language erosion when more complex structures are involved:

- (5) Egyptian Arabic in the US (Albirini 2014: 740)  
 wi-kamān baḥibb arūḥ l-Detroit ʔašān ʔinda-ha  
 and-also love.IMP.F.IND.1SG go.IMP.F.1SG to-Detroit because at-3SG.F  
 maṭāʕim \*mumtaz-īn  
 restaurant.PL excellent-PL.M  
 ‘And I also like to go to Detroit because it has excellent restaurants.’

In (5), the speaker selects the sound masculine plural, while non-human plural nouns require either the broken plural or the feminine singular in Egyptian Arabic. Once again, language change in diasporic Arabic, where the language is learned under reduced input conditions, tends to replicate processes of language change that happened or are happening in the Arabic-speaking world. In the case of agreement, the standardization that the agreement system underwent in the transition from pre-Classical to Classical Arabic has been convincingly explained as emerging from the overgeneralization of frequent patterns by L2 learners (Belnap 1999).

Finally, isolated cases show syntactic borrowing or convergence<sup>10</sup> at the level of word order, which is usually preserved in diasporic contexts, as in the example in (6).

- (6) Moroccan Arabic in the Netherlands (Boumans 2001: 105)  
 u ʔtat l-u dya-l-u l-lḥem  
 and give.PRF.3SG.F to-3SG.M GEN-3SG.M DEF-meat  
 ‘And she gave it [i.e. the dog] its meat.’

<sup>10</sup>Once again, considering this phenomenon as syntactic borrowing or convergence depends on the speaker’s language dominance, which is not clear from the source and is not easily ascertained in second-generation speakers, whose dominant language is often subject to shift.

This example illustrates an extreme case of word order change, in which the possessive *dyaal-u* 'its' precedes the head. Overgeneralization of permissible (but sometimes pragmatically marked) word orders, however, occur much more frequently. Egyptian heritage speakers in the US, for instance, use SVO order 77.65% of the time, vs. 52.64% for Egyptian native speakers (Albirini et al. 2011: 280–281).

In situations of stable bilingualism, such as in some Arabic *Sprachinseln*, convergence with contact languages can result in permanent alterations to word order. In Buxari Arabic, for instance, transitive verbs feature a mandatory SOV word order, with optional resumptive pronoun after the verb. Cleft sentences such as the following one are quite common in all Arabic dialects:

- (7) Egyptian Arabic (Ratcliffe 2005: 145)

il-fustān gībt-u  
DEF-dress get.PRF.1SG-3SG.M  
'I got the dress.'

In Bukhari Arabic, which has long been in contact with SOV languages (such as Persian and Tajik), this structure became the standard for transitive verbs, so that the resumptive pronoun can also be dropped, as in the following sample:

- (8) Bukhari Arabic (Ratcliffe 2005: 144)

fāt ŷūd ḥada  
INDEF stick take.PRF.3SG.M  
'He took a stick.'

### 3.4 Lexicon

In the domain of lexical borrowing, which has attracted considerable interest among scholars, the situation of bilingualism in diasporic contexts poses some methodological issues in the individuation of actual loanwords. The production of heritage speakers, in fact, is inevitably marked by frequent phenomena of code-switching, which makes difficult to distinguish between nonce-borrowings (Poplack 1980) and code-switching. If we define lexical borrowing as “the diachronic process by which languages enhance their vocabulary” (Matras 2009: 106), in fact, it is not clear which language is here enhancing its vocabulary, since diasporic varieties of Arabic are not discrete varieties and feature the highest degree of internal variability. A possible solution to this impasse consists in looking exclusively at the linguistic properties of the alleged loanword. In this vein, Adalar & Tagliamonte (1998: 156) have shown that, when foreign-origin nouns appear in contexts in which they are completely surrounded by the other language, they are treated like borrowings (in this case, nonce-borrowings) at the phonological, morphological and syntactic level. When, on the contrary, they appear

in bilingual (or multilingual) utterances, they represent cases of code-switching, patterning with the language of their etymology. The domain of lexical borrowing in diasporic varieties of Arabic, however, is an area that needs further research.

## 4 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an overview of the main phenomena of contact-induced change observed in Arabic diasporic communities, distinguishing them from internal developments due to reduced input and weakened monitoring. Diasporic communities rarely feature situations of stable bilingualism, so that language change usually corresponds to language attrition and is followed by the complete shift to the dominant language. The study of language change in diasporic communities, however, constitutes an interesting field of investigation, both in itself and for the insight it can give us into language change in monolingual communities. Change at the phonological, morphological and syntactic level finds parallels in comparable phenomena that have occurred in the history of Arabic (such as in the case of agreement) or that are occurring as we speak (such as in the case of the spread of the negator *miš* in Egyptian Arabic). Not by chance, similar phenomena also occur(red) in the Arabic-based pidgins of East Africa, such as Juba Arabic. Various scholars, in fact, have maintained that the mechanisms of change differ in the degree of intensity, but not in their intrinsic nature, from those operating in less extreme situations of contact (e.g. Miller 2003: 8; Lucas 2015: 528).

On the other hand, the analysis of contact phenomena in diasporic communities poses some methodological issues with regard to the categories of borrowing, imposition and convergence (Van Coetsem 1988; 2000). These categories, in fact, imply the possibility to define clearly the speaker's dominant language or, at least, to define him as a stable 2L1 speaker. This is rarely the case with heritage speakers, whose repertoires follow trajectories in which language dominance shifts, usually from the heritage language to the socially dominant one. This process is usually concomitant with the beginning of school education, but we lack theoretical and methodological tools to determine with accuracy the speaker's position on the trajectory.

Further avenues of research on this topic thus include a more rigorous investigation of emerging and shifting repertoires and the analysis of the complex relation between diasporic languages, pidginization and creolization, which has already been the object of a number of contributions (e.g. Gonzo & Saltarelli 1983; Romaine 1989).

## Further reading

- ▶ Rouchdy (1992b) is the first description of Arabic in the US.
- ▶ Rouchdy (2002) analyzes more broadly language contact and conflict, with a section devoted to Arabic in the diaspora.
- ▶ Owens (2000) collects essays on Arabic as a minority language, focusing on both *Spracheninseln* and diasporic Arabic, but introducing also historical and cross-ethnic perspectives.

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## Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	INDEF	indefinite
DEF	definite article	M	masculine
DIM	diminutive	NEG	negative
F	feminine	OBL	oblique
HESIT	hesitation	PL	plural
GEN	genitive	POSS	possessive pronoun
IMPF	imperfect (prefix conjugation)	PRF	perfect (suffix conjugation)
IND	indicative	SG	singular

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