Living with two languages: Arabic-speaking immigrant children's bilingual proficiency development

Morad Al-Sahafi

King Abdulaziz University

Abstract

This paper seeks to trace the process by which New Zealand-raised Arab immigrant children acquire their two languages, i.e. Arabic and English, and attempts to highlight the various stages and driving forces in this process. In particular, the focus is on the language-related experiences and views of 10 Arabic-speaking immigrant parents and their children concerning the process of bilingual language development. The findings based on data collected through semi-structured interviews and observation in the Arabic-speaking community in Auckland show that while development of the children’s English skills had been well taken care of by their English mainstream education and the New Zealand English-dominant society, most of the families’ efforts (and concerns) had been directed towards the development of children's Arabic skills. Arabic proficiency development among these families became associated with a two-front struggle, which required the transmission of two Arabic varieties (Standard and Colloquial), co-existing in a diglossic situation and both competing with English, the majority language. Generally, the participants in this study seemed to be aware of the rather unbalanced oral and literacy development in Arabic among the children. A number of factors were found to be collectively responsible for the children's gradual English superiority over Arabic, including, older school age children bringing English into the home environment, attending mainstream daycare centres and schools, and peer pressure to use English.

Keywords: language proficiency, Arabic-speaking, immigrant children, language maintenance.

Introduction

Language contact is the norm, not the exception. We would have a right to be astonished if we found any language whose speakers had successfully avoided contacts with all other languages for periods longer than one or two hundred years. (Thomason, 2001, p. 10)

As Thomason (2001) observes in the above quotation, contact between people of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds is not an unusual social phenomenon. However, language contact is more intense in today's globalized world as new advances in technology and means of transportation have considerably increased multinational expansion and different forms of transnational movement. Such contact nearly always involves a linguistic dimension where speakers of different languages meet and live either permanently or for extended periods of time. Such situations attract a wide range of scholarly attention that focuses on the linguistic consequences of language contact as well as on the social context and circumstances of contact situations.

In New Zealand, immigration represents a major source of language contact between English (the majority language of New Zealand) and other heritage/community languages (e.g. Greek, Samoan, Italian, Tongan, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Afrikaans, Arabic). Language contact in immigrant contexts, and elsewhere, can have a wide variety of linguistic outcomes (Fishman, 1989; Winford, 2003). Kaufman (2000), among others, identifies three main possible linguistic outcomes when immigrant children are exposed to the dominant language of the environment:
1. Language maintenance: as a result of immigrant group physical or social isolation leading to the employment of L1 as the primary mode of communication.

2. Bilingualism: when the immersion in L2 is coupled with maintaining open channels for communication in L1.

3. Language shift: when diminishing opportunities for communication in L1 leads to the development of language shift that triggers language attrition particularly among pre-puberty children.

Previous research on immigrant languages has shown that the majority language (L2) gradually displaces the immigrant language (L1) in many of its domains of use. This process of language shift influences the intergenerational transmission of the immigrant language, leading, in most cases within the course of three generations, to monolingualism in the majority language (see Baker, 2001). The transmission and maintenance of the immigrant minority language, therefore, represents one of the major challenges faced by many immigrant families in the host country (Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000; Fishman, 1991). For example, Taft and Cahill (1989) investigated language proficiency in Arabic and English among second generation Lebanese immigrant school children in Melbourne and found the children to be dominant in English in all of the four skills. The children’s superiority in English over Arabic was found to be greater in the reading and writing modes. Based on their findings, the researchers concluded that the fate of Arabic among these children was not promising in terms of both oral and literacy skills especially in the absence of Arabic written materials in most of the immigrants’ homes.

Research highlights the importance of the role of the family in the process of ethnic and linguistic continuity among immigrant minority children (Barkhuizen, 2006; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Pauwels, 2005; Schupbach, 2006; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002; Zhang, 2004). There is, however, a lack of research that explores the perceptions of fathers in this process. Fathers play an active role in parenting in many immigrant communities (see Kim & Starks, 2010). In typical Arab Muslim families, fathers act as the guardians of their families and consequently they usually play a visible and active role in parenting and are expected to play an equally important role in the process of language transmission in their families.

The present study explores the language-related experiences and perspectives of Arab immigrant fathers and their children concerning the process of children's bilingual development in the context of Auckland. In particular, this paper seeks to provide a detailed account of the process of bilingual proficiency development among New Zealand-raised Arab immigrant children. The paper also attempts to highlight the various stages and driving forces in this process. The next section provides a brief overview of the Arabic-speaking community in New Zealand. This is followed by a description of the participants as well as of the research methods employed in the study.

**New Zealand Arabic-speaking community**

Arabic-speaking immigrants constitute a relatively recent immigrant minority group in New Zealand whose number increased considerably during the 1990s. As a pluricentric language (Abd-el-Jawad, 1992; Clyne & Kipp, 1999), Arabic has been brought to New Zealand by Arabic-speaking immigrants from a range of different Arab countries, including Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco. The 2006 New Zealand Census shows that 9852 respondents claimed that they could ‘have a conversation about a lot of everyday things’ in Arabic (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The majority of Arabic-speaking immigrants have chosen to reside in Auckland, New Zealand largest and most cosmopolitan city.

Any discussion of the language situation in Arabic-speaking communities cannot overlook the existence of diglossia (Amara & Mari, 2002; Ferguson, 1959; Zughoul, 1980). Ferguson (1959) first used the concept of diglossia to refer to the coexistence of two genetically related varieties of the same language in a particular society. These two closely related varieties are in complementary distribution with each other. This means that the use of each variety is allocated to different communicative purposes, leading to the development of remarkably stable types of sociolinguistic situations. The two varieties are referred to as the high (H) variety and low (L) variety. The H variety is the one that is more prestigious and used for formal purposes such as writing religious texts and education. On the other hand, the L variety is used for informal spoken purposes such as everyday household conversation.

Arabic diglossia is demonstrated in the co-existence of two well-defined varieties in Arabic-speaking communities: the high variety (Classical/Fusha Arabic: the official language in all Arab countries) and the low variety (Colloquial Arabic; everyday spoken variety of the community). It is to be noted, however, that Colloquial Arabic is a collective term which refers to a wide range of non-standard Arabic varie-
ties existing along a dialect continuum. These dialects are the Arabic varieties that native speakers acquire as their mother tongue before they start learning the written standard through mainly formal education. Mutual intelligibility between these colloquial forms exists and varies depending on degree of interdialectal contact and geographical proximity. The influence of Arabic diglossia and the degree of correspondence between Standard Arabic and the colloquial forms are expected to have an impact on Arabic language proficiency development among the participant children in the present study.

Methods

Participants

Ten Arabic-speaking families residing in Auckland participated in this study. Social networking was used to identify and recruit the participants. The participant families immigrated to New Zealand from different Arab states including Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia and Morocco (see Table 1). The length of residence of these families ranged between 4 and 13 years with an average of nearly 9 years of residency in New Zealand. All families comprised of both parents and their children. All father participants and their wives were born and raised in the Arab world. The fathers' levels of education are relatively high and vary from secondary education to postgraduate level. In each participant family the father and one school-aged child were interviewed. Two of the children (Ali and Lama) were New Zealand-born and the remaining eight were foreign-born who came to New Zealand at an early age (below age 10) to attend New Zealand primary schools. At the time of the study, the children (5 males and 5 females, ranging in age from 8 to 14) were living with their families in Auckland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Father's education</th>
<th>Length of stay in NZ</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah* and her father</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>9 yrs</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>4 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali and his father</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>9 yrs</td>
<td>Undergraduate + Diploma</td>
<td>12 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umar and his father</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>12 yrs</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>11 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatima and her father</td>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>13 yrs</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>13 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adnan and his father</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>14 yrs</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>12 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nora and her father</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>12 yrs</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>9 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hassan and his father</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
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<td>Wael and his father</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>11 yrs</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>7 yrs</td>
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<td>Lama and her father</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>10 yrs</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>10 yrs</td>
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<td>Hend and her father</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>13 yrs</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
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* All participants' names are pseudonyms.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected by using in-depth semi-structured interviews and observation in the Arabic-speaking community. Participation Information sheets and Consent Forms were issued to the parents of the children and the children themselves. Each of the10 fathers was audio-recorded during a semi-structured interview. In addition, one school-age child of each father participant was interviewed after the father’s contribution. The interviews aimed to explore participants views and perceptions of the process of bilingual development among their children. Parents were asked to comment on their children's oral and literacy skills in Arabic and English. The children were also asked to comment on their bilingual language proficiency. Interviews were conducted either in Arabic or English, depending on their preference. Seven of the fathers chose Arabic. All children but one chose English.

In addition, observation in the Arabic-speaking community was conducted during the data collection process in order to provide a point of reference for interpreting the participants’ viewpoints in the interview (Krathwohl, 1998). For example, my participation in a wide range of activities at the Arabic-speaking community allowed me to informally observe and corroborate data from parent and child interviews with regard to the children's patterns of language proficiency and use.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interview transcripts were analyzed for recurring ideas and salient themes and patterns. Emergent themes pertinent
to the focus of the current study will be used as the basis for the analysis and discussion in the next section. The current study describes patterns of L1 and L2 development among Arabic-speaking immigrant children as reported by the participant children and their fathers.

**Findings and discussion**

In general, findings indicate that the children either acquired some Arabic in the home country prior to immigration or acquired it from their families in the new country, since Arabic was reported as the home language by all the parents in this study, particularly for parent-child interaction. Children's Arabic language and literacy proficiency levels appear to be influenced by age of arrival and length of residence. Several of the parents reported that their children arrived at an early age in New Zealand before receiving any formal Arabic language and literacy instruction in the home country. Nevertheless, the children arrived with an ability to speak the home variety of Arabic, the variety predominantly spoken in the original country both in the family and outside, and at a level appropriate to their age and experience. As Adnan’s father explained (Interview excerpts translated from Arabic are given in italics.):

> Adnan was six when he arrived in New Zealand and he didn’t join primary education in Tunisia. His spoken Arabic was good because, in fact, as a child in Tunisia, Arabic was the only language he was exposed to. This enriched his language… When he came to New Zealand, he was enrolled at the Arabic weekend school, his performance was really good. However, as time passes I feel that his Arabic level started to decline as a result of the introduction of English, which has taken a larger space at the expense of the Arabic language.

The fact that Colloquial Arabic is the predominant language spoken throughout the Arab world both within and outside the family domain assisted in establishing the children's spoken skills prior to immigration. For example, aged four when he arrived in New Zealand, Hassan was able to speak Arabic reasonably well, as observed during his interview and also as noted by his father:

> What helped us was that when Hassan came from Jordan, he was able to speak Arabic you know I mean the spoken Arabic which is the Jordanian dialect. So, at that time we were pretty concerned about him learning English but after a while we came to realize that we need not worry about his Arabic ability. Our problem is that he might now lose his Arabic.

For other New Zealand-born children or those who arrived as young infants, the process of Arabic language acquisition was triggered by exposure to the spoken Arabic variety in the home domain. The family, mainly the parents, represents the major source for spoken Arabic input in the host country (see also Al-Sahafi and Barkhuizen, 2006). Children with older siblings usually learned Arabic and English simultaneously in the sense that they learned Arabic from their parents and English through interactions with older siblings attending mainstream education. The next section seeks to trace the process by which Arab immigrant children acquire English.

**Children’s development of English proficiency**

The existence of older siblings was reported by the parents and their children as being a source of English input in the home domain since English was reported to be the preferred language used among siblings. This situation is exemplified by the case of Ali, a New Zealand-born child, as described by his father: "He started using both languages at the same time. He started learning English from his siblings and Arabic from me and his mother."

Another factor which appeared to play an important role in the process of English learning among the children was attending mainstream preschool centres. Enrolling children in mainstream daycare or preschool centres helped to accelerate the learning of English through regular language exposure, peer interactions, and peer pressure to “fit-in” to the new all-English environment. For example, Hassan joined his kindergarten as soon as he arrived in New Zealand at the age of four and this improved his English skills at the expense of his Arabic, as noted by his father:

> Hassan joined his kindergarten and started to learn English through interactions with other children there, and indeed we started to worry for his Arabic language. Based on my observation, he started to lose many of the Arabic words. Even though the English language is not his mother tongue, it has become richer.
Attending kindergarten was commonly regarded by the parents as a factor encouraging their children to shift away from using Arabic from an early age. For example, Lama’s father reported that Arabic was the main language his child used until she joined her kindergarten: “But when she came back and started talking about her kindy; what her teacher taught her; the songs she sang with the teacher, she used English.” For this reason, some of the families did not seem to be enthusiastic about enrolling their children in English preschools. Some parents, like Adnan’s father, chose not to have their children enrolled in a monolingual English kindergarten in order to maximize their children’s exposure to Arabic prior to formal school entry. As he explained:

I was keen that my kids become imbued with Arabic before starting their public English school. For this reason, I did not enrol them in kindergarten from an early age. I only enrolled them for two or three months in order for them to get used to the school atmosphere. I know, people here might not support this idea, but I deliberately did this in order to offer my children a chance to get imbued with Arabic.

Yet, for those families where both parents worked, keeping young children at home in order to delay the introduction of the second language was not an option. For example, Umar’s father told me he and his wife had to take their child, aged below two years, to a daycare centre as both of the parents were busy working. Consequences of such an early exposure to English were noticed by Umar’s father: “The first language he started speaking was English. He learned English before Arabic.”

The next important stage in the process of English learning among the children was going to school. New Zealand mainstream education is mainly English monolingual. In this regard, some of the parents recalled some of the difficulties faced by their children who arrived in New Zealand after school-starting age. Children’s accounts of their early days at school confirmed this:

Interviewer: What about your English school?
Wael: It was a little bit hard in the beginning. But then I got used to it.

Interviewer: Tell me about that. Tell me about your first days at the English school. Was it difficult? Do you remember having any problems?
Wael: It was hard when my classmates spoke to me at that time. But by looking at people speaking English all the time around me at the school, I started learning English. And all the studies I was doing was in English.

Similarly, Fatima, aged six when she arrived in New Zealand, articulated some of the problems she experienced, in particular finding new playmates and making friends due to her lack of English skills: “It was really difficult in the beginning. To say can I play with you, I had to buy people [laughs]. And I went to ESOL.” As mentioned by Fatima and other children, New Zealand mainstream schools provide ESOL support for immigrant and other ESL children in the form of pull-out ESOL classes. Parent and child participants praised the role of such ESOL support in helping children of immigrants improve their English proficiency and consequently their school performance.

When asked about the language they used socially or preferred to use with their Arabic-speaking classmates between classes and at recess times, the majority of children stated that they spoke English in order to include their non-Arabic speaking peers in conversation. These children said that they used English in order not to appear “rude” (Fatima’s interview) or “get in trouble” (Sarah’s interview). The children’s bilingual communicative sensitivity is evident in their comments on patterns of language use at school. Sarah, for example, thought that using Arabic with her Arab classmates and friends at the English mainstream school might cause her some problems:

We use English because if we start speaking Arabic, people will come to us and say, “You have to speak English! You have to speak English!” You are not allowed to speak that way because people will think that we say bad stuff about them while we are actually not. So we’d rather speak English because otherwise we’ll get into trouble.

In sum, the children developed their English proficiency fairly well. As noted above, a number of factors were collectively responsible for the children’s gradual English superiority over Arabic (Al-Sahafi, 2010), including (a) older school age siblings who routinely speak English at home with each other and provide early English exposure to their younger siblings, (b) attending mainstream daycare and preschool centres, (c) attending mainstream schools, and (d) peer pressure to speak English. Obviously, this process of English proficiency development among the children did not take place in a vacuum.
Undoubtedly, such a process had its impact on the parallel development of Arabic language and literacy among these children.

**Children’s development of Arabic proficiency**

Besides developing their English skills, the children were also expected by their parents to develop their Arabic skills. This section covers the Arabic oral and literacy proficiency of the children. It also describes their families’ language maintenance struggle with two varieties of Arabic which are in a diglossic relationship with each other: Fusha (standard) and Colloquial (nonstandard) Arabic.

**Living with two Arabic varieties**

As far as Arabic oral proficiency is concerned, all participants reported that they spoke a nonstandard national variety of Arabic in the home domain, which represented the single most important sphere and source for the children’s spoken Arabic input. The participants stated that their families spoke the national Arabic variety associated with their home country. For example, Adnan’s father explained,

> We speak the Tunisian dialect. It is with great regret that we do not use Fusha Arabic. Thus, when he [Adnan] sometimes hears or reads Fusha Arabic he faces difficulty in understanding the words. Why? Because he is not used to hearing Fusha… How can he learn Fusha? No one speaks to him in Fusha.

When asked to comment on their children’s Arabic proficiency, most of the parents believed that their children, to a greater or lesser extent, were able to understand and speak the Arabic dialect (or the vernacular) of their country of origin. At the same time, all the parents indicated that their children had low reading and writing skills, i.e. a low level of Arabic literacy. For example, Nora’s father stated that his 12 year old daughter, who was 3 when she arrived in New Zealand, had unbalanced Arabic proficiency:

> Good. If you talk to her she’d reply and communicate in a kind of natural way, I wouldn’t say she is very good but I would say she is good… her reading and writing skills are weak; they do not exceed 15-20%.

Another parent, Hassan’s father, was aware that his child, despite his seemingly good Arabic ability, did not reach a level appropriate to his age: “According to his age, he is supposed to reach grade two of primary education, but I can say he is at a grade one level. So if he was in Jordan, his Arabic would definitely be better.” The children’s Arabic proficiency was reported to inversely correlate with their length of stay in New Zealand. As Sarah’s father observed,

> It is true that she [Sarah] currently maintains a good command of Arabic, but as she grows older and as we stay longer in New Zealand, she has started to lose her vocabulary because she does not practice them very often. If you do not use the word, you will forget and lose it even if it is still there stored in the memory.

The children seemed to agree with their fathers’ accounts regarding their unbalanced Arabic oral and literacy skills. In their interviews, they indicated that their Arabic oral skills were better than their literacy skills. For example, Adnan, a 14 year-old child, stated that “I am a fluent speaker of Arabic…Yeah, I speak very good Arabic compared to other people you know” but “reading and writing is a little bit weaker than speaking because since I came here I’ve had only one day that I learn Arabic, which is at the Arabic [weekend] school, and the rest of the week is all in English”. Like Adnan, several of the children singled out limited exposure to reading and writing as a major cause for their apparently weaker Arabic literacy ability.

To this, Nora, a 12 year old girl, added another factor not conducive to Arabic literacy development among Arab immigrant children: lack of opportunity to practise reading and writing in Arabic. According to Nora, her Arabic literacy development did not match her oral skills development because of a lack of opportunity to engage in Arabic literacy activities: “I don’t do much writing and reading. Yeah. You do more speaking. You hear, then you say.”

Nora’s comment reflects the fact that literacy in English represents the main literacy required for the children’s mainstream education as well as for their successful functioning in the wider society. Sarah, a nine year-old girl, explicitly commented on the dilemma she sometimes faced in understanding Fusha/literacy Arabic despite her good Arabic oral skills.

> Sarah: I know Arabic well but sometimes when they speak Fusha Arabic, I do not know that much.
Sarah’s comments summarize quite nicely some of the problems Arab children face when they start learning Arabic literacy due to its diglossic nature. Sometimes the words are different in Standard and Colloquial Arabic and sometimes the words are quite similar but their pronunciation is different due to the application of phonological and grammatical rules associated with the standard variety. According to Ennaji (2005, p. 48), Arab school children often develop “a mental block” which becomes apparent when they have to switch between these two varieties of the Arabic language.

To lessen the influence of the home variety and also to increase children’s exposure to Fusha (literacy) Arabic, some fathers reported enrolling their children from an early age in the Qur’an classes held at many New Zealand Islamic centres, as Wael’s father explained in the following excerpt:

There is no doubt that the existence of Colloquial Arabic has its impact on our children. But for my children, they have a daily Qur’an class and indeed there is nothing like reading the Holy Qur’an in strengthening the Arabic language faculty and developing a good sense and taste of the language. So we can say that the influence of Colloquial Arabic is less here because there is a corresponding daily support and exposure to the right use of Arabic through the daily Qur’an lesson. This is in addition to the Arabic Sunday school, which represents another source for the learning of the correct Arabic through reading and writing. If we stop sending children to the Qur’an classes and the Arabic school, Colloquial Arabic will become a real problem, and then the child will not be able to understand Fusha Arabic.

As is evident in the above excerpt, Arabic use in religion is a factor supporting Arabic literacy development. Arabic is the language of Islam and its use in the religious domain supports its maintenance. While stressing the importance of Arabic literacy education for their children, many parents described the scope for Arabic literacy learning at the Arabic heritage school as being limited due to its meeting only once a week. The impact of Islam on the maintenance and intergenerational transmission of Arabic (Arabic literacy in particular) is well documented in the literature (see for example, Al-Sahafi & Barkhuizen, 2006; Clyne & Kipp, 1999; Fishman, 1991).

In sum, the findings indicate that all the children in this study had the ability to understand and speak Arabic and in particular, the Arabic variety spoken in the family. However, there was some variation in Arabic proficiency among them. The findings further illustrate that none of the children had achieved balanced oral and literacy proficiency in Arabic. That is, all of the children were reported to have lower Arabic literacy skills as a result of a reportedly limited exposure to the written standard. Taft and Cahill (1989) reported a similar pattern among Arab immigrant children in Australia.

The diglossic speech communities the families came from appeared to have an impact on the process of Arabic language learning and development among the children. The families’ spoken home varieties were non-standard varieties of Arabic. The transmission of this non-standard variety of Arabic needed to be complemented by the teaching of the standard variety in order to ensure that the child developed his/her literacy skills. Literacy acquisition and development in minority languages, i.e. local literacy, is a key factor in intergenerational language maintenance (Fishman, 2001; Kosonen, 2008).

Conclusion

This study considers the process of L1 and L2 proficiency development among Arabic-speaking immigrant children in the context of Auckland. Unsurprisingly, as virtually all immigrant children do (Fillmore, 1991; Shin, 2005), children in this study were gradually but surely becoming proficient users of English. As reported by their parents and as observed during their interviews, the children felt more comfortable speaking English than Arabic. In their interviews, the children noted their superior English skills and at the same time their lack of appropriate Arabic literacy skills. The children stated that English was the
only language they were exposed to in mainstream schools. As one of the child participants explained, “from the kindergarten and from then they just taught us English.” Other factors supporting English acquisition and development among the children include older school age children bringing English into the home environment, attending mainstream daycare/preschool centers, and peer pressure to use English.

While development of the children’s English oral and literacy skills had been well taken care of by the English mainstream school and the New Zealand English-dominant society, most of the families’ efforts (and concerns) had been directed towards the development of children’s Arabic proficiency. The study has shown that most of the children did maintain their home language to a certain extent, especially their Arabic oral skills. Generally, the children’s ability to understand and speak Arabic was described as much more advanced than their Arabic reading and writing ability. The children tended to acquire and speak the Arabic variety used by their parents. It should be noted, however, that children’s exposure to non-standard spoken Arabic in the home domain is insufficient to initiate the process of Arabic literacy development. This is particularly so for the children whose home spoken Arabic diverged considerably from the written standard.

As previously noted, development of home language literacy is an important factor in language maintenance. Attempting to do so requires providing children with regular exposure to Standard Arabic in the country of immigration. Although contexts that provide the children with such exposure are constantly accessible in daily life in Arabic-speaking countries, such formal contexts are limited when living outside the Arab world, particularly in the context of New Zealand where Arabic is not yet visible in the public domain. Therefore, parental involvement and participation are essential to provide children with a variety of formal and informal literacy learning activities using the standard variety. For example, families can make use of modern communication technology such as the Internet to provide their children with plenty of interaction with relatives and friends in the home country. In addition, families can encourage their children to use Arabic resources on the Internet (e.g., newspapers, magazines) to maximize the children’s exposure to up-to-date uses of Arabic. Such opportunities for Arab children to regularly use the home language in its spoken and written forms can contribute to its promotion and maintenance when appropriate guidance and support are provided by their families.
References


