Editor-in-chief's introduction

Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics (*AJAL*) is a forum where scholars share their views and research findings on topics related to the linguistic situation in the Arab world, and Arabic in the world. It enables contributors to transcend barriers, but also to build bridges. Indeed, contributors living and working in different parts of the world transcend geopolitical barriers through *AJAL* by making use of technological innovations that globalisation has made available. They converge at valorising the deep-seated specificities of the Arabic language, which resist the homogenising effects of globalisation, while contributing to reinforcing pluralism across languages and among languages speakers.

The contributors to this *Special Issue* investigated phonological, morphological, and lexical development among children, most of whom of Arab origin. They reviewed current theories and analytical tools; proposed procedures that take into consideration distinguishing morpho-syntactic characteristics of the Arabic language and its varieties; and compared their research findings to those obtained on the acquisition of the same linguistic components in other languages. Their main aim has been to engage with their peers in what I called in my Introduction to the Inaugural Issue of *AJAL* "global exchange and development of knowledge."

This *Special Issue* addresses topics related to children's acquisition of a number of varieties of Arabic; Yemeni-Ibbi, Egyptian, Qatari, and Modern Standard. It highlights the variation and complexity of a language that is diglossic and chiefly synthetic, and it draws attention to the dearth of research conducted on the acquisition of this language. The interest in the linguistic development of Arab children with specific language impairment is salutary, and the attempt at

advancing effective diagnostics and treatment methods for this category of children is very opportune. The comparisons between studies of typically developing children and atypically developing children acquiring different languages reflects a clear commitment on the part of the contributors to position research on Arabic and Arabic speakers in world research. By relating phoneme to grapheme and morpheme to word recognition and spelling, they also address the issue of literacy development among learners of Modern Standard Arabic and highlight the need for developing adequate teaching strategies and techniques that take into consideration the idiosyncrasies of spoken, but most importantly written Arabic.

To pursue global exchange and development of knowledge in language acquisition studies, further research is needed on the acquisition of local varieties of Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic and, more particularly, on the interface between these two levels of diglossia. We need to conduct more longitudinal studies of children's phonological and morpho-syntactic progression from the babbling stage to the holophrastic stage, up to the sentence stage. We also need to approach their utterances as performatives taking place in different encounters and reflecting their socio-cognitive development and psychological states. Such studies would expand a prevalent reductionist "typical vs. atypical" classification of children, provide more insightful interpretations of their utterances, and yield more refined descriptions of their linguistic repertoires. They would also contribute to research in literacy, which has become more than ever multilingual, polysemiotic, and multimodal.

Eleven authors and co-authors contributed the five articles in this *Special Issue*. They are erudite scholars teaching and conducting research at prestigious universities and research centres in Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, India, the US, and Britain. They are *linguists without borders* who are interested in the study and learning of Arabic.

Professor Abdessatar Mahfoudhi and Dr Fauzia Abdalla, *Guest Editors* for this Issue, screened typescripts and Abstracts submitted to the Journal. Charles Haynes, Sahbi Hidri, Gad Elbeheri, Mahmoud Emam, Boutheina Sayadi, John Everatt, Martha Crago, and Habib Abdesslem read and commented on the papers the *Guest Editors* sent them; they recommended the five articles in this Issue. They accompanied writers whose papers needed attending to through the *Guest Editors* and in consultation with the *Manager* and the *Editor-in-chief* of the Journal.

On behalf of the Editorial Board of the *Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics* and the Guest Editors for this Issue, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who trusted us with their research work. I hope this *Special Issue* will stimulate our readers into generating good quality research that we would be honoured to publish in *AJAL*, the Journal that does not charge its readers or contributors any fees and whose Editorial Board, Guest Editors, Reviewers, and Technicians have chosen to be rewarded in the hardest of currencies, *Knowledge*.

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