Does Arabizi Constitute a Threat to Arabic?

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Abstract

The main goal of this study was to empirically examine the impact of Arabizi (i.e. writing Arabic with English script) on Palestinian students' Arabic language development. This article seeks to enter the debate over the merits and risks of widespread Arabizi use with a quantitative study of its effects on Arab students. In order to assess whether internet use and Arabizi use affect performance in Arabic fluency, we administered an Arabic spelling test, followed by a brief survey assessing students' use of Arabizi to 420 eighth grade students in Bethlehem government schools. The overall results show that using Arabizi was correlated with weaker scores on the spelling test, indicating either that Arabizi use harms students Arabic capabilities or that other factors cause students to use Arabizi and to have weak Arabic spelling skills. However, more research must be done to tease out these differences and look beyond correlation.

Key words: Arabizi, Arabic script, language development, sociolinguistics

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