

## Variations of Word Usage in Arabic Media: A Study of Arabic Newspapers

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### *Abstract*

*The main idea behind practising Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is to standardise the use of the Arabic language in all Arab countries, especially in official communication, be it written or spoken. This is due to their belief that language is one of the important elements contributing to their unity and sense of brotherhood as they are separated by different legitimate territories. This effort has more or less succeeded in uniting them in certain aspects. In reality, however, the writer has found that the practice has yet to ensure the standardisation of the Arabic language, particularly in terms of word usage style among countries. Taking news articles as data, this paper aims to highlight the differences that occur in word usage in seven Arabic newspapers from different countries, with a corpus of around 85,000 words from the World Affairs section. The analysis also includes articles published in two Arabic newspapers from non-Arab countries in order to relate to the role of geography in creating word usage style in publishing. The Wordsmith 5.0 computer programme was applied to the corpus by extracting all words into frequency lists and concordance. The results show that the Arabic newspapers contributed greatly to the creation of word usage variations, specifically in terms of spelling, loan word acceptance, verb transitivity to particle, phrase combination and plural formation.*

*Keywords: Modern Standard Arabic, word frequency, Arabic newspaper, usage differences, stylistic*

### INTRODUCTION

Arabic media, especially newspapers, has made significant contributions to the development of readers' knowledge and thinking level (Munir, 2010). In the field of language learning, academicians consider newspapers to be a very helpful tool in developing language knowledge and proficiency among learners (Ali, 2011). One of the important aspects of a newspaper's language characteristics is its word usage, which may affect the readers' understanding of what they read. Therefore, newspapers as a public medium information

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resource use words to fulfil their role of building readers' character and shaping their mentality (Reah, 2002).

Arabic newspapers tend to use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as its medium of news delivery (Abdelali, 2004). Beyond that, MSA – also known as *Fus'ha* – is the standard form of Arabic within the Arab world; it has a unifying function, with its main purpose being to serve as the official language of communication for the Arab world. Although it claims to use a single standard Arabic language, variations and differences still occur in Arabic newspapers (Abdelali, 2004). David Ford (n.d) studied the Arabic language information structure and found that variations do exist in MSA.

Accordingly, this places emphasis on variations that occur in news articles in several Arabic newspapers, including two from non-Arab countries. To the writer's knowledge, a similar study was previously conducted by Ahmed Abdelali (2004), which explored variations in MSA language usage in 11 Arabic newspapers. However, his study focused solely on newspapers from Arab countries in contrast to the current study, which includes Arabic newspapers from non-Arab countries.

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The issue of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is not a new one; in fact, it has been discussed by Arab scholars for more than ninety years (Mol, 2003). The issue was raised when they realised the urgency of uniting the Arab nations, which were separated by international border territories at the time. To realise this aim, steps were taken to ensure the united and standardised use of Arabic in all Arabic-speaking countries. This move was in line with the view of Holes (2004), who noted MSA as the official language of communication among the Arab people.

Despite the claim that a single, standard Arabic language is used in the newspapers, slight differences commonly occur, especially in terms of word usage. This phenomenon can be noticed clearly when comparing newspaper articles from different Arab countries. This was mentioned by Abdelali (2004), who noted some differences in word usage. Zeinab Ibrahim (2009) found that Egyptian newspaper readers could not understand certain words featured in Lebanese and Moroccan newspapers. A study by Parkinson (2008) found that there were differences between newspapers from different countries in terms of sentence subject agreement. He also found that the Egyptian and Kuwaiti newspapers had relatively low use of feminine agreement compared to *al-Hayat* from the United Kingdom. Bushra Zawaydeh and Zina Saadi (2006) declared that Arabic orthography is one of the Arabic features that cause such

variations. Meanwhile, Wolfram (2005) mentioned that the grammar of the language remains one of the most potential factors behind variation.

The emergence of variations in the Arabic language can be associated with several factors. One of the important factors is geography. According to Ditters (1991), variation in the use of MSA depends on factors such as the progress of time and geographical spreading by way of interference with colloquial varieties. Arabic is usually divided according to region. Some scholars divide the Arabic language into three broad regional variations, namely the Arabic of the Arabian Peninsula and Mesopotamia (including Iraq), the Eastern Gulf (including Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen) and the Maghreb (including Morocco and Algeria). However, Fischer and Jastrow (in Mol, 2003) divided Arabic dialects into five broad groups which represent five regions, distinguishing Egyptian Arabic (including Egypt and Libya) and Syro-Palestinian Arabic (including Lebanon, Syria and Palestine) from the three above-mentioned variations.

The effect of local dialects on newspaper writing is also an important factor. This was stressed by Kaye (1987), who stated that although there are many similarities between the dialects of the Eastern Arab and the Western Arab regions, it is not possible for people from different regions to understand each other completely. The use of locals dialect in Arabic newspapers sometimes becomes preferable when it is better understood by readers than the standard language (*al-lughah al-fusha*), especially for news articles on national issues. This leads to a consideration of the differences in word usage between newspapers from different countries and regions, as most of them have their own dialects.

Another factor that leads to word usage variation in newspapers is evolution due to the effects of colonisation in different countries. Most of the Arab countries were colonised by three major European countries, namely Britain, France and Italy. As a result, several Arab countries were closely affected (Mol, 2003). It is also a major factor in recognising loan words taken from foreign languages. As a result, many foreign words that were introduced into the Arab countries are now used in Arabic newspapers and daily communication (Abdelali, 2004).

#### AIM OF STUDY

The aims of this study are stated below:

- i. To explore word usage variations between Arabic newspapers via word frequency analysis of the World Affairs section
- ii. To identify the main word categories which commonly cause variations in world news

- iii. To relate word usage variations in Arabic newspapers to their country of publication

### DATA COLLECTION

The use of text in analysing word frequency is an effective way to explore language characteristics because it provides information about language styles in word usage. In newspapers in particular, analysing news articles that are published in different countries could exhibit different styles of word usage.

In order to achieve the targeted objectives, data was gathered from the World Affairs section in seven Arabic newspapers, including two published in non-Arab countries. The World Affairs section was selected because it is a popular and regular section in the newspapers (Wanta & Hu, 1993). The importance of this section can be justified by the fact that almost every major newspaper in every country has a specific section for world news. In total, seven newspapers were selected for this study: *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), *Al-Jazirah* (Saudi Arabia), *Al-Safir* (Lebanon), *Al-Sabah al-Jadid* (Iraq), *Al-Khabar* (Algeria), *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* (United Kingdom) and *Al-Furat* (Australia). The five newspapers from Arab countries represent the five Arab regions based on Fischer and Jastrow's classification.

Table 1: Newspapers Based on Country of Publication

Arab Countries		Non-Arab Countries	
Newspaper	Origin	Newspaper	Origin
<i>Al-Ahrām</i>	Egypt	<i>Al-Quds al-'Arabi</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Al-Jazīrah</i>	Saudi Arabia	<i>Al-Furāt</i>	Australia
<i>Al-Khabar</i>	Algeria		
<i>Al-Safir</i>	Lebanon		
<i>Al-Ṣabāḥ al-Jadīd</i>	Iraq		

The selection of newspapers was based on their daily circulation and digital availability. The data included 211 news texts of around 87,000 words, which were gathered in thirty days continuously between December 2007 and January 2008. The process of data gathering also took into consideration the fact that some newspapers are not published seven days a week, especially on Sunday and Friday. It is also need to be highlighted the main issues that become the focus of most Arabic newspapers at that moment are the issue of Iraq post war, Iran nuclear programme and Palestine issue.

Table 2: Number of Words by Newspaper

No	Newspaper	World
1	<i>Al-Ahrām</i>	12,425
2	<i>Al-Jazīrah</i>	12,554
3	<i>Al-Khabar</i>	12,787
4	<i>Al-Safīr</i>	12,440
5	<i>Al-Ṣabāḥ al-Jadīd</i>	12,465
6	<i>Al-Quds al-'Arabi</i>	11,848
7	<i>Al-Furāt</i>	12,950
<b>Total</b>		<b>87,469</b>

The World Affairs section in a daily newspaper normally contains several articles. In order to select only one article daily from each newspaper, the number of words in the articles was the main consideration. Therefore, the articles that contributed best towards reducing the word count gap between newspapers were selected. This enabled the comparison process between newspapers and ensured more reliable findings. As shown in Table 2, *Al-Quds al-Arabi* has the least number of words with 11,848 words.

### METHODOLOGY

The data was analysed using the Wordsmith 5.0 computer software, which was specifically built to analyse language style in a statistical manner. It is programmed to produce frequency lists, run concordance searches, calculate collocations for particular words, find keywords in a text and examine their distribution. In addition, the software enables comparisons of language use in texts. This is in line with Cook and Stevenson's (2010) suggestion that "any Natural Language Processing (NLP) such as this on recently produced text will encounter new words" and make comparisons between texts from different countries possible.

Prior to the analysis, the data needs to be indexed (grammatically tagged) to ensure that the software produces accurate results. For this purpose, the writer tagged words that could possibly cause ambiguity such as words with similar spelling but different annotations. For example, the word *ta-ha-da-tha* might be one of several forms of a verb (*tahaddatha*, *tahduthu*, *tuhdithu*) or a noun (*tahadduth*). In addition, Arabic words that are combined into one character should be separated because the selected software is only capable of recognising words by detecting the characters between two spaces. For example, the word *ليسألهم* (*to ask them*) contains three words in one character. Thus, they should be separated by putting spaces in between them to represent the three characters.

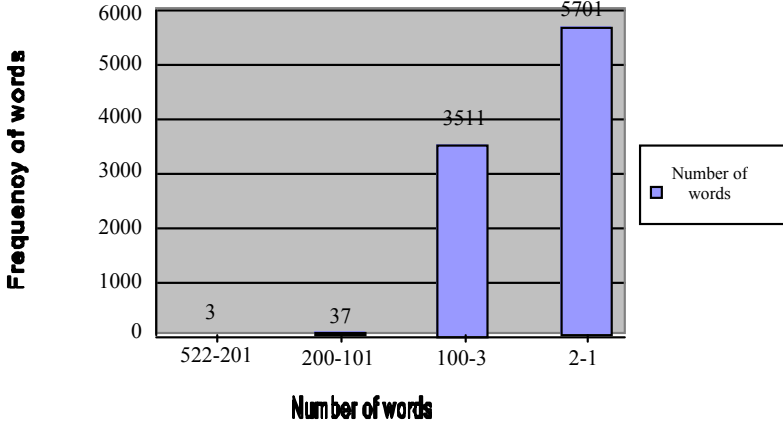
## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results were divided into two types: firstly, word usage variations for the whole data without segregating the newspapers and secondly, word usage variations between newspapers. The first analysis explored the variation trend in Arabic word usage in the World Affairs section in general, while the second analysis was more in-depth and compared word usage between newspapers from different countries. This is due to the fact that the country of publication, including non-Arab countries, may somehow be a major part of the affective factors that lead to the situation. The analysis was determined based on frequency of occurrence for each analysed word. Upon discussing the results of the analysis, the researcher presented all findings that showed signs of variation based on the most prominent differences in each word category.

### General Description of the List

The results show that the frequency list contains 9,252 different words, listed from the highest frequency at the top to the lowest frequency at the bottom. A normal frequency list pattern subsequently emerges. In general, there are more words sharing the same frequency rating at the bottom of the list than at the top. For example, the top ten words in the list have different frequencies, starting with the word الرئيس (*leader*) with 522 occurrences followed by the verb قال (*said*) with 326 occurrences. The first pair of words that shared a similar frequency rating were إسرائيل (*Israel*) and إيران (*Iran*), both with 135 occurrences and ranking at 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> on the list respectively. There are several other words that have different frequencies, but the overall trend is for frequency ratings to be shared by increasing numbers of words the further down they are on the list. A large number of words (4,202) occurred just once and ranked from 5051<sup>st</sup> to 9252<sup>nd</sup> on the list. Graph 1 represents this phenomenon.

Graph 1: Number of Words By Frequency From Top to Bottom of The List



Graph 1 shows the distribution of words by frequency. Only three words occurred with a frequency between 522 and 201, followed by 37 words with 200-101 occurrences, 3,511 words with 100 to 3 occurrences and 5,701 words with 2 or 1 occurrences. Although the graph uses inconsistent scales to reduce the differences between them, the differences are still large, with the 2-1 occurrence range standing out and accounting for the largest percentage of words on the list.

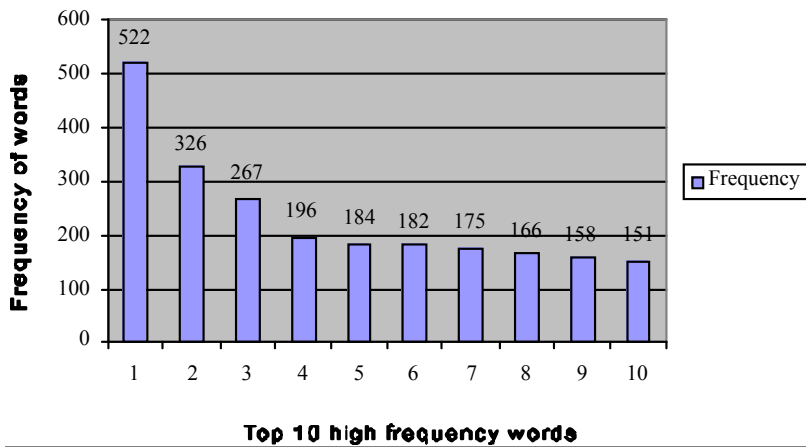
Table 3: Top 10 Most Frequently Used Words in World Affairs

No	Word	Freq	%	Text	%
1	رئيس (leader)	522	0.50	159	75.36
2	قال (said)	326	0.31	143	67.77
3	حكومة (government)	267	0.26	98	46.45
4	قوات (force)	196	0.19	75	35.55
5	جيش (army)	184	0.18	69	32.70
6	مجلس (council)	182	0.17	71	33.65
7	مؤتمر (conference)	175	0.17	49	23.22
8	وزير (minister)	166	0.16	53	25.12
9	يوم (day)	158	0.15	88	41.71
10	عام (year)	151	0.14	82	38.86

Table 3 shows that the word رئيس had the highest frequency with 522 occurrences (0.50%). The first three words, رئيس, قال (326 times) and حكومة (267 times) each occurred more than 201 times. In terms of their dispersion

in the texts, رئيس is the highest with appearances in 159 out of 211 texts (75.36%), followed by قال in 143 texts (67.77%) and حكومة in 267 texts (46.45%). The statistics show that higher frequency does not necessarily correspond with occurrence in more texts. For example, the word مؤتمر, with 175 occurrences, only appeared in 49 texts, while the word عام had only 151 occurrences but appeared in 82 texts. This leads to the conclusion that the former is more specific and used in relation to particular events, while the latter is more general and may appear in relation to many kinds of world events. In terms of semantics, most of the high frequency words have a strong relationship with world events, which frequently cover war, world crises, political leadership, governments, international organisations and so on. For greater clarity, the top ten high frequency words are presented in Graph 2.

Graph 2: Top 10 Words in The Frequency List



Graph 2 shows that the word with the highest frequency, رئيس, had 522 occurrences, which is dramatically more than the second, قال, with 326 – a difference of 196. The graph also shows that the gaps between the second and third, 57 ( $326-267 = 59$ ) and between the third and fourth, 71 ( $267-196 = 71$ ) were more moderate. The graph then slopes more gently from 196 occurrences for the fourth word to 151 for the tenth word, the differences between words being 12 between the fourth and fifth, 2 between the fifth and sixth, 7 between the sixth and seventh, 9 between the seventh and eighth, 8 between the eighth and ninth and 7 between the ninth and tenth. A rough conclusion may be drawn that at the top of the frequency list, three words clearly dominate the list in the World Affairs sections: رئيس, قال and حكومة.



### Word Usage Variation in General

The results were divided into two popular categories in the Arabic language, which are noun and verb as described below:

#### Noun

##### *Sound and Broken Plural*

The analysis investigated which plural form was used when both a sound plural and a broken plural were available in Arabic. Nouns with only one plural form were not analysed.

Table 4: Use of Broken and Sound Plurals in World Affairs Section

No.	Singular	Broken Plural	Freq	Sound Plural	Freq
1	تقرير ( <i>report</i> )	تقارير	10	تقريرات	0
2	نشاط ( <i>activity</i> )	أنشطة	8	نشاطات	10
3	مشكلة ( <i>problem</i> )	مشاكل	8	مشكلات	5
4	مشروع ( <i>project</i> )	مشاريع	8	مشروعات	8
5	رسالة ( <i>letter</i> )	رسائل	5	رسالات	0
6	تدبير ( <i>management</i> )	تدابير	9	تدبيرات	0
7	طريق ( <i>way</i> )	طرق	8	طريقات	0
8	نشط ( <i>active</i> )	نشطاء	5	نشطون	0

Table 4 shows a tendency in Arabic newspapers to use the broken plural noun more than the sound plural. In the examples above, the opposite is true in the case of only two words: نشاطات which occurred more frequently than the broken plural form and مشروعات, where the sound and broken plurals occurred with equal frequency. Furthermore, the broken plurals of five nouns (تقارير, رسائل, تدابير, طرق, نشطاء) were used to the exclusion of their sound plurals.

##### *Variation in Phrases*

The purpose of analysing this kind of word was to reveal which phrases (including proper names and ordinary phrases) characterised world news. Table 5 illustrates the occurrence of these phrases.

Table 5: Examples of Phrases in World Affairs

Noun	No.	Phrase	Freq	Total
الشرق (East)	1	الشرق الأوسط (Middle East)	31	33
	2	الشرق الأوسط الجديد (New Middle East)	1	
	3	الشرق الأوسط العربي (Arab Middle East)	1	
الأطلسي (Atlantic)	1	الحلف الأطلسي (Atlantic Treaty)	10	21
	2	حلف شمال الأطلسي (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)	9	
	3	حلف شمال الأطلنطي (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)	2	
البيت (house)	1	البيت الأبيض (White House)	17	18
	2	البيت الأسود (Black House)	1	
المحتلة (occupied)	1	القدس المحتلة (occupied Jerusalem)	4	5
	2	الأرض المحتلة (occupied land)	1	
إسرائيل (Israel)	1	دولة إسرائيل (state of Israel)	2	3
	2	حكومة إسرائيل (Israeli government)	1	

Table 5 shows five examples of words used in phrases. The use of the word الشرق in الأوسط (33 times) shows that the newspapers frequently refer to the Middle East, but the new expressions الشرق الأوسط الجديد and الشرق الأوسط العربي show its variation. The existence of the last two phrases shows that Arabic newspapers use other terms to refer to Arab countries. This phenomenon can be related to the existence of the state of Israel among the Arab countries, leading to the formation of a new term to take into account their new unwelcome neighbor. For the word الأطلسي, the table shows that the newspapers regularly use both الحلف الأطلسي and حلف شمال الأطلسي to refer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (10 and nine occurrences respectively). The analysis indicates that no difference in meaning was implied, but that the shorter form was used when the term was repeated in the same article. With respect to the word البيت, the result shows that the newspapers promoted the use of البيت الأبيض rather than البيت الأسود to refer to the White House in the United States (17 and one occurrences respectively). With regard to the word المحتلة, the table shows that it was incorporated with القدس والأرض to refer to the occupation of Palestine. The use of phrases such as دولة إسرائيل and حكومة إسرائيل, with two and one frequencies respectively, shows the indirect recognition of the state of Israel in the Arab world. It may be said that the use of words in combination with others as phrases has resulted in the creation of some new terms that have caused variation.

## Verb

### *Verbs with One Semantic Meaning*

Variations can also be clearly identified in verbs that have similar meanings or various verbs from a single family of verbs that have similar meanings. The results below show several such examples.

Table 6: Verb Frequency by Semantic Family

No.	Meaning	No.	Verb	Frequency
1	Speaking	1	قال ( <i>said</i> )	326
		2	يقول ( <i>say</i> )	29
		3	تحدث ( <i>spoke</i> )	6
		4	يتحدث ( <i>speak</i> )	5
		5	يتكلم ( <i>talk</i> )	1
2	Affirmation	1	أكد ( <i>confirmed</i> )	111
		2	يؤكد ( <i>confirm</i> )	14
		3	أثبت ( <i>affirmed</i> )	2
3	Killed	1	قتل ( <i>killed</i> )	35
		2	استشهد ( <i>killed</i> )	3
4	Watching	1	شهد ( <i>witnessed</i> )	4
		2	يرى ( <i>see</i> )	18
		3	رأى ( <i>saw</i> )	7
		4	يشهد ( <i>witness</i> )	4
		5	ينظر ( <i>look</i> )	3
		6	نظر ( <i>looked</i> )	1
5	Announcement	1	أعلن ( <i>announced</i> )	85
		2	يعلن ( <i>announce</i> )	5
		3	أخبر ( <i>informed</i> )	2
6	Meeting	1	يلتقي ( <i>meet</i> )	14
		2	يواجه ( <i>face</i> )	10
		3	التقى ( <i>met</i> )	5
		4	وجه ( <i>faced</i> )	1
		5	يقابل ( <i>encounter</i> )	1

7	Success in achieving something	1	(succeed) ينجح	7
		2	(confirmed) حقق	6
		3	نجح (succeeded)	4
		4	(confirm) يحقق	4
		5	يفوز (win)	2
		6	فاز (won)	1
8	End	1	تم (completed)	75
		2	بتم (complete)	57
		3	انتهى (ended)	2

Table 6 shows that Arabic newspapers may use different verbs in one semantic phrase to express the same meaning as evidenced in the 'Meaning' column. For example, the verbs أعلن and أخبر share a similar meaning, which is to indicate an announcement. The result also highlights many important instances of some verbs being used more frequently than others with similar meanings due to the varying requirements of different situations. The fact that meaning differences still exist between verbs in one semantic family also contribute to the phenomenon. For example, the word أعلن was used more frequently than the verb أخبر with 90 (85+5) and two frequencies each.

#### *Verb with Transitivity*

The main purpose of this analysis is to determine whether news articles have special characteristics in terms of verb use with particles (prepositions). This is because Arabic has a commonly practised grammar style, which is to incorporate certain verbs with specific particles. Therefore, this particular analysis is very important to prove the availability of other styles aside from verb and particle usage in Arabic newspapers. In order to achieve this purpose, several verbs that give a clearer picture of newspaper writing styles from this perspective were selected.

Table 7: Use of Verbs With Particles

Verb	No.	Particle	Frequency	Total
أصيب ( <i>hit by</i> )	1	-	17	28
	2	بـ ( <i>with</i> )	11	
وصل ( <i>arrived</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	8	14
	2	-	6	
تسعى ( <i>strive</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	7	14
	2	لـ ( <i>for</i> )	7	
تهدف ( <i>to aim</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	5	7
	2	لـ ( <i>for</i> )	2	

تعلق ( <i>related</i> )	1	(with)ـ	11	<b>12</b>
	2	-	1	
دعى ( <i>called</i> )	1	(to)إلى	22	<b>24</b>
	2	(for)لـ	2	

Table 7 shows that several verbs may be used with different particles other than the regularly used particle. For example, the verb أصيب (*hit by*) was used both without the particle ـ (with) to refer to the state of being struck by a kind of sickness, as well as with the usual particle ـ. The use of this verb with the particle ـ is a common combination, and excluding the particle may confuse readers as to the kind of injury sustained. For the verb وصل, the table shows that it was used in a rather similar frequency both in its normal usage with the particle إلى (*to*) and without it. The verb تسعى was used equally with the particles إلى and لـ (seven occurrences each). As the use of this verb with إلى is common, the existence of لـ can be related to the effects of other languages, especially English, since the latter uses ‘strive for’ to mean ‘exert strenuous effort to achieve something’, which may be translated as لـ تسعى in Arabic. The verb تهدف was used with the particle إلى to indicate an ‘aim or objective’. However, the table proves that the variation occurs in this particular verb by using لـ to replace إلى. The same occurs to other verbs, such as verb تعلق, which is normally paired with ـ, and دعى with إلى.

### Word Variation in Different Newspapers

The purpose of this analysis is to enable a direct comparison of newspapers published in different countries and an in-depth study of the language variation for specific word categories. The results of this analysis determined whether variations that occurred in newspaper writing were affected by their country of publication. Three word categories that showed clear variations in word usage in Arabic newspapers were identified as follows:

- i. Word variation in the high frequency list
- ii. Word variation by phrase
- iii. Word variation by transitivity
- iv. Word variation by spelling

#### *Word Variation in the High Frequency List*

The results indicate several important points that could potentially indicate differences between newspapers in the high frequency list.

Table 8: Top Five Words by Newspaper

Newspaper	1	F	2	F	3	F	4	F	5	F
<i>Al-Ahram</i>	رئيس	57	أمريكية	53	إيران	52	أمريكي	44	قوات	40
<i>Al-Furat</i>	العراق	73	جيش	50	رئيس	50	عراقي	41	عراقية	37
<i>Al-Jazirah</i>	رئيس	94	قال	66	حكومة	52	وزير	45	قوات	43
<i>Al-Khabar</i>	رئيس	122	حكومة	65	يوم	46	إسرائيلي	42	انتخاب	42
<i>Al-Quds al-'Arabi</i>	قال	69	رئيس	66	حكومة	46	مجلس	45	مؤتمر	44
<i>Al-Sabah al-Jadid</i>	رئيس	70	قال	68	روسيا	47	كوسوفو	47	قوات	39
<i>Al-Safir</i>	رئيس	63	مؤتمر	43	حكومة	41	سلام	36	كان	36

Table 8 shows the five most frequently used words in the newspapers. The word رئيس, which topped the frequency list for the whole corpus, was also the most frequently used word in five newspapers: *Al-Khabar* (122 occurrences), *Al-Jazirah* (94), *Al-Sabah al-Jadid* (70), *Al-Safir* (63) and *Al-Ahram* (57). Meanwhile, the word العراق was the highest in *Al-Furat* with 73 occurrences, while the verb قال was highest in *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* with 69. Significantly, the fact that العراق was the most frequently used word in *Al-Furat* (73 occurrences) indicates that Iraq-related issues were the main concern of this Australian newspaper. This is confirmed by the fact that the words عراقي and عراقية rank fourth and fifth, with 41 and 37 occurrences respectively. It is not difficult to understand why the World Affairs section of the Iraqi newspaper *Al-Sabah al-Jadid* does not report much on Iraq-related issues since they would be considered internal national issues.

#### Word Frequency by Phrase

This section of the analysis proves that different newspapers use different terms or phrases to indicate similar meanings. This can be seen in the examples below:

Table 9: Differences in Use of Phrases in Arabic Newspapers

Phrase	Newspaper	Freq	Phrase	Newspaper	Freq
الشرق الأوسط العربي (Arab Middle East)	<i>Al-Khabar</i>	1	الشرق الأوسط الجديد (New Middle East)	<i>Al-Furāt</i>	1
دولة إسرائيل (state of Israel)	<i>Al-Safir</i>	1	دولة يهودية (Jewish state)	<i>Al-Safir</i>	2
	<i>Al-Quds al-'Arabi</i>	1			

Table 9 shows two examples of the different uses of phrases in Arabic newspapers. The phrases الشرق الأوسط العربي and الشرق الأوسط الجديد were used in *Al-Khabar* and *Al-Furat* respectively. The second phrases دولة إسرائيل and دولة

يهودية were used in similar frequencies, though more commonly so in *Al-Safir*. For the first example, the use of both phrases shows that Arabic newspapers employ other terms to refer to Arab countries rather than the typical الشرق الأوسط, which can be found in *Al-Furat* and *Al-Khabar*. This may be related to the existence of the state of Israel among the Arab countries, leading to the formation of a new term to take into account their new unwelcome neighbor. Meanwhile, the second example shows that the geographical proximity of Lebanon to Israel may account for the fact that this phrase was used by *Al-Furat* (Australia) and *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* (United Kingdom), indicating their indirect recognition of Israel despite being in conflict with it.

*Word Variation by Transitivity*

The results show that word usage variation in verb transitivity occurs in the newspapers. In this respect, the results show several notable differences.

Table 10: Dispersion of Verbs by Transitivity Across Newspapers

Verb	Particle	Newspaper							Total
		<i>Al-Ahrām</i>	<i>Al-Furāt</i>	<i>Al-Jazīrah</i>	<i>Al-Khabar</i>	<i>Al-Quds al-'Arabi</i>	<i>Al-Ṣabāḥ al-Jadīd</i>	<i>Al-Safir</i>	
أصيب		6	6	6	-	2	2	6	28
(hit by)	-	6	4	2	-	2	-	3	17
	بـ (with)	-	2	4	-	-	2	3	11
وصل		-	3	-	3	2	3	3	14
(arrived)	إلى (to)	-	2	-	2	1	2	1	8
	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	2	6
تسعى		3	2	1	4	1	2	1	14
(strived)	إلى (to)	-	1	1	2	1	1	1	7
	لـ (for)	3	1	-	2	-	1	-	7
تهدف		1	-	1	1	1	1	2	7
(aim)	إلى (to)	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	5
	لـ (for)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
يتعلق		2	1	1	3	2	1	2	12
(relate)	بـ (with)	2	1	1	3	2	-	2	11
	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
دعى		5	1	1	4	3	5	5	24
(called)	إلى (to)	4	1	1	3	3	5	5	22
	لـ (for)	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2

Table 10 shows that variations in verbs transitivity can be traced according to newspapers. This is done by practising a totally different particle than the normally used one or applying both. An example of the first situation is the verb *يَهْدَفُ* with *لـ*; it is only used by *Al-Safir* in two frequencies, while other newspapers use the particle *إلى*. The second situation can be noted by way of the verb *دَعَى*; where *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Khabar* use the particles *إلى* and *لـ*, other newspapers only use *إلى*. The table also shows that several particles were used on an almost similar level, leading to variations. For instance, the verb *تَسْعَى* with the particles *لـ* and *إلى* were used seven times. In contrast, the verbs *يَتَعَلَقُ* and *دَعَى* are clearly dominated by a single particle (*بـ* for *يَتَعَلَقُ* and *إلى* for *دَعَى*). One of the reasons for these variations relates to the effect of foreign languages on Arabic, especially English. The English language uses two styles to link to an objective, for example 'purpose to', which can be paired with *يَهْدَفُ إِلَى* and 'aim for', which is similar to *يَهْدَفُ لـ*. The same can be said of *تَسْعَى لـ*, which is similar to the use of 'strive for' in English.

#### Word Variation by Spelling

The results also show that the broad use of loan words in Arabic newspapers contributed to variations in spelling. Table 11 shows examples of variations across the newspapers.

Table 11: Examples of Loan Words with Variant Spellings

No.	Word	Newspaper	Freq	Word	Newspaper	Freq
1	دكتاتور (dictator)	<i>Al-Safir</i>	2	ديكتاتور	<i>Al-Ahram</i>	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>1</b>
2	إستراتيجية (strategy)	<i>Al-Furāt</i>	7	سترتيجية	<i>Al-Furāt</i>	1
		<i>Al-Safir</i>	5			
		<i>Al-Ṣabāḥ al-Jadīd</i>	5			
		<i>Al-Khabar</i>	1			
		<i>Al-Ahrām</i>	1			
		<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
3	أطلسي (Atlantic)	<i>Al-Ṣabāḥ al-Jadīd</i>	14	أطلنطي	<i>Al-Ahrām</i>	2
		<i>Al-Jazīrah</i>	5			
		<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 11 shows the spelling variations for three words. In the first word, the difference occurs because the sound 'dic' is unavailable in Arabic. *Al-Safir*, a newspaper from Lebanon, considers the spelling of the sound 'dic' as



adequate without a vowel (*ya*) because it can be represented by *kasrah*. For *Al-Ahram*, the vowel ‘i’ should be indicated by a vowel (*ya*). For the second word, the confusion occurred in a loan word beginning with the sound ‘stra’, which does not exist in the Arabic language. Therefore, most newspapers added a consonant (*hamzat*) to enable pronunciation as إستراتيجية, and the Australian newspaper *Al-Furat* inserted a short vowel to make سترتيجية. The last word was not similar to the previous two words; the spelling variation occurs due to how the word is borrowed. The spelling أطلنطي is a direct transfer from English (Atlantic), while the spelling أطلسي comes from the word أطلس (atlas).

## DISCUSSION

The results presented in the above section show that the data was analysed in two parts: general data and specific newspapers. The first analysis generally explored variation trends in Arabic word usage in the World Affairs section, while the second analysis was an in-depth examination of word usage among newspapers from different countries. The analysis was determined based on the frequency of occurrence for each analysed word. For the purpose of this study, several sub-categories from each noun as well as verb categories were selected for analysis.

### General Discussion of the List

Generally, it can be stated that the frequency list for the World Affairs section demonstrates a normal pattern where a larger frequency gap can be seen between words at the top of the list, decreasing progressively towards the bottom. For example, the frequency gap between the top word (الرئيس) and the second word (قال) on the list is 196 (522-326), but there is no gap between the 4,202 words that occurred only once. In conclusion, the graph shows that a small number of words can be found on the high frequency list, with widely different frequencies to a large number of words with the same frequency at the bottom of the list.

In the specific examination of the high frequency list, it was revealed that most of the words occurring in high frequency were those that were particularly relevant to the world issues. This can be seen from the words حكومة (*government*), قال (*said*) and رئيس (*leader*), which dominate the top ten high frequency words. The results also showed that higher frequency did not necessarily mean dispersion in more texts. For example, the words يوم (*day*) and عام (*year*) were dispersed in more texts (82 and 88 respectively) than several words that occurred in higher frequencies such as مؤتمر (*conference*) and وزير (*minister*), which appeared in only 49 and 53 texts respectively. This is because the first two words are general words that regularly occur in all kinds of writing, while the other two words are closely related to world

affairs. It can be briefly concluded that it is normal for a high frequency list to be dominated by words closely related to the area of the corpus along with more general words.

### Word Usage Variation in General

#### *Noun*

The analysis of sound and broken plural forms showed that when both forms were available, newspapers preferred to use broken rather than sound plurals. For example, the broken plural رسائل (*letters*) was used more than the sound plural رسالات (*letters*) even though the use of both forms is accepted in Arabic. This might be due to the fact that the sound plural is normally used for plural forms related to people such as معلمات (*feminine teachers*) and مقدمات (*feminine presenters*).

In terms of phrases, the analysis showed that newspapers create variations by proposing new expressions in addition to the phrases already in practice. The new expressions were not created in vain but as a reflection of the needs of the current situation (Adham, n.d). For example, the use of the phrase الشرق الجديد (*New Middle East*) and الشرق الأوسط العربي (*Arab Middle East*) in addition to الشرق الأوسط (*Middle East*) proved that Arabic newspapers use other terms to refer to Arab countries. This phenomenon can be related to the existence of the state of Israel among the Arab countries, leading to the formation of a new term to take into account their new unwelcome neighbor. Apart from that, the use of certain phrases as short forms when repeated in the same article is significant enough to create a variation. For example, the phrase الحلف الأطلسي (*Atlantic Treaty*) is a short form of حلف شمال الأطلسي (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*). The phrase البيت الأبيض is a normal translation for the American White House and the high frequency of its usage was not a surprise because the United States is actively involved in world issues. However, the occurrence of the phrase البيت الأسود (*Black House*) in *Al-Quds al-'Arabi* also referred satirically to the same White House, showing the use of metaphor to convey the unacceptability of American decisions and actions in world issues. With regard to the word المحتلة (*occupied*), the analysis shows that it was incorporated with القدس (*Jerusalem*) and الأرض (*land*) to refer to the occupation of Palestine. Although this is an indication of the Arab world's protest against Israeli settlements, the existence of positive phrases about Israel shows that the rejection is not absolute. The use of phrases such as دولة إسرائيل (*state of Israel*) and حكومة إسرائيل (*Israeli government*) also shows indirect recognition of the state of Israel.

### Verb

The analysis went further by exploring verbs with similar meanings. It was found that the verb أعلن (*announced*) was used in very high frequencies compared to its synonyms in both sections, indicating that it was more accurate to use أعلن in news writing rather than أخبر, because differences in meaning still exist depending on context. It could be stated, therefore, that different contexts require the use of different words from within the same semantic family. The results also highlight many significant instances of some verbs being more commonly used than others with similar meanings due to the varying requirements of different situations. The fact that meaning differences still exist, depending on the context between verbs in one semantic family, also contribute towards the creation of language use variations. For example, the verb أعلن (*announced*) was used more frequently than the verb أخبر (*informed*) because they were normally used in different situations, although their meanings appear similar. The verb أعلن was used for announcements to a large number of people, while the verb أخبر was normally used for small target audiences. In the World Affairs section, it is common to carry reports of leaders making announcements (أعلن) to large numbers of people.

On the other hands, the analysis of verbs with transitivity proved that several verbs may be used with different particles to indicate similar meanings. The results for the verb تهدف (*aim*), for example, showed that it was used with the particle لـ instead of the more typical إلى. It proved that *Al-Safir* (Lebanon) was distinctive in that it always used لـ. Although the newspaper was the only one in the sample to demonstrate this style, the writer found that it was not misleading since both types of usage explained the objective of the particular action, which was affected by other languages such as English. This point supports previous discussions about the possibilities of Arabic being affected by a foreign language (Mol, 2003).

### Word Variation in Different Newspapers

The study of word variation in newspapers began with an analysis of the top five highest frequency words in the World Affairs section. The word الرئيس (*leader*), which is also the highest frequency word overall, ranks the highest in five out of the seven newspapers. The other two newspapers, *Al-Furat* and *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, had the words العراق and قال respectively at the top of the frequency list. Generally speaking, this showed that most newspapers reported on world leaders, especially those leading governments, organisations and political parties. In *Al-Furat*, however, the word العراق had the highest frequency, and with the words عراقي and عراقية in fourth and fifth place, this indicated that Iraq was the newspaper's main concern. The reason for this may be because the newspaper is published by Iraqis who migrated to Australia after the American allied attack on Iraq in 2003.

The analysis of word frequency by phrase in newspapers proved that different newspapers used different phrases to indicate similar things. This can be seen in Table 9, which shows two examples of differently used phrases in Arabic newspapers. In the first example, the existence of the phrases الشرق الأوسط العربي (*Arab Middle East*) and الشرق الأوسط الجديد (*New Middle East*) showed that Arabic newspapers use other terms to refer to Arab countries rather than the typically used term الشرق الأوسط (*Middle East*), which can be found in *Al-Furat* and *Al-Khabar* newspapers. This may be related to the existence of the state of Israel among the Arab countries, leading to the formation of a new term to take into account their new unwelcome neighbor. Meanwhile, the second example shows that the geographical proximity of Lebanon to Israel may account for the fact that this phrase was used by *Al-Furat* and *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (United Kingdom), thus indicating their indirect recognition of Israel despite being in conflict with it.

The analysis of word variation by transitivity showed the existence of several differences between newspapers. Table 10 shows that the variation occurred when the newspapers were applying a totally different particle than the typically used one or both. An example of the first situation is the verb تهدف (*aim*) and لـ (*for*), which is only used by *Al-Safir*, while other newspapers use the particle إلى (*to*). The second situation can be noted in the verb دعى (*called*), where *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Khabar* newspapers use both particle إلى (*to*) and لـ (*for*) while other newspapers only use إلى (*to*). Since the phrase دعا إلى has become quite common in Arabic, the use of دعا لـ may be considered a new variation in Arabic newspapers. The results showed that *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Khabar* were distinctive in their recognition of both styles, although the use of the verb with the particle إلى was still more frequent. One of the reasons for this variation relates to the effect of foreign languages on Arabic, especially English.

In terms of spelling, the results show that the broad use of loan words in Arabic newspapers contributed to variations in spelling. This may be due to the fact that in most cases, loan words do not comply with the conventions of Arabic word formation and cause differences between countries in transcribing the pronunciation of the particular loan word. Ola Hafez (1996) noted that “in the process of integration, loanwords may retain more than one phonological and morphological pattern that vary freely”. For instance, the word ‘dictator’ can be spelt with دكتاتور (without vowel ‘ya’) or ديكتاتور (with vowel ‘ya’). The reason for this variation is related to the transposition of English vowels into Arabic. The normal method is to represent all foreign letters using Arabic letters, even though the language only uses consonants and long vowels. This means that even short vowels in English are usually represented by Arabic letters rather than by ‘vowel points’. According to

this system, ‘dictator’ should be spelled in Arabic as دكتور. However, the vowel ‘ya’, which in Arabic would normally indicate a long ‘i’, is sometimes omitted, which makes the spelling دكتور.

For the second word, the confusion occurred in a loan word beginning with the sound ‘stra’, which does not exist in Arabic. Therefore, most newspapers added a consonant (*hamzat*) to enable pronunciation as إستراتيجية (*strategy*), and the Australian newspaper *Al-Furat* inserted a short vowel to make it سترتيجية (*strategy*). The last word was not similar to the previous two words because the spelling variation adheres to how the word is borrowed. The spelling أطلنطي (*Atlantic*) is a direct transfer from English (*Atlantic*), while the spelling أطلسي (*Atlantic*) comes from the word أطلس (*atlas*).

### CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings of the study suggest that Arabic newspapers have become a major medium for creating word variations in the use of the Arabic language. This phenomenon becomes clearer when a variety of news articles from different countries are compared. One of the major factors leading to this situation is geography, specifically the newspapers’ country of publication. This is due to the claim that newspaper articles using MSA cannot eliminate the effects of the local language in different geographical areas. The use of local dialects in the newspaper articles also contributed to the language variations. This kind of usage becomes preferable in some cases when the local dialect is better understood by readers than the standard language, especially when the news article covers national issues. This leads to a consideration of differences in word usage among newspapers from different countries and regions, as most of them have their own dialects.

The differences in Arabic dialects in many parts of the Arab world are influenced by the languages of the countries that colonised them, especially European powers in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a result, many words introduced into Arab countries are used in Arabic newspapers and daily communication. The colonial period affected the language locally in terms of borrowed words and the later development of the language.

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