

## Reevaluating Diglossia: The Case of Iraqi Arabic

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**Abstract** – Diglossia is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that exists when a language has two different varieties that are used in different domains of language use. Arabic is one of the typical examples of this phenomenon in world languages today. While Fergusonian diglossia stipulates that in the Arab world there are two varieties of Arabic, a high variety (Classical Arabic) and a low one (Colloquial Arabic), it can still be argued that more than two varieties do exist. Moreover, it is not clear whether it is Classical Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic that constitutes diglossia alongside with the colloquial Arabic. Further, though Ferguson finds that the phonological differences between Classical Arabic and spoken Arabic are less striking than the grammatical differences, in Iraqi Spoken Arabic the phonological differences are strikingly noticeable. The present study is designed to answer the three questions: whether it is Classical Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic that constitutes diglossia alongside with the colloquial Arabic; whether the language situation in the Arabic speech community is diglossic, triglossic, or multiglossic; whether the phonological differences in the Iraqi Arabic diglossia are moderate or sharp. The findings of the study reveal that the language situation in the Arabic speaking community is much more complicated than merely drawing a simple distinction between the H and L varieties. The language situation can be viewed as triglossic or even multiglossic (quadriglossic) as there seems to exist in addition to the three varieties: Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and Iraqi Arabic, (with a yet fourth variety, Educated Spoken Iraq Arabic used in the everyday colloquial style of learned people). It has also been found that the phonological variations between the two varieties are so striking that six such aspects have been identified.

**Keywords:** diglossia, triglossia, multiglossia, Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic, Iraqi Arabic

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### I. INTRODUCTION

It is noticeable that there are some speech communities where the school language (officially formal language) is significantly different from the home language (dialect or vernacular). Such a situation is referred to by linguists as *diglossia*. Diglossia is a situation where two distinct varieties of the same language are used side by side to fulfill different social functions. One variety is used only on formal and public occasions, while the other variety is used under normal, everyday circumstances. The High variety (H), is used only on formal and public

occasions while the other one, Low variety (L), is used under normal, everyday circumstances. The difference between the two varieties sometimes renders them mutually unintelligible.

The concept of diglossia has developed into one of the most central topics in sociolinguistic research and has been expanded significantly. On this point, Hudson (2002), and Kaye (2001) find that no notion in sociolinguistics has attracted researchers' attention as diglossia has and this can be seen in the remarkable amount of research carried out during the past five decades.

## **II. THE PROBLEM**

While Fergusonian diglossia specifies briefly that in the Arab world there are two varieties of Arabic, a high variety Classical Arabic (CA) and a low one, Colloquial Spoken Arabic (CSA), there is still room for argument concerning the diglossic status of Arabic in that it is felt that more than two varieties do exist. Moreover, Ferguson does not clearly specify any phonological feature in diglossia but rather loosely states that "the sound systems of H and L constitute a single phonological structure of which the L phonology is the basic system and the divergent features of H phonology are either a subsystem or a parasystem" (1996: 34). Further, though Ferguson finds that the phonological differences between CA and MSA are moderate whereas the grammatical differences are the most striking ones, in Iraqi diglossic situation, the phonological variations are strikingly noticeable.

## **III. THE AIMS**

It is the aim of the present study to address these two aspects of Iraqi Arabic (IA) diglossia: sociolinguistic and phonological to uncover its real status and to find out whether the phonological differences between the two varieties are moderate or sharp.

## **IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. Is it CA or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) that constitutes diglossia alongside with the Colloquial Arabic?
2. Is the language situation in the Arabic speech community diglossic, triglossic, or multiglossic?
3. Are phonological differences in the Iraqi Arabic diglossia moderate or sharp?

## **V. ON FERGUSONIAN DIGLOSSIA**

Diglossia was first discussed by William Marçais (1930-1931) but it has been the theme of much argument since Ferguson's seminal paper "Diglossia" in 1959. There has been wide

agreement among researchers (Fishman, 1967; Britto, 1986; Hudson, 2002) on the necessity of the concept. The general acceptance of Ferguson's concept, however, has been a subject of modification, redefinition, and extension. On this point, Kaye (2001: 121) points out that no other topic has generated such prodigious research in sociolinguistics over the last five decades.

Much of the discussion centers around the fact that the concept of diglossia is used rather liberally in sociolinguistics and is often extended to language situations that are not truly diglossic in the Fergusonian sense. Furthermore, diglossic research of the past and present has not yet produced a definite, contemporary theoretical outline of diglossia, thus leaving the field open to both new impetus and overuse. (Hudson, 2002: 2)

Ferguson originally used the term diglossia to refer to a specific relationship between two or more varieties of the same language in use in a speech community in different functions. The superposed variety is referred to as High and the other variety or varieties as Low. Ferguson (1959a: 336) defines diglossia as:

*A relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standard), there is a very divergent highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or of another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes, but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.*

That is the point Romaine (1989:31) stresses by affirming that "The most important hallmark of diglossia is the functional specialization of H and L. In one set of situations, only H is appropriate, while in another, only L." Moreover, whenever there are acute differences in form and function between formal and informal styles, the speech situation is diglossic.

According to Wardhaugh, "the phenomenon of diglossia is not ephemeral in nature: in fact, the opposite is true: it appears to be a persistent social and linguistic phenomenon." In a diglossic situation, the two varieties have co-existed for a long period, sometimes, as in Arabic-speaking communities, for many centuries. A key point in diglossia is that the two varieties are kept apart functionally. One variety, referred to as L, is used at home or in other informal situations, however, if someone needs to give a lecture at a university or in any formal circumstance, they are expected to use the other variety, referred to as H. For Wardhaugh, the two varieties cannot be interchangeably used. He asserts: "You do not use an H variety in circumstances calling for an L variety, e.g. for addressing a servant; nor does one use an L variety when an H variety is called for, e.g., for writing a serious work of literature" (2005: 89-90).

In terms of language acquisition, in a diglossic society, all children acquire the L variety. Some may concurrently learn the H variety, but many do not learn it at all. Therefore, the two varieties are not regarded as having the same degree of prestige. For example, this "diglossic

situation may also be found in Egypt, where both classical Arabic and colloquial Arabic is used" (Finch, 2005: 214).

It is noticeable that Ferguson's definition of 'diglossia' is quite specific in that the two varieties should belong to the same language. Some other scholars, however, have extended the term to cover situations which do not count as diglossic according to Ferguson's definition. For Meyerhoff (2006:103) diglossia is a situation in which "One language may be used for some social functions or in a specific social context, while another language is served for other". Fishman (1971:75) refers to Paraguay as an example of a diglossic community, in which the two varieties do not belong to one language, but are Spanish and Guarani.

## **VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGLOSSIA**

Ferguson (1959a: 328-36) proposed a set of nine features by which diglossia might be identified and distinguished from other sociolinguistic situations. They are as follows:

- 1) the superposed variety (H) and the vernacular variety (L) are in a strict complementary functional distribution;
- 2) H is uniformly held in higher esteem than L by members of a speech community;
- 3) H has associated with it a substantial and highly regarded body of written literature;
- 4) proficiency in H is typically attained as a result of formal schooling, whereas proficiency in L is attained through the natural process of mother-tongue acquisition;
- 5) the pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary of H are standardized and tolerate only limited variation, whereas there is wide variation in the pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary of L;
- 6) diglossic situations are extremely stable and typically persist for several centuries at least;
- 7) there are always extensive differences between the grammatical structure of H and L;
- 8) there exists a series of phonologically unrelated lexical doublets for concepts frequently expressed in H and L; and
- 9) the sound system of H and L constitutes a single phonological structure of which L is the basic system.

Moreover, and according to Umar-ud-Din et al. (2011: 11-12), post-1959 research on diglossia has concentrated on a number of important variables. These are:

**1. Function:** Diglossia is different from Bilingualism. Diglossia has H and L varieties that are used for different purposes. They have their respective domains in which they are normally used.

- 2. Prestige:** H is highly valued, prestigious variety. People have more positive attitude towards H, while the L-variety is felt to be corrupt, vulgar, undignified, and the stigmatized variety.
- 3. Literary Heritage:** H usually has a long literary tradition and is used in writing. The H variety is considered to be a language. The L variety is used in everyday encounters.
- 4. Acquisition:** L-variety is usually acquired as a first language while H-variety is learned through schooling in a formal educational setting.
- 5. Standardization:** H is strictly standardized. Grammars and dictionaries are written by native grammarians in H-variety. L is rarely standardized. Grammars of L-variety are usually written by foreigners.
- 6. Stability:** Diglossia is generally a stable and long-lived phenomenon. It persists for centuries or even millennia. H and L borrow from one another. L-varieties displace the H-variety, but H only displaces L if H is the mother tongue of an elite.
- 7. Grammar:** The grammars of H are more complex than the grammars of L-variety. They have more complex morphology, tense systems, gender systems, agreement, syntax than L-variety. Cases and verb inflections are reduced in L.
- 8. Lexicon:** Lexicon is often somewhat shared, but generally there is differentiation; H has vocabulary that L lacks, and vice-versa. There paired lexical items. L and H have different terms for the same object.
- 9. Phonology:** There are two phonological systems. The phonology of H is more complex. H has usually underlying phonological system while L diverges from this system in the course of development of thousands of years.
- 10. Distribution of Diglossia in Language Families, Space, and Time.** Diglossia is not limited to any geographical area or language family, and diglossias have existed for centuries or millennia (Arabic, South Asia).

## VII. ON ARABIC DIGLOSSIA

Ferguson identifies four situations which show the major characteristics of this diglossic phenomenon: Arabic, Swiss German, Haitian (French and Creole), and Greek. In an Arabic-speaking diglossic community, the two varieties are standard Arabic (H) and the various regional colloquial Arabic (L). There has been this view that the spoken varieties of Arabic are corruptions of MSA or CA as found in the Quran and are, therefore, less prestigious varieties of Arabic.

Ferguson (1959a: 336) argued that Arabic is one of few languages that exhibits this reality and that it is the most classic example of the coexistence, side by side, of a high variety that is mainly written, literary and formal language that displays a high degree of uniformity around the Arab countries, and low varieties which are mainly spoken dialects that are seldom codified and

are used for daily life communication and vary widely around the geography and communities of the Arab world.

According to Wardhaugh (2005: 90) "The H variety is the prestige variety; the L variety lacks prestige. In fact, there can be so little prestige attached to the L variety that people may even deny that they know it although they may be observed to use it far more frequently than the H variety." Speakers of Arabic in particular gain prestige from being able to allude to classical sources. The folk literature associated with the L variety will have none of the same prestige." Watson (2002: 8) asserts that "Dialects of Arabic form a roughly continuous spectrum of variation, with the dialects spoken in the eastern and western extremes of the Arab-speaking world being mutually unintelligible."

Diglossia is a remarkable phenomenon in Arabic. While some scholars maintain that diglossia in Arabic emerged with the Islamic conquests of the 7th century A. D. (Blau, 1977), others hold that the language of Pre-Islamic poetry was radically different from that of the colloquials. According to historians, CA had, thus, ceased to be the spoken variety and turned out a purely literary medium by the end of the Umayyad Caliphate in 750 A. D.

CA is still used for religious purposes and is formally taught in schools, particularly in preparation for the study of religion or the study of Arabic language and Arabic literature. Modern Standard Arabic, a modernized and somewhat simplified derivative of the Classical Arabic, has become the medium for serious writing, broadcasting and formal public speaking. Different colloquial varieties of Arabic, substantially different in structure from the Modern Standard Arabic, are employed in all informal interactions.

CA is reverentially upheld by all Arabic speakers as pure representation of the language in the pretext of religion. According to De Silva (1975), Arabic is a classical case of diglossia in which the day to day conversation is impracticable in the prestigious variety and is therefore conducted in the vernaculars, but all prestigious activities are carried out in the classical language. The situation is, however, complex in practical context like education. In the words of Ferguson (1959a: 327)

*In the Arab world... formal university lectures are given in H, but drills, explanation, and section meetings may be in large part conducted in L, especially in the natural sciences as opposed to the humanities. Although the teachers' use of L in secondary school is forbidden by law in some Arab countries, often a considerable part of the teacher's time is taken up with explaining in L the meaning of material in H which has been presented in books for lectures.*

While discussing the present situation of Arabic diglossia, Bentahila (1991: 81) states that there is an opposition between "high and low varieties which leads to such a gulf between formal written language on the one hand and everyday spoken language on the other. This duality, of course, exists within each Arab nation and within the repertoire of each individual educated speaker." On the other hand, there is an opposition between "different regions of the Arab world,

which have quite distinctive dialects as their mother tongues. The situation, thus, “exhibits both intranational and international diversity.”

### **VIII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Arabic diglossia has been the subject of a number of studies by different researchers, like (Blanc 1953, 1960; Blau 1977; Ferguson 1957, 1959 a and b, 1989; Harrel 1960; Al-Toma 1969; Suleiman 1985; Bentahila 1991; Dahir 1998; Al-Saidat 1999; Tamimi and I’lawi 2006, Al-Saidat & Al-Momani 2010) who all studied Arabic varieties from different angles. Blanc (1953) makes a detailed study of the phonology of North Palestinian Arabic.

Harrel (1960) points out that CA is not entirely uniform from one set of cultural conditions to another or from one geographical area to another. Through his study of Egyptian Radio Arabic in comparison with CA, he establishes that through the use of the long vowels /o:/ and /e:/ and the absence of long versus short vowel contrast in word final position, the Egyptian Radio Arabic is away from CA and closer to the colloquial situation.

Al-Saidat (1999) investigates the diglossic situation of South Jordan at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels. He concludes that the phonological, grammatical and lexical differences identified in his study between prove that there is a wide gulf between the two varieties.

Tamimi and I’lawi (2006) investigate the phonetic behavior of the glottal stop in different word positions in Northern Jordanian Arabic in order to compare it with that of standard Arabic. They conclude that the glottal stop behaviour in North Jordanian Arabic word initial position is similar to standard Arabic; whereas, it is different in word medial and final positions.

Al-Saidat and Al-Momani (2010) investigate the differences between MSA and Jordanian Arabic in the area of future focusing on form and uses of future markers. They state that MSA future markers are not used in Jordanian Arabic; instead, a number of different markers are used to express different speakers’ attitudes towards the future activity.

Moreover, numerous studies (Abdulaziz, 1986; Abu-Absi, 1986; Alrabaa, 1986; Gully, 1993; Suleiman, 1994; Haeri, 2000) have addressed this diglossic situation, identifying the wide linguistic distance, particularly on syntactical and morphological levels, between the two varieties, as well as the debate on whether or not the vernaculars should be considered Arabic at all or are simply manifestations of local national culture.

### **IX. DIGLOSSIA, TRIGLOSSIA OR QUADRIGLOSSIA?**

Diglossia in Ferguson’s terms views Arabic to have two varieties H and L, but it is not clear which H (the CA or MSA) that constitutes diglossia alongside the L variety. While the H and

L distinction is accepted, this does not entail that there are two varieties. The real situation in the Arabic speaking communities reveals that at least three varieties can be distinguished.

Being the language of Islam, CA is the high written variety. It is the written language of the Holy Quran and classical literature, and is the property of none. It does not have a speech community. Although in schools it is supposed that the CA is used, it is the middle variety, the MSA (that is codified and standardized and used in the media, and administration), that is being used. The main distinction between CA and MSA springs from the MSA being more phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically than the CA. accordingly, it is more plausible to consider the Arabic speaking communities triglossia rather than diglossic, having three distinct varieties that co-exist. These are:

- **Classical Arabic**
- **Modern Standard Arabic**
- **Regional colloquial (Iraqi) Arabic**

Moreover, one may still argue for the existence of ‘quadriglossia’ in Iraqi Arabic speaking regions and the Arab world, in the sense that, in addition to the three varieties above, a fourth variety, (Educated Spoken Arabic), is used in the everyday colloquial style of educated people. Thus, the triglossic situation can further be recategorized to be quadriglossic as below:

- **Classical Arabic** (written language of the Holy Quran and classical literature)
- **Modern Standard Arabic** (mainly written and also spoken language of the media)
- **Regional colloquial (Iraqi) Arabic** (only spoken at home, in the street, and among friends)
- **Educated Spoken Iraq Arabic** (only spoken among educated people at academic institutions).

## **X. ON PHONOLOGICAL VARIATIONS**

Despite Ferguson’s claim that the phonological variations between the H and L varieties are moderate, the situation of Iraqi Colloquial Arabic reveals striking variations. There are at least six phonological aspects that sharply distinguish the two varieties.

1. The first aspect is the existence of more consonant phonemes in the L variety that no counterparts exist in the H variety. The table below presents the consonant sounds of MSA.

No	Arabic letter	Name	Phonetic Symbol	Sound Description	Arabic word	English word
1	ء	Hamza	'	Voiceless epiglottal plosive	fa'r	(rat)
2	ب	Bā'	b	Voiced bilabial plosive	ba : b	(door)
3	ت	Tā'	t	Voiceless denti-alveolar plosive	tamr	(dates)
4	ث	Thā'	θ	Voiceless inter-dental fricative	θalaθah	(three)
5	ج	Jīm	dʒ	Voiced palate -alveolar affricate	dʒuʒ	(hunger)
6	ح	Ḥā'	ħ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative	ħima:r	(donkey)
7	خ	Khā'	x	Semi-Voiced uvular fricative	xasarah	(loss)
8	د	Dāl	d	Voiced denti-alveolar plosive	da : r	(house)
9	ذ	Dhāl	ð	Voiced inter-dental fricative	ðaki	(intelligent)
10	ر	Rā'	r	Voiced alveolar trill	rab	(lord)
11	ز	Zāy	z	Voiced alveolar fricative	ruz	(rice)
12	س	Sīn	s	Voiceless alveolar fricative	su:q	(market)
13	ش	Shīn	ʃ	Voiceless palate-alveolar fricative	ʃams	(sun)
14	ص	Ṣād	ʂ	Voiceless velarised alveolar fricative	ʂahḥah	(health)
15	ض	Ḍād	ɖ	Voiced velarised denti-alveolar plosive	ɖ aʕi:f	(weak)
16	ط	Ṭā'	ɟ	Voiceless velarised denti alveolar plosive	ɟi:n	(soil)
17	ظ	Ẓā'	ʐ	Voiced velarised alveolar fricative	ʐarf	(envelope)
18	ع	ʕ ayn	ʕ	Voiced pharyngeal frictionless continuant	ʕaql	(mind)
19	غ	Ghayn	ɣ	Voiced uvular fricative	ɣuba:r	(dust)
20	ف	Fā'	f	Voiceless labio-dental fricative	fan	(art)
21	ق	Qāf	q	Voiceless uvular plosive	qamar	(moon)
22	ك	Kāf	k	Voiceless velar plosive	kita:b	(book)
23	ل	Lām	l	Voiced alveolar lateral	la:	(no)
24	م	Mīm	m	Voiced bilabial nasal	maʔar	(rain)
25	ن	Nūn	n	Voiced alveolar nasal	nu:r	(light)
26	ه	Hā'	h	Voiceless glottal fricative	hawa:ʔ	(air)
27	و	Wāw	w	Voiced labio-velar semi-vowel	wahid	(one)
28	ي	Yā'	j	Voiced palatal semi-vowel	jad	(hand)

In the L variety extra non-Arabic consonants sounds exist. These sounds are /ŋ/, /tʃ/, /g/, and /p/, as shown in the following table

Sound	Colloquial word	Standard word	English translation
/ ŋ /	mangūf	ManQūf	Engraved
	ingirəs	ludiy	Stung
	iistengi	Yaxtar	Choose
	ingeshir	Wəlla	Went
	mangūç	manQūç	Drenched
/ tʃ /	tʃinit	Kunt	I was
	tʃai	Shai	Tea
	tʃisib	Kesb	Earning
	tʃmalah	Zijadah	Extra
	tʃis	Kīs	Sag
/ g /	gilit	Qult	I said
	gām	Qām	Stood
	ragis	raQs	Dance
	glɔ:b	Misbah	Lamp
	gun	Qun	Coop
/ p /	pardah	Sitār	Curtains
	panka	Mirwaha	Fan
	pantʃar	-----	flat tyre
	pāyah	-----	stair step
	pāchah	-----	type of food

2. The second aspect of striking phonological variations between the H and L varieties is the use of at least one long vowel, one diphthong, and two triphthongs, or vowel sequences that are not found in MSA. These are / ɔ: /, / aii /, / aia /, and / eə /. The following table presents the vowels of MSA.

No	character	Name	Phonetic Symbol	Sound Description	Arabic word	English word
1	◌ُ	Damma	u	Back rounded vowel between close and half close (short)	çud	Come back
2	◌ُو	Wāw	ū	Back close rounded vowel (long)	ç ūd	lute
3	◌َ	Fatha	a	Front open unrounded vowel (short)	çadda	counted
4	◌َا	Alif	ā	Front open unrounded vowel (long)	ç ād	Came back
5	◌ِ	Kasra	i	Front unrounded vowel between close and half-close (short)	çilm	knowledge
6	◌ِي	Ya'	ī	Front close unrounded vowel (long)	ç īd	feast
7	◌َاي	Ay	ai	Diphthong	çain	eye
8	◌َاو	Aw	au	Diphthong	çawd	return

The following table presents the extra four vowels that are found in Iraqi Colloquial Arabic.

Sound	Colloquial word	Standard word	English translation
/ɔ:/	gɔ:b	Misbah	lamp
	ʃɔ:n	Keif	how
	ɟɔ:m	Jawm	day
	nɔ:m	Nawm	sleep
	ɫɔ:n	Lawn	colour
/aii/	ħaiir	mu ħtar	perplexed
	naiim	nā'im	sleeping
	saiim	Sā'im	fasting
	gaiim	Qā'im	standing
	daiim	Dā'im	permanent
/aia/	dʒaia?	dʒā'i?	hungry
	maia?	Mā'i?	melting
	taiah	tā'ih	lost
	Baia?	Bā'i?	buyer
	ɖaia?	Ḍā'i?	lost
/eə/	weən	ʔjn	where
	leəʃ	Limāḏā	why
	zeən	Jeid	good
	mneən	min ʔjn	Where from
	θneən	ʔiθnain	two

3. The third aspect is that of the use of breakers between two consonant (a final consonant cluster) where it should not be used, or is not a property of the MSA.

Colloquial word	Standard word	English translation
dʒibin	dʒibn	Cheese
femis	fems	Sun
zibid	zubd	Butter
nehis	nehs	misfortune
filis	fils	Dime

4. The fourth aspect is the existence of initial consonant clusters in the Iraqi Colloquial Arabic while no such clusters are permitted in the MSA.

Colloquial word	Standard word	English translation
ʃlɔ:n	māḏā / keif	What!/ how
ʃbīk	mā bik	What is wrong
ʃsār	māḏā hadath	What happened
ʃseweət	māḏā fa'alt	what have you done
ʃgilit	māḏā Qult	What did you say

5. The fifth aspect is the use of initial consonant sequences without vowels, an aspect that is not part of the MSA.

Colloquial word	Standard word	English translation
ʃlɔ:n	māḏā / keif	What!/ how
ʃbīk	mā bik	What is wrong
ʃsār	māḏā hadath	What happened
ʃseweət	māḏā fa'alt	what have you done
ʃgilit	māḏā Qult	What did you say
slāh	silāh	Weapon
frā ʃ	fira ʃ	Bed
klāb	kilāb	Dogs

6. The sixth aspect is the shift (transposition) of vowels from their original position in the MSA to another different position in the Iraqi Colloquial Arabic.

diresit	darastu	Studied
liʔab	la'iba	Played
kiteb	kataba	Wrote
kisar	kasara	Broke
sibah	sabaha	swam

All these phonological aspects of the Iraqi L variety make the phonological variations between the L and the H strikingly distinctive. This proves that the phonological variations between the two varieties are not moderate as it used to be thought of.

## XI. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the above discussion of the two main subjects, the sociolinguistic status of Arabic speaking community as a diglossic and the phonological variations between the two varieties H and L, it can be concluded that:

1. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Ferguson's (1959a) classification of Arabic varieties into high and low does not actually correspond to the linguistic situation in Iraq and other Arabic speaking countries in that three distinct varieties are in a triglossic relation: the language situation in the Arabic speaking communities is not diglossic but rather triglossic or even quadriglossic in that three or even four distinct yet related varieties seem to exist Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Regional colloquial (Iraqi) Arabic and Educated Spoken Iraq Arabic.
2. Instead of CA, as Ferguson stipulates, it is MSA (that is employed in writing personal letters, in political or scientific discourse, and in the media and administration) that constitutes diglossia alongside with colloquial Arabic.
3. Phonological variations are not moderate as literature on diglossia tends to describe them. They are so striking that they sound to constitute a different code.

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