

# On Arabic language maintenance among Arabs living in Western countries: A review of literature

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## Abstract

Arabic is present in the Arab world and beyond. It is used as an official (or co-official) language in the Arab World (this refers to the twenty-two member states of the Arab League). Also, Arabic has the status of a national language in Mali, Niger, and Senegal. Besides, it is spoken in linguistic enclaves in Nigeria, Cyprus, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. In addition, it is employed as the liturgical language in Muslim countries and countries with a Muslim minority all over Africa and Asia. As a result of the migration to Western countries since the end of the nineteenth century, Arabs and Arabic has been present in such countries. The presence of Arabs in Western countries raises the following question: *Are these Arabs language maintainers or language shifters?* The present article is an attempt to answer this question through reviewing a number of studies that have dealt with Arabic language maintenance among the Arabs living in Western countries (namely the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Greece, and France), deducing from these studies the major trends in Arabic language maintenance among these Arabs, and providing a critique of the studies.

**Key words:** Arabic, Arabs, Language Maintenance, Language Shift, Western Countries

## 1. Introduction

Arabic is an international language. At a rough guess, approximately 400 million people use a variety of Arabic as their mother tongue. Arabic is present in the Arab world and beyond. It is the official (or co-official) language in the 22 member states of the Arab League: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. In so being, it symbolizes a pan-Arab identity (Abdel-Jawad, 1992; Holes, 2004; Ennaji, 2005). It is also recognized as a national language in Mali, Niger, and Senegal (Holes, 2004). Additionally, Arabic is used as the liturgical language in Muslim countries and countries with a Muslim minority all over Africa and Asia (Versteegh, 1984) and the Arabic script is used to write languages such as Persian and Urdu (Versteegh, 2001). There are speakers of Arabic in a number of linguistic enclaves in Cyprus, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Niger, and Nigeria (Versteegh, 2001; Holes, 2004). Maltese is often considered as a variety of Arabic (Versteegh, 2001; Holes, 2004). Arabic has been present in Western countries by virtue of the migration of Arabs to such countries since the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, the migration of Lebanese and Syrians to the

United States and the migration of Moroccans and Algerians to the countries of Western Europe (Versteegh, 2001). The presence of Arabs in Western countries raises the following question: *Are these Arabs language maintainers or language shifters?* The present article is an attempt to answer this question through reviewing a number of studies that have dealt with Arabic language maintenance among the Arabs living in Western countries (namely the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Greece, and France), deducing from these studies the major trends in Arabic language maintenance among these Arabs, and providing a critique of the studies.

Before dealing with the aforementioned question (sections 2. and 3.), it is worth delineating the terms “language maintenance” (henceforth LM) and “language shift” (from now on LS). Actually, the two terms are closely connected. Such close connection is evident in the fact that “investigating language maintenance is often done through the identification of domains and situations in which the language is no longer used or is gradually making way for the use of another language” (Pauwels, 2005, p.719).

### **1.1. Language Maintenance**

Several definitions of LM seem to imply the retention of a language in the face of a fierce competition from another (Strivistava, 1989; Mesthrie, 2001; Pauwels, 2005; Coulmas, 2005; Batibo, 2005). Pauwels (2005), for example, states that the term language maintenance is used to “describe a situation in which a speaker, a group of speakers, or a speech community continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life despite competition with the dominant or majority language to become the main/sole language in these spheres” (p. 719). However, this is not always the case, that is, the maintenance of one language may occur in a situation where it faces no competition from another (Batibo, 2005). According to Taft and Cahill (1989), the maintenance of a language refers to competence in it and the actual use made of it. But, as Pauwels (2016) points out, definitions of LM often overlook the “issue of the degree of usage that needs to be in place by either a speaker or a community to speak about LM” (p.20).

### **1.2. Language Shift**

It appears that many definitions of LS share the idea of a change from the utilization of one language to the utilization of another (Weinreich, 1979; Fasold, 1984; Strivistava, 1989; Jaspert & Kroon, 1993). For instance, Weinreich (1979) defines LS as “the change from the habitual use of one language to that of another” (p.68). However, these definitions seem to lack any reference to the factors underpinning LS. Some classifications have been made for LS. For example, Tandefelt (1992) refers to four types of LS; partial, total, macro-, and micro-level shifts. Firstly, the partial shift indicates that LS is underway within a community. Secondly, the total shift refers to complete LS. Thirdly, the macro-level shift denotes the LS of an entire community. Finally, the micro-level shift points to the LS of an individual. In the same vein, Clyne (2003) differentiates two types of LS in his investigation into the dynamics of language contact among immigrants in Australia: intra-generational and inter-generational shift. Thus, the intra-generational shift indicates LS within the same generation while the intergenerational shift refers to LS between the second and third generations of an immigrant group.

## **2. Research on Arabic Language Maintenance in Western Countries**

Generally speaking, little research has been undertaken on the maintenance of Arabic language among Arab immigrants in Western countries (Martin, 2009). The following is a

review of 31 studies of Arabic language maintenance among Arabs living in USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Greece, and France.

## 2.1. USA

Several studies have dealt with Arabic language maintenance in the American context (e.g. Dweik, 1980; Daher, 1988; Seymour-Jorn, 2004; Alghazo, 2007; Martin, 2009; Rouchdy, 2013; Torjuman, 2013; Albirini, 2014; Al Alili & Hassan, 2017). Dweik (1980) carried out a study on LM and LS among the Muslim Yemenite immigrants in Lackawanna and the Christian Lebanese immigrants in Buffalo and the Niagara Frontier, USA. He found that religion affiliation was a strong factor in language maintenance and language shift in the sense that it contributed to Arabic language maintenance among the Muslim Yemenite immigrants and to the shift from Arabic to English among the Christian Lebanese immigrants.

For his part, Daher (1988) studied the changes in the language behavior of a Christian American-Lebanese community in Cleveland, Ohio. The findings pointed to a variety of factors that had impeded language maintenance within this community: Arabs' negative attitudes towards Arabic, the majority group's negative attitudes towards Arabs and Arabic culture, illiteracy in Standard Arabic, desire for social and economic mobility, formal education, and length of residence.

Moreover, Seymour-Jorn (2004) investigated the motivations for Arabic language learning among 15 Muslim Arab-American university students Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Results showed that frequent contact with the homeland, the desire to read the Quran in Arabic, positive attitudes towards Arabic, and family bonds had motivated these students to learn Arabic. Seymour-Jorn reported a number of factors that had contributed to Arabic language maintenance among the Muslim Arab-American community in Milwaukee in general, viz. religion, recency of immigration, experience of racism and anti-Muslim sentiment in Milwaukee (due to the wars with Israel, the oil embargo, the September 11 and other events), frequent contact with the homeland, and the presence of strong community leadership.

Similarly, Alghazo (2007) researched into LM among four children, three female mothers (one of whom is a teacher), and one female teacher in a Midwestern town. The findings demonstrated that ethnic identity, religion, parents, the curriculum, teachers, and positive attitudes towards Arabic played the major role in Arabic language maintenance.

Equally important, Martin (2009) studied language practices and language attitudes among 94 Arab American parents from across the United States. She discovered that the majority of the Arab American parents had positive attitudes toward Arabic and were engaged in language practices that could promote Arabic maintenance among their children. All of the parents reported low proficiency in Arabic among their children. Martin concluded that language shift had occurred among Arab American children.

As well as that, Rouchdy (2013) investigated the maintenance of Arabic among the Arab community in Detroit. She identified six factors underpinning Arabic-language maintenance within this community: (1) the revival in the use of Arabic, reflected in the increasing number Arabic television programs, newspapers, and cable networks that transmit directly from the Arab world, (2) the establishment of national religious academies, (3) the opening of private schools where Arabic and Islamic studies are taught, (4) the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language at some public schools, (5) increase in enrolment in Arabic classes in universities in Michigan, and (6) positive attitudes towards Arabic.

Another study was conducted by Torjuman (2013) about the role of mothers in Arabic language maintenance among Arab families in Chicago. She discovered that 91% of the 473 Arab mothers who participated in the study believed it was important for their children to learn Arabic and that mothers taught their children Arabic more than fathers did. She also discovered that Arabic was used the least to talk to the children by mothers who taught them Arabic, which led her to conclude that the children were the ones who decided the language used at home.

In addition, Albirini (2014) studied the impact of eight external factors (language use, language input, language attitudes, ethnic identity, family role, support, school, and demographics) on the Arabic-language proficiency of 20 Egyptian and 20 Palestinian undergraduate and graduate students at three different universities in the United States. He found that only five out of the eight aforementioned factors have an influence on Arabic-language proficiency among the participants in the study, namely language use, language attitudes, ethnic identity, community support, and family role.

Finally, Al Alili and Hassan (2017) explored the attitudes of 238 Arabic- and 128 non-Arabic speaking parents towards the importance of learning Arabic in the United States. They discovered that both Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic speaking parents had positive attitudes towards learning Arabic in the US; however, in practice, the Arabic-speaking parents showed a strong motivation for and commitment to help their children learn Arabic, compared to their non-Arabic speaking counterparts who did not see substantial benefits from learning Arabic in the U.S.

## 2.2. UK

Arabic language maintenance among the Arabs residing in the UK has been the focus of more than one study (e.g. Othman, 2006; Jamai, 2008; Bahbouh, 2010; Othman, 2011; Gomaa, 2011; Eid, 2018). Othman (2006) researched into language choice among 14 Arab families, one Arab-Spanish family, and one Arab-Scottish family, living in Manchester. The findings revealed that Arabic was consistently used in the domains of home, friendship, media, and religion (mosque) while English was used in the domains of education (university) and work and in shops. The findings also revealed that Arabic was maintained among the second-generation Arabs by virtue of the use of Arabic at home, the availability of Arabic satellite channels, the availability of Arabic schools and mosques in which children learn Arabic, and the ease of travel to the countries of origin.

Additionally, Jamai (2008) carried out a study on language use and maintenance among 219 Moroccans in London. He found that language shift was underway among the Moroccan community in Britain due to the limited size, the socio-economic exclusion, the lack of institutional support, the use of English at home (46.6% of the community claimed to use English exclusively at home), and the use of Arabic mass media only for entertainment.

In the same city (London), Bahbouh (2010) studied the language policy in a weekend Arabic school run by native non-linguist Arabic speakers. She discovered that the administration of the school encouraged the use of *Fuṣḥā* (Standard Arabic) and discouraged the use of spoken Arabic inside the classrooms whereas it made no effort to promote the use of *fuṣḥā* outside the classrooms. Bahbouh concluded that such policy was ineffective as far as language maintenance was concerned.

Working in the same city (Manchester), Othman (2011) investigated Arabic language maintenance among the first and second generations (parents and children) of 17 Muslim Arab families. Results revealed that the use of Arabic within the family and in intra-group

communication, positive attitudes towards Arabic, and formal institutional support had contributed to Arabic language maintenance among the participants in the study.

Focusing on the same subject, Gomaa (2011) explored the Arabic language maintenance among the five Egyptian families (with at least one school-aged child) in Durham. He found that the factors contributing to the maintenance of the Arabic language were: Arabic language use in the home between parents and children on a daily basis, the educational level of participants, religion, identity, and access to Arab media through satellite channels.

Lastly, Eid (2018) researched into the language practices and language attitudes of 85 first-generation Lebanese parents and their 125 second-generation UK-born children, living in London. The findings showed that Lebanese Arabic was maintained among second-generation Lebanese-British children by virtue of (a) the predominant use of Lebanese Arabic by parents in interaction with each other, with children and with other Lebanese and Arabic speakers, (b) strong integrative attitudes to Lebanese Arabic, (c) the availability of mass media in Arabic (Lebanese Arabic and MSA), (d) the availability of digital technologies, (e) regular visits to and from the homeland, and (f) frequent contact with other Lebanese speakers. The findings also showed a difference between Lebanese Muslim families and Christian families in the perception of the link between MSA and religion. While Muslim Lebanese parents and children believed that MSA was important in maintaining their religion (Islam), their Christian counterparts did not consider it to have a key role in the transmission of their religious values and beliefs. Besides, it was found in the study that children use mostly English when communicating with each other at home and sometimes made their parents use English with them.

### **2.3. New Zealand**

A number of studies have concerned Arabic language maintenance in New Zealand (e.g. Al-Sahafi & Barkhuizen, 2006; Al-Sahafi, 2015; Al-Sahafi 1919; and Dagamseh, 2020). Al-Sahafi and Barkhuizen (2006) studied the use of Arabic among 63 adult Arabic speakers from Iraq and Palestine, who resided in Auckland. Results demonstrated that Arabic was used in the home domain between parents, children and siblings, in social gatherings, with friends at school and university, and with their fellow bilingual workers, the use of satellite dishes to get access to Arabic media channels, and the critical role of religion (Islam) in the maintenance of the Arabic language.

In the same context (Auckland), Al-Sahafi (2015) explored the role of ten Arabic-speaking immigrant fathers in Arabic language maintenance. The findings indicated the presence of several factors that were conducive to Arabic language maintenance, namely parents' positive attitudes towards the maintenance of Arabic (all of them reported that Arabic is important in preserving their cultural and religious identity as Arab Muslims and considered it as a core value for the Arabic-speaking fathers because of its connection with the religion), the use of Arabic at home within the family, communication with friends and relatives using the Internet, teaching children at home using Arabic books, videos and DVDs, and the use of digital media such as reading newspapers and magazines via the Internet to have access to the written form of Arabic.

Still in the same context, Al-Sahafi (2019) investigated the role of a weekend Arabic school in LM among immigrant Arab children in Auckland. He interviewed 16 Arab immigrants, namely ten father-child dyads and six teachers. Results revealed that all of the fathers and the teachers and six of the children strongly supported the Arabic school and believed that it played an important role not only in Arabic-language maintenance but also in co-ethnic networking and socialization.

And finally, Dagamseh (2020) researched into language maintenance, shift, and variation among 99 Jordanian and Palestinian Muslim immigrants (belonging to 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations) in Christchurch. The findings showed that all participants held very positive attitudes towards Arabic, considering it to be closely linked to their religion and cultures, and towards New Zealand English. However, there was a discrepancy between positive attitudes to Arabic and Arabic language proficiency and use among 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations. As results showed, among these generations, there were a gradual shift from Arabic to English in the domains of home, friendship and religion and a clear regression in Arabic literacy. Based on participants' reports that they use only Arabic when praying, Dagamseh suggested that religion played an important role in Arabic language maintenance.

#### **2.4. Australia**

Arabic language maintenance among Arabs living in Australia has been the concern of a small number of studies (e.g. Taft & Cahill 1989; Clyne and Kipp, 1999; Kipp and Clyne, 2003; Abdelhadi, 2016; and Yousef & Taylor-Leech, 2018). Taft and Cahill (1989) researched into LM in 10- to 11-year-old children of Lebanese immigrants in Melbourne. They found that Children's Arabic language maintenance depended to a large degree on parents' level of literacy in Arabic and their commitment to transmit the language to their children. They also found that children's use of Arabic was determined by the opportunity and necessity to speak it, rather than competence in it or attitudes towards Arabic and Arabs.

Equally important, Clyne and Kipp (1999) investigated Arabic language maintenance among two Arabic-speaking communities in Australia: Christian Lebanese and Muslim Egyptians. Clyne and Kipp identified some of the factors that contributed to the maintenance of the Arabic language among the Egyptians and Lebanese. These factors included media use, TV and radio programs, school programs and literacy, the requirement of religious affiliation to achieve language proficiency, the role of the mosque and church, the role of the internet in learning the community language, reading books in the Arabic language, and communication with friends and relatives via the phone. The results indicated that the Arabic language was maintained and used at home by the Egyptians more than Lebanese, including the first and second generations. The results also displayed that identity and religion were the strongest inspiring factors for the Egyptians to maintain their Arabic language. However, the communication with friends and family was seen to be the most important motivating factor for the next Lebanese generation.

In another study, Kipp and Clyne (2003) analyzed language data from the 2001 National Australian Census. Results revealed the role of Islam in Arabic language maintenance. In fact, first- and second-generation Lebanese and Egyptian Muslims displayed a lower shift from Arabic to English than did Maronites (from Lebanon) or Copts (from Egypt). As Kipp and Clyne explained, this was in part the result of the increased incentive for the development of literacy beyond the first generation among Lebanese and Egyptian Muslims and the status of Arabic as the language of Islam.

In addition, Abdelhadi (2016) explored Arabic language maintenance among 20 adult Arabs from the Arabic-speaking community in the regional Queensland city of Toowoomba. He discovered that ten factors had contributed to the maintenance of Arabic language among this community: (1) parents' awareness and commitments, (2) the use of Arabic in different domains (family, friends, neighbors, and community), (3) Arabic language teaching, (4) positive attitudes, (5) religion (Islam), (6) cultural identity, (7) access to Arabic media, (8) frequent visits to the homeland, (9) regular overseas communication with relatives and friends, and (10) solidarity among Arabic speakers.

Lastly, Yousef and Taylor-Leech (2018) studied the efforts of Arabic language maintenance made by four Arabic-speaking mothers in Brisbane. The findings indicated that the four mothers had positive attitudes towards Arabic and adopted two strategies to maintain it, namely the use of only Arabic with their children at home and the frequent visits their homelands. Nevertheless, they faced two challenges, namely the lack of institutional resources and the insufficiency of Arabic lessons offered by Islamic after-hours schools. The findings also indicated that the mothers have positive attitudes towards English, seeing it mainly as a means for essential communication, for integrating into the wider society, and for presenting themselves well as Arabs and Muslims to English speakers. Yousef and Taylor-Leech recommended the promotion of literacy education for the growing population of school-aged children from Arabic-speaking backgrounds in Australia.

### **2.5. Canada**

Few studies have dealt with Arabic language maintenance in Canada (e.g. Qawar, 2014; Dweik *et al.*, 2014; and Hamed, 2018). Qawar (2014) investigated language choice and language attitudes among 100 Arabs residing in Quebec. Results indicated the role of family/home, social interactions, Arabic radio stations, religion, and ethnic identity in Arabic-language maintenance. They also indicated that participants had a mixture of attitudes towards Arabic. On the one hand, all of them considered it as being connected to ethnic heritage and a religious language. On the other hand, they saw it as the least important and the least prestigious language compared to French.

Furthermore, Dweik *et al.* (2014) studied language use and language attitudes among 70 second-generation Muslim Arabs living in Vancouver. They found that the participants used (a) mostly Arabic in the home domain (with family members in daily life), in the work domain (with their colleagues, bosses, and Arab customers), and in the emotion domain (when expressing happiness, anger, and hurry); (b) only Arabic in communication with relatives in Vancouver and in the Middle East, in the religious domain, and in the Arabic-school domain (with their teachers and colleagues for those who attend Arabic schools); and (c) both Arabic and English in the neighborhood (they used Arabic with Arab friends and English with English-speaking neighbors) and media domains. It was also found that participants considered Arabic as the most prestigious language and believed that it was important for their children to speak it fluently.

To end with, Hamed (2018) explored the attitudes of six Libyan immigrant mothers in Montréal towards Arabic and their efforts to maintain it in their school-aged Libyan-Canadian children. The findings revealed that the mothers held very positive attitudes to Arabic, considering it as an essential ethnic identity marker, as an essential factor for enhancing family ties, and as the language of Islam. Positive attitudes towards Arabic translated into efforts to maintain it, viz. the implementation of an only Arabic policy at home, the celebration of Islamic rituals, sending children to Arabic schools, and exposing children to Arabic TV channels.

### **2.6. Greece**

Little has been known on Arabic language maintenance in Greece. Gogonas (2011) explored LM ad LS among 32 second-generation Arabic speakers in Athens, gathering data from Muslim and Coptic Egyptian pupils (through a questionnaire) and 14 parents (by means of interviews). He reported that Arabic was maintained among second-generation Muslim Egyptian pupils while their Coptic fellow pupils were experiencing language shift. As the results demonstrated, the factors that had contributed to Arabic language maintenance among Muslim pupils were: parents' positive attitudes to Arabic-language maintenance, parents' use

of Arabic with their children at home, parental initiatives for Arabic-language teaching, and parents' perceptions of cultural and linguistic distance from the host population.

## 2.7. Sweden

As it is the case in Greece, little research has concerned Arabic language maintenance. Attaallah (2020) studied the influence of the language ideologies and policies of five Levantine Arabic-speaking immigrant parents (four mothers and one father) in Sweden on heritage language maintenance or loss for their children. Results showed that these parents were aware of the importance of both maintaining Arabic and mastering Swedish. With regards to Arabic, Attaallah found that the parents were highly committed to maintaining Arabic for their children and viewed it as a means of communication within the family and with the Arabic community in Sweden, a marker of cultural, religious and ethnic identity, and an advantageous for their children. Attaallah also found that parents' efforts to maintain Arabic were challenged by such factors as the absence of their extended family members, the lack of frequent contact with close Arabic community, and peers' influence, and the inefficiency of mother tongue lessons given at schools. To overcome such challenges, the four mother participants set the use of only Arabic at home in communication among family members as a family language policy and sent their children to weekends mother tongue classes organized by cultural and social associations for Arabic-speaking immigrants. All participants in the study stressed the necessity of improving mother tongue education at schools as a way to promote heritage language maintenance among immigrant children.

## 2.8. France

As in Greece and Sweden, Arabic language maintenance in France has not drawn much attention. Abu-Haidar (1994) investigated language loyalty among Algerian immigrants' children in France. Results indicated that Algerian Arabic was still used by French-born Algerians, despite strong interference from French. Results also indicated that Algerian Arabic was considered as a marker of ethnic identity and a symbol of community membership.

Similarly, Medjedoub (2015) researched into language choice among 20 Algerian immigrants (belonging to first, second, and third generations) in France. She discovered that Arabic was maintained among the first- and second-generation participants but lost among those belonging to the third generation. Language shift was underway among the third-generation participants due to negative attitudes towards Arabic, high educational level, disuse of Arabic at home, and little contact with other Arabic-speaking people at work or in the neighborhood. This was not the case among the participants belonging to the first and second generations.

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1. Trends in Language Maintenance among Arabs in Western Countries

Generally speaking, most of the studies reviewed earlier showed that Arabic was maintained among the Arabs who participated in them. The following are the major trends in Arabic language maintenance among these Arabs, which can be deduced from the reviewed studies:

- a) Muslims Arabs tend maintain Arabic more than Christian Arabs do. This has to do with the close link between Islam and Arabic. As Spolsky (2003) notes, "Islam is basically and strictly associated with Classical Arabic" (p. 84) and "prayers must be recited in Arabic five times a day" (p.58).

- b) Parents play a vital role in Arabic language maintenance. As Fishman (1991) and Spolsky (2012) point out, the family plays a critical role in natural intergenerational language transmission.
- c) Parents are the only ones who set the language policy within the family but such policy is sometimes challenged by children in the sense that they decided the language (s) their parents use to them. This is in line with Tuominen's (1999) finding that the children in the families she studied were often the ones who decided what the family's home language would be.
- d) Positive attitudes towards Arabic play an important in Arabic language maintenance but sometimes such attitudes do not translate into practice by those who hold them.
- e) Children tend to use the dominant language with each other. As Clyne (2003) pointed out, "second generation Australian born children in most groups, whatever language children may speak to their parents, they tend to communicate with each other in English" (p. 29).
- f) Complementary schools appear to be insufficient for Arabic language teaching due to lack of teaching materials, lack of trained teachers, and the inability to combine between Standard Arabic and the different varieties of spoken Arabic inside the classroom.
- g) Arabs' and majority group's negative attitudes towards Arabs and Arabic culture can have a detrimental effect on Arabic language maintenance.

### **3.2. A Critique of the Reviewed Studies**

What follows is a critique of the 31 studies reviewed above. To start with, these studies focused mostly on English-speaking countries. This may be attributed to the status of English as an international language. Also, most of the researchers used the term "Arabic" as a general term to label the language under study and have not specified the varieties of Arabic that are used and which variety of Arabic was maintained most. Furthermore, most the studies were conducted by Arab researchers. This implies that there is little concern from Western researchers about Arabic language maintenance in immigrant contexts. Moreover, most of the researchers overlooked the effect of the negative attitudes of the majority group towards Arabs and Arabic culture on Arabic language maintenance. Additionally, these researchers did not deal with the impact of the Western governments' policies on the maintenance of Arabic. Besides, most of the reviewed studies focused on Arabic language maintenance among Arabic-speaking Muslim Arabs. Actually, only six among them involved Christian Arabs (Dweik, 1980; Daher, 1988; Eid, 2018; Gogonas, 2011, Clyne & Kipp, 1999; Kipp & Clyne, 2003) and only one study (Al Alili & Hassan, 2017) included non-Arab Muslims. In addition, only one study (Medjedoub, 2015) included first-, second-, and third-generation participants, which makes it difficult to support or contradict the assumption that language shift is complete within three generations (Fishman; 1985, 1991). Lastly, the results of the studies cannot be generalized to all Arabs in the countries in which they were conducted, due to the limited numbers of participants. Accordingly, the question of whether or not Arabic is maintained among the Arabs residing in the Western countries mentioned earlier remains unsettled.

### **4. Conclusion**

In this article, I have tried to resolve the question "*Are the Arabs living in Western countries language maintainers or language shifters?*" As an attempt to achieve this goal, I have offered a review of 31 studies on Arabic language maintenance among Arabs living in USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Greece, and France. Based on this review of research, I have identified seven major trends in Arabic language maintenance

among Arabs living in these countries. I have also provided a critique of the reviewed studies. This critique has shown that it is difficult to resolve this question. Consequently, I suggest that the best way to settle it is to conduct more research on Arabic language maintenance among Arabs (Muslims and non-Muslims) and non-Arab Muslims in the Western countries mentioned above as well as in other Western countries such as Germany, Poland, and Norway where there is virtually no research conducted to date on this topic.

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