

German-Arabic language contact phenomena in blogs. Or: Barakallahufik für das Video!¹

In the second half of the 20th century, the study of language contact evolved at a fast pace in various parts of the world, establishing itself as a subdiscipline of linguistics. Studying phenomena of language contact between German and Arabic is still an important research desideratum; its relevance and topicality for society and education policy nowadays is clear, particularly against the backdrop of unpredictable waves of migration from the Arab world.

This paper aims to illustrate, by way of example, potential German-Arabic language contact phenomena found in blog posts and to analyse these in relation to patterns and practices, without, however, claiming to be representative. The posts under analysis concern the reactions of followers to videos published on two YouTube channels, Muslim Mindset and Islamictutors. Among these followers, there is one main group of users from various backgrounds who are Muslim or are interested in Islam and who speak German and Arabic. Features of youth language suggest that the followers are relatively young, which is, in turn, advantageous as more language contact phenomena can be expected in younger speakers (cf. Riehl 2014, p. 39).

Alongside morphosyntactic and lexical features, the main focus of the qualitative analysis of user comments in this study is on categories of intention, function and addressee orientation. The user comments are not analysed in isolation but in relation to their potential for interactivity and for their multimodal configuration. The analysis revealed the following practices in German-Arabic language contact:

- A. Code switching due to ritualized formulaic language from the Qur'an
- B. Borrowing and integration of borrowed elements into the German grammatical system
- C. Hybrid formations (word-internal language mixing)
- D. Adoption of the discourse marker *Wallah* (= I swear to God)
- E. Adoption of culture-specific discourse conventions (brother/brothers as a form of address in Islam)
- F. Language mixing in greetings
- G. Script switching

The analysis shows that there is a wide variety of German-Arabic language contact phenomena in blogs which represent a resource for language users to express their own identity positions. In some practices there are already signs of stability. It also reveals different motivations behind these practices and how they can have as community-building function. As revealed in the analysis, the presence of Arabic in the form of code switching, transfer phenomena and hybrid formations as well as the adoption of discourse markers and discourse conventions does not serve primarily to fill gaps in the users' knowledge of

¹ *May Allah bless you for the video!*

German vocabulary. Indeed, recourse to Arabic can be understood as an end in itself, explained by the prestige of Arabic as the language of the Qur'an and Islam. On the one hand, recourse to Arabic expresses the bicultural identity and bilingualism of both sender and receiver. On the other hand, due to the practices of language contact with Arabic identified in the study, a special group-internal mixed style has developed among members of the community. This mixed language style endows the virtual community with a sense of belonging. At the same time the community can be perceived as a unified and solidly united entity from the outside. Thus practices involving language mixing contribute to the creation of a virtual space in which members of the community, who are spread over a wide area, can share a phatic and community-building "we code", establish contacts with like-minded people and create a collective community identity. In this fashion the "virtual ummah" is constructed through language (Engelmann et al. 2010, p. 25) as it supports diasporic communities and can protect Islamic identity with respect to challenges to be overcome and the potential dangers of globalization (cf. Jamil et al. 2020).

References

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