

Somali community perception on Arabic language

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Abstract:

The problem of the study is to determine the perception of Somali society towards the Arabic language in the field of education and work, and how society views this language in general, many Somalis believe that Arabic is backward language, Therefore, this study felt this problem and interrogates whether these perceptions are real or not. This study aimed at discovering and collecting perceptions of Somali community on Arabic language, This study has a great importance because it reveals the truth about the Somali perception towards the Arabic language, the study followed the descriptive, and cross sectional method, the researcher selected the sample size by following virtual sampling method(VSM), the study used for data collection electronic questioner, and gained the findings include: The 84% of respondents showed that Arabic language easy and understandable comparing with other languages , while 16% believe that Arabic is

difficult language , according to work field the 79% of respondents showed that Arabic scholars can find a job, while 21% answered that Arabic language cannot find a job , 52% of respondents believe that Arabic is active and sophisticated language, while 48%of them believe that Arabic is aback ward language which cannot compatible with education and technology, and 57% of them showed that western countries has made defamation against Arabic language. the most of respondents showed their willing to learn Arabic for the purpose of religious affairs, the study recommended to do deep studies to direct community towards their language which is very crucial in terms of religion, culture, and communication.

Keywords: Community, Somali, Arabic, perception, backward, sophisticated.

Introduction

Language is the sounds through which everyone expresses their purposes (Aniis/1972). Somali community used different language since their existence in Horn of Africa, one of the languages they mostly used was Arabic language , the main factor behind that was the religion of Islam, many historians believe that the current Somali language was derived from ancient Arabic language, it is one of dialects that belongs to Arabic . The 2021 Joint Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment (JMCNA) for Somalia records eleven languages that in

use in Somalia . The JMCNA shows that Northern Standard Somali is the most widely spoken as a first language (60% of the population), followed by Maay Somali (20%) and Benadiri Somali (18%). The country's official languages are Northern Standard Somali and Arabic, but Arabic is used chiefly in religious practice, and for more than 39% of the population, neither is the main language used at home. (JMCNA / 2021.) there are other minority languages available in Somalia include two Swahili dialects: Bravanese (also known as Chimwiini or Chimbalazi), spoken along the southern beach of Somalia, and

Bajuni or Kibajuni. Mushunguli (or Mushungulu), spoken by the Bantu minority of southern Somalia, is also spoken in Tanzania, where it is known as Zigula or Zigua. An unknown number of people use Somali Sign language. (<https://translatorswithoutborders.org>). The Arabic language has more importance to the Somali community, and approximately 90% percent of the Somali community can write and read Arabic script, because they learned in holly Quran school in childhood age.

In the Somali constitution, article 30 obligated the teaching of Islamic studies in all levels of child education, which makes compulsory the learning of Arabic language.

Arabic language is a historical language, it was appeared with human appearance as many historians said, and also is the language of holy Quran and prophet Mohamed's traditions, Muslim communities over the world consider it necessary, and also the consider it sacred language, Somali community one of that Muslim communities.

In these days it seems getting low, English is widely taught in schools and the language of

objectives of the study

The main objectives of study are the following

- 1- To clarify the Arabic position in Somali society
- 2- To deter main the perception of Somali community towards Arabic
- 3- To discover factors that influence the Somali perceptions on Arabic

instruction at many Somali universities; it is also a working language of many Somali NGOs. Italian, previously an official language, is now spoken chiefly by older people and government officials those who lived in Italian colony era. (<https://translatorswithoutborders.org>)

problem statement

The Somali community publicly have a perception that English is international language, and is the language of the science which can lead them prosperity and adaptation with developed countries, while the Arabic language is backward language which cannot be compatible with what is happening in the world in terms of political and scientific issues, Therefore, this study felt this problem and interrogates whether these perceptions are real or not. Why does Somali public opinion believe in the lowliness of the Arabic language and the superiority of Arabic? Is the Arabic language suitable to become a teaching language in schools and universities? Are job opportunities deprived for Arabic language specialists?

Study questions

- 1- What is the reality of the Arabic language in Somalia?
- 2- What do the Somali people think about the Arabic language?
- 3- What factors contributed to the formation of Somali opinion towards the Arabic language?
- 4- Why has the Arabic language declined in the field of education?

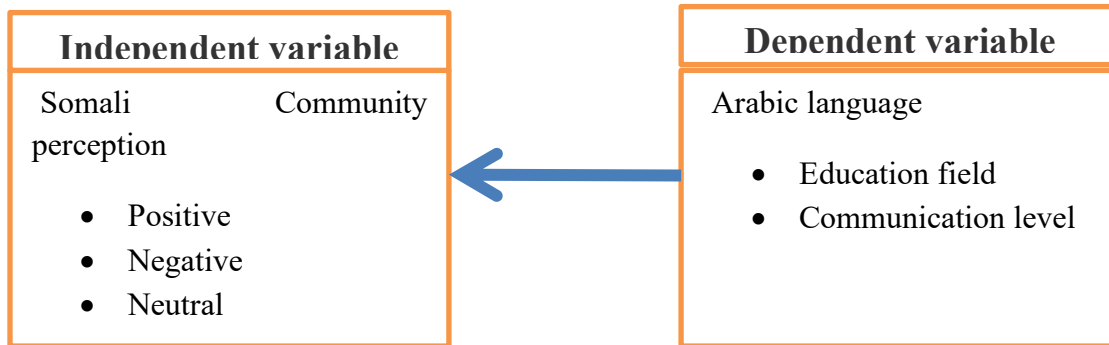
conceptual frame work

Figure 1

Source: designed by the researcher 2023

literature review**(M.H muktar. 1998 The Arabic source on Somalia- London)**

this study focused to discover Arabic sources related to Somali community which written by Somali nationalist authors and also indicated the importance of that sources and the significance of Arabic language to the Somali culture, the study proofed the impact of Arabic language on Somali society in terms of culture and religion, finally the study found that the Somali authors a lot of sources including History books, religious books, political books before the writing of the Somali script in 1972. The official and non-official documents written in Arabic before that time, after 1972 non Arabic language writings started to appear.

this study is different from the current study that focuses the discovering the Somali perception on Arabic, while the previous study

focused the gaining of the sources written by Somali scholars

(Dr.Hussein A. Salad. 2022, roots of the Arabic language in Somalia before and after Islam)

This is a proven historical study that shows the extent of the interrelation between the Arabic and Somali languages and the extent of the presence of the Arabic language in Somalia. The study followed the descriptive approach based on collecting information from sources and references and then attributing it to its sources and references. The analytical approach is rooted in analyzing the information, criticizing it, sifting it, and deducing scientific facts from it. Finally this study reached the following findings

1- The Arabic language is an ancient Semitic language spoken by nearly five hundred million people, in addition to a huge number of Muslims around the world who consider it a

sacred religious language for them and in use it is their second language.

2- There is a multi-faceted relationship between the Somali language and the Arabic language, such as the literary aspect and the aspect of common linguistic vocabulary.

3- The Arabic language had a presence in Somalia before Islam, and this presence is represented by the original presence and the neighborhood, as well as the commercial presence, where Arabs come to Somalia for the purpose of trade, and it is said that the Arabic language entered Africa five thousand years ago, through the southern and northern entrances to the Red Sea coast and Somalia. It is one of those African places where the Arabic language reached, Evidence of the presence of the Arabic language in Somalia is that "The Exploratory Dictionary of the Roots of the Somali Language in Arabic," which is a two-volume large volume written by Sharif Salih Muhammad, contained more than 5,000 words. He stated that he did not list all the words, but

Methodology

The research followed the descriptive, applied approach based on collecting information from the field using a data collection tool (questioner)

The data is then presented, analyzed, and extracted scientific conclusions from it. The study used e-data collection questioner using by kobo tool box, and excel.

Study type: descriptive, quantitative, cross sectional

rather excluded religious and political words, which are very many. .

4- After the emergence of Islam, the Arabic language in Somalia became firmly established due to Islam, migrations, and the beginning of attempts to write the Somali language in Arabic letters at the hands of Sheikh Yusuf Al-Kunene, as well as due to religious education represented in Holly Quran schools and religious centers.

5- Somalia's accession to the Arab League played a major role in the advancement of the Arabic language in Somalia.

6- After the military central government, the Arabic language existed in Somalia due to individual and institutional efforts.

This study showed that the Arabic language declined in the revolutionary rule from 1969-1990 because of European colony which was always against the spreading of Arabic language.

1.7: Study population

The study population means all individuals or people who are the subject of the research problem. The study population is also "all individuals of the phenomenon that the researcher wants to study (Nor/2017)

The study population is Somali community members reside in Mogadishu, so the impossibility of researching them individually the researcher determined 1000 individuals as an original population.

Sample size

The researcher selected the sample size by following virtual sampling method (VSM), The researcher relies on the virtual sample in cases where he finds himself unable to accurately determine the study population, the sample size was 100 persons from large target population, the researcher considered the characteristics of sample individuals (sex,

educational qualifications, training, and age) 96 individuals participated the study .

Sections of the questionnaire

The questions contained two main sections; first section included the personal information of the respondent While the second section contains five main questions on which the research revolves.

Section one: Respondent's information

1. Sex

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Male	88	91.67
Fmale	8	8.33

2- Qualification

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor	59	61.46
High Diploma	12	12.5
Other	9	9.38
PhD	8	8.33
Diploma	4	4.17
High School	4	4.17

3- work field

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher	76	79.17
Student	12	12.5
Other	8	8.33

4- Age

Value	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	54	56.25
30-40	36	37.5
Over 40	5	5.21

Table (4)

The information of respondents shows variety of age , sex, work, and qualification , this diversification can influence the result positively, according to the age the most members responded was youth between 20-30

The section two: answers of respondents

1- The nature of Arabic language(easy/difficult)

Value	Frequency	Percentage
easy and understandable	81	84.38
difficult language	15	15.62

Table (5) Source: primary Data 2024

the 80% of the respondents believe that the Arabic language is easy language which can everyone can understand , this reflects that the Somali community know Arabic language since the first century of Islamic calendar , while the others

(20%) percept the difficultness of Arabic language , the result is that Somali community have positive perception on Arabic according to easiness and difficultness.

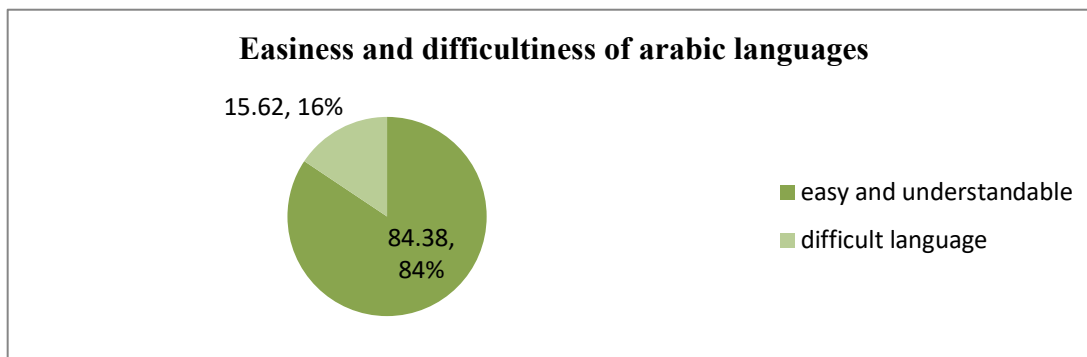


Figure 6

2- Arabic language scholars can find job opportunities

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	76	79.17
Disagree	21	21.88

Table (6) Source: primary Data 2024

the 79.1% of the respondents believe that the Arabic language scholars can find job opportunities, while the others (21.9%) percept the opposite of this perception, the result is that Somali community have positive perception on Arabic according to job opportunities.

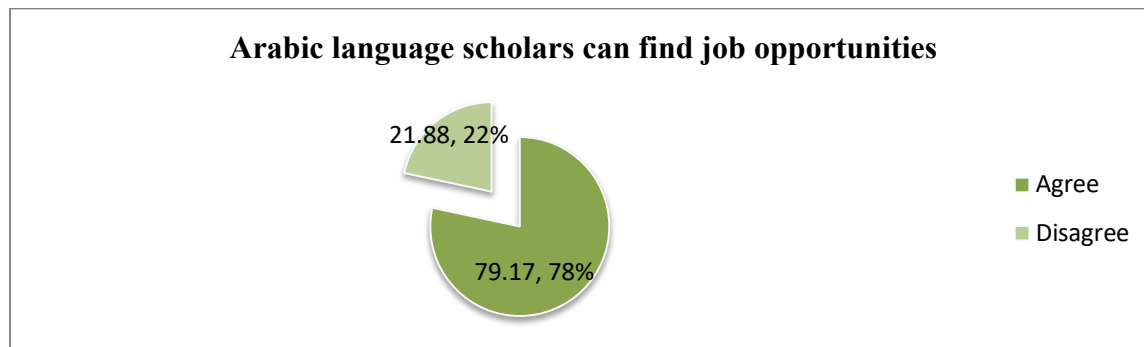


Figure (6)

3- Arabic language is a backward language

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	50	52.08
Agree	46	47.92

Table (7) Source: primary data 2024

as shown the table above, the 52% of respondents respond that Arabic language sophisticated language, while the 48% of responds shows that the Arabic language is backward language that

cannot keep up with the new world and technology, the result is that Somali community have fifty-fifty perception on Arabic according to backwardness and development.

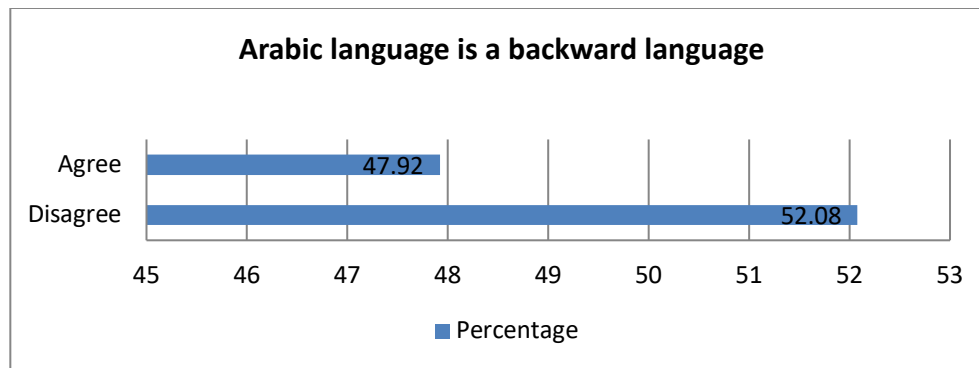


Figure (7)

4- Arabic Language Can not adjust with scientific field

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	62	64.58
Agree	34	35.42

Table (8) Source: primary data 2024

As shown in the table above, the Somali communities according to this sample believe that that the Arabic is no relevant to be medium of instruction in scientific field 34% . this means that Arabic language is only relevant to religious studies and disciplines related to it, that is why many

people prefer to learn with English instead of Arabic, but the 64.5% of respondents see that the Arabic language is suitable to be medium of instruction of science field, and can adjust with both scientific and non-scientific disciplines

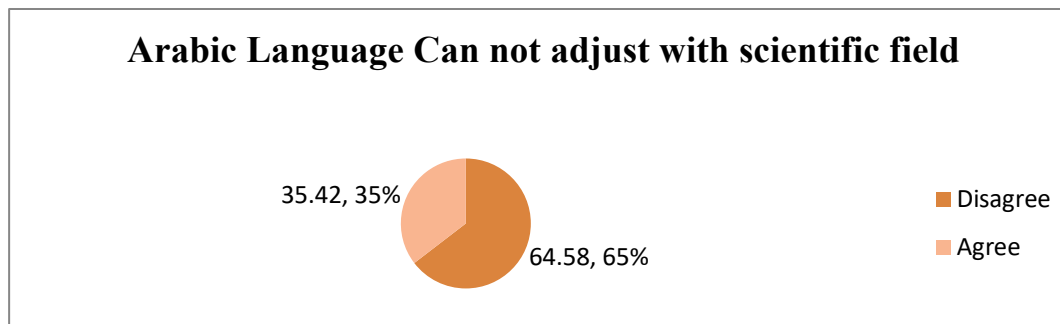


Figure (8)

5- Arabic scholars cannot work in other fields

Value	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	66	68.75
Agree	30	31.25

Table (9)

As shown in the table above, the Somali communities according to this sample believe that the Arabic scholars can't work in other fields 69%. While the 31% of respondents see that the Arabic language scholars cannot work in other

academic fields, this shows that the Arabic language is one of academic disciplines that can enable scholars to work in different academic fields. the result is positive perception.

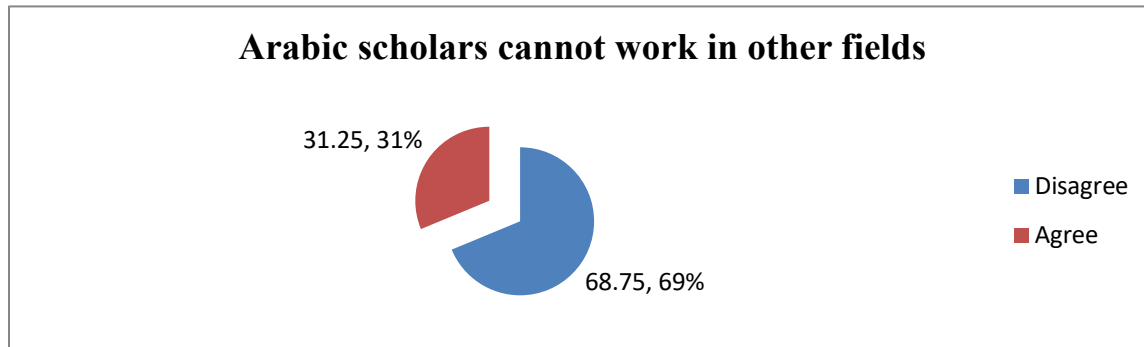


Figure (9)

6- The Arabic language has become unpopular in Somalia because:

Table (10) primary data 2024

the respondents made different answers according to causes of Arabic unpopularity, 57% of

respondents believe that the western countries fought Arabic language and defamed it, the 25% attributed the Arabic unpopularity to the market value, the 11.5% attributed to difficultness of the

language, while 6.5% told that the Arabic that the Arabic is not language of science, the most influential factors are western countries and market.

Value	Frequency	Percentage
western countries have made defamation against it.	55	57.29
it has no value in the market	24	25
it is hard	11	11.46
it is not language of science	6	6.25

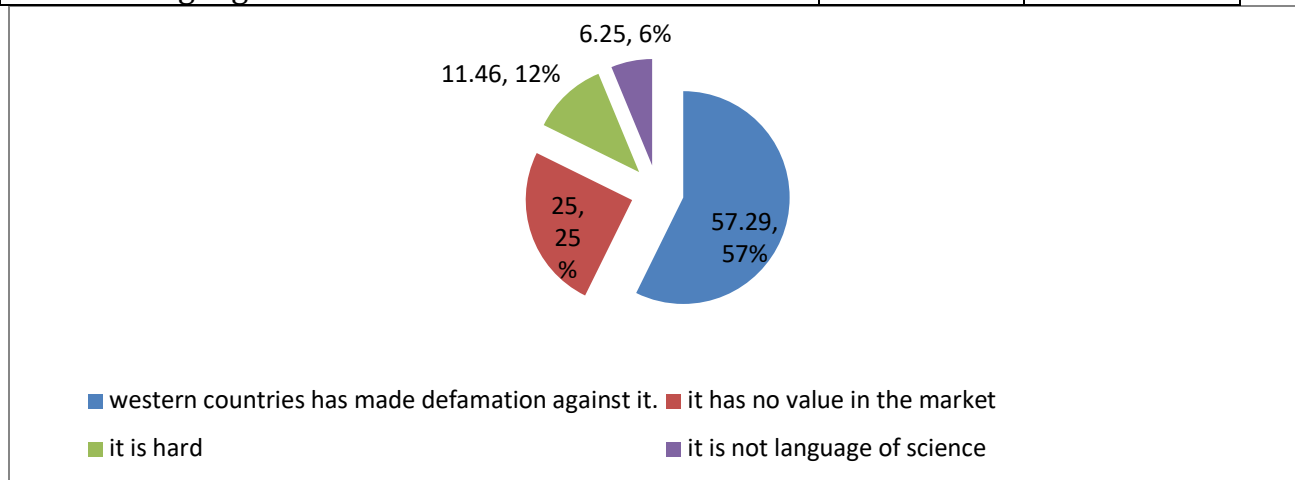


Figure (10)

Findings and recommendation

According to public opinions the Somali community believes negative perception on Arabic

languages, in the light of this opening the study examined the accuracy and validity of that to find evidence-based results, and the study found the following

	Aspects of perception	Perception type	Percentage
1-	Easiness and difficultness	Positive	84.38%
2-	Job opportunities	Positive	79.1%
3-	backwardness and development	Fifty-fifty	52%- 48%

4-	suitability to be medium of instruction in science field	Positive	64.5%
5-	Working, Arabic scholars in other academic fields	Positive	69%

however, the general perception of Somali community according to this study is positive, although there are many people believe negative perception as shown in the above table. The study examined and asked the respondents what made the Arabic language unpopular according to public opinion, the study found two main factors, and they are defamation done by western countries and the market value. in generally the prevailing opinion regarding the Arabic language is different from real Somali community perception as the study showed.

Recommendation

The study recommends the following

- the Somali national exam and certificate should give high respect and consideration to the Arabic language, it should be included the target subjects that should be passed by every student,
- Training the Arabic teachers to make the students interest the subject.
- Islamic scholars should make campaign for Arabic teaching and spreading it with different means.

- Confronting Western propaganda towards the Arabic language, clarifying the relations between it and Islam, and showing that it is the language of all Muslims.

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