

Language Choice Online: Globalization and Identity in Egypt

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Abstract

The dominance of English on the Internet in the medium's early years caused great consternation about a possible threat to local languages and cultures. Though the hegemony of English online has since weakened, there is still concern about how English and other languages interact online, but there has been almost no research on this issue. This paper combines linguistic analysis, a survey, and interviews to examine English and Arabic language use in online communications by a group of young professionals in Egypt. The study indicates that, among this group, English is used overwhelmingly in Web use and in formal e-mail communication, but that a Romanized version of Egyptian Arabic is used extensively in informal e-mail messages and online chats. This online use of English and Arabic is analyzed in relation to broader social trends of language, technology, globalization, and identity.

JOURNAL OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION 2006, June