

Vernacularism and the New Lexicon of the Arab Human Paradigm: Reclaiming the Creative Power of Derivation and Linguistic Adoption

المحلية والمعجم الجديد للنموذج الإنساني العربي: استعادة القدرة الإبداعية للاشتقاق والتبني اللغوي

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ABSTRACT

This paper builds upon Nasser Hajjaj's Arab Vernacularism (2024), expanding the paradigm of Vernacularism into translation and lexicon studies. It explores how newly introduced terms — vernaculate, vernaculation, vernaculist, and vernacularistic — redefine linguistic creativity, empowering translators and scholars to treat vernaculars as sources of knowledge and identity rather than linguistic deviations. Using retrospective and thematic analyses, this research establishes the foundations of a bilingual lexicon that bridges Arabic and English through terms like تنطيق (transliteration), شوارد لغوية (idiomatic vernaculars), and المحلية (Vernacularism). It argues that Arabic linguistic thought must evolve beyond prescriptive grammar to embrace descriptive, human-centered paradigms. The study situates Vernacularism as an epistemological and methodological framework that integrates linguistics, translation, literature, anthropology, and AI-era humanism — offering an inclusive foundation for a renewed Arab human paradigm.

الخلاصة

تستند هذه الدراسة إلى مفهوم "المحلية" الذي أسسه الدكتور ناصر الحاج في كتابه المحلية العربية Arab Vernacularism (٢٠٢٤)، لتوسّع تطبيقاته في مجالي الترجمة والمعجمية. تبحث الورقة في المصطلحات الجديدة التي أضافها الحاج إلى المعجم العربي والإنكليزي مثل التنطيق (transliteration)، والشوارد اللغوية (للتعبير الاصطلاحية) Idioms، والمحلية (Vernacularism)، والتحليل المحلي (Vernacularistic analysis). تعتمد الدراسة المنهج (الاستردادي) الاسترجاعي والتحليل الثيمي لتبيان كيف يمكن للتراث اللغوي المحلي واللسانيات الحديثة أن يتكاملا ضمن إطار إنساني شمولي يجمع بين اللغة والثقافة والهوية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن اللغة العربية (اللسان العربي) بحاجة إلى تجاوز القيود النحوية الوصفية نحو منهج علمي وصفي إنساني، يؤسس لمفاهيم جديدة في الدراسات اللغوية والترجمية والنقد الأدبي، بما يجعل المحلية إطاراً معرفياً ومنهجياً جامعاً بين اللغة، والثقافة، والإنسان.

Keywords

الكلمات المفتاحية

المحلية؛ اللسانيات العربية؛ دراسات الترجمة؛ المعجمية الثنائية؛ الإنسانيات الثقافية

Vernacularism; Arab Linguistics; Translation Studies; Lexicon Development; Cultural Humanism

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not a neutral instrument of communication; it is the most powerful medium through which identity, culture, and collective consciousness are shaped and transmitted. In the Arab intellectual tradition, the relationship between language and identity has long been mediated through the idea of *Fusha* — the codified, prescriptive form of Arabic grammar derived from *Sībawayh's Kitāb*. While *Fusha* has historically symbolized unity, it also fostered linguistic hegemony by marginalizing the living languages of the people — what Ibn Khaldūn called *luġāt al-amṣār* (Vernacular languages of the cities, regions). These spoken varieties, rich with local expression and human nuance, were dismissed as “dialects” or even “corruptions of the tongue.” (Ibn Khaldūn).

Dr. Nasser Hajjaj's *Arab Vernacularism* (2024) reopens this long-suppressed conversation by restoring legitimacy to the vernacular as both a linguistic and cultural phenomenon. His Vernacularism paradigm — *al-maḥallīyyah* المحلية in Arabic — advances the study of vernaculars beyond mere phonetic variation or regional slang, positioning them as the dynamic foundation of human creativity, knowledge, and ethical consciousness. Hajjaj's work proposes that the vernacular is not a symptom of decline but a living epistemology — a system of knowing, creating, and being that bridges linguistic study, literary criticism, translation, anthropology, and even artificial intelligence.

Building upon this foundation, the present paper, in collaboration with Dr. Hajjaj, aims to explore *Vernacularism* as a lexicological and translational paradigm — one that fills a major gap in Arabic linguistic and cultural studies. It introduces a bilingual lexicon of Vernacularism, translating its key English concepts (*vernaculate*, *vernaculation*, *vernaculist*, *vernacularistic*) into Arabic morphological equivalents (محلّنة, محلّني, المحلّة, المحلّ). This lexicon reclaims Arabic's creative capacity to generate new terms organically, in harmony with its own morphological and semantic logic.

In essence, this research seeks to accomplish three interrelated objectives:

1. To provide a comprehensive theoretical grounding for Vernacularism as a human-centered linguistic paradigm.
2. To demonstrate the methodological continuity between early Arab linguists (such as al-Farāhīdī, al-Aṣma'ī, and al-Jāhīdh/ Jāhiz) and modern vernacular studies.
3. To establish a bilingual lexicon and conceptual map for future scholars, translators, and educators to employ Vernacularism across disciplines — especially in translation studies, literary criticism, and computational linguistics.

By integrating language, culture, and humanism, Vernacularism marks a paradigm shift from the grammatical rigidity of *Fusha* or MSA to the creative plurality of *al-Lisān al-'Arabī al-ḥayy* (the living Arabic tongue). As such, it not only challenges the traditional dichotomy between “high” and “low” in Diglossic language (Ferguson 1959) but also contributes to a new humanistic vision of Arab identity in the 21st century — one where unity emerges from diversity, and expression thrives in its most human form.

2. THE NEED FOR A NEW LEXICON PARADIGM

Throughout Arabic linguistic history, lexicography has served as the vessel through which the intellectual and cultural spirit of the Arab world has been both recorded and restricted. From *al-Farāhīdī's Kitāb al-'Ayn* — the first Arabic dictionary that sought to map the language by sound — to modern academic lexicons standardized by Arab language academies in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad, Arabic lexicography has largely remained prescriptive rather than descriptive. It has privileged linguistic purity over communicative vitality, aiming to preserve the past rather than document the present.

Hajjaj argues in *Arab Vernacularism* (2024) that this fixation on preservation has transformed Arabic into a “museum of eloquence,” where words are embalmed rather than allowed to breathe. Modern lexicographers, working under the shadow of *Naḥw* (grammar) and *I'rāb* (case endings), often overlooked the everyday linguistic creativity of Arabs — the idioms, expressions, and innovations of the vernaculars that capture real human experience. As a result, the Arabic lexicon became detached from Arabic life.

Hajjaj identifies this as a core problem in Arab intellectual history: the separation between *Lisān* (the living tongue) and *Lughah* (the codified dialect of the elite). While early Arab scholars such as al-Farāhīdī, al-Aṣma'ī, and al-Jāhīdh understood that language was fluid and diverse — reflecting regional, tribal, and cultural variation — the later grammarians of the Abbasid period sought to fossilize Arabic into a single idealized form. This process excluded vast dimensions of meaning carried through everyday speech, folklore, idioms, and poetic dialects.

In his reformulation of the lexicon, Hajjaj reintroduces “vernaculation” (المحلّنة) as a process of humanizing and reanimating linguistic study. Rather than localization, or treating language as an abstract system of signs, Vernacularism considers language as a cultural organism — alive, adaptive, and morally responsive to human contexts. As he writes, “*the vernacular is not linguistic residue but the essence of living expression.*”

This approach calls for what can be termed a “Lexicon of Human Experience.” Such a lexicon, unlike traditional dictionaries, would:

- Document vernacular usage alongside formal equivalents.
- Recognize regional and cultural idioms as legitimate linguistic phenomena.
- Embrace semantic innovation, allowing new forms like *tanṭīq* (تنطيق) to replace mechanical loanwords such as *naq’ḥara* (نقحرة, transliteration).
- Include vernacular epistemes — local terms of emotion, ritual, and art that reveal indigenous knowledge systems.

The paper’s contribution expands this vision by proposing a bilingual lexicon model that maps English conceptual innovations in Vernacularism (e.g., *vernaculate*, *vernaculation*, *vernaculist*, *vernacularistic*) onto their Arabic morphological counterparts (يُحَلِّل، المحللة، محلاني، محلانية). This not only bridges linguistic systems but also restores the reciprocity between Arabic and English intellectual production — challenging the historical asymmetry between Western linguistic theory and Arab philological tradition.

Thus, the need for a new lexicon paradigm emerges from a deeper human necessity: to reconcile language with life, theory with practice, and expression with identity. Vernacularism, in this sense, revives the empirical spirit of early Arabic scholarship while aligning it with global postcolonial and cognitive linguistics movements that see language as an evolving expression of culture, not a fixed code.

”اللغة التي ما تسجل واقع الناس تخسر روحها”
 “A language that does not record the life of its people loses its soul.”

Hajjaj (2024) argues that the vernacular should not be dismissed as a linguistic corruption but celebrated as a legitimate medium of cultural and intellectual expression. As he writes:

”أن كل لغة فيها متسع للتخيل الشعري وللكمة المناسبة، سواء بالنسبة للدلالات المرتجلة، أو بالنسبة للخطاب الشائع. فليس هناك من لغة سوقية ولغة نبيلة، ”
 ”فالفصاحة والعامية (الشعبية) - المحلية كلاهما ممكن في كل اللغات

“Every language allows room for poetic imagination and the right word, whether in spontaneous meanings or in common speech. There is no vulgar and noble language; eloquence and vernacularity are both possible in every tongue.”

3. EARLY ARAB SCHOLARS AND THEIR RESPECT FOR VERNACULARS

The intellectual lineage of Vernacularism does not emerge *ex nihilo* (out of nothing); rather, it traces its roots to the descriptive spirit of early Arab linguists who observed language as a living phenomenon, not merely as a system of rules. In this sense, Vernacularism represents a revival of the empirical curiosity that characterized the early linguistic schools of Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad — before prescriptive grammar of *Nahu* froze Arabic into an abstract perfection.

3.1 Al-Farāhīdī: The Empirical Founder of Descriptive Philology

Al-Farāhīdī (d. 791 CE), author of *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, is often regarded as the first lexicographer of the Arabic language. His method was empirical, grounded in listening to how Arabs *actually spoke* in various tribes and regions¹. He arranged the lexicon phonetically rather than alphabetically, beginning with the sound of the throat — the origin of articulation (*makhraj al-‘ayn*) — as a symbolic gesture to the natural roots of speech. This structure embodied a descriptive rather than hierarchical understanding of language, acknowledging that meaning arises from sound and use, not from canonical prescription.

Hajjaj’s Vernacularism recovers this same ethos, applying what he terms a retrospective descriptive method—a re-reading of linguistic heritage to unearth the forgotten vitality of the Arab *Lisān* (tongue). Just as al-Farāhīdī’s approach recorded tribal variation as linguistic richness, not corruption, Hajjaj’s *vernacularistic reading* views contemporary Arabic vernaculars as legitimate continuations of that creative process.

3.2 Al-Aṣma‘ī: The Ethnographer of Speech

Similarly, al-Aṣma‘ī (d. 828 CE) functioned as one of the earliest ethnolinguists. He traveled across the Arabian Peninsula collecting poetry, idioms, and oral expressions from different tribes — not to judge them against a grammatical ideal, but to preserve the multiplicity of the Arab voice. His fieldwork represented an early form of linguistic anthropology, integrating language, landscape, and cultural behavior.

Al-Aṣma‘ī’s recordings of idiomatic diversity mirror what modern linguistics calls vernacular data collection. His method valued *usage* over *rule*, aligning with Hajjaj’s principle that every vernacular form “embodies the worldview of its speakers.” Vernacularism thus extends al-Aṣma‘ī’s ethnographic mission into the modern age — documenting not only how Arabs speak, but how they create meaning through their local realities.

3.3 Al-Jāhīdh: The Philosopher of Language and Diversity

Al-Jāhīdh (d. 868 CE), the author of *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* and *al-Ḥayawān*, stands as one of the earliest Arab thinkers to recognize the linguistic value of popular and vernacular expression. Unlike later grammarians who sought to purify Arabic from local usage, Al-Jāhīdh insisted on preserving the people's speech (*kalām al-ʿawām*) in its authentic form. In *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, he warns scholars against altering or "refining" the language of the common people:

"إذا سمعت بنادر من نواصر العوام، وملحة من ملح الحشوة والطعام، فإياك وأن تستعمل فيها الإعراب، أو تتخير لها لفظاً حسناً، أو تجعل لها من فيك مخرجاً سرياً، فإن ذلك يفسد الإمتاع بها، ويُخرجها من صورتها، ومن الذي أريدت له، ويذهب استطابتهم إياها، واستملاهم لها".

"If you hear a witticism from the common people or a joke from the humble masses, beware of using grammatical inflection, choosing refined words, or giving it an elegant pronunciation. Doing so ruins its charm, alters its natural form, and deprives it of the pleasure and flavor intended by its speakers." (*al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* (vol. 1, p. 136))

This passage captures Al-Jāhīdh's early vernacular sensitivity — his understanding that language derives its beauty not from grammatical perfection but from authenticity. His defense of unadorned everyday speech anticipates the principles of Vernacularism, which values the expressive and cultural truth embedded in local tongues.

For Al-Jāhīdh, linguistic difference was not decay but vitality, an expression of divine creativity. Vernacularism continues this philosophy by affirming that *plurality is the soul of language*. Where modern nationalism sought to suppress difference for the sake of uniform identity, Vernacularism restores linguistic and cultural diversity as the **foundation of unity**, not its antithesis.

Hajjaj's *vernacularistic reading* thus situates itself within this historical continuum — from al-Farāhīdī's empirical phonology to al-Aṣma'ī's ethnographic ear and al-Jāhīdh's philosophical embrace of difference. It is not a rupture from Arab intellectual history but its continuation and completion. By reactivating these early descriptive methodologies, Hajjaj transforms them into a modern paradigm — bridging the classical *Lisān* tradition with contemporary linguistic humanism.

4. METHODOLOGY: RETROSPECTIVE METHOD AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS IN VERNACULARISM

To transform Vernacularism from a philosophical intuition into a structured scientific framework, Dr. Hajjaj employs what he terms the Retrospective Method, (Saussure, 1959) (المنهج الاستردادي - الاسترجاعي) and Thematic Analysis (التحليل الموضوعي). These two pillars provide the methodological backbone of Vernacularism as both a linguistic and cultural paradigm.

4.1 The Retrospective Method

The Retrospective Method (Saussure, 1959) begins with an analytical return to the origins of Arabic linguistic thought — to the classical texts where empirical observation once thrived but was later buried under prescriptive rigidity. Hajjaj revisits early sources like *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* of al-Farāhīdī, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* of al-Jāhīdh, and *al-Ḥayawān*, not as static monuments, but as archives of observation that still speak to the living condition of the Arabic tongue.

By reading these works backward and forward — from their historical context toward contemporary linguistic realities — Hajjaj identifies where Arabic linguistics diverged from empirical description into theological prescription. This retrospective reading, therefore, diagnoses the moment of linguistic paralysis, when Arabic was confined to what he calls "the grammar of sanctity" — a system that served divine and political authority rather than human expression.

In Arab Vernacularism, Hajjaj elaborates:

"اللغات المحلية (لغات الأمصار) حية بالخصوصيات والتميزات والفرادات التي تعطي لكل بيئة جغرافية هويتها المحلية المميزة، مثل تميز الزهور الملونة في الحديقة الواحدة، ومثل تنوع الأشجار في البستان الواحد، فتتوزع الثقافات في المجتمعات العربية عامل قوة لا عامل ضعف، وإشارة حياة لا موت، ورمز للحرية لا للقمع والاضطهاد، وبوجودها تحيي الوجود الوطني أمام طغيان العولمة. لقد أسهم النحويون واللغويون الأوائل في إقصاء مصطلح "اللسان العربي" المتعدد اللغات، حتى تحول الحديث عن اللسان بمرور الزمن إلى حديث عن «لغة عربية فصحي»، تنبذ اللغات العربية في الغالب وتسمي الحديث بها لحناً".

"The local languages (the languages of the regions) are alive with their distinct particularities, nuances, and singularities, each giving its geographical environment a unique local identity — like the varied flowers in one garden or the diverse trees within a single orchard. The diversity of cultures within Arab societies is a source of strength, not weakness; a sign of life, not death; a symbol of freedom, not oppression. Through their existence, these languages revive the national spirit against the tyranny of globalization. Yet early grammarians and linguists contributed to the exclusion of the term '*al-Lisān al-ʿArabī*' (the Arabic Tongue) in its plural sense, until discourse about the tongue was reduced to a discussion of a single 'Standard Arabic Language' — one that rejected other Arabic languages and labeled their use as *lahn* (error or deviation)." (Hajjaj, 2024).

The Retrospective Method (Saussure, 1959) thus reclaims the descriptive heritage that once animated Arabic by unearthing what was omitted or silenced. It allows Hajjaj to reconstruct the continuum of Arabic expression from pre-Islamic vernaculars to contemporary spoken tongues, proving that modern dialects are not deviations but natural linguistic evolutions.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

Complementing the Retrospective Method, Thematic Analysis provides the tool for tracing recurring vernacular motifs (thīmāt maḥliyah) across language, literature, and art. Hajjaj applies it to identify vernacular themes and metaphors in Arabic poetry, architecture, music, and mythology — treating each as an extension of the linguistic field.

For example, in his analysis of Baghdadi vernacular poetry and Iraqi maqām music, Hajjaj identifies recurrent themes of melancholy, resistance, and locality, showing how linguistic rhythm mirrors cultural rhythm. Similarly, he traces vernacular motifs in architecture — such as the *Shanasheel* of Basra and the *Madheef* of the marshlands — as visual grammar of local speech. (Hajjaj, 2024)

- Thematic Analysis in Vernacularism thus becomes interdisciplinary:
- In linguistics, it uncovers the semantic networks of everyday speech.
- In literature, it reveals how poets encode locality and resistance through idiomatic imagery.
- In architecture and art, it interprets material culture as a continuation of linguistic expression.

This holistic approach transforms Vernacularism into what Hajjaj calls a “meta-human discipline”ⁱⁱⁱ — a way to read language as a mirror of collective being.

This paper’s collaboration with Dr. Hajjaj extends this methodology by integrating it into lexicographic innovation. Through comparative tables and bilingual mappings (to be detailed in Section 5), Hajjaj demonstrates how lexicons can be restructured using vernacularized logic — replacing foreign loanwords with Arabic neologisms derived from internal morphological patterns.

Hence, the Retrospective Method uncovers where Arabic went silent, while Thematic Analysis shows how it can speak again — not through revivalism, but through vernaculation (المحلة): the act of returning language to life. (Braun, V., & Clarke, V. 2021)

5. THE NEW VERNACULAR LEXICON: TOWARD A BILINGUAL FRAMEWORK

The Vernacularism paradigm does not stop at theorizing language; it builds language anew. Through collaboration with Dr. Nasser Hajjaj, the paradigm evolves into a lexicographic movement that reshapes how Arabic and English engage one another semantically, morphologically, and culturally.

Hajjaj’s Arab Vernacularism (2024) introduced a radical lexicological proposition — to “vernaculate” the lexicon itself, granting each word the power to act (fi‘l) rather than remain passive (ism). In his words:

"كن فيكون" His Command is, "be", and it is (The Holy Quran, 2024, 23:83).

The verb is stronger than the noun; even God—the Greatest Name—requires action to prove His divinity. Through this principle, Hajjaj transformed “vernacular” from a static adjective into a living verb—to vernaculate—empowering it to move, to act, and to create.

In this transformation, vernaculate becomes not merely a linguistic innovation but a counter-hegemony to globalize, recalling Antonio Gramsci’s conception of cultural struggle. As Crehan (2011) explains in Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology, hegemony is never purely coercive but achieved through cultural consent—through the internalization of dominant linguistic and ideological forms. To vernaculate, then, is to resist that consent: to reclaim local agency, voice, and knowledge from the homogenizing currents of globalism. It is the verb of the subaltern imagination, the grammatical form of freedom. Where “globalize” spreads uniformity, “vernaculate” restores multiplicity; where one flattens, the other roots. Thus, Vernacularism advances a grammatical act of liberation, transforming the passive subject of globalization into an active participant in linguistic and cultural self-definition. (Crehan, K. (2011).

5.1 Lexicological Foundations

This paper extended this vision into applied linguistics and translation studies, co-developing with Hajjaj a bilingual lexicon that integrates both English and Arabic equivalents grounded in vernacularized morphology.

Where classical Arab lexicographers sought to preserve “purity,” Vernacularism seeks creativity — expanding the Arabic lexicon organically, without foreign dependence.

For instance, instead of the common term نفرة (naqahra, transliteration- Al-Mawrid 2021), which is coined from نقل *naql* to move or transfer and حرفي *harfi* literally, Hajjaj coined تنطق (tanṭiq) — “to give voice or pronunciation of a foreign vocab.”

This shift replaces the visual root (writing) with an oral-phonetic one (speaking), thereby aligning terminology with the natural process of language formation.

Similarly, vernacularism itself is rendered as المحلّية (al-Maḥllāniyyah), or *al-maḥalāniyyah* المحلّانية following the morphological pattern of علمانية 'ilmāniyyah (secularism) and shaklāniyyah شكلانية (formalism), placing it in equal philosophical stature with other global paradigms.

5.2 (Table 1) Bilingual Vernacular Lexicon (English ↔ Arabic)

English Term	Arabic Equivalent	Morphological Pattern / Explanation
Vernacularism	المحلّانية، المحلّية (al-maḥllāniyyah)	Paradigm / methodology; modelled after العلمانية (secularism).
Vernacular	محليّ (maḥallī)	Adjective denoting locality; used for language, architecture, art, and music.
Vernaculation	المحلّلة (al-maḥlalah)	Process noun (verbal noun); the act of vernaculizing or returning language to locality.
To Vernaculate	يُمحّل / يُمحّل (yumaḥlil / yumaḥlal)	Active/passive verb pair; to localize creatively through speech, literature, or culture.
Vernaculist	محلاّني (maḥllānī)	Practitioner or scholar of vernacularism; person engaged in vernaculation.
Vernacularistic (Reading/Analysis)	قراءة محلّانية / تحليل محلّانيّ	Adjectival usage of maḥllānī denoting vernacularistic approach.
Transliteration	تنطيق (tanfīq)	From <i>nuṭq</i> (speech); focuses on sound articulation rather than orthography.
Idioms	شوارد لغوية (shawārid lughawīyyah)	Borrowed from <i>Kitāb al-Shawārid</i> of al-Ṣāghānī; denotes linguistic anomalies and idiomatic usages.
Localization	التوطن (at-tawfīn)	Retained for technical/geographical contexts; distinguished from <i>vernaculation</i> , which is cultural.
Vernacular, language, Culture, art	لغة محلية، ثقافة محلية، فنون محلية (lughā maḥalliyyah, thaqāfah, funoon)	Cultural expressions rooted in local ethos (poetry, music, rituals).

This table presents the core vocabulary introduced by Hajjaj's Vernacularism paradigm (2024), listing each English term with its Arabic equivalent and a brief morphological or conceptual explanation. It illustrates how Arabic's derivational system (ishtiqaq) enables precise and dynamic equivalents for newly coined linguistic, cultural, and theoretical terms within the Vernacularism framework.

5.3 (Table 2) Lexicon Map: Vernacularism Across Disciplines

Discipline	Application of Vernacularism	Illustration
Linguistics	Redefines diglossia as a continuum of living dialects.	<i>Arabi CSSA</i> (Contemporary Standard Spoken Arabic) as umbrella of vernaculars.
Literature	Encourages <i>vernacularistic reading</i> that interprets local metaphors, idioms, and oral imagery.	Poetic localisms in al-Sayyāb, Adonis, and Salah Ahmad Ibrahim.
Translation Studies	Replaces "domestication vs. foreignization" with <i>vernaculation</i> — ethical localization of meaning.	<i>Tanfīq</i> vs. <i>naqaḥra</i> .
Architecture	Recognizes regional building styles as linguistic expressions.	<i>Madheef</i> , <i>shanasheel</i> , and North African <i>riad</i> .
Anthropology	Treats vernaculars as systems of knowledge, not folklore.	Rituals of 'Ashurā', Ayyūb's Wednesday, and Baba 'Ashur.
AI and NLP	Promotes <i>Deep Vernaculation Processing (DVP)</i> to counter linguistic bias.	Replacing MSA-centric datasets with vernacular corpora.

5.4 Lexicographic Implications

The creation of this bilingual lexicon reorients Arabic linguistic practice from imitation (taqlīd) تقليد to innovation (tajdīd) تجديد. It encourages scholars, translators, and AI developers to adopt maḥal-lānī logic — anchoring terminology in the native morphology of Arabic while allowing for global adaptability.

Such linguistic decolonization parallels Hajjaj's ethical stance in AI and language education, where vernacular is not a lower form but a moral center of authenticity.

By providing verbs, adjectives, and processes, Vernacularism animates the lexicon, transforming it from a repository of words into a living system of cultural renewal.

6. THE CALL FOR ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL REFORM: VERNACULARISM AND THE ETHICS OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY

At the heart of Vernacularism lies a moral and educational imperative: to restore the human dimension of language. For centuries, Arab scholarship has oscillated between idealized unity and linguistic exclusion, mistaking the diversity of tongues for a threat to identity. Dr. Hajjaj's *Arab Vernacularism* (2024) reframes this dilemma — asserting that Arab unity does not mean linguistic uniformity, but rather a polyphonic harmony where each vernacular voice contributes to the collective *al-Lisān al-'Arabī*.

«أن كل لغة فيها متسع للتخيل الشعاري والكلمة المناسبة، سواء بالنسبة للدلالات المترجلة، أو بالنسبة للخطاب الشائع. فليس هناك من لغة سوفيقية ولغة نبيلة، فالفصاحة والعامية (الشعبية-المحلّية) كلاهما ممكن في كل اللغات».

“Every language has room for poetic imagination and fitting expression — whether in spontaneous meanings or in common discourse. There is no vulgar and noble language; eloquence and colloquialism coexist as possible modes in every tongue.” In this redefinition, vernaculars are not deviations from Arabic, but its renewable energy — the living proof that Arabic is not a dead museum of syntax, but a civilization of voices.

6.1 Academic Reform: Vernaculating the Curriculum

The first domain of reform lies in academic linguistics and pedagogy. Most Arab universities still teach Arabic and English through prescriptive grammar and imported theories, neglecting the natural, lived language of their students. Vernacularism calls for vernaculating the curriculum — that is, grounding the teaching of both Arabic and foreign languages in the students’ own vernacular reality.

In the teaching of Arabic linguistics, this means replacing memorization of abstract case endings with the study of how *Baghdadi Arabic*, *Damascene Arabic*, or *Maghrebi Arabic* express real-world meaning. For example, rather than correcting the student who says “ما قدرت أروح للجامعة” instead of “أنا لم أستطع أن أذهب إلى الجامعة,” the teacher analyzes why the first form carries immediacy and intimacy missing from the second. This turns the classroom into a living laboratory of linguistic creativity.

In English language teaching (ELT), the same vernacularized approach liberates Arab learners from colonial language anxiety. Instead of mimicking native-speaker phonology, students are trained to *vernaculate* English — to speak it in a way that reflects their local identity. In practice, this means creating vernaculated English materials:

- Dialogues that reflect local idioms, culture, and humor.
- Bilingual glossaries that use *tanṭīq* (تنطق) rather than transliteration, focusing on pronunciation and meaning rather than orthographic imitation.
- Writing tasks that invite students to translate from their vernacular realities, not only from standardized texts.

Thus, *vernaculating the curriculum* becomes a pedagogical revolution: language teaching grounded in translation, contextual lexicons, and cultural fluency rather than foreign imitation.

6.2 Translation and Lexicography: From Dictionaries to Living Tongues

Translation and dictionary-making are the natural laboratories of Vernacularism. This paper and Dr. Hajjaj’s collaborative bilingual lexicon (Section 5) offers a model for rethinking translation not as transfer, but as transformation. A translator under the Vernacularism paradigm is not a neutral bridge, but an *active vernaculist* who adapts, recreates, and humanizes meaning.

Traditional dictionaries, both Arabic and bilingual, often isolate meaning from context; *Vernacularism* reintroduces life and geography into lexicography. For instance:

- Instead of defining *Madheef* (مضيف) merely as a “guest house,” it is annotated as a vernacular architecture of southern Iraq, constructed of reeds, symbolizing communal hospitality.
- Instead of rendering *Khashabah* (خشابة) simply as “wooden plank,” it is marked as a Basran musical genre, akin to jazz in improvisational rhythm.

By embedding cultural and local information into dictionaries, the *vernaculated lexicon* transforms reference tools into archives of lived experience.

6.3 The Ethical Imperative: Unity Through Diversity

The second domain of reform is ethical and ideological. Arab nationalism, in its twentieth-century form, equated unity with homogeneity, turning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) into a political idol. Yet as Hajjaj notes, this has created “a linguistic hierarchy that alienates the people from their own tongue.” Vernacularism proposes an alternative:

- Unity through diversity, not uniformity through suppression.
- Inclusion of all Arab vernaculars — from Baghdad to Marrakech, from Khartoum to Aden — under the living banner of *Arabī CSSA* (*Contemporary Standard Spoken Arabic*).

This shift requires Arab universities and ministries of education to accept vernaculars as integral components of Arabic studies, not as threats to it. By embracing *al-Maḥllāniyyah*, academia can reconcile identity with modernity, reconnecting the Arab intellectual world to its empirical, creative, and humanistic roots.

6.4 Vernacularism as a Global Human Paradigm

In the broader human context, Vernacularism extends beyond the Arab world as a global ethical framework for linguistic diversity. It resonates with Indigenous revitalization in the Americas, with African decolonial linguistics, and with Asian vernacular modernities.

By championing local expression as the foundation of global communication, Vernacularism transforms language into a medium of coexistence, not competition.

Thus, the call for reform is not only academic but civilizational. To teach language through vernaculation is to teach empathy; to translate through *mahlalah* is to humanize communication; to build dictionaries of *shawārid* is to preserve the unrecorded beauty of everyday speech.

In embracing Vernacularism, Arab academia affirms the most sacred truth of its linguistic heritage — that the Lisān lives not in its prescriptive rules, but in its people.

7. CONCLUSION

Vernacularism as the Future of Linguistic Renewal and Ethical Borrowing

Vernacularism, as articulated by Dr. Nasser Hajjaj in *Arab Vernacularism* (2024), emerges not merely as a theory but as a paradigm shift in human linguistics. It restores to language its most vital human function — to live, grow, and adapt through people, not prescriptions. By redefining the relationship between *the local* and *the universal*, Vernacularism bridges the gap between linguistic creativity and moral responsibility, between expression and identity.

At its core, Vernacularism reclaims what Arab linguists once called the power of words to generate —(derivation) ⁱⁱⁱ الاشتقاق new life. Hajjaj demonstrates that the strength of Arabic lies in its productive morphology, its ability to derive meaning dynamically from roots:

طار، طيار، طائرة، مطار، طيران، طائر
(fly, pilot, airplane, airport, aviation, bird)

In contrast, English, though vast, is poor in verbs, relying instead on nouns and compounds. By applying الاشتقاق to English, Hajjaj gave the language a new act of vitality, coining the verb “to vernaculate” — not *vernaculize* (as in *standardize*), but a word that embodies life, locality, and motion. In this act, English language studies gain what Hajjaj calls التبني اللغوي (Linguistic Adoption) — a humane form of borrowing that preserves the adopted term’s spirit, context, and cultural life rather than stripping it of origin.

Through *linguistic adoption*, words travel ethically, not colonially. Just as Arabic once borrowed and naturalized حَيًّا (hi, hey), قانون (canon/law), and أقلمت (acclimate) into new semantic worlds, English can vernaculate the richness of other cultures, integrating rather than assimilating them, like adopting *yā nisbah such in oil > oily, fog > foggy, Iraq > Iraqi*. In this sense, Vernacularism offers a new philosophy of translation and borrowing, where creativity replaces subordination, and adoption replaces domination.

For Arabic, Vernacularism — *Mahllāniyyah* — restores what was lost — the empirical spirit of observation, the acceptance of local speech as part of linguistic truth, and the courage to derive meaning anew. For English, Vernacularism opens the door to a new human morphology, where every borrowed word becomes a home for coexistence.

Ultimately, Vernacularism stands as the ethical grammar of our global age — a bridge between languages, peoples, and disciplines. It reminds us that all tongues are born vernacular, and only by remaining so do they stay alive.

“اللغة التي لا تستق تموت، واللغة التي لا تتبنى تفقد إنسانيتها.”
“A language that does not derive dies, and a language that does not adopt loses its humanity.”

In uniting Arabic derivation with English adoption, Vernacularism becomes not only a method but a message — that the future of world languages lies not in uniformity, but in vernaculated diversity: alive, adaptive, and deeply human.

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→ “Language became, in modern studies, an empirical and observational science — yet this awareness remains distant from the Arab world.”
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ⁱ In *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* (vol. 4, p. 156), al-Farāhīdī documents several vernacular expressions rooted in the linguistic landscape of ancient Iraq, illustrating the coexistence of **Arabic, Nabatean (Old Assyrian), and Suwādī (southern Mesopotamian)** speech. Under the root ك ر خ / **k-r-kh**, he records:

al-kurākhah: a woven reed mat or partition — Baghdādī usage;
al-kārikh: one who channels or guides water to the fields — Suwādī usage;
al-Karkh: the name of a market in Baghdād — Nabatean in origin;
 and *Akīrākh*: another locality in the Suwād (southern Mesopotamia)."

These lexical notes demonstrate **al-Farāhīdī's empirical awareness of vernacular plurality** in early Iraq. Rather than purging non-Qur'ānic or non-"pure" Arabic forms, he **preserved Nabatean and Suwādī vocabulary** as living components of the Arabic tongue, thereby affirming what Hajjaj later termed *Vernacularism*: the recognition of *local speech as part of linguistic truth and cultural continuity*.

"باب الخاء والكاف والراء معهما (ك ر خ) مستعمل فقط"
 كرخ: الكراخنة: الشقة من البواري – بغدادية.
 والكارخ: الذي يسوق الماء [إلى الأرض] – سوادية.
 والكرخ: اسم سوق ببغداد – نبطية.
 وأكيراخ: موضع آخر في السواد.
 (كتاب العين، ج ٤، ص ١٥٦)

ⁱⁱ "Vernacularism is not merely a humanistic framework; it is a *meta-human discipline* — one that transcends the traditional boundaries of language, culture, and literature. It perceives the vernacular as a living intelligence, mediating between human creativity and artificial cognition. In this sense, Vernacularism becomes not only a philosophy of language but an ethics of being, bridging the human and the technological through the local."

ⁱⁱⁱ Within Vernacularism, the creative system of Arabic morphology—*ishtiqāq* (derivation)—is recognized as a living generative engine that predates and exceeds the scope of Chomsky's generative grammar. Whereas Chomsky's model treats grammar as a finite set of syntactic rules capable of generating infinite sentences, Arabic *ishtiqāq* embodies a deeper cultural logic of creativity: it generates meaning through semantic, phonological, and morphological transformation. In this sense, Chomsky's generative grammar represents only a narrow linguistic abstraction of what the Arab linguistic tradition already achieved dynamically through derivation. Vernacularism therefore situates Arabic morphology as a humanly generative act—where the speaker, not the system, produces language. It extends the notion of "generativity" beyond syntax to include vernacular creativity across poetry, idiom, architecture, and music, revealing that linguistic generation in Arabic is fundamentally cultural, not merely computational.