

Languages, Democracy and Tyranny

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Languages play an important role in the development and acceptance of democracies or tyrannies. Democracy is present and future-oriented, while tyranny is past-oriented. Yet English language is present and future-oriented, exactly as democracy is, while Arabic language is past-oriented as tyranny is. This is why English language participated in the development and endorsement of democracy, while Arabic language ultimately led to the rejection of democracy and the dominance of tyranny.

1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND DEMOCRACY

English language is present and future-oriented. Unlike Arabic, English language does not erase the verb to be in the present tense. And it does not conjugate “I am not” and “I am still” in the past tense. In addition, English does not allow us to accurately use “was” to refer to the present and future, contrary to what goes on in Arabic. These examples show that English language is present and future-oriented, unlike some other languages such as Arabic. But democracy is present and future-oriented. Therefore, English language coheres with democracy. This is why English-speaking cultures were able to develop and embrace democracy. In other words, since English language is consistent with democracy, given that both of them are present and future-oriented, it follows that English language played, and it is still playing, an essential role in the development and acceptance of democracy. Those who use English for communication will ultimately tend to be present and future-oriented, exactly as English language is. And being present and future-oriented perfectly fits with democracy. This is why democracy was developed and accepted in English-speaking cultures.

Democracy is present and future-oriented. This is so because in democracy people are free to decide on what actions and beliefs are righteous and correct. And these independent and free decisions are supposed to be taken in the present and future in accordance with one’s current and futuristic convictions and circumstances. If one’s decisions with regard to what actions and beliefs are righteous and true were past decisions, then one would be a prisoner of past conventions. And this contradicts the basic principle of democracy, namely one’s independence and freedom. This is why democracy is always present and future-oriented, and it is so in order to maintain the maximum amount of freedom and independence for each individual. Yet this main aspect of democracy is not consistent with past-oriented languages, such as Arabic, while it is consistent with future-oriented languages, such as English.

2. PAST-ORIENTED LANGUAGE

Arabic language is past-oriented. For example, the verb to be in the present tense and only in the present tense is erased and implied in Arabic sentences. We say in Arabic “Ana Ostath”, which means “I am a teacher”. But literally we are in fact saying “I teacher”, given that “Ana” is I, and “Ostath” is teacher. As it is clear in this example, the verb to be in the present tense, namely “am”, is erased and implied in the Arabic sentence “Ana Ostath”. Now, one interesting linguistic question is the following: why is the verb to be erased and implied in the present tense in Arabic? The answer resides in the fact that Arabic language is past-oriented, exactly as the Arab-Islamic culture is. According to Arabic language, the present is an illusion, and only the past is real. This is probably why the verb to be in the present tense is erased in Arabic. Erasing the verb to be in the present tense in Arabic is an excellent example of the fact that Arabic language and the Arab-Islamic culture are past-oriented, such that from their perspective, truth, knowledge and morality are properties of the past, rather than being aspects of the present and future.

In addition, “Lasto” in Arabic means “I am not”, while “Maazilto” means “I am still”. Both “Lasto” and “Maazilto” are conjugated in the past, exactly as “Zahabto”, i.e. “I went”, “Akalto”, i.e. “I ate”,

and “Darasto”, i.e. “I studied”. Yet “Lasto” and “Maazilto” refer to the present. This shows that Arabic language is past-oriented. Even the verb “Kana”, i.e. “He was”, refers to the present and future, and not only to the past. This is considered to be a secret of Arabic language, which was expressed and discussed by some Arab linguists, such as Al-Thaalibi. According to this linguistic secret, “Kana”, i.e. “He was”, refers to the present and future in addition to referring to the past. And this is why the Quranic verse says: “God was compassionate and merciful”, although the meaning of this verse is that God was, is and will always be compassionate and merciful. All of this reveals the fact that Arabic language is past-oriented, and explains why most of the Arabs tend to use the past tense more than the present and future tenses. In fact, many social scientists, such as Edward T. Hall, described the Arab-Islamic culture as being past-oriented. And this perfectly coheres with the fact that Arabic language is past-oriented as well.

3. ARABIC LANGUAGE AND TYRANNY

Now, Arabic language is past-oriented, while democracy is present and future-oriented. Thus, Arabic language contradicts democracy. This is why most Arabs, and those influenced by Arabic, namely most Muslims, weren't able to develop democracy, and they tend as well to reject democracy. This clearly shows the relationship between Arabic language and democracy, namely that Arabic language plays a major role in the rejection and failure of democracy in the Arab-Islamic world. Arabic language strongly participated in leading the Arab-Islamic mind and culture to be past-oriented, given that Arabic language itself is past-oriented. But past-oriented minds and cultures are not consistent with democracy because democracy is present and future-oriented. This obviously led to the rejection and failure of democracy in the Arab-Islamic countries. And the rejection and failure of democracy in the Arab-Islamic world are the foundations for the acceptance and dominance of tyranny. Therefore, Arabic language participated in the acceptance and dominance of tyrannies in the Arab-Islamic culture.

Tyrannies are past-oriented because they are formed in accordance with the main principle that the true beliefs and righteous behaviors were determined or established in the past by the tyrannical regimes. And thus, any change in the present or future is useless and even harmful. This indicates that tyrannies are past-oriented, exactly as Arabic language is. And this is why Arabic-language, as a past-oriented language, participated in the formation of tyrannies in the Arab-Islamic world. If someone usually uses some important verbs in order to refer to the present although these verbs are conjugated in the past tense, then one will ultimately be past-oriented, such that one's conception of time is that time is heading towards the past, which possesses the genuine truths, facts and moral conduct. And when one is past-oriented, one will tend to accept tyranny, given that tyrannies are past-oriented. This accurately describes the Arab-Islamic culture. Most Arabs and Muslims, who are influenced by Arabic language, use essential verbs to speak about the present, although these verbs are conjugated in the past. And this led most Arabs and Muslims to be past-oriented, and hence caused the dominance of tyrannies in the Arab-Islamic world.

4. LANGUAGES AND INHERITED INFORMATION

English language contains less inherited information than other languages, such as Arabic. For example, the English word “knowledge” is not linguistically derivable from the English word “tradition”. This shows that English language does not imply the inherited information that knowledge resides in tradition. In other words, English language does not provide an inherited definition or analysis of the concept of knowledge. And thus, it guarantees our freedom to think independently about knowledge and analyze knowledge as we freely choose. In this sense, English maximizes our freedom due to the fact that it entails minimum inherited information in comparison to some other languages. And this coheres with democracy, which aims to maximize our independence and freedom. In light of these considerations, it is plausible to infer that English language provides a strong foundation for the development and acceptance of democracy.

But the Arabic word “Marifa”, i.e. knowledge, is linguistically derivable from the Arabic word “Orf”, i.e. tradition. Hence, Arabic language implies the inherited information that knowledge exists in tradition. This linguistic fact probably participated in leading the Arab-Islamic culture to be traditional. And since Arabic language contains specific inherited information with regard to knowledge, namely that knowledge resides in tradition, it follows that Arabic language does not maximize our freedom to think about knowledge and independently analyze knowledge. This aspect

of Arabic language contradicts democracy. And this is why Arabic language plays an essential role in the rejection and failure of democracy in the Arab-Islamic world.

There are many examples in English language which show that English maximizes our freedom and independence in comparison to some other languages, such as Arabic. For instance, the English word “future” is not linguistically derivable from the English word “before”. Hence, English does not imprison us in the inherited information that the future is that which existed before our present time. And thus, English guarantees our freedom to define the concept of future in light of our independent inquiries. Yet the Arabic word “Mostakbal”, i.e. future, is linguistically derivable from the Arabic word “Kabla”, i.e. before. Therefore, Arabic implies the inherited information that the future is that which occurred before. This probably led the Arab-Islamic culture to be past-oriented. And since Arabic contains the inherited information that the future had occurred before, it follows that Arabic language imprisons us in a unique conception of the future, unlike what English does. This also reveals that Arabic does not maximize our freedom. And thus, it is not consistent with democracy.

Another example is that English language does not imply the inherited information that society is conceptually related to mosques and/or churches, given that in English the words “society”, “mosque” and “church” are not linguistically derivable from each other. Therefore, English maintains our freedom with regard to thinking about and analyzing the concepts of society, mosque and church. But the Arabic word “Moj-ta-ma-a”, i.e. society, and “Ja-mi-a”, i.e. mosque, are linguistically derivable from each other. Hence, according to Arabic language, society and religion, namely Islam, are conceptually related in the sense that there could not be a society without a mosque, and vice versa. And this is inherited information implied in Arabic language itself. Here Arabic language imprisons us in a definite conception of society and religion. And this obviously does not cohere with democracy.

In conclusion, all of this indicates that English is consistent with democracy, while Arabic is not due to the fact that English contains less inherited information than Arabic. And this is why English guaranteed the development and endorsement of democracy, while Arabic failed to do so. In addition, English language is consistent with democracy, while Arabic language is consistent with tyranny because both English and democracy are present and future-oriented, while both Arabic and tyranny are past-oriented. All of this proves that languages play a vital role in the acceptance or rejection of democracy.

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