**Second Place: Let’s Celebrate 18th of December**

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* One cup of tea and two bottles of water, please.
* Why didn’t you order these simple things using Arabic?
* This is the usual thing; she will not understand if I uttered them in Arabic!
* BUT, you didn’t try, maybe she will!

Arabic language is one of the oldest living languages. It is spoken by more than 422 million speakers in the Arab world and by Muslims of different neighbouring countries, like Turkey, Chad, Mali, Eritrea etc. In addition to that, the Arabic alphabet is used in many languages, like Persian language. The spread of the Arabic language is attributed to the Islamic civilisation since it made the Arabic language the language of different sciences and literature. During the Islamic civilisation, everyone who needed to learn the different sciences, like algebra alchemy, and astrology needed first to master Arabic.

Because Arabic language is considered as one of the important languages in the world, UNESCO's Executive Board in 23th of October 2012 allocated the 18th of December of each year to be World Arabic Language Day, the day when the United Nations General Assembly in 1973 considered Arabic language as its sixth official language.

World Arabic Language Day is celebrated annually on December 18th by many Arab countries as a way to protect the language since the development delay that occurs in the Arab countries led to the negative impact on the spread of the Arabic language. However, protecting the language should go further than allocating a day to observe its importance.

One feels sorry to see that many foreign visitors of Arab counties do not see the need to learn our language since English is welcoming them everywhere such as workplaces, shops and even in local communities. Unlike foreign countries that force the visitor to learn the country’s language.

I remember one of Sultan Qaboos University’s professors who told us that she worked in Japan and she was forced to learn Japanese because everybody was speaking Japanese. The same happened to her when she went to Turkey. But when she came to Oman her eyes and mouth opened wide and she raised her eyebrows because everybody spoke with her in English! Now she has been in Oman for more than ten years, but she does not speak Arabic!

Another professor questioned us why we do not communicate with foreigners in Arabic. Why are we the ones who should switch to their language? Why don’t we give them the opportunity to learn our language?

An answer for those who claim that we communicate with foreigners in English to be understood would be that we can break the habit by having a strong desire to return the glory to our dearest language, the Arabic language.

Standard Arabic is like a sick mother who whines every day because of the neglect she generally receives especially of her own children. So how can a stranger heal her wounds when she longs to be healed by her own children? Nowadays, with the spread of social media, English language and different Arabic dialects dominate over standard Arabic. Isn’t it a downhearted situation to neglect our language which reflects our history, heritage, and identity and show a huge concern with learning other languages?

I have Omani friends who have difficulty typing messages in Arabic, but they find it very easy to type in English. Another friend received high grades in English courses, but when it came to Arabic, she got the worst grade! I am not saying that we should stop learning other languages, since English, for example, is the international scientific language nowadays. Therefore, we need to master English to benefit from different sciences. We also ought not to forget that our prophet stressed the importance of foreign languages. But we should not let other languages dominate over our language especially in our country.

I am reduced to tears when I see many Arabs doing their best to learn foreign languages and teach them to their children, but not giving a hoot about learning their own language. A huge number of Arabs, especially those whose countries were under European colonization, try to conceal their Arab identity by only speaking the colonisers’ languages because of the common belief that Arabs are retarded. They forget that they are the ones who can revive the Arabic language and give it back its prestige. They are the ones who can make Arabic immortal by making it once again the language of science and research to express their pride in Arabic and as Arabs.

Yes, let us celebrate World Arabic Language Day and be as proud as a peacock that Arabic is part of our culture, but we ought not to wait for 18th of December of each year to observe its importance. Let us celebrate our language daily by giving it the attention it deserves. If there is one thing we can pass on to our children as part of our heritage, let it be our dearest language. It reflects who we are.