The Politics of Pro-*ʿāmmiyya* Language Ideology in Egypt

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Introduction

As other chapters in this volume demonstrate, the increasing use and acceptability of written *ʿāmmiyya* in Egypt is now well-documented. The motivations behind this are rarely studied, although speculations have been made about the role of political ideology. One well-discussed dimension of language politics in Egypt takes the form of a binary of Egyptian nationalism vs. pan-Arab nationalism: the former ideology favouring *ʿāmmiyya* and the latter favouring Standard Arabic or *fuṣḥā* (Suleiman 1996; Suleiman 2003; Suleiman 2008). However, the salience of this binary in present-day Egypt is unclear: on the one hand, it is often suggested that Egyptian nationalism was overtaken by pan-Arab nationalism (ibid.), and on the other, emerging literature suggests that pan-Arab nationalism is now a spent force (Phillips 2014). Moreover, although there has been a tendency to delimit the discussion of language politics in Egypt to the question of nationalism, it has recently been suggested that *ʿāmmiyya* might be used to counter the hegemonic discourse of the (language) authorities (Bassiouney 2014; Ibrahim 2010). The symbolic significance of *ʿāmmiyya* in this latter case is clearly very different (cf. Aboelezz forthcoming).

While by no means suggesting that political ideology is the only explanation for the increasing use of *ʿāmmiyya* in written domains in Egypt, this chapter hopes to shed light on the complicated relationship between language and politics in Egypt. To highlight the relationship between political ideologies and language ideologies, I draw on two interviews with what I term pro-*ʿāmmiyya* 'agents of change' in the summer of 2010. The timing of the interviews is significant. By focussing on the political dimension, which has been at the forefront of Egypt's turbulent recent history, I aim to demonstrate how political ideologies reflect and relate to broader social and moral concerns still relevant today.

Methodology

In this chapter, I aim to answer this central research question: What role does language ideology play in the motivation of the two *pro-ʿāmmiyya* agents of change? This research question includes two central concepts which warrant explanation: language ideology and language change. Language ideologies may be understood here as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1979: 193). Milroy (2004) stresses the instrumentality of language ideology in bringing about language change and argues that the two should be studied in tandem. Language change may be said to occur at two levels: the first level is the *structure* of the language (lexicon, grammar, etc.); the second is the *use* of the language, that is, "the functional allocations of the varieties of language used" in a speech community (Ferguson 1977: 9). This chapter is concerned with this latter type of language change, which Ferguson notes is usually fuelled by changes in users' *evaluations* of language – or in other words, their language ideologies.

In this chapter, I refer to groups or individuals who play an active part in bringing about (language) change as 'agents of change'. I focus specifically on the ideological motives of two pro-*ʿāmmiyya* agents of change. The first agent of change is the Liberal Egyptian Party (henceforth, LEP), an Egyptian political party established in 2008 with an ideology of separatist Egyptian nationalism and an aim to standardise Egyptian Arabic. The second agent of change is Malamih, a publishing house established in 2007 which published work by young Egyptian writers in a range of language varieties, and crucially championed publishing in *ʿāmmiyya*.

To answer the research question, interviews were conducted with representatives of LEP and Malamih in the summer of 2010. From the outset, I did not intend the interviews to be a fact-finding mission, but rather a means of eliciting ideological positions vis-à-vis the language situation in Egypt. Indeed, I argue that although both LEP and Malamih have now ceased to exist, the ideological underpinnings of their agency in language change remain salient.

My analysis of the interviews draws on three main theoretical approaches. The first approach draws on Eisele's (2000; 2002; 2003) work who has developed one of the most elaborate frameworks for studying language ideologies in Arabic sociolinguistics. Eisele assumes the presence of 'authorising discourses' in society, which he terms *regimes of authority*:

> Each of the regimes of authority present in a society/culture may have an effect on the kind of language which is valorized, and on the metalinguis-

tic views of language in general, and ultimately on the views and analyses of language professionals themselves (linguists, grammar specialists, language teachers, L1 and L2), who participate as well in their own discursive regimes of authority.

EISELE, 2002: 5

However, he notes that "individuals do not always adopt the value system of one regime of authority alone and for all time, but rather manipulate the various regimes of authority and their differing systems of values (and thus the meanings that inhere in them) in fashioning their own identity" (Eisele 2002: 6).

Eisele recognises four recurring 'topoi' or cultural tropes underlying the value system of the most dominant regime of authority about the Arabic language (Eisele 2000; Eisele 2002). These are motifs which frequently emerge in the narrative about the Arabic language; namely: unity, purity, continuity and competition. The topos of *unity* underscores the value of the Arabic language as uniting pre-Islamic Arabs in a single culture. This topos has been more recently "reinterpreted in the service of various nationalisms, initially Islamic but most strongly and successfully for Arab nationalism and Arab unity" (Eisele 2002: 7). The topos of *purity* encapsulates the traditional preoccupation to protect the Arabic language from 'contamination' resulting from interaction with non-Arab populations following the spread of Islam. In the modern period, this is exemplified in the prescriptivist role of education and language academies in maintaining the purity of "the classically derived modern written language" and stigmatisation of the Arabic vernaculars (Eisele 2002: 7). *Continuity* is linked to the "development of a complex and highly esteemed written tradition, which is passed down through the generations and in which inheres the most highly valued features of the culture" (Eisele 2002: 7). In modern times, this topos can be seen in the 19th century revival of Arab culture and the Arabic language with an emphasis on the classical literary canon as a source for modern values. *Competition* involves rivalry with other languages, initially other Islamic languages such as Persian and Turkish, but more recently European colonial languages, particularly English.

While Eisele states that he has derived these four topoi from modern narratives of the 'story of Arabic' reflecting the dominant authoritative practice, he demonstrates that these topoi can also be found in rival authorising practices. For example, he applies his framework to the work of Salama Musa (an Egyptian nationalist and proponent of *ʿāmmiyya*) and reveals that although Musa's aim was to subvert dominant beliefs about Arabic, "he nevertheless reflects the dominant Arab way of talking about language" (Eisele 2003: 53).

In my analysis, I supplement Eisele's topoi with three further topoi: conspiracy, authenticity and superiority. While my aim is to capture the ideological arguments of the pro-ʿāmmiyya interviews more closely, these supplementary topoi may also be found in the dominant authoritative practice about Arabic. The topos of conspiracy relates to the perception that language is under threat due to a conspiracy to undermine it. In the dominant authoritative practice, Arabic is constructed as the victim of a colonial conspiracy to bring about its demise. The topos of authenticity, which is an offshoot of the topos of purity, captures the idea that a given code is the *real* language of the people (Bassiouney 2014). In the dominant practice, *fuṣḥā* is constructed as the sole authentic version of Arabic by discrediting colloquial varieties which are denied the status of 'real' languages. The topos of superiority overlaps with the topoi of purity and continuity where these are valued as superior qualities. However, I intend it mainly for qualities which are seen to be inherent to a language and which cannot be objectively evaluated (e.g. beauty, melody, logic, etc.). In the dominant practice, *fuṣḥā* is typically endowed with such superior qualities (Ferguson 1997 [1959]).

The second theoretical approach I employ focuses on the way in which interviewees project and construct their personal identity, as well as Egyptian identity, and how these identities form part of their ideologies. The analysis here is premised on the notion of multiple identities, specifically, Omoniyi's (2006) analytical framework for studying the "hierarchy of identities". Omoniyi argues that "an individual's various identity options are co-present at all times but each of those options is allocated a position on a hierarchy based on the degree of salience it claims in a moment of identification" (2006: 19). These moments of identification "are points in time in performance and perception at which verbal and non-verbal communicative codes … are deployed to flag up an image of self or perspectives of it" (Omoniyi 2006: 21). Omoniyi notes that language itself "is an acceptable identity marker", "so that the alternative languages not chosen in a given moment within an interaction would be alternative identities that are backgrounded or that are less invoked" (2006: 20). My analysis therefore takes account of the verbal codes in the interview transcripts vis-à-vis the identities and ideologies expressed by the interviewees.

The third theoretical framework draws on the discourse mythological approach, a critical discourse analysis approach developed by Darren Kelsey (2012a; 2012b; 2014) for textual analysis of news stories. Central to this approach is the concept of 'myths'. The scholarly use of the term 'myth' "stresses the unquestioned validity of myths within the belief systems of social groups that value them" as opposed to the popular use of the term where it is synonymous with falsehood (Kelsey 2014: 309). This is in line with the definition that Fer-

guson (1997 [1959]) gives in an article dealing specifically with language myths about Arabic, where language myths are described as:

> ... attitudes and beliefs [which] are probably current about the language of the community as well as about other languages and language in general. Some of these are true, i.e. correspond very well to objective reality, others are involved with esthetic or religious notions the validity of which cannot be investigated empirically, and still others which purport to deal with facts are partly or wholly false.
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> FERGUSON 1997 [1959]: 150

As Kelsey (2014: 309) points out, "a myth is not a lie. Rather, it is a construction of meaning that serves a particular purpose through the confirmations and denials of its distortion". In this sense, myth becomes an expression of values and ideologies; a means of legitimating the speaker's position while simultaneously discrediting those who do not subscribe to the same values. In other words, myth becomes "*a vehicle for ideology*" (Kelsey 2014: 313). By employing CDA conventions of studying dominant tropes and discursive constructions, Kelsey's approach aims to underline *how* ideology is transported through myth.

The three analytical approaches I highlighted have one thing in common: at the heart of all of them is a concern with ideology. Throughout the analysis, I employ "a neutral approach to ideology":

> This approach means that the analyst does not need to claim any freedom from ideology; there is an open acceptance that our own perceptions, critiques and ideas are equally influenced by ideology. But since ideology is not an exclusively negative term, it is this neutral approach that exempts the analyst from accusations of hiding their own ideologies behind claims of intellectual or analytical superiority or objectivism.
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> KELSEY 2014: 313–314

To achieve this, I deliberately refrain from evaluating the validity of the interviewees' statements: my goal is not to make ideological judgments but to understand the very workings of language ideology. My analysis is presented in the next two sections.

The Liberal Egyptian Party

The Liberal Egyptian Party (LEP) was a political party with an Egyptian separatist ideology established in 2008, although it was not officially recognised by the government under laws which restricted the formation of new political parties. LEP was an offshoot of an earlier party founded in 2004 called *Maṣr il-Umm* (Mother Egypt). In the interview, Abdel-Aziz Gamal El-Din explains that the two parties only differ in name: after the application to establish *Maṣr il-Umm* was rejected by the authorities, they could not re-apply under the same name. Both parties, he explains, are an extension of the Egyptian nationalist current which dates back to the early 20th century (cf. Suleiman 1996; 2003; 2008). He notes that the Internet has helped them communicate their views to a wider audience, but describes LEP as "a party predominantly for intellectuals, and not so much for the masses". The activities of LEP have received some attention in recent literature. Panović (2010) mentions that a 'Masry Wikipedian' he interviewed is a former LEP member, while Darwish (2007) points to the role of LEP (then in its formative stages) in organising a televised celebration of the (ancient) Egyptian new year in 2007.

The party had an agenda focussed on re-asserting the Egyptian ethnic identity, establishing a secular democratic national government emphasising the separation of religion and state, and standardising the Egyptian vernacular. The latter item in the agenda is the reason I identified LEP as an agent of change. It is worth noting however that following the 2011 revolution and in the lead-up to the 2011–2012 parliamentary elections, LEP assimilated into the Social Democratic Egyptian Party which shares LEP's overarching aims for a secular state, but does not have a language-related item in its official manifesto.

When I contacted LEP and expressed my interest in their language policy, they immediately nominated Abdel-Aziz Gamal El-Din for the interview. It was clear that he was – to borrow Eisele's (2000; 2003) term – the 'language maven' in the party. One of four founding members of the party, Gamal El-Din was seventy when I interviewed him. He spoke in a mixture of *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya* which is closer to the former than the latter. Gamal El-Din describes himself as a "researcher of Egyptology" (*bāḥith fi l-maṣriyyāt*) with a particular interest in "the evolution of the Egyptian language". He has more recently become known for editing and introducing a number of historical works which chronicle specific periods in Egypt's history (Gamal El-Din 2006; 2011b; 2012), in addition to authoring books on aspects of Egyptian history (Gamal El-Din 2007; 2011c; 2013). This recent publishing activity has earned him the title of 'historian' (*muʾarrikh*) in publishers' descriptions of his works.

It is worth noting here that the focus of Gamal El-Din's published works is in line with LEP's Egyptian nationalist ideology. Three common themes which run through all of them is a focus on Egyptian Coptic identity (and by extension, Coptic Christianity) as an expression of authentic Egyptian identity, identifying Arab (and by extension, Islamic) 'invasions' as a foreign element in Egyptian history,[1] and Egyptian nationalism and resistance against oppressors and foreign invaders. It is worth noting that the first two themes are the same themes which ran through the writings of Egyptian separatists such as Salama Musa and Louis Awad (Suleiman 2008).

Gamal El-Din also established a printed magazine called *Maṣriyya* (Egyptian, fem.) in the 70s, which has recently taken the form of an electronic blog.[2] The magazine forwards the same themes mentioned above with particular emphasis on Egyptian nationalism, democracy and secularism. Significantly, one year after I interviewed him, Gamal El-Din published a book titled *Ḥawl Taṭawwurāt Lughatinā al-Miṣriyya al-Muʿāṣira* (On the Evolution of our Modern Egyptian Language) (Gamal El-Din 2011a). This book fleshes out the view of Egyptian Arabic (referred to as the Egyptian Language) which Gamal El-Din expresses in the interview. In what follows, I will not evaluate the linguistic accuracy of Gamal El-Din's conceptualisation of the Egyptian Language (henceforth, EL), but will use this term *prima facie* and comment only on the ideological aspects of the account given of it.

According to Gamal El-Din, all the living languages of the world have an official level and a popular level; a language myth which normalises the language situation in Egypt. Gamal El-Din deliberately refrains from using the terms *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya*. Instead, he refers to the popular and official levels of 'Egyptian language'. Significantly, even the official level (i.e. *fuṣḥā*) is qualified as 'Egyptian', and it is the popular level not the official level which is seen as the 'original source' of the language. When I used the term *ʿāmmiyya* to ask him about his view of language in relation to Egyptian identity, he responded:[3]

SEG1:   The issue of Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* has come to a problem of terminology. I feel that some of those who claim to be linguists invest it to

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1   The term commonly used in Arabic is *al-futūḥāt al-islāmiyya* (the Islamic conquests; literally 'openings'), which has positive connotations. However, Gamal El-Din uses the markedly negative term *ghazw* (invasion) instead. Similarly, Gamal El-Din (2013) uses the negatively marked term *iḥtilāl* (occupation) to refer to the period of Ottoman rule in Egypt.

2   The blog can be found here: http://masryablog.blogspot.co.uk/2009/01/normal-0 -microsoftinternetexplorer4_18.html (accessed 01.07.2014).

3   Transcriptions of interview segments over 10 words long are provided in Appendix 1.

demean the Egyptian language. Meaning that there would be an Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* and an Arab(ic) *fuṣḥā*, when, scientifically, this is not really available. What is available is that there is an Egyptian language which has been evolving throughout history and draws from all the languages that have entered it, from Persian to Turkish, to Arabic, to English, to German, to French, to Italian, to Greek … to Nubian and African and Tamazight. All of these have entered the Egyptian language. And all of these influences do not form the majority of the Egyptian language so that we can call it a Greek language or a French language or an English language or even an Arabic language, or Turkish. No, we can call it an Egyptian language influenced by all this, and herein lies the value of the Egyptian language; that, in absorbing all the civilisations that have entered it, it was able to absorb the lexical items which have come to it from these languages. But it has continued, since ancient times and up until our present day, to dwell in its own house of **grammar**[4] rules. And this is very clear in the modern linguistic studies which confirm that the modern or contemporary Egyptian language is the daughter of ancient languages in its final contemporary form which is present now, and which will of course evolve into other forms as other forms emerge.

Two main myths can be noted in this account of EL (noting that this account addresses the popular level of EL; i.e. *ʿāmmiyya*). The first myth is that Egypt has a special assimilatory capacity which has enabled it to absorb various cultures and civilisations throughout history. This myth is extended to language, where EL has absorbed some of these languages through its special assimilatory power. Note that Egypt and EL are frequently conflated in this account. A second myth is that EL is a direct descendant of ancient Egyptian languages and that it has preserved its grammatical form over time. This invokes Eisele's topos of continuity, which is commonly found in the dominant authoritative discourse in relation to *fuṣḥā*. Significantly, however, it is essentially applied to *ʿāmmiyya* here. EL is described as 'the daughter of ancient languages' and this historical continuity contributes to it superiority.

In line with the definition he presents in his book (Gamal El-Din 2011a), Gamal El-Din then proceeded to explain that EL – like any other language – has two levels: an Egyptian *fuṣḥā* and an Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya*; the latter is the level

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4 Boldface indicates words which were said in English in the interview.

of everyday use and the former is the level used in the writing of 'newspapers and magazines, etc.'. However, he refuses to refer to this latter level as *Arabic fuṣḥā*, offering the following reasoning:

SEG2:   … but for *fuṣḥā* to be called Arabic, I don't really think that there was, at some point in time, an Arabic *fuṣḥā* language which existed in any clear historical period. There was an Arabic language, which was an amalgamation of many disparate languages which were present in the Arabian Peninsula, and which varied amongst them in the names of things: in the names for palm trees, and the names for lion, and the names for sword. And it is normal for a language which develops in a poor desert community to be less advanced and accomplished than a language which has developed in an agricultural community like Egypt. The agricultural community in Egypt has contributed an ancient civilisation with multiple levels in culture, arts, science, language and literature, which cannot be attained by what I call 'the tongues' (*al-alsina*). And I insist on calling them 'tongues' because they were mostly spoken and not written […] and they were only written belatedly, and when they were written it was at a time when this language had not yet stabilised. […] Indeed, when the whole region wanted to learn Arabic in the modern, contemporary age, they resorted to the Egyptian teacher. They actually say that the Egyptian is teaching them Arabic; it is impossible for the Egyptian to teach them Arabic; he will teach them Egyptian […] If the whole region is Arab then they don't need an Egyptian teacher to teach them Arabic; but when they learned, they learned Egyptian.

Again, a number of myths can be traced here. First, the myth that a language which develops in an agricultural environment is more sophisticated than a language which develops in a desert environment. The second myth is that a written language is more prestigious than a spoken language. Two more language myths about Arabic can be found in the excerpt: that the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula did not speak a single language, and that Egyptian teachers of Arabic teach 'Arabs' EL. This latter myth is significant because it implies that the *fuṣḥā* used by 'all Arabs in the region' is in fact 'Egyptian' (effectively stripping 'Arabs' of 'Arabic' and of a standard/written language of their own). The topos of superiority is invoked throughout this excerpt, and the myths outlined above help to achieve this: EL is superior to 'the Arabic tongues' because it developed in an agricultural environment and was recorded in writing earlier. Significantly, the distinction between EL/Egypt/Egyptians/Egyp-

tian culture is blurred, to the effect that the superiority of EL over 'Arabic tongues' becomes synonymous with the superiority of Egypt and Egyptians over Arabs.

As Gamal El-Din explains in the interview, it is the popular level of EL (i.e. ʿāmmiyya) which LEP seek to codify to become the official language of Egypt. He argues that the authentic language is that which people use, saying that 'language is the daughter of the people and the populace not the intellectuals' (al-lugha hiya ibnit al-gumhūr wa-l-nās, mish ibnit al-musaqqafīn) – employing the metaphor of parenthood a second time. He asserts that all Egyptians 'essentially speak the same language, with only slight differences, possibly at the phonetic level but not at the grammatical level' (SEG3). The codified variety, he explains, should be modelled after the EL found in art forms such as poetry, theatre and cinema 'where Egyptian fuṣḥā is absent'. Gamal El-Din points to the shortcomings of the Arabic writing system in representing the full range of 'Egyptian phonics' and says that this writing system will need to be adapted, or indeed an entirely new writing system adopted, in the process of codifying EL. Significantly, Gamal El-Din makes it clear that the process of codifying EL involves simply recording it, and not laying down rules for it since the people who use it have already established its rules.

Two topoi are invoked in laying out this argument: authenticity and unity. The popular level of EL which LEP seek to make official is the 'real' language which Egyptians – all Egyptians – speak. This in turn suggests the superiority of EL. This is made explicit later in the interview when Gamal El-Din asserts that recent developments such as the relaxation of publishing laws and the spread of mobile phones and the Internet have favoured EL because it is "the smoothest and easiest in interaction, circulation and derivation" (al-aslas wa-l-ashal fi l-tadāwul wa-l-taʿāmul wa-fi l-ishtiqāq). He cites words such as 'save' and 'delete' which have been embedded in everyday spoken EL, for example dallituh ([he] deleted [it]). For Gamal El-Din, authenticity seems to be at odds with purity. Purity, which is positively valued in the dominant authoritative discourse about Arabic, is in fact negatively valued in Gamal El-Din's account. This in turn invokes the topos of competition: EL competes with (and is metaphorically 'besieged' by) Arabic. The tension between them is transmitted in a binary of progressive EL on the one hand versus archaic Arabic on the other. This tension is also reflected at the level of identity, where 'Egyptian' and 'Arab' are seen as contradictory categories. Another aim which LEP declared in their mission statement was to delete the word 'Arab' from Egypt's official title, The Arab Republic of Egypt. In explaining the rationale behind this, Gamal El-Din compares the title to the label 'Egyptian Arabic', which he categorically rejects:

SEG4: Well this is the equivalent to [certain] people calling our language Egyptian Arabic. It doesn't work; I can't be French English, or Egyptian English, or Egyptian Arabic. You are putting together things … which don't really go together. I can't be Arab *and* Egyptian. How could it be? So they say, well, Arab is *qawmiyya* and Egyptian is *waṭaniyya*.[5] No, I am neither Egyptian *qawmiyya* nor Arab *qawmiyya*, I am [concerned with] Egyptian identity.

This Egyptian identity according to Gamal El-Din encompasses anyone who carries an Egyptian identification card. He highlights however the diversity of Egyptians in terms of social, economic, religious, ethnic and class differences. In spite of these differences, Egyptians share a "cultural" identity which dwells in the "traditional Egyptian consciousness" (*al-wigdān al-maṣrī al-taqlīdī*) and speak the same language. Crucially, although Gamal El-Din mentions many types of diversity in the make-up of Egyptian identity, linguistic diversity is not among them. Instead, language becomes the one shared feature among an otherwise diverse nation (invoking once more the topos of unity).

Addressing the increasing emphasis on Egyptian identity in recent times, Gamal El-Din attributes this to the "failure of the project of [pan-]Arab unity and *qawmiyya*". He states that Nasser's pan-Arab policies were a cause for division. He reasons that pan-Arabism in Egypt came to be associated with Islam, so that when pan-Arabism faded, only Islam was left. This, he says, has created a problem for the Copts who rejected pan-Arabism because now it would appear as though they are rejecting Islam, resulting in sectarian strife as a by-product of so-called pan-Arabism. Gamal El-Din states that pan-Arab authorities persecuted those who championed Egyptian identity or wrote in *ʿāmmiyya* such as Louis Awad, and mentions that he himself came under attack when he established his magazine *Maṣriyya* (in the 1970s) only because it was named 'Egyptian'. At the time, speaking in the name of Egypt and Egyptianness was categorically rejected as anti-pan-Arabism. These authorities, Gamal El-Din says, are now no more; they have weakened and retreated, accounting for the 'return' to Egyptian identity. He is quick to point out however that pan-Arabism as an ideology still exists and that LEP often comes under attack from

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5   While both terms would translate into nationalism in English, there is a subtle difference in meaning. The term *waṭaniyya* derives from the Arabic word *waṭan*, while *qawmiyya* invokes the concept of *umma*. While *waṭan* refers to "the place to which a person belongs, the fatherland", *umma* refers to "the group of which a person is a member, the nation" (Suleiman 2003: 114). The term *qawmiyya* is particularly known for its use as a qualifier in pan-Arab nationalism (*al-qawmiyya al-ʿarabiyya*).

pan-Arabists and those "who are still under the illusion that it is possible to resurrect pan-Arabism". Hence the competition/tension highlighted between EL and Arabic at the linguistic level, and between 'Egyptian' and 'Arab' at identity level, is extended to tension between Egyptian separatism and pan-Arabism at the ideological level.

Malamih Publishing House

Malamih is a publishing house established by Mohamed El-Sharkawi in 2007 with a mission to empower young Egyptian writers "without ideological, national, or linguistic boundaries".[6] By the time I interviewed El-Sharkawi in July 2010, Malamih had published more than 75 works by Egyptian writers in a range of language varieties and combinations, including *fuṣḥā*, *ʿāmmiyya*, English, French, *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya*, and English and Latinised Arabic. This overtly liberal attitude towards publishing in varieties other than Standard Arabic is the reason Malamih was identified as an agent of language change. El-Sharkawi emphasises this point in the interview, indicating that other publishers who publish works in *ʿāmmiyya* do not promote this openly.

I should point out that Malamih mysteriously closed down towards the end of 2011, shortly after which El-Sharkawi left Egypt. His current whereabouts remain unknown despite my best efforts to locate him. It appears that the closure of the publishing house was financially motivated, although political factors may have also played a part. El-Sharkawi had had his skirmishes with the Egyptian authorities because of his anti-regime views and his affiliation with the pro-democracy group, *Kifāya* (Enough). He was jailed several times for short periods between 2006 and 2010, the most recent being a little over a month before I interviewed him in 2010.

The issue of identity is particularly salient in this interview; the identity of Malamih as a publishing house is inseparable from the identity of its founder, Mohamed El-Sharkawi. As well as referring to Malamih in the third person, El-Sharkawi alternates between the first person pronouns 'I' (*ana*) and 'we' (*iḥna*) when he talks about the publishing house. Using Omoniyi's (2006) 'hierarchy of identities' framework, the identity which El-Sharkawi foregrounds the most is his political identity as a leftist, anti-regime activist. At the beginning of the interview, El-Sharkawi addresses Malamih's declared mission of publishing

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6 From Malamih's website: http://www.malamih.com/ar/index.php?option=com_content &task=view&id=5&Itemid=6 (last accessed October 2010). The website is no longer active.

works 'without boundaries' to include the caveat: "There **are** boundaries. In the end I am leftist; I cannot publish something which talks about capitalism for example; I cannot publish something which supports the regime. There is a political dimension in the matter" (SEG5).

El-Sharkawi's activist identity is similarly fronted at various other points in the interview, where he highlights his differences with Mubarak's government, particularly his multiple arrests for his political views. He refers to himself as a "highly confrontational person" (*shakhṣ ṣidāmi giddan*) and a [political] "instigator" (*muḥarriḍ*). He also mentions his previous employment in a leftist publishing house, *Merit*. El-Sharkawi was 28 years old when I interviewed him, and his bias to young writers is a bias to his own generation; he mentions that he is part of 'a new generation' in the publishing industry. Another aspect of El-Sharkawi's identity which comes up more than once in the interview is his background. El-Sharkawi mentions at three different points that he is from Kafr El-Sheikh, a rural governorate in the Nile delta. He refers to his humble upbringing and his father's small income and how he struggled to buy books which he could not afford.

Returning to Malamih's language 'policy', El-Sharkawi emphasises that it sets them apart from other publishers. He explains that the reason they do not enforce 'linguistic boundaries' is that "language is a means of communication, it should not be an instrument for withholding culture from another" (SEG6). He vehemently states that the books Malamih publishes "will not undergo linguistic editing because there is no such thing as editing a writer's [work]; the writer is free" (SEG7). The only caveat is that the writer does not offend with their writing; that is, El-Sharkawi explains, they are free for example to criticise the idea of religion, but not to criticise one religion in favour of another. It is worth noting that despite Malamih's 'no-language-editing' policy, later in the interview El-Sharkawi mentions a novel written by a young writer from his own home governorate where he heavily interfered to 'correct' the *ʿāmmiyya*:

SEG8:   I was, myself I mean, correcting [it]; I interfered completely in this novel […] I'm telling you I was removing [segments of] speech and inserting speech. The girl [writer] is from Kafr El-Sheikh, the governorate I come from. She had written very rural [literally, peasant-like] speech; she had written speech which is impossible … – no one would understand it.

El-Sharkawi removed regional expressions in the text, altered the spelling of some words, and added diacritics (*tashkīl*) to others. What El-Sharkawi had

evidently done was to 'convert' the script to Cairene *ʿāmmiyya*, calling to mind the guidelines set out for the editors of *Wikipedia Masry* which reflect a clear bias towards Cairene (Panović 2010).

While El-Sharkawi acknowledges that some *ʿāmmiyya* words may be represented in a range of ways using the Arabic writing system, it was clear that he believed there was a 'right' way. For instance, he says that when writing the word *hatʾūl* [she/you will say], the initial vowel should not be represented as a long vowel; hence هتقول is correct, but هاتقول is incorrect. He explicitly states that *ʿāmmiyya* "has principles [which govern] how we must write it" (*laha uṣūl lāzim niktibha izzāy*), and that [written] *ʿāmmiyya* "must include diacritics" (*lāzim yikūn fīh tashkīl fī l-lugha il-ʿāmmiyya*).

El-Sharkawi's attitude towards *ʿāmmiyya* warrants attention. He refers to it as *il-lugha il-ʿāmmiyya il-maṣriyya* (the Egyptian colloquial language). What is significant here is the qualifier 'language' which is a conscious choice on El-Sharkawi's part. El-Sharkawi explains that, from the start, Malamih has been biased to *ʿāmmiyya* because it reflects the distinctiveness (*khuṣūṣiyya*) of Egypt(ians). They even raised the slogan *Yasquṭ Sībāwēh* (down with Sībāwayh).[7] "What have I got to do with Sībāwayh?" he says, "Sībāwayh was a man who lived there; in Najd and Ḥijāz" (SEG9).

El-Sharkawi's view of *ʿāmmiyya* is inseparable from his view of *fuṣḥā*. He states that, even though he studied Arabic at Al-Azhar University, he could not be less concerned with *fuṣḥā* grammar rules, meter and rhyme, etc. He refers to *fuṣḥā* as *lugha aṣīla* (pure language)[8] to mean that it has not developed from any other language. This he says makes it a very difficult language with complicated grammar. *ʿāmmiyya* on the other hand is not a 'pure language', which makes it easier and more flexible:

SEG10:   'āmmiyya language gives me more room to express [myself], given that I am Egyptian, and it reaches a lot of people, as opposed to *fuṣḥā*. Not everyone has a taste for *fuṣḥā*, and it is always difficult because ... the Arabic language (*il-lugha il-ʿarabiyya*), meaning the language of the *ḍād*[9] (*lughit iḍ-ḍād*), is tough and very difficult. It is even classed as one of the [most] difficult languages in the world, like ... like German,

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7   A famous 8th century Arabic grammarian.

8   The Arabic word *aṣīl* (m.; *aṣīla* fem.) is an adjective which denotes authenticity, purity (especially of lineage) and rootedness (i.e. being well-established). It is often used with respect to animals, for example *ḥiṣān ʿarabī aṣīl* (horse of pure Arab breed), and is used here in that sense.

9   The Arabic language was labelled 'the language of the *ḍād*' by early Arab grammarians after a

because German is a pure language and Arabic (*il-ʿarabiyya*) is a pure language, meaning that it is not derived from anything.

He elaborates:

SEG11:   *ʿāmmiyya* is also rich with its terminology, but also because many foreign words have entered it and because it is not a pure language – meaning that *ʿāmmiyya* is not pure. *ʿāmmiyya* at the end of the day is Coptic mixed with Greek mixed with Hieroglyphic mixed with Arabic. This is not our language; meaning Arabic (*il-ʿarabiyya*) is not a language of Egyptians. […] This is why we invented *ʿāmmiyya*. Why is Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* the only one which is understood throughout the – Arab – World? It is impossible for Palestinian *ʿāmmiyya* to be understood throughout the Arab World – in the Levant [perhaps]; it is impossible for Algerian – not the Tamazight, the Arabic, which is called '*il-darga*' [*dārija*] in Algeria – to be understood [throughout the Arab World].

El-Sharkawi goes on to claim that Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* is the only colloquial Arabic understood throughout the Arab World. When asked why this is so, he replies:

SEG12:   Because it has its DISTINCTIVENESS, and because … it is derived from several things, and it's easy, and I can explain many things with it, it's verbose; it has verbosity, and it sounds nice to the ear. Algerian doesn't, Iraqi doesn't. […] We are closer to the Arabic language (*il-lugha il-ʿarabiyya*) than any of the other languages\ dialects, but at the same time it (*ʿāmmiyya*) gives me space [to elaborate], because it is not a pure language.

These three segments (SEG10 to SEG12) require detailed analysis. While El-Sharkawi refers to *ʿāmmiyya* in the interview as 'the Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* language' (*il-lugha il-ʿāmmiyya il-maṣriyya*) – sometimes contracted to 'the Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya*' (*il-ʿāmmiyya il-maṣriyya*) or simply *il-ʿāmmiyya* – he refers to *fuṣḥā* in a number of ways (red). In particular, he uses the words for Arabic

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letter in the Arabic alphabet denoting a sound which was thought to be unique to Arabic (Suleiman 2012). It is worth noting that this label usually invokes linguistic pride, but El-Sharkawi uses it sarcastically.

(*il-ʿarabī* or *il-ʿarabiyya*) to refer exclusively to *fuṣḥā* while *ʿāmmiyya* is not qualified with this label at any point in the interview. Note also that both *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya* are referred to as languages. However, El-Sharkawi is not as willing to award this title to other Arabic colloquials; when he begins to refer to them as 'languages' (*lughāt*) in SEG12 this is quickly repaired to 'dialects' (*lahagāt*), a label which he does not use in conjunction with Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* at all.

There are many language myths which can be extracted from El-Sharkawi's account of *fuṣḥā*, *ʿāmmiyya* and other colloquial Arabics (summarised in table 9.1). These myths invoke a number of topoi. The topos of purity, which is traditionally invoked to exalt *fuṣḥā*, is portrayed here as a shortcoming: *ʿāmmiyya* is simpler and more flexible than *fuṣḥā* because it is not a pure language. The topos of authenticity is also invoked; *ʿāmmiyya* is closer to the Egyptian people because they are a "people with an auditory culture" (*shaʿb saqaf-tuh samʿiyya*). It is worth noting here that although El-Sharkawi paints an overall negative picture of *fuṣḥā* in comparison to *ʿāmmiyya*, he does not explicitly state that *ʿāmmiyya* is superior. For instance, when he compares the restricting conciseness of *fuṣḥā* to the verbosity of *ʿāmmiyya*, he acknowledges that both of these qualities have their advantages and disadvantages. Conversely, when El-Sharkawi compares *ʿāmmiyya* to other colloquial Arabics, he is adamant that the former is better. The 'rationalised evaluations' provided to support his view invoke the topos of superiority (cf. Ferguson 1997 [1959]). For example, the theme of inherent beauty which is often associated with *fuṣḥā* is reappropriated here for *ʿāmmiyya*, which 'sounds nicer' than other colloquial Arabics. This is also evident in El-Sharkawi's choice to reserve the label 'language' for Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya*, but relegate other colloquial Arabics to 'dialects'.

Another myth in the excerpts is that Egyptians 'invented' *ʿāmmiyya* as a way of forging their own language in response to the foreignness of *fuṣḥā*. Like LEP's Gamal El-Din, El-Sharkawi describes *ʿāmmiyya* as a hybrid variety with input from multiple languages and evaluates this positively. However, he does not consider *ʿāmmiyya* an extension of ancient Egyptian languages, conceding in SEG13 below that it is 'not our language'. El-Sharkawi's view of *ʿāmmiyya* is closely linked to his view of Egyptian identity; both Egypt and *ʿāmmiyya* are special – they have their 'distinctiveness' (*khuṣūṣiyya*; small capitals in excerpts). He uses this term again when asked whether a poetry collection published by Malamih was in *fuṣḥā* or *ʿāmmiyya*:

SEG13:   Poems in *fuṣḥā*, but in our *fuṣḥā*, not the *fuṣḥā* of the Bedouins of the [Arabian] Peninsula ... **I'm sorry**, but I'm against\ they don't\ they ...

TABLE 9.1   *Language myths in El-Sharkawi's account of* fuṣḥā, ʿāmmiyya *and other colloquial Arabics*

fuṣḥā	*ʿāmmiyya*	**Other colloquial Arabics**
Far from people	Close to people	
Pure language	Impure language	
Limited vocabulary (rigid)	Richer vocabulary (flexible)	
Concise (restricting)	Elaborative/expressive (liberating)	Not as elaborative/expressive
Complex/difficult	Simple/easy Sounds nice Closer to *fuṣḥā* Understood throughout Arab World	Not as simple/easy Do not sound (as) nice Further from *fuṣḥā* Not understood throughout Arab World

> the Wahhabis have ruined Egyptians' lives generally – even in Islam they have their own interpretations – but also those of the Peninsula ruined the language, I mean ours. In the end this is not our language, but you discover that we have our DISTINCTIVENESS; our *ʿāmmiyya* has DISTINCTIVENESS and it has amazing pronunciation and writing rules, but of course no one cares for them.

This account transports the myth that Egyptians have their own version of *fuṣḥā*. However, unlike Gamal El-Din, El-Sharkawi does not go as far as to claim that the *fuṣḥā* used everywhere in the Arabic-speaking world is Egyptian *fuṣḥā*. In fact, El-Sharkawi highlights that the Egyptian *fuṣḥā* he refers to is different from the *fuṣḥā* of the 'Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula'. Also unlike Gamal El-Din, El-Sharkawi's idea of 'distinctiveness' does not carry clear separatist nationalistic undertones. However, the superiority of Egyptians is still implied: El-Sharkawi refers to the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula as Bedouins and then uses the Arabic words *bitūʿ shibh il-gizīra* (those of the Peninsula) which have a derogatory tone to them. This mirrors the superiority of Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* over other colloquial Arabics expressed above.

El-Sharkawi notes that Malamih has two main agendas, change and a secular state[10] (*taghyīr w-dawla madaniyya*), and even though the work they published does not necessarily further these agendas in a direct way, they certainly wouldn't publish works which support a religious state or the political status quo. The overlap in the views of religion between Gamal El-Din and El-Sharkawi is worth noting here, particularly their aspiration for a secular state and their antagonism towards the religious influence of the Arabian Gulf countries. Indeed, SEG13 suggests that Egyptians not only have their own distinct version of *fuṣḥā* but also of Islam.

El-Sharkawi acknowledges the increase in publishing activity in *ʿāmmiyya*, owing this to the relaxation in publishing rules and the emergence of more publishers. Writers are no longer forced to publish via government publishers where the approval process alone can take up to seven years. Now there are many private publishers and writers have more choice. However, El-Sharkawi notes that even though works published in *ʿāmmiyya* are on the rise, they are not presented as such, which is where Malamih stands out. He adds that other publishers who have published several works in *ʿāmmiyya* deny that this is an orientation they have. They are quick to state that the opinions expressed in the works they publish are those of the authors. This statement provokes El-Sharkawi who says this is not true; "If I am not convinced then I should not publish [it], because this represents me and represents my orientations, ambitions and ideologies" (SEG14).

According to El-Sharkawi, publishers' reluctance to support *ʿāmmiyya* overtly owes to the stigmatisation of publishing in *ʿāmmiyya*. Even though the flourishing of private publishing has curtailed the policing of the language authorities and the hegemony of the standard language, there is constant tension between those who write and publish in *ʿāmmiyya* and the upholders of the standard language. For instance, El-Sharkawi mentions how others in the publishing circle frequently criticise Malamih's language policy and tell him that he must do this or that:

SEG15: They would start to say "No, Mohamed, you cannot do that" or "Mohamed it is imperative (*lāzim*) that you do I-don't-know-what". So I tell them, yes, it is imperative, so we will do that which is imperative

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10   The concept of *dawla madaniyya* (literally, 'civil state') is too complex to cover in this chapter. It is translated into 'secular state' here because it was clearly intended to mean this in the two interviews. The term has gained wider currency and attracted the attention of academics post-2011. I refer the reader to De Poli (2014) for a useful delineation.

in another publishing house, but because we established Malamih
to break all imperatives, we are doing all the things which are **not**
imperative.

This repetition of the word *lāzim* (imperative) is significant as it highlights
Malamih's strife with the language authorities, invoking the topos of compe-
tition. Because it is deliberately challenging the hegemony of *fuṣḥā* and violat-
ing linguistic norms, Malamih is portrayed as both (linguistically) daring and
deviant.

Significantly, El-Sharkawi notes that it was when they started publishing in
English that they came under the most attack and Malamih was accused of
"undermining the foundations of Egyptian culture" (*bitqawwiḍū arkān il-saqāfa
il-maṣriyya*). He explains their motive for publishing in English noting that it
acknowledges the presence of an audience that prefers to read and write in
this language: "**bilingual** people who speak both [Arabic and English]" (*il-nās
illi humma **bilingual**; illi humma biyitkallimu il-itnēn*) or those who think in
English. He points to youths educated in prominent private universities, with
special reference to the American University in Cairo (AUC). He also cites the
economic virtues of publishing in English: books they publish in English, he
says, are priced higher, because the target readers are willing to pay more for
them. Malamih's English novels range in price between L.E. 50 and L.E. 80, the
Arabic books sell for around L.E. 20. Hence, although the English books do not
necessarily sell more than the Arabic books, they generate more revenue. As
El-Sharkawi puts it, publishing one book in English enables them to finance
5 books in Arabic. It is clear that Malamih's motives for publishing in English
are very different from the motives to publish in *ʿāmmiyya*. While El-Sharkawi
is clearly passionate about publishing in the latter, the former is more of an
economic necessity. On publishing in the two language varieties he says: "We
want what unites [people] not what divides. The English language divides, it
does not unite; in the end of the day how many people will read a novel [in]
English?" (SEG16).

This invokes the topos of unity. When El-Sharkawi speaks of the variety
which 'unites' Egyptian people, he is referring to *ʿāmmiyya*. The audience he
wants to reach is young Egyptians whom he is aiming to attract with a lan-
guage which is accessible to them in order to trigger their interest in social
issues. These he reaches by publishing books in *ʿāmmiyya* which are priced to
make them affordable to a wide range of readers. English, he acknowledges,
enables him to reach a different audience: a much smaller audience, granted,
(hence the 'dividing' capacity of English), but one with substantial economic
capital.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight the ideological motives of two pro-ʿāmmiyya agents of change in Egypt who were interviewed in 2010 by examining the interviews through three analytical lenses (Eisele's topoi, the discourse mythological approach, and the hierarchy of identities).

One of the most notable findings of the interview analysis was the range of terms used to refer to *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya*. Gamal El-Din's concept of 'the Egyptian language' (*al-lugha al-miṣriyya*) is particularly significant. The elaborate concept, which was clearly based on an ideological foundation espousing the superiority of Egyptians, does not only demonstrate the existence of different terminological traditions in Egyptian society (even if they only belong in the realm of 'folk linguistics'), but also that the same term can mean different things to different people. Compare for example Gamal El-Din's use of the term 'Egyptian language' to El-Sharkawi's use of the same term: the former used it to refer to a system which encompasses both *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya* (in the same way that *al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya* would be used), while the latter used it to refer specifically to *ʿāmmiyya*.

Another example of how ideologies can be mediated through linguistic labels is in the conscious labelling of *ʿāmmiyya* as a 'language' (*lugha*) in both interviews. Gamal El-Din denies the Arabian 'tongues' (*alsina*) of old the status of languages. Similarly, El-Sharkawi reserves the label 'language' for Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* but refers to other colloquial varieties of Arabic as 'dialects' (*lahgāt*). These labels feed into the constructed superiority of Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* in both cases.

The role of language choice as an identity marker in the interviews was not straightforward. While the use of 'elevated' *ʿāmmiyya* by El-Sharkawi with occasional English words is in line with the identity of the educated, pro-ʿāmmiyya Marxist, Gamal El-Din's language choice flouts expectations. That is, Gamal El-Din's use of a mixed variety which was arguably closer to *fuṣḥā* than *ʿāmmiyya* at many points goes against his pro-ʿāmmiyya ideology. To account for this, one must acknowledge the wider pool of indexes associated with *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya* (cf. Bassiouney 2014). While the use of *fuṣḥā* might be at odds with Gamal El-Din's political ideology, it serves to project the identity of the knowledgeable intellectual, lending authority to Gamal El-Din's statements.

The most important findings were perhaps in the area of language myths. Here, the discourse mythological approach was particularly helpful. Subjecting the interviews to discourse analysis does not only bring out the myths in the discourse, but also demonstrates how these myths are transported through language choice, argumentation, metaphors, labelling, hedging and the use of

pronouns. It is important to reiterate here that the term myth is used independently of its truth value; it does not matter whether a 'myth' is true or false, what matters is its unquestionable validity to a certain group. The discourse mythological approach and Eisele's topoi complement each other as various topoi are often invoked through myths. What is particularly striking is how the topoi in the dominant authoritative discourse about Arabic were reappropriated in the pro-ʿāmmiyya discourse of the two interviews. The occurrence of these topoi in the interviews is summarised in table 9.2.

It is worth pointing to the overlap in the ideologies of LEP and Malamih: both are pro-ʿāmmiyya and share similar ideas about separation of religion and state. Crucially, they were both at odds with the government authorities generally and the language authorities more specifically. However, despite the similarities between LEP's professed Egyptian nationalism and Malamih's emphasis on the 'distinctiveness' of Egyptians, there was a marked difference in how they viewed Egypt in relation to the Arab World. When El-Sharkawi compares ʿāmmiyya to other colloquial Arabics, he places Egypt within an 'Arab World' (SEG11), a concept which is completely absent from Gamal El-Din's account who refers to 'Arabs in the region' instead (SEG2). One might argue that while Gamal El-Din expressed 'separatist Egyptian nationalism', El-Sharkawi expressed 'integral Egyptian nationalism': the former views Egypt as entirely removed from the Arab World, while the latter captures a view of Egypt as distinct from the Arab World but "with strong non-national links with the Arabic speaking countries" (Suleiman 2008: 39).

Moreover, even though LEP and Malamih shared a pro-ʿāmmiyya ideology, there were significant differences in their arguments. LEP's Gamal El-Din considered ʿāmmiyya the genetic offspring of Egyptian languages, while El-Sharkawi who asserted the distinctiveness of Egyptian ʿāmmiyya did so while identifying it as a language with foreign origins; one which is ultimately 'not ours'. Similarly, while Gamal El-Din expressed unequivocal support for ʿāmmiyya, Malamih's 'bias' for ʿāmmiyya was coupled with 'linguistic liberalism': an openness to publish in a range of linguistic forms in order to reach different audiences.

Finally, even though the two interviews were conducted prior to substantial political change in Egypt and both LEP and Malamih no longer exist in the capacity in which I interviewed them in 2010, this chapter demonstrates that the ideologies expressed are embedded within a web of enduring social and geopolitical concerns.

TABLE 9.2   *Topoi in the interviews*

Topos	LEP	Malamih
SUPERIORITY	Rationalised evaluations to demonstrate superiority of *ʿāmmiyya* over *fuṣḥā*; *Fuṣḥā* is essentially Egyptian – What 'Arabs' speak is Egyptian	Rationalised evaluations to demonstrate that Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* is superior to other colloquial Arabics; The concept of an Egyptian *fuṣḥā* which is superior to 'Bedouin' *fuṣḥā*
UNITY **AUTHENTICITY**	*ʿāmmiyya* is the *real* language that *all* Egyptians speak	*ʿāmmiyya* is unifying and authentic: it is closer to the people on the streets; English is dividing and unauthentic: it is used by a select few
PURITY **CONTINUITY**	The 'Egyptian language' is a daughter of ancient (Egyptian) languages. It is a hybrid and continually evolving language with the assimilatory power to absorb lexical items from many foreign civilisations while maintaining its own grammar – and herein lies its value	*Fuṣḥā* is a pure language (*lugha aṣīla*), but this is a negative feature; Strength of *ʿāmmiyya* lies in its hybridity because it makes it more flexible Not explicit
COMPETITION	Linguistic: *ʿāmmiyya* 'besieged' by *fuṣḥā*; Identity: Egyptian vs. Arab; Ideological: Egyptian nationalist vs. pan-Arabist	Strife with language authorities
CONSPIRACY	Not explicit	Wahhabis have ruined Egyptians' language and religion

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Appendix: Interview Transcripts

SEG1

… mawḍūʿ il-ʿāmmiyya l-maṣriyya dakhal fi mushkilit muṣṭalaḥ. ana baḥiss inn huwwa baʿḍ il-… mudda ʿī ʿilm il-lugha biyastasmirūh li-l-ḥaṭṭ min mustawā il-lugha il-maṣriyya. bi-maʿnā inn tibʾa fīh ʿāmmiyya maṣriyya wa-fuṣḥā ʿarabiyya, baynamā ʿilmiyyan da shēʾ mish mutawaffir yaʿni. al-mutawaffir anna hunaka lugha maṣriyya tataṭawwar ʿabr al-

tārīkh ta'khuz min kull il-lughāt illi dakhalit laha min awwil il-fārisiyya ila l-turkiyya ila l-ʿarabiyya ila l-inglīziyya ila l-almāniyya ila l-firinsiyya ila l-īṭāliyya ila l-yūnāniyya ... ila in-nūbiyya wa-l-ifrīqiyya wa-l-amāzīghiyya. kull da dakhal fī il-lugha l-miṣriyya. wa-kullin min hāzihi l-muʾassirāt lā tushakkil ghālibiyyit al-lugha l-maṣriyya biḥēṣ niʾdar nisammīha bi-ʾinnaha lugha yūnāniyya aw lugha firinsiyya aw lugha inglīziyya aw lugha ʿarabiyya ḥatta, aw turkiyya. laʾ niʾdar nisammīha lugha miṣriyya mutaʾassira bi-kull da, w-di qīmit il-lugha l-miṣriyya; innaha istaṭāʿat an tastawʿib, min ḍimn ma-stawʿabit kull il-ḥaḍārāt illi dakhalitha, tistawʿib il-mufradāt illi gatlaha min hazihi l-lughāt. wa-lākinn ẓallat, munzu al-qidam wa-ḥatta al-yōm, taskun fī bēt al-qawāʿid wa-l-**grammar** al-khāṣṣ bīha. w-da wāḍiḥ giddan fī il-dirāsāt al-lughawiyya il-ḥadīsa illi bituʾakkid inn al-lugha al-maṣriyya il-ḥadīsa aw il-muʿāṣira hiya lugha ibnat al-lughāt il-adīma fī shaklaha an-nihāʾī il-mawgūd al-muʿāṣir il-ʾān, w-illi ha-yiṭṭawwar ṭabʿan ila ashkāl ukhra biẓuhūr ashkāl ukhra.

SEG2

... amma ann il-fuṣḥā titsamma hiyya l-ʿarabiyya fa-ana yaʿni ma-aẓunnish inn fīh fi waʾt min il-awʾāt kān fīh lugha ʿarabiyya fuṣḥā mawgūda fi ayy fatra tārīkhiyya waḍḥa yaʿni. kān fīh lugha ʿarabiyya, hiya gimāʿ li-shitāt al-ʿadīd min al-lughāt illi kāt mawgūda fi l-gazīra il-ʿarabiyya w-illi kānit bitakhtalif fī-mā baynahā fī asmāʾ al-ashyāʾ: fi asmāʾ il-nakhīl wa-asmāʾ il-asad wa-asmāʾ il-sēf [...] wa-huwa min aṭ-ṭabīʿi inn il-lugha illi bitanshaʾ fī mugtamaʿ faqīr ṣaḥrāwī takūn aqall taṭawwuran wa-ingāzan min lugha nashaʾat fī mugtamaʿ zirāʿī zayy maṣr. il-mugtamaʿ il-zirāʿi fi maṣr ʾaddim ḥaḍāra qadīma zāta mustawayāt ʿadīda fi l-saqāfa wa-fi l-fann wa-fi l-ʿilm wa-fi l-lugha wa-fi l-adab, lā yumkin an tatawaffar fī-mā yusammā bi-l-alsina, wa-ana baʿuṣṣir ʿala inn ana asammīha alsina laʾinnaha kānit tunṭaq wa-lā tuktab fi l-ghālib [...] wa-lam tuktab illā mutaʾakhirran, wa-ʿindamā kutibat kāna fī awqāt lissa hāzihi al-lugha lam tastaqirr [...] ḥattā anna kull il-manṭiʾa ʿindamā arādat fi l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīs wa-l-muʿāṣir an tataʿallam al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya kānat talgaʾ ilā al-mudarris al-maṣri. humma fi l-ḥaʾʾa biysammūha il-maṣri biyʿallimhum ʿarabi; mish mumkin il-maṣri yiʿallimhum ʿarabi; ha-yʿallimhum maṣri [...] kull il-manṭiʾa iza kānu ʿarab fa-humma mish fī ḥāga ilā mudarris maṣrī yiʿallimhum ʿarabi, wa-lākinn lamma itʿallimu itʿallimu maṣri.

SEG3

il-kull biyitkallim lugha taʾrīban waḥda, il-furūʾ bēnha furūʾ basīṭa, w-mumkin tikūn fī baʿḍ iṣ-ṣawtiyyāt, innama mish fī qawāʿid il-lugha bitāʾithum.

SEG4

ma-hu da nafs il-muʿādil li-fikrit inn nās tiʾullik [...] ʿala l-lugha btāʿitna yiʾullik il-ʿarabiyya il-maṣriyya. ma huwwa ma-yinfaʿsh; ma-yinfaʿsh abʾa il-inglīziyya il-firinsiyya, aw il-inglīziyya il-maṣriyya, aw il-ʿarabiyya il-maṣriyya. yaʿni inti bitḥuṭṭi ḥagāt ... ma-

timshīsh yaʿni. ma-yinfaʿsh abʾa ʿarabi w-maṣri. izzāy tīgi? fa-yʾullak laʾ, ma l-ʿarabiyya di l-qawmiyya w-il-maṣriyya di l-waṭaniyya. laʾ, ana la qawmiyya maṣriyya wa-la qawmiyya ʿarabiyya, ana hawwiya maṣriyya.

SEG5

fi ḥudūd. fi l-ākhir ana yasāri; mish haʾdar anshur ḥāga bititkallim ʿan ir-raʾsimāliyya, masalan; mish haʾdar anshur ḥāga maʿa l-niẓām. fīh buʿd siyāsi fi l-mawḍūʿ.

SEG6

il-lugha hiyya adāt tawāṣul, fa-mayinfaʿsh il-lugha tibʾa adāt manʿ saqāfa ʿan ākhar.

SEG7

il-kutub mish hayiḥṣallaha taʿdīl lughawi laʾinn ma-fīsh ḥāga ismaha inn ana aʿaddil ʿala kātib; il-kātib huwwa ḥurr.

SEG8

ana kunt baṣaḥḥaḥ, binafsi yaʿni; tadakhkhalt tamāman fi l-riwāya di [...] ʿāyiz aʾullik inn ana kunt bashīl kalām w-baḥuṭṭ kalām. il-bint min kafr il-shēkh barḍu, min nafs muḥāfẓiti. fa-hiyya katba kalām fallāḥīni awi; yaʿni katba kalām mustaḥīl yaʿni ... – maḥaddish hayiʿrafuh.

SEG9

ana māli bi-sībāwēh? sībāwēh da rāgil kan ʿāyish hināk; fi nagd w-il-ḥigāz.

SEG10

il-lugha il-ʿāmmiyya bitiddīni barāḥ aktar fi t-taʿbīr, bima innī maṣri, w-bitiwṣal li-nās kitīr awi, ʿaks il-fuṣḥā. il-fuṣḥā mish kull in-nās bitatazawwaqha, w-ṭūl il-waʾt hiyya ṣaʿba laʾinn ... il-lugha il-ʿarabiyya, lughit iḍ-ḍād yaʿni, qawiyya w-ṣaʿba giddan. ḥatta hiyya muṣannafa min il-lughāt is-ṣaʿba fi l-ʿālam, zayy ... zayy il-almāniyya, laʾinn il-almāniyya lugha aṣīla w-il-ʿarabiyya lugha aṣīla, yaʿni mish mushtaqqa min ḥāga.

SEG11

w-barḍu il-ʿāmmiyya ghaniyya bimufradātha, bass laʾinn barḍu dakhal ʿalēha kalimāt dakhīla kitīr w-laʾinnaha lugha mish aṣīla, yaʿni il-ʿāmmiyya mish aṣīla. il-ʿāmmiyya fi l-ākhir ibtiʾ ʿala yūnāni ʿala hīrūghlīfi ʿala ʿarabi. di mish lughitna; yaʿni il-ʿarabiyya mish lughit maṣriyyīn. [...] ʿashān kida iḥna ikhtaraʿna il-ʿāmmiyya. il-ʿāmmiyya il-maṣriyya lēh hiyya il-waḥīda illi bititfihhim fi kull ḥitta fi l-ʿālam, il-ʿarabi? mustaḥīl il-ʿāmmiyya il-filisṭīniyya titfihim fi l-ʿālam il-ʿarabi kulluh – ʿand il-shawām; mustaḥīl il-gazāʾiriyya – mish il-amāzīgh, il-ʿarabiyya, illi bititʾāl ʾil-dārga' fi l-gazāʾir – titfihim.

SEG12

la’ann hiyya laha ᴋʜᴜṢūṢɪʏʏᴀ, w-la’inn ... hiyya mittakhda min kaza ḫāga, w-sahla, w-ba’dar ashraḥ bīha ḥagāt kitīr, mushiba, ya‘ni fīha ishāb, w-ḥilwa waq‘aha ‘a- l-widn. il-gazā’iri la’’a, il-‘irā’i la’’a. [...] iḥna a’rab li-l-lugha il-‘arabiyya min il-lughāt\ il-lahagāt it-tanya bass fi nafs il-wa’t hiyya bitiddīni barāḥ, la’inn hiyya mish aṣīla.

SEG13

shi‘r bi-l-fuṣḥā, bass bi-l-fuṣḥā btā‘itna, mish bifuṣḥit il-badw bitū‘ shibh il-gizīra ... **I’m sorry**, bass ana ḍidd\ humma mish\ humma ... il-wahhābiyyīn bawwaẓu ḥayāt il-maṣriyyīn ‘umūman – ḥatta fi l-islām ya‘ni ‘anduhum tafsīrāthum – bass kamān bitū‘ shibh il-gizīra bawwaẓu l-lugha, ya‘ni bitā‘itna iḥna. iḥna fi l-ākhir di mish lughitna, bass inti taktashifi inn iḥna līna ᴋʜᴜṢūṢɪʏʏᴀ. il-‘ammiyya līha ᴋʜᴜṢūṢɪʏʏᴀ w-līha qawā‘id nuṭ’ w-ktāba rahība, bass ṭab‘an ma-ḥaddish biyib’a ma‘ni bīha.

SEG14

law ana mish muqtani‘ il-mafrūḍ ma-nshursh, la’’in da biy‘abbar ‘anni w-biy‘abbar ‘an tawagguhāti w-ṭumūḥāti w-afkāri.

SEG15

... y’ūlu “la’a ya mḥammad ma-yinfa‘sh ti‘mil kida” aw “mḥammad lāzim mish ‘arfa ti‘milu ēh”. fa-ba’ulluh awya ma-hu da lāzim fa-l-lāzim da ha-ni‘miluh fi dār nashr tanya, bass bima inn malāmiḥ ‘amalnāha ‘ashān niksar bīha l-lāzim fa-iḥna bini‘mil kull il-ḥagāt illi hiyya **mish** lāzim.

SEG16

iḥna ‘ayzīn illi yigamma‘ ma-yfarra’sh. il-lugha il-ingilīziyya bitfarra’ ma-bitgamma‘sh; ir-riwāya fi l-ākhir kām waḥid ha-yi’rāha ingilīzi?