Dialect and stance-taking by non-Egyptian celebrities in Egypt

Abstract: This article explores the stance of non-Egyptian celebrities performing in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) and/or living in Egypt. These celebrities are forced by the Egyptian media to take a stance towards ECA and Egypt, and engage in the ongoing dialogue concerning Egypt’s cultural role. Meta-linguistic, as well as linguistic, resources become the focal point of a struggle for dominance. Over the last five years, there have been intense debates regarding the role of Egypt as a cultural hub in relation to the Egyptian media. This is due to the increasing threat from other emerging cultural hubs – such as Dubai and Lebanon – both of which have greater financial resources and allow the use of other Arabic dialects. The data utilised for this research includes television and newspaper interviews, articles, as well as performances by non-Egyptians. One particularly relevant example is that of Russian/Armenian belly dancer Ṣāfināz¹ who currently resides in Egypt.

Keywords: non-Egyptian celebrities, dialect, stance-taking, Egyptian media, immigration, code choice

Introduction

This article explores the stance of non-Egyptian artists, singers and actors living in Egypt. These non-Egyptians often employ code choice and utilise "meta-linguistics" resources, such as references to shared language attitudes and ideologies, in order to position themselves as either admirers of Egypt or "Egyptians by choice". They are also forced to take a stance and engage in dialogue within which Egypt’s cultural dominance, and ECA’s role in mirroring or emphasising this dominance, is enforced.

The insistence on taking a stance is due to the increasingly competitive globalised context, in which access to linguistic resources is dependent on economic power and media distribution. Non-Egyptian artists’ stance regarding Egypt and ECA – and, in particular, their use of ECA in television interviews – is highly influenced by whether they have fully immigrated to Egypt or not. Egypt’s role as the main cultural hub of the Arab world has been intensely debated in the Egyptian and the wider Arabic media over the last five years. This is because of the emergence of other cultural hubs – such as the two prominent examples of Dubai and Lebanon – both of which have greater financial resources and allow the use of other Arabic dialects, such as Levantine or Gulf Arabic.

To further understand the use of ECA to adopt a stance, one needs to understand that language is first and foremost a resource. As Heller (2007:15) argues, language can be defined as a set of resources that, like all resources, is distributed in unequal ways, depending on the social networks and “discursive spaces” of

¹ Names and titles are transliterated using the ALA/LC Romanization scheme (http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/arabic.pdf), to facilitate identification in library catalogs and databases. Linguistic data is transcribed phonetically, following standard practice.

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individuals. The indexes of these resources are related to the "social organizations, historical conditions, and political situation of a community" (Heller 2007:15). The concept of an "unequal distribution of power", as related to access to a standard language and other dialects and/or languages, has previously been referenced in the work of both Heller and Chambers (Heller 2007:15; Chambers 2009:267). However, in the case of Egypt, there is a struggle for power and dominance on both a linguistic and meta-linguistic level. It is not the case that ECA is still the most dominant code in the Arab media, but it is the case that the Egyptian media is still hanging on to its previous position of unrivalled power in a struggle for dominance, which, in fact, is increasingly slipping away, given the wide access to other codes throughout the Arab world.

Data for this study includes television interviews with non-Egyptians, as well as newspaper interviews and articles in which Egyptian identity and language are highlighted. There is also reference to films, songs and performances of non-Egyptians. The data includes artists from other Arabic countries, some of whom refuse to switch to ECA or refuse to code switch between ECA and their dialect and instead opt to utilise another Arabic dialect. In order to conduct a thorough study, one has to depend on what Johnstone terms the "cumulative patterning of stance" (2009:19) – that is, one has to study the same individual over a period of time and in different public contexts to understand the display of stance that also constructs an identity. Following Johnstone, in this article I will concentrate on one specific artist: Šāfnāz, a Russian/Armenian belly dancer who migrated to Egypt in 2011 and was threatened with deportation on at least two occasions. Television interviews with the dancer directly following these deportation threats are examined in detail, in order to demonstrate how this dancer in particular, as well as other non-Egyptian artists living and performing in Egypt, use ECA as a resource, the access to which clearly indexes an acknowledgement of Egyptian cultural dominance. The inclusion of other celebrities in this study provides a wider context within which to examine and subsequently explain this phenomenon. The methods used to reflect this stance, such as dialogicality, are also examined.

This study is the first of its kind to explore the role of immigration, code choice and stance-taking in the Arab world. It also concentrates on the struggle of access to linguistic resources as a reflection of a wider sense of national identity – that is, it correlates identity with access to linguistic and meta-linguistic resources by analysing novel sources of data. Indeed, the role of competing dialects across the Arab world remains underexplored (see Hachimi 2013).

**Egypt as a cultural hub: the linguistic situation**

Like other Arabic countries, Egypt has a diglossic situation in which Standard Arabic (SA) is used in formal settings and is not the native language of any group, while Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) is used for communication, with a form of Cairene being the most prestigious variety. The rise of Egypt as the cultural hub of the Arab world during the twentieth century had an essential linguistic impact on both Egypt and the Arab world at large. In 1919, the first recording studio opened in Cairo; during the 1920s, several film companies began producing silent films in Egypt; and within a relatively short period of time, Egypt became the leader of Arabic popular culture. It was during this period that the Egyptian capitalist Ţalʿat Ḥarb set up the studio complex in Cairo that was to make Egypt the Hollywood of the Arab world. Egyptian radio started broadcasting in 1932; later renamed Radio Cairo, it eventually reached the entire Arab world. The cultural hegemony of Egypt led to almost all Arabs being exposed to various types of ECA. Eventually, this meant that ECA (and, in particular, the urban Cairene variety) became almost a semi-standard language across all Arab countries, and thus came to be understood by most Arabs who watched Egyptian films and soap operas, listened to Egyptian music or even read Egyptian colloquial poetry (see Versteegh 2014). Consequently, ECA gained a special status. To the present day, it remains the dialect that boosts the careers of actors and singers from Syria, Lebanon or the Gulf throughout the Arab world.

A related phenomenon that left a lasting linguistic effect was the rise to stardom of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthūm (1904–75), who remained an icon of Arabic culture and music for over half a century. It is difficult to overstate the importance of Umm Kulthūm. Virginia Danielson attempted to encapsulate the extent of her prominence and influence in *Harvard Magazine*, evoking a comparison to several US-based cultural "greats"
combined: “[I]magine a singer with the virtuosity of Joan Sutherland or Ella Fitzgerald, the public persona of Eleanor Roosevelt and the audience of Elvis and you have Umm Kultūm”. In 1932, Kulthūm was famous enough throughout Egypt and the Middle East to go on tour throughout the Arab world, including Damascus, Baghdad, Beirut and Tripoli; without doubt, by 1934 Umm Kulthūm was the most famous and prestigious singer in Egypt; as a result, she was chosen to inaugurate Radio Cairo with her voice on 31 May 1934.

Following her rise to fame, Umm Kulthūm’s attitude shifted towards both SA and ECA, and she came to promote knowledge and usage of both varieties in Egypt and throughout the Arab world. By singing songs in ECA that were heard from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, she raised the prestige of ECA to the status of a language of culture accessible to all Arabs. By singing both medieval and modern poetry in SA, she similarly made SA an accessible and common code for Egyptians and, indeed, all Arabs. Some of her most famous songs are medieval poems set to music, as well as poems written by leading poets of the day, such as the poet laureates Aḥmad Shawqī and Ḥāfiz Ibrāhīm and the romantic poet Ibrāhīm Nājī. Her linguistic repertoire helped cement SA as a living language in a more effective manner than the efforts of all the language academies combined. Egyptians, both literate and illiterate, were – and, indeed, still are – singing her songs, even if they miss some of the meanings that come from in-depth knowledge of SA. In a community where oral culture plays a major role, Kulthūm’s part in influencing the formation of societal attitudes towards language and ideology cannot be ignored.

However, Egypt's cultural awakening was not only restricted to the mediums of cinema and music. The beginning of the twentieth century also witnessed a flourishing of the publishing industry in Egypt. More books were published in Egypt during this period than in all of the Arab capitals combined, and hundreds of new periodicals were launched between 1900 and 1930 (Fahmy 2011:29–31). Not only was there an increase in the production of newspapers and magazines, but there was also an overall "expansion of the country's intellectual horizons" (Berque 1972:356).

Although SA flourished throughout Egypt’s cultural renaissance, ECA's role remained prevalent and influential. Even at the zenith of Arab nationalism in Egypt, during which period SA was promoted under Nasser, ECA's dominance persisted. Nasser himself, when addressing Egyptians and the Arab nation as a whole, used both ECA and SA – this being very possibly a linguistic first in Egyptian political history. It may not have been his direct intention to elevate the status of ECA, but rather to produce the utmost effect possible on his audience. However, the very fact that he did not feel bound to use SA is sufficient to reflect the familiarity and ease with which Egyptians use ECA.

Another cultural indicator of the pervasive influence of ECA is found in the language of films of this era, particularly those films that possessed nationalist undertones, such as Wā Islāmāh ("Woe to Islam") (1961) and Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ("Saladin") (1963). The title of the latter was, of course, intended to allude to Nasser himself, thereby establishing a comparison between Saladin and Nasser. In the film, Saladin uses a mixture of ECA and SA, while all of the other characters, including the crusaders, simply use ECA. An even more intriguing example of ECA dominance is in the film Jamīlah Būhrayd ("Djamila Bouhired") (1959). This film dramatises the life of Algerian nationalist and revolutionary Jamila Bûhrayd, who was imprisoned and tortured by the French during the Algerian War. Although set in Algeria and France, the film is shot entirely in ECA.

In previous studies, such as that conducted by Blanc (1960), in which he examines inter-dialectal communication, the general conclusion reached is that Egyptians, when interacting with other Arabs, are least accommodating when levelling their colloquial towards SA or any other colloquial. Whether this is true or not is a moot point and needs further research. Some of the earlier studies on this issue are now dated, and what was true at that time may not still be accurate today. However, the conclusions of Blanc (and others) give us reason to pause and consider this research finding. The almost smug attitude held by Egyptians towards their dialect is related to two essential factors that are a prerequisite for understanding the deeply embedded cultural associations of ECA – namely, market force and aspirations of cultural hegemony. Both factors are, of course, related. By "market force", I refer to the fact that Egyptians comprise approximately 24% of the inhabitants of the Arab world. Therefore, they form the prime audience and market for the media. In addition to this, Egyptians have immigrated to other Arab countries by the millions

over the past few decades. However, the main factor in the spread of ECA and the pride and confidence that Egyptians possess towards their dialect is Egypt’s cultural hegemony within the Arabic media for almost a century. That said, it is essential to also acknowledge that exposure to Levantine Arabic has increased dramatically among Egyptians in recent years, due to popular soap operas that are now increasingly available via satellite television. The same is true of exposure to Gulf dialects. This, however, has not changed the attitude of Egyptians towards their dialect: Egyptians still strive to achieve cultural hegemony, and Egyptian films in ECA are still hitting box offices throughout the Arab world.

Data, theories and methods

The data gathered for this study includes one hundred plus television interviews with seventeen non-Egyptian celebrities who perform in ECA, some of whom have decided to settle in Egypt and some of whom have not, as well as non-Egyptians who refuse to perform in ECA. Forty-four newspaper interviews with these same artists in which Egyptian identity and language are highlighted are also referred to. This article aims to produce a macro picture of the stance adopted by non-Egyptians, while also concentrating on one artist in particular – Şafināz, an Armenian/Russian belly dancer – to explore the “patterns of collective positioning” (Jaffe 2009:18) that she utilises in order to construct her identity. As Jaffe argues, social identity is “the cumulation of stances taken over time” (2009:11). For celebrities, one’s identity does not just accumulate over a period of time, but it is also regularly performed in public. Table 1 summarises patterns of switching of non-Egyptian celebrities, their nationalities and whether they have fully immigrated to Egypt or not.

Table 1: Non-Egyptian celebrities’ use of ECA and immigration patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Years in Egypt</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code of Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aṣālah</td>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Approx. 10 years</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>ECA, SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durrah</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Tunisian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>ECA % TCA</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayfā’ Wahbah</td>
<td>Singer/actor</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Egypt/Lebanon 11 years</td>
<td>LCA and ECA</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind Ṣabrī</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Tunisian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Approx. 10 years</td>
<td>ECA % TCA, English, French</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jannāt</td>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Approx. 10 years</td>
<td>ECA % MCA/French</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latīfah</td>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>Tunisian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikūl Sābā</td>
<td>Singer/actor</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Egypt/Lebanon Approx. 12 years</td>
<td>LCA and ECA</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razān</td>
<td>Singer/actor</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Approx. 5 years</td>
<td>LCA % ECA</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şafināz</td>
<td>Dancer</td>
<td>Armenian/Russian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Non-applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samīra Said</td>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>Morroccan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dubai/Cairo 3 years</td>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bāsim Yākhūr</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Approx. 8 years</td>
<td>SCA/ECA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥasan</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Jordanian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Approx. 8 years</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamāl</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Approx. 8 years</td>
<td>SCA/ECA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymān</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lebanon Approx. 3 years</td>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maksīm Khalīl</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dubai 3 years</td>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundhir Rayhānah</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dubai 3 years</td>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qaṣīyy Khūlí</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Syrian</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dubai 3 years</td>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>ECA/SCA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author.

Note: This table covers the period up to December 2014. It is sometimes impossible to know precisely where a celebrity resides permanently, especially if they have homes in two different countries.
This study is the first of its kind to explore the role of code choice and meta-discourse in the Arab world not just with reference to SA and ECA but with reference to other languages and to other competing Arabic dialects. It also concentrates on the struggle of access to linguistic resources as a reflection of a wider sense of national identity – that is, it correlates identity with access to linguistic and meta-linguistic resources by analysing novel sources of data. Indeed, the role of competing dialects across the Arab world remains underexplored (see Hachimi 2013).

The analysis of this data will lay bare the use code choice, meta-linguistic resources, dialogicality and the affective and epistemic stances that are utilised to adopt an identity. Over the next few paragraphs, I will shed light on these concepts in detail.

**Stance taking**

Stance is considered by Ochs (1992) as the mediating path between linguistic forms and social identities. That is, stance is a “contextualisation cue” that informs interlocutors regarding the nature of the role that the speaker aims to project in relation to the form and content of his or her utterance – for example, choices of aspect, modals or evidential statements can display a speaker’s attitude together with the claims or content of reported speech (Jaffe 2007:56). In a single act of stance-taking, three things are achieved: evaluation, positioning and alignment. Evaluation refers to the process in which a stance-taker “characterises” an object of stance as having a “specific quality or value” (Du Bois 2007:143); positioning is when the stance-taker makes her or his affective stance clear and claims both certainty and knowledge; and alignment is the act of standardising and normalising the relation between different stances (see Du Bois 2007:144; Damari 2010:611). For example in the data analysed celebrities evaluate Egypt’s role as a cultural hub and align themselves with the prevalent discourse of Egyptian media that Egypt is the most important country in the region culturally. They adopt this position and their discourse reflects it. They also disalign themselves with other competing discourses that claims that this is not the case anymore and that Egypt lost its dominant role in the Arab world. In some cases as will be clear in the analysis celebrities may be forced to make their position clear by interviewers. This positioning can then accumulate into a larger entity that we may call an identity. By studying evaluative expressions, grammar, phonology, and lexis, one can have a better understanding of the stance of a specific individual (see Bucholtz and Hall 2010: 22).

As Jaffe argues stance is also a resource that reflects a wider identity. Jaffe (2009:17) contends that when stance draws upon macro-political, historical and linguistic ideologies, it can be described as meta-sociolinguistic in nature. This meta-sociolinguistic stance is usually displayed through “overt commentary” about the codes that have been used. Jaffe also argues that “patterns of code choice can also be interpreted as stances in which language ideologies are simultaneously a resource and an object” (2009:17).

Epistemic stance is concerned with the truth value of a “proposition and the speaker’s degree of commitment to it” (Irving 2009:53). For example modals could reflect this degree. Consider the following examples:

Egypt must be the place to go to if you want to be famous.  
Egypt might be important but I am not sure.

The truth value of the first proposition is stronger than the second and this is denoted by use of the modal “must”. For further examples see (Irving 2009:53). The nature of statements is also significant in epistemic stances. In the following example, there is a factual statement with verb to be which denotes the epistemic stance of the speaker.

*Egypt is the most important country in the world.*
Affective stance is concerned with speakers’ feelings and attitudes about “a proposition, an utterance or a text” (Irving 2009: 54). Consider the following example;

I am so sad that people think I don’t like Egypt.
I am so happy to be here.

To explain this further I outline below some of the linguistic resources that celebrities use to adopt a stance. These linguistic resources are both discourse-based and structural-based.

These resources are structured through associations/indexes that individuals acquire and resort to. These indexes are related directly to language ideologies, as well as social, political, and demographic variables. That is, these linguistic resources are used in relation to the indexes of different codes and social variables, so that language is part of the social process that individuals engage in. The resources referred to in this study include:
1. Content: talk about language;
2. nature of statements (see Gee 2010); including grammatical patterns such as nominalization, verbless sentences, mood and modality;
3. presuppositions;
4. dialogicality;
5. code switching and code choice.

Statements can directly reflect the identity of the speaker and audience. In a study of teenagers in a post-industrial area of Massachusetts, Paul Gee (2010: 152) uses the following categories to relate their language to their perceptions of self: cognitive statements, such as “I think” and “I know”; affective statements, such as “I like,” “I want,” and “I need”; state and action statements, which describe one’s state and actions, such as “I am intelligent” and “I work hard”; ability and constraint statements, such as “I can get an A grade”; achievement statements, such as “I want to go to Harvard” and “I challenge myself.” While the differences between achievement statements and ability and constraint statements are not always clear, this categorization, could help demarcate types of stances, whether affective or epistemic.

I would like to add to this the category of assertive statements (see Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 179) for similar phenomena in other languages), which in Arabic can take the form of a verbless sentence in the present tense. Verbless sentences in which the verb “to be” is implicit have been touched upon earlier and are a popular resource in public discourse for the factual indexes they carry in Arabic.

Modality refers to a micro-analysis of the clause structure that concerns itself with the functional categories of statements: whether the utterance is declarative (a proposition), interrogative (a question), or imperative (a command). Modality also refers to “expressions of commitment to the truth or obligation of a proposition” (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 112). Modal items have different grammatical forms that include adverbs, such as the English adverbs, “possibly,” “certainly,” “perhaps,” and so on; modal verbs, such as the English “must” and “could”; participal adjectives, such as “it is required”; verbs of cognition, such as “I feel” and “I believe”; and copular verbs, such as “it seems,” “it appears,” “it is,” and so on.

Modality, on the other hand, may express certainty and strong obligation—this is called “high modality,” as in the case of “must,” “should,” “definitely,” and “always”—or uncertainty and weak obligation, which is termed “low modality,” such as “could,” “possibly,” “perhaps,” and “kind of.” Mood and modality are essential in helping us understand epistemic stances. It may also reflect attitude and ideology (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 112).

According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 114), presupposition “refers to the presumed knowledge a recipient needs to make full sense of a text.” It usually uses cultural frames and biased assumptions that are a result of shared cultural beliefs.

Turning to dialogicality, this is the main concept used to employ meta-linguistic resources and is a pivotal resource in this study. According to Du Bois, dialogicality is apparent when a stance-taker’s utterances “engage with the words of those who have spoken before – whether immediately within the current exchange of stance utterances, or more remotely along the horizons of language and prior text as projected by the community of discourse” (2007:140).
However, the content of an utterance and the choice of code are the most essential factors in the stance taking process. In the last paragraphs I outlined methods used to show the stance of celebrities. I also delineated the concepts adopted in this work.

The study aims to highlight the accumulative patterns of celebrities’ stance taking process.

Data analysis

It is clear from the analysed data that there is a direct relation between code switching to ECA in interviews and whether the celebrity has immigrated to Egypt or only performs in ECA. For example, the male Jordanian actor ʿIyāḍ Naṣṣār, who permanently immigrated to Egypt eight years ago, switches to ECA (almost completely) in all of the five interviews examined from the data. In comparison, other actors who live in more than one country, Egypt included, do not necessarily adhere to ECA in all of the interviews they undertake, even when the interviewer is Egyptian him/herself. The Syrian actor Maksīm Khalīl performs in ECA, but does not use it in interviews, even with Egyptian interviewers, and he attributes this stance to his identity as a Syrian. Bāsim Yākhūr, who mainly lives in Dubai but stays in Cairo for long stretches of time and similarly performs in ECA, does not use ECA at all in interviews. He is also Syrian, and it is not clear from his interviews whether this stance is related to his identity or linguistic aptitude.

Table 2  Accommodation of non-Egyptian male celebrities to Egyptian interlocutors in interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Celebrity</th>
<th>Number of TV Interviews</th>
<th>Number of Newspapers and Articles</th>
<th>Number of Egyptian Interviewers</th>
<th>Number of Non-Egyptian Interviewers</th>
<th>Percentage of ECA Switched Completely to ECA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bāsim Yākhūr</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ʿIyāḍ Naṣṣār</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamāl Sulaymān</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maksīm Khalīl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundhir</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>80% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayḥānah</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qaṣiyy Khūlī</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tayyim Hasan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10% Only one programme No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author.

Table 3  Accommodation of non-Egyptian female celebrities to Egyptian interlocutors in interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Celebrity</th>
<th>Number of TV Interviews</th>
<th>Number of Newspapers and Articles</th>
<th>Number of Egyptian Interviewers</th>
<th>Number of Non-Egyptian Interviewers</th>
<th>Percentage of ECA Switched Completely to ECA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hind Ṣabrī</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durrah</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aṣālah</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikūl Sābā</td>
<td>8</td>
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Source: Author.
Over the next few pages, I will give detailed examples of specific non-Egyptian celebrities.

**Russian/Armenian belly dancer Ṣāfināz**

Ṣāfināz arrived in Egypt at the beginning of 2011, and since then she has been threatened with deportation twice: the first time due to the expiration of her visa; the second because she performed with a belly dancing costume sporting the colours of the Egyptian flag. Following the second threat of deportation, she undertook an interview on *Miṣr al-jadīdah*. In this interview Ṣāfināz demonstrated both an affective and epistemic stance, in order to position herself as a lover and admirer of Egypt and Egyptians and highlight the role of dialect in her journey to success in Egypt. To recall, According to Jaffe (2009:7), the affective stance displays "the emotional states of the speaker", while the epistemic stance demonstrates the degree "of certainty of the speaker about their propositions". Ṣāfināz's use of stance is clarified below:

**Programme:** *Miṣr al-jadīdah*³

**Muʿtazz Damirdāsh: male interviewer**

*S*: ana bahibbi maṣr/masr sabab nagaḥiti/il-gumhu:r il-maṣrī humma illi bi-yinagaḥni/fa mayinfaʃ

*M*: maṣr li:ha faḍl Šale:ki innik nagaḥti fi:ha/

*S*: bil-nisba li ana bahibbi maṣr mumkin aktar min baladi

*M*: walla:hi

*S*: ana ishtaḡalt fi kit:i:balad bas mafihum/gumhu:r ḥa-thibbini zayy il-maṣrīyyi:n ma bi-yḥibbu:ni/Saf

*a:n kida zayy ma humma bi-tḥibbubum [...] bahibb alwaːnu/zay ma bahibb il-balad/zay ma bahibb ak/i:wi zayy ma bahibb kulli ḥa:ga fi:h

*M*: yaːnī inti bi-tḥibbi maʃ fi kulli ṣuwarha/ka-ʕaːda:t wi taqa:li:d

*S*: fi kulli ṣuwarha/fil-aːyaːm il-wiḥʃa/fil ayyaːm il-ḥilwa/fil ayyaːm al-ʕaːdiyya

*S*: I love Egypt. Egypt is the cause of my success. The Egyptian audience is what makes me succeed. So I cannot do anything that insults them.

*M*: You feel grateful to Egypt for your success?

*S*: For me, I love Egypt even more than my own country.

*M*: Really?

*S*: I have worked in many countries, but I never found an audience that loved me as Egyptians did. So as they love me I love them. [...] I love the Egyptian flag and its colours. I also love the country and I love the food and everything in it.

*M*: So you love Egypt in all its forms?

*S*: In all its forms: in the good days, and the bad days and the normal ones.

The affective stance of Ṣāfināz is apparent in her repetition of the highly emotive verb "love" in Egyptian Arabic with the ECA aspeCutu marker b-, which denotes a continuous state of affection. She combines this with an epistemic stance in more than one interview, when she declares that Egypt is the reason for her success:

**Note the following propositions by Safinaz:**

_Egypt is the cause of my success_

This proposition is rendered verbless in Arabic with an implicit verb to be. The epistemic nature of the proposition also reflects the stance of the speaker. She considers Egypt the reason for her success.

_I have worked in many countries, but I never found an audience that loved me as Egyptians did._

Here Safinaz utilizes an epistemic stance which is that there is no audience that loved her as Egyptians did. This renders Egyptians special and renders their relationship as special. She also claimed to know the stance of Egyptians towards her when she said that no one has ever loved her as Egyptians did. So she attributes to them an affective stance as well.

Programme: Ṣāḥibat al-saʿādah
Isʿād Yūnus: female interviewer
S: I was afraid. This is a very big country, and the strongest belly dancer artists are in Egypt.

Here, Ṣāfināz displays an affective stance of awe for the powerful role that Egypt plays in the art of belly dancing. She then expresses an epistemic stance when she denotes the factual statement that the strongest belly dancers artists are from Egypt. This statement in Arabic is in fact expressed with the implicit verb to be. She states that she was afraid or intimidated, due to the fact that Egypt harbours the most important artists in her field. What is overwhelmingly apparent is that Ṣāfināz clearly acknowledges Egypt’s role, as a cultural hub for belly dancing and the instrumental part it has played in her success.

Unlike actors or singers, belly dancers do not have to perform in a specific dialect. Most non-Egyptian singers and actors perform in Egypt using Egyptian dialects. However, as a dancer, Ṣāfināz was consequently called upon in interviews to display her knowledge of ECA and acknowledge its importance and role in a global world. As demonstrated, Ṣāfināz employs dialogicality to cast herself as a lover of Egypt and an Egyptian by choice. Indeed, she also uses dialogicality as a tool to emphasise her agreement with Egyptians that ECA is a resource that enables one to gain access to fame and fortune throughout the Arab world. In fact, as previously mentioned, as a dancer she does not need to master ECA and that fact, perhaps, has led her to outline her stance even more openly and transparently than other performers. In order to appreciate the importance of her references to Egypt’s icons and cultural role, it is essential to understand the dialogue currently taking place in Egypt and the Arab world at large regarding the role of ECA. As previously mentioned, ECA no longer has a monopoly over art. However, Ṣāfināz, in each of her interviews, presupposes that Egypt is the only cultural hub, not just in terms of the Arab world, but across the entire Middle East. Her Yaḥduth fī Miṣr interview clarifies this position further, as the interviewer forces her to take a stance:

Programme: Yaḥduth fī Miṣr
Sharīf ʿĀmir: male interviewer
A: illi a-rafu/aw a-ra东路/yaʔ̬ni xuʔ̩u:šan il-ka:m sana: illi fa:tu/inni il-raʔ̩s il-/inn iʔ̩nna il-raʔ̩s il-маašri aw il-raʔ̩s il-baladi da fann маašri xa:šis/iʔ̩nna tu:š Sumrīna niʔ̩raš asma:š?/kibi:ra/samya gama:l/l′i-fi ?aʔbdu/di:n/a/lakin šafina:z ism маašri li-wa:hdah min afjar il-raʔ̩s qaša:t fi маašri fi ha:dhih al-ayya:m [...] muḥaddada b-innaha tiğ’a:dir mašri/aʔaʃrašik izzazy/illi maʃ ha-tifhami:h ... ismik il-ašli... [She says her name].
A: What is known and also what I have read in recent years is that Egyptian dancing or local dancing is a purely Egyptian art. We have long known famous Egyptian names in belly dancing, including Sāmiyah Gamāl, Fīfī ʿAbduh, Dīna and so on. But Ṣāfināz is an Egyptian name for one of the most famous belly dancers in Egypt these days who is also threatened by deportation. How shall I introduce you? What you do not understand ... [...] we can translate. What is your original name?
[...]

Sharīf ʿĀmir, the interviewer, presupposes that belly dancing is a uniquely Egyptian art and highlights the fact that although Ṣāfināz has an Egyptian name, she is not, in fact, Egyptian.

Despite this, Ṣāfināz positions herself throughout the interview as an admirer of Egypt, an Egyptian by choice and, most importantly, engages in a dialogue about Egypt that is difficult to understand for non-Egyptians, both politically and culturally. When asked when she arrived in Egypt, she replies:

Dialect and stance-taking by non-Egyptian celebrities in Egypt

She refers to "the revolution" without mentioning the precise name of the revolution – the January 25 Revolution – presupposes that she, the interviewer and the audience all share this knowledge. She thus positions herself as an insider who has an intimate understanding of the importance of this event for Egyptians and measures her time in Egypt in reference to it. Similarly, in another interview, she also refers to current political events and demonstrates her stance:

**Programme:** Miṣr al-jadidah  
**Muʿtazz:** male interviewer  
S: mabṣuṭa bi rayisna giddan/axi:ran ḥa-nʃu:f il-ʔama:n  
S: I am happy with our president. We will now have safety at last.

Here, she displays her affective stance by expressing her happiness. She refers to the Egyptian President Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sīsī as "our president", thus suggesting through her use of pronouns that she, too, is an Egyptian. She also makes reference to the dialogue taking place in Egypt regarding the need for political stability and safety. Again, in this example, she is engaging in a purely Egyptian dialogue, and her use of dialogicality serves to enhance her position as an Egyptian by choice.

When asked how she became interested in belly dancing in this same interview, she tactically posits a similarly Egyptian-focused response:

S: suʕa:d ḥosni/xalli ba:lak min zu:zu/bil-ṣudfa ṭalaʿ da ḥa:ga maṣri  
S: From the actor Suad Hosni and her movie Take Care of Zuzu. By chance, this movie turned out to be Egyptian.

By referring to a famous Egyptian movie and actor, Ṣāfināz appeals to Egyptians’ pride as regards the role of their dialect in the wider Arab world. That she inadvertently discovered by chance that the film she credits with influencing her passion for belly dancing is, in fact, Egyptian indexes that Egyptian culture is widespread, as well as highlighting her stance concerning the spontaneity of her interest in Egypt. For Ṣāfināz, her natural and instinctive interest in Arabic and Egypt is related to sheer admiration and love of the country and people.

In the **Yaḥduth fi Miṣr** interview (and, notably, in several others), she is specifically queried regarding dialect and her learning process:

**Programme:** Yaḥduth fi Miṣr  
**Sharīf:** male interviewer  
Sh: inti itʕallmti ʕarabi izza:y/  
S: min talat sini:n tabʕan/awwil ma ge:t maṣr w-ʕirift inni mayinfaʃ tiharraki:ha fi maṣr law inti mabtaʕrafi:ʃ tikallimi:ha ʕarabi  
Sh: [repeats sentence and laughs.]  
Sh: How did you learn Arabic?  
S: Three years ago, of course. Once I arrived in Egypt and realised that one cannot function without learning Arabic.  
Sh: [repeats sentence and laughs]

Her conditional sentence in Egyptian Arabic contains a number of errors. For example, she uses second person feminine pronouns, when, in fact, she should use a first person singular pronoun. Ṣāfināz’s answer, with its grammatical mistakes, does not satisfy her interviewer, so he repeats his question (and laughs), in order to prompt further discussion concerning her process of learning Arabic:

Sh: itʕallimti izzay baʔa/  
S: fi-fuʃgina/min aʃha:bna kida/min ge:r ḥaddi yiʕallimni/ʕalaʃa:n kida ana ma-baʕraf-fi tiʔra ʕarabi/ yado;b mikassar.  
Sh: wi itʕallimti izzay yaʃni/bi-tismaʃi ağa:n/  
S: awwil ḥa:ga umm kalthu:m wi Šabd il-ḥali:m/baḥibb asmaʃu wi arʔuʃ Sala umm kalthu:m wi ʕabd
Sh: Šalaʃa:n kida itšallimti Šarabi/Šaʃa:n tifhami Šabd il-ḥali:m bi-t-ʃu:l?e:h/
S: ah
Sh: di ha:ga saʃba giddan
S: ana aʃu:l ma-titkallimi:-ʃ maʃa:ya ingli:zi Šaʃa:n ana lazim atkallim Šarabi
Sh: So how did you learn it, then?
S: In my work, from my friends and so on, but without any one teaching me, and that is why I cannot read Arabic well, just about...
Sh: So how did you learn, then? Did you listen to songs?
S: First I listen to songs by Umm Kulthūm and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. I love to listen to them and dance to Umm Kalthoum and Abdel Halim songs, and I ... [...] For example, I am originally an actress and for me dancing is acting; they always come together for me. That is why I cannot dance without acting. So if you want to dance to Umm Kulthum and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm’s songs and you do not know Arabic, it is not possible. So when people watch me dance to a song, they should know from my acting the words of the song, they should know what Ḥalīm is saying. So I need to understand what they sing. That is why I learned Arabic.
Sh: So that is why you learned Arabic? To understand what ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm says?
S: [smiling] Yes.
Sh: This is really difficult.
S: That’s why I tell people: “Do not speak to me in English, because I must speak in Arabic”.

As is clear from this interchange, Ṣāfināz never provides a clear method of how she learned to speak ECA. This is unlike other celebrities, who systematically explain how they mastered ECA when questioned in interviews. She first states that it was necessary for her to learn it, in order to function in Egypt as a belly dancer. Then she claims that she never took any sort of formal classes in ECA, but learned it from friends and through her work. However, this answer does not satisfy the interviewer, who then proceeds to prompt her into providing him with a clear answer. She responds by referring to past dialogues that all Egyptians are familiar with concerning Egypt’s role as a beacon of culture. In fact, she narrates her personal narrative of learning this language as if it was simply a natural outcome of listening to iconic Egyptian musicians, such as Umm Kulthūm and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ḥāfiẓ. This romantic and wildly unrealistic answer seems to appeal to both her audience and interviewer: the fact that she learned Arabic in order to understand Egypt’s cultural heritage and thus to be able to feel and communicate it on a visceral level when she dances. In fact, the music of Umm Kulthūm, as a classical singer, is not the obvious choice for belly dancing, and there are few occasions in which belly dancers dance to her music.

In sum, Ṣāfināz produces a narrative of arriving in Egypt during the tumultuous period of the January 25 Revolution; the Egyptian interviewer and audience can understand this turmoil. She subsequently spontaneously learned Arabic in order to be able to function in Egypt; again, the Egyptian interviewer and audience are flattered by the ease and necessity of learning ECA. However, Ṣāfināz’s narrative is simply not accurate. She could have just as easily utilised English, given its global status in Egypt. Similarly, she could have hired a translator. But, instead, she chooses to learn ECA, actively refraining from mentioning the process itself and the hard work involved. Here, she uses the model verb lazim “must” to correlate learning Arabic with living in Egypt. Her attitude to ECA is not just positive, she regards knowledge of this dialect as a necessity, given the new identity that she has chosen to adopt. As Dragojevic et al. (2013:20) argue: “Language attitudes are not only a product of present times, but also a reflection of complex histories of domination and subordination that, in some cases, can be traced back hundreds of years”. Ṣāfināz’s attitude towards ECA is also an acknowledged compensation of the dominance of Egypt for hundreds of years as a
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The importance of the relationship between attitude and the social world, as well as attitude and social variables, including historical and political variables is also stressed by Dragojevic et al. (2013). It is through engaging in an ongoing dialogue focusing on dialect and language that language attitudes and ideologies accumulate. Şâfinâz chose to take part in this dialogue by referring to both the past and the future.

Forcing a stance: the case of Jordanian actor Iyâd Naşşâr

According to Irvine, a stance is not just the product of a choice on the part of a speaker. A speaker may find a stance forced on him or her, depending on the context: “[W]e say a person takes a stance, but they – and we ourselves – may also find themselves in one willy-nilly. A stance can be given or accorded” (2009:70). In the case of Şâfinâz, the interviewer occasionally guided her towards giving a specific answer, and Irvine, she complied willingly. However, in some cases, Egyptian interviewers of non-Egyptian celebrities force these celebrities to switch to ECA or to explicitly discuss their stance towards ECA and Egypt. Use of ECA in these cases indexes dominance of Egypt culturally. To illustrate this, I will provide examples from two interviews (one in 2008; the other in 2010) with the Jordanian actor Iyâd Naşşâr.

Iyâd Naşşâr became well known in Egypt after his lead role in the Syrian SA production Abnâʾ al-Rashîd (“Sons of al-Rashîd”) (2006) – a serialised costume drama that chronicled the lives of Hârûn al-Rashîd and his two sons. He was then asked to play various small roles in Egyptian films and soap operas until around 2008, when he landed his first main role in an Egyptian soap opera. By this time, he had mastered ECA, in order to play the role. But not only did he have to master ECA to be cast in a main role in an Egyptian soap opera, he also had to master ECA in order to conduct interviews on Egyptian talk shows. In the 2008 interview, he was pressured by the interviewer to speak in ECA and was only allowed to switch to Jordanian Arabic for novelty’s sake. This interview took place on the well-known Egyptian television programme al-Sahrah taḥlā (“A pleasant evening”) on the main Egyptian satellite channel.6 The programme is broadcast live and accepts calls from viewers. During the programme, the Jordanian actor was also accompanied by his Egyptian script writer.

Programme: al-Sahrah taḥlā

**Egyptian female interviewer:** How did you learn to speak Egyptian Arabic so well?

**Script author:** In fact, when Iyâd arrived in Egypt, his accent [in ECA] was not like that at all. But he said to me that in a month he would be very fluent.

**Egyptian female interviewer:** So what did you do in that month?

**Jordanian actor:** You know, in the Levant, because of Egyptian TV series we really understand Egyptian Arabic, but understanding vocabulary is one thing and being able to pronounce words correctly is another. I mean, the spirit of talking. So I started listening carefully to people speaking in Egyptian; I started training myself by recording myself and listening to it later and correcting my mistakes. There was vowelling on the script, but sometimes I had to write the pronunciation of a word above it in red in English letters to make sure I get it right. When I was working on the series, I refused to take any calls from Jordan or use any other dialect, in order not to confuse myself.

**Egyptian female interviewer:** So please answer the next question in Jordanian Arabic ...

Following this specific request from the young Egyptian female interviewer, Naşşâr complies. The way in which the interviewer frames her first question implies that to be able to master ECA in such a short space of time is a big achievement. Unlike Şâfinâz, Naşşâr explains that mastering ECA is the result of hard work and resolution. The script writer interjects to emphasise that it was not easy for the actor, since his pronunciation of ECA was poor before coming to Egypt. Thus, mastering ECA is construed as a prize to be won through hard work, and Naşşâr willingly accepts this idea. Before Naşşâr delineates how he managed to gain fluency in ECA, he explains the difference between passive knowledge and everyday usage of a

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dialect. He mentions that he has always been able to understand ECA, like “all other Arabs in the Levant”, but he could not speak it. He also acknowledges the dominance of Egyptian television series and thus the Egyptian media throughout the Levant, by doing so ensuring his popularity with his Egyptian audience by engaging in the same ongoing dialogue. The actor then proceeds to explain the specific tools that he used to learn ECA.

The attitude of the Egyptian interviewer towards the primacy of ECA and the pressure placed on the Jordanian actor to conform to ECA norms is particularly apparent in the next example from the al-Sahrah tablā interview. Here, a female Syrian fan calls in and asks to speak to “Mr. Īyād” in Levantine Arabic. The Syrian fan asks him about his films and soap operas in Syria, and the Jordanian actor attempts to reply in Levantine dialect. A transcription is used, since there is code-switching, and the non-Egyptian Arabic is marked in bold:

**Jordanian actor:** Aflaːm/ma fi fi minṭiqat if-ʃaːm...
Films, in the Levant there are no ...

**Egyptian female interviewer interrupts:** ʔiḥki bi-ʃaːrīt:
Speak in Egyptian Arabic!

**Jordanian actor smiles and continues:** Musalsalaːt ʕamalt aktar/wi inti ʃarfi inni nawsīyyat il iʃ-ʃaːm fiʃ-ʃaːm bi-tkuːn tarixīyaa/wi inni ayyi fannaaːn ḥatta law bi-ykaːbir beːnu:nh wi beːnh nufsaaːn ʃaːrif inni diʃ-ʃaːrīt il maʃruːʕ wa fiʃ-niḥaaːya da fi maʃlaːḥit il-ḥaːla l-ʃarabiyyaa.
I have done more soap operas than films in Syria. You know, in Syria the kind of soap opera you do are usually historical. Also, any actor, even if he denies it to himself, knows what it means to him to enter Egypt. This, to any Arab actor, is a legitimate right, and at the end this is for the benefit of drama in the Arab world.

**Egyptian female interviewer:** tiftikir eːh illi yixallī l-fannaaːn yikaːbir innu yiʔuːl inni maʃrūt miḥātta muhīmma biʃ-ʃaːbːaː luh.
Why do you think an actor would refuse to acknowledge that being in Egypt is an essential part of his career?

**Jordanian actor:** Mumkin li-ʔannu lam futuːh luh il-furṣa innu yaʔti li-ʃaːrīt [...]
Perhaps because this actor never had a chance to come to Egypt in the first place [...]

**Syrian fan:** inta gazzaːb awi biʃ-lahga l-ʃaribiyya
You are really attractive when you speak Egyptian Arabic.

The status of ECA as the language of Egyptians who aspire for cultural hegemony is apparent here. The non-Egyptian actor receives a phone call from a Syrian and reverts back to his Levantine dialect to answer her, probably unconsciously so as to accommodate her and because it is his mother tongue. He starts with a marked negative marker in Levantine Arabic ma fi (“there is no”), as opposed to the ECA maːfiː ...
Before he has a chance to finish his sentence, the interviewer interrupts him, ordering him to speak in Egyptian Arabic. Strangely, she uses the imperative Levantine form ʔiḥkī (“speak”), rather than the Egyptian equivalent ikallim; it is not entirely clear why she does so. Ironically, it could be that she, too, unconsciously accommodates the discourse of the Syrian fan. It could also be a conscious message that speaking in ECA is a choice, even if he has mastered another dialect. In other words, the interviewer may be signalling that she chooses to utilise ECA during the interview, even though she could easily speak to him in Levantine.

The Jordanian actor is swift in his reaction. Not only does he immediately switch back to ECA, but he also feels the need to flatter his Egyptian audience. He does so by confirming the widespread Egyptian belief that Egypt is, in fact, the centre of Arab culture, if not also the “mother of the world”. The interviewer picks up this nationalistic thread and shows an interest in his complementary statements about Egypt. She asks him why anyone would doubt the importance of the Egyptian market.

Why do you think an actor would refuse to acknowledge that being in Egypt is an essential part of his career?
The question of the interviewer presupposes the dominant role of Egypt and directs the actor to take a positive stance towards both Egypt and ECA.

His reply aligns him completely with Egypt and Egyptians, as he posits that the scorn of those actors who refuse to acknowledge Egypt’s significance is usually due to sour grapes; they – meaning other actors or singers (which statement would, of course, include Najwá Karam) – are simply bitter because they have never had the chance to visit Egypt. Note that in his last sentence concerning actors who have not had the opportunity to visit Egypt, he uses the SA negative construction lam tutiḥ luh il-furṣa. This switch may be to emphasise the importance of this final statement of opinion.

His attempts to please his Egyptian audience by speaking positively about Egypt – and, more importantly, doing so in ECA – pay off when the Egyptian female fan flirtatiously comments that he is “very attractive” when he speaks ECA. An Egyptian actor may not be as attractive, but a Jordanian flatter an Egyptian’s ego is, of course, much more interesting and fascinating. When the fan states that Iyād Naṣṣār is attractive (the same word is used to denote “sexy”) when he speaks in ECA, she acknowledges his efforts and achievements and rewards him for mastering her dialect.

This interview was conducted in 2008. Since then, Iyād Naṣṣār’s popularity as an actor has steadily risen throughout Egypt, and he was even cast in the role of Ḥassan al-Bannā’ – the controversial Egyptian founder of the Muslim Brotherhood – in the television series al-jamāʿah (“The brotherhood”) (2010). The fact that Egyptian producers chose a Jordanian actor to play such an important Egyptian figure is telling.

In 2010, Naṣṣār was invited to partake in another interview on the well-known talk show al-ʿĀshirah masāʾan (“Ten o’clock”) with Muná al-Shādhili – a show somewhat comparable to Oprah Winfrey’s Oprah.7 Muná opens her interview with Naṣṣār by congratulating him for undertaking the task of playing such a controversial role as that of al-Bannā’. Notably, in this introduction, she uses a mixture of SA and ECA, while Naṣṣār sticks to ECA throughout the interview. When he pauses and stumbles after some minutes, his host interrupts to inform him that he can speak in Jordanian Arabic, SA or ECA – whatever code he feels most comfortable with. Naṣṣār, however, has learned his lesson: he replies quickly in ECA that he feels more comfortable using ECA, since he has been living in Egypt for a while and now even thinks in ECA. Here, his reaction clearly demonstrates his desire to make his positive stance completely clear to both interviewer and audience.

In addition to Naṣṣār, there are many examples of non-Egyptian celebrities opting to take a positive stance towards Egypt and ECA in interviews. Some do so by discussing ECA directly and some do so by switching to ECA while acknowledging Egypt’s role or positing that they feel Egyptian. The following examples merely skim the surface:

**Tunisian singer Laṭīfah in ECA**

I am Egyptian by desire, spirit and blood. I have lived in Egypt for about 25 years now. I am, for sure, with the majority of Egyptians who like Abdel Fattah al-Sisi …

**Lebanese singer Haifa in LCA**

Being in Egypt makes me really happy. I am happy to accept the invitation of this audience. Perhaps I am Lebanese, but I owe so much to Egypt.

**Refusing to comply: the case of Lebanese singer Najwá Karam**

Najwá Karam is a well-known Christian Lebanese singer and one of the few singers who has openly declared that she would never sing in any dialect except her own (that is, Lebanese), including Egyptian and Gulf dialects. No Gulf country took this as an offence, but Egyptian producers and media-makers were livid. Karam was attacked by Egyptian newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations. On more than one occasion, she was asked to explain her declaration and provide a justification for it. In response to these

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attacks by the Egyptian media, Karam convened a news conference to explain her position and made a number of significant public statements about Egyptian singers. She first explained that she has not mastered ECA, and while other Lebanese singers may be proficient in ECA, she simply could not sing in a dialect that she has not mastered. When asked whether she might lose all of her Egyptian audience as a consequence, she replied: “There are also those who like the Lebanese dialect in Egypt. I appreciate the singer who values his own dialect and his own country”. With this statement, Karam rendered the issue a patriotic one. From her perspective, there are those who only sing in their dialect and therefore appreciate who they are and what their country is, and there are those who do not. Karam then accused Egyptian jihaṭ (“bodies”) (possibly the Ministry of Culture) of prohibiting Egyptian singers from singing in any other dialect except Egyptian. She also issued a direct challenge by stating that she would sing in Egyptian Arabic only if ‘Amr Diyāb (a famous Egyptian pop singer) sang in Lebanese. However, Karam was also apologetic at times. She admitted on one occasion that she did not mean to offend Egyptians, but only intended to be generous by asking them to sing in her dialect: “It is like asking someone to come to visit you”.

As a consequence, Karam was accused by the Egyptian media of being a mediocre singer, who would never become famous, because of her refusal to sing in other dialects. She was also accused of being a fanatic, who does not appreciate diversity and the global nature of art. The reaction in the Egyptian media clearly demonstrated that Egyptians associate fame and celebrity with singing in Egyptian Arabic. Interestingly, the same idea was confirmed by Karam herself, who accused fellow Lebanese singers of using ECA solely in order to become famous (see article referenced above in n. 12). This attack on ECA-speaking Lebanese singers provoked counter-attacks in the Lebanese media, as is clear in the following extract from an article posted in 2011 on the website Anazahrah.com:

[But the “mother of the world” that refuses to open up to Lebanese Arabic considers Karam’s refusal to sing in Egyptian an offense to Egypt. Some [journalists] still think of Egypt as the gateway to fame like it was 50 years ago. This is not true anymore; Lebanon and Gulf countries are the gateway to an audience that is diverse in both nationality and culture. Egypt has remained closed upon itself, refusing to open up to what others are doing, and refusing to abandon its place in making non-Egyptian stars. While now, with satellite channels, any singer can make it in a day by having his video clip broadcast all over the place.]

While we are not undertaking an analysis of this article in detail here, suffice to say that it is clear that the journalist believes that Egyptians wrongly consider themselves to be at the centre of the world. Note that the phrase “mother of the world” – a common appellation for Egypt – is placed within quotation marks, presumably in order to cast doubt on Egypt’s role as such. The Lebanese journalist assumes that Egyptians’ fixation on their dialect (ECA) and their attempts to pressure non-Egyptians to use it across all mediums stems from Egyptians’ perception of themselves as the cultural centre of the Arab world. Thus, ECA reflects both past and present aspirations of cultural hegemony. This cultural hegemony is not just dependent on the numerous films, songs and soap operas produced in Egypt, but also on Egypt’s historical and political past.

In sum, by refusing to sing in ECA, Karam spurred an argument in both the Egyptian and Lebanese media about power, control, identity and, of course, language. Karam was called upon to justify and explain her stance regarding dialect, but this very demand and her subsequent response made her famous in the process.

**Forcing a stance: the case of Syrian actors Quṣayy and Maksīm**

A more complex occurrence is that of non-Egyptian celebrities who perform mostly in ECA, but then either intentionally or non-intentionally do not switch to ECA in interviews. When this occurs, the celebrity in question is usually required to clarify their stance towards Egypt or give an explanation as to why they cannot switch. They are, in other words, forced to openly display their stance by their Egyptian interviewer. The following are two examples of interviews with Syrian actors who do not switch to ECA, Quṣayy and Maksīm:

**Programme:** MBC TV, al-Ḥakam 14

**Maksīm (Maxime): Syrian male actor**

M: Egyptian Arabic is widespread, and we hear it a lot, but it is not easy to get the intonation right? This all needed studying. This is not easy.

**Interviewer:** Do you speak Egyptian well?

M: Well, good, I try.

**Interviewer:** I will test you today. Can you switch now to Egyptian for the rest of the interview?

M: In fact, no.

**Interviewer:** Why?

M: I will tell you why. I act a role in Egyptian, but with all respect to the Egyptian audience, I act in Egyptian, but my original dialect is Syrian. I am just speaking about my dialect, not my national feelings. My dialect is Syrian, so I have to speak Syrian no matter what.

Here, Maksīm refuses to comply with the request of the Egyptian interviewer to speak in ECA. He provides the epistemic response that since his original dialect is Syrian, he has to speak Syrian, despite being capable of acting in Egyptian. The interviewer, by openly requesting that Maksīm switch to ECA as a “test”, forces him to declare his stance and provide an explanation for it.

A similar interrogation occurs in Quṣayy’s interview on al-Ḥakam:

**Programme:** MBC TV, al-Ḥakam 15

**Quṣayy: Syrian male actor**

**Interviewer:** You did not speak to me one sentence in Egyptian Arabic, why?

Q: No, I did speak to you a lot in Egyptian.

**Interviewer:** No, no, you did not speak at all in Egyptian. I noticed you were not influenced by living in Egypt. I am really surprised, and now I am beginning to believe people who claim you did not master Egyptian in the soap opera *Abdeen Palace*. You are running away from ECA. Prove it, prove you can speak it.

Q: Is that an exam? Egyptian Arabic is really difficult, and it is very difficult for someone to master. I hope I performed it well.

Again, the interviewer verbally prods Quṣayy, determined to make him switch to ECA or declare a stance and subsequent explanation for it, which he eventually does, admitting his difficulty in mastering the dialect. These two interviews clearly demonstrate the pressure exerted by the Egyptian media to force non-Egyptian actors to take a stance towards, or switch to, ECA.

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14 MBC TV, al-Ḥakam, 18 December 2013, available at: http://shahid.mbc.net/ar/episode/74832/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-3.html (accessed 24 February 2015).

15 MBC TV, al-Ḥakam, available at: http://shahid.mbc.net/ar/episode/85986/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%85-1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-19.html (accessed 24 February 2015).
Discussions and conclusions

*Globalisation, access to linguistic resources and stance-taking*

Non-Egyptian artists do not have equal access to ECA as a resource, even those who choose to perform in ECA. Some have adopted ECA in interviews, purposefully displaying a positive affective and epistemic stance towards Egypt, in which they position or align themselves as Egyptians by choice, both to interviewer and audience; others, for different reasons, do not have equal access to ECA beyond performance. It is noteworthy that Heller (2011:50) argues that the global "expansion of production also means dealing with more linguistic varieties than was necessary earlier". For Egyptian media-makers, dealing with linguistic diversity is problematic, since it means that access to other dialects in the Arab world could also open the door to fame for artists. Globalisation and the emergence of other cultural hubs throughout the Arab world means that Egyptian dialects are no longer the normative code for all Arabs searching for celebrity and success. Chambers (2009:267) argues that standardisation is the product of an unequal distribution of power. A dialect becomes a standard or a norm because its speakers hold more power. However, in this study, it is clear that it is not because Egyptians possess power that they try to impose their dialect as the norm, it is, in fact, because that power is slipping away from them that they attempt to do so. Hachimi (2013:279) gives several examples in which Egyptians who interact with other Arabs – especially North Africans – consider their dialect the norm and the only natural way of communicating.

Over the course of this article it has been made clear that media-makers do not just deal with ECA as the norm, but enforce its role through forcing non-Egyptians to clarify their stance towards ECA, requiring them to not simply perform in ECA, but to also hold a full interview in it. Artists have different aptitudes and attitudes and not all master ECA well. However, if they fail to switch to ECA, they are required to give an explanation for this "failure" and at least acknowledge Egyptian Arabic’s role in Arab media and culture. In the case of Syrian actor Qusayy, he intentionally or perhaps unintentionally did not use ECA in interviews with Egyptian interviewers, despite the fact that he performed in the role of an Egyptian khedive in an Egyptian soap opera. Maksim, another Syrian actor also famous for playing Egyptian roles, openly refused to reply to his interviewer in ECA and responded by emphasising the relation between dialect and national identity.

That Levantine artists do not accommodate their code in interviews is already proof of their dominance in the Arab media. They still largely, along with artists from the Gulf, perform in Egypt in ECA, but often adopt their own code when speaking in interviews. This threat of the growth of Levantine or Gulf media outlets and performance is prevalent in programmes such as *Arab Idol*, which is financed by the Gulf countries, and in which Egyptians are panelists, along with Syrians, Lebanese and Emiratis, rather than the main judges and performers. Arab performers in these programmes still occasionally perform songs by Egyptian icons, but this is a far cry from the 1960s and 1970s, during which period the Egyptian media was almost the only media producer available throughout the Arab world.

It is noticeable that North African artists are the fastest to adapt to ECA in interviews, and they rarely, if ever, switch back to their own dialects. This observation needs a study in itself; it could be due to the fact that they do not expect others to understand their dialects; it could also be because of their linguistic abilities or even their amount of exposure to ECA. The peoples who least frequently switch to ECA during interviews are Syrians. This may, in part, be related to the strength of their national identity and the manner in which they correlate use of a dialect with identity. It could also be because their dialect is already prevalent throughout the Arab media, such as in dubbed Turkish and Syrian soap operas (although since 2011, these are rare). Lebanese celebrities follow Syrians in their frequency and ability to switch to ECA. However, while they do switch, they still maintain features of their dialect. Some possible reasons for their desire to retain features of their dialect may have to do with the fact that it is, again, easy for Egyptians to understand their dialect, as well as the fact that they have their own media producers and that Lebanon is another growing cultural hub.
Stance and dialogicality used to adopt an Egyptian identity

Wodak (1999:4) argues that national identity assumes a shared perceptual and attitudinal disposition that is the product of public discourse – in other words, individuals acquire it through education, the media and everyday practices. She adds that, in this sense, a national identity is both vulnerable and impressionable. Without shared background information, it is impossible to identify with an Egyptian identity. Bucholtz & Hall (2010:21) also posit that “in identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values” – that is, dialogicality is an essential dynamic in this process of positioning. Dialogicality is related to access to resources. Some non-Egyptian artists share the indexes of Egyptians towards ECA, as the code of culture and the key to fame, and are aware of previous dialogues concerning this argument. For example, artists such as Şafinâz and Īyād Naṣṣâr share Egyptians’ indexes of ECA as an essential resource, access to which led both individuals to fame. Others, such as Najwâ Karam, do not believe that this is necessarily a given. In this case, ECA as a resource was not essential for Karam to achieve celebrity. She rose to success without moving to Egypt or performing in ECA. Karam, as with several other non-Egyptian artists, correlates code choice with national identity.

Throughout these interviews, talk about language and engaging in a dialogue focusing on ECA’s role in Arabic culture, whether by interviewers or artists, is prevalent. In most cases, artists are forced to adopt a meta-linguistic stance, as well as employ resources such as dialogicality and code choice, switching to display their positive stance towards Egypt. Some artists go as far as claiming that they have become Egyptians by choice These celebrities not only perform but also (usually) hold interviews in ECA, thus utilising linguistic resources to adopt a positive stance towards Egypt and Egyptians, such as belly dancer Şafinâz and Jordanian actor Īyād Naṣṣâr, Moroccan Samīrah Saʿīd and Tunisian singer Latīfah. Some even adopt an Egyptian national identity by engaging in not just a linguistic dialogue, but also a distinctly political one. Şafinâz is a case in point. Others display their affective stance towards Egypt by claiming how much they love and admire it, but stop short at claiming they are completely Egyptian.

This article has provided a focused examination of Şafinâz – an Armenian/Russian belly dancer. Johnstone (2009) shows how linguists can examine an individual’s linguistic style by studying his or her usage of language and “repertoires”, as well as how this individual engages with discursive resources (2009:29) to create his or her unique style. Şafinâz remains a fascinating case, because unlike other artists she cannot display code choice in her performance, as she is a dancer. In interviews, she has regularly been required to clarify and emphasise her stance towards Egypt and Egyptians. She has done so by adopting ECA in all of her interviews. Not only did she resort to meta-linguistic resources to clarify her stance in these interviews, but also to affective and epistemic stances. Unlike other non-Egyptian artists, when specifically prompted to share how she learned ECA, she claimed that it came naturally to her, much in the way that a native speaker would learn his or her own language, and does not need studying. Through this claim she was also emphasising that access to ECA is a natural outcome of falling in love with Egypt and Egyptians. The narration of her learning process (or, rather, lack of one) is almost fairytale-like, with no signs of struggle, hardship or effort involved. This is in direct contrast to Īyād or Maksīm, both of whom are Arabs who found ECA’s pronunciation and intonation challenging; the first failing to master it when engaging in spontaneous talk (for a variety of reasons mentioned above); the second mastering it only after numerous rigorous attempts. However, while it was easy for Şafinâz to engage in a political, as well as a linguistic, dialogue concerning Egypt, for the Syrian artists this was sometimes difficult, given their situation and the level of censorship involved. Despite this, Īyād and Maksīm resorted to general statements in which Egypt’s role as the backbone of the Arab world was emphasised.

To sum as Sung Park (2011:278) contends, “repeated occurrence of similar stances across multiple, disparate contexts may give rise to a more enduring frame for speaking (or speaking about) English”. In addition as they argue it can also serve as a “channel through which language ideologies are reproduced”. Although Park’s article focused on Korean’s stance and meta-discourse about English, the attempt of trying to search for a frame and pattern in stance taking is essential in all contexts, and should be the focus for sociolinguists. In the case of non-Egyptian celebrities there is a clear pattern occurring in which they
position themselves willy-nilly as admirers of Egypt and in which a cumulative pattern of stance taking can be predicted in most cases.

**Contribution to sociolinguistics**

With political unrest rippling across the Arab world and the growing distribution and reach of both Gulf and Levantine media, the balance of cultural power has changed. It is not only those with power who try to impose their linguistic code on others (Chambers 2009); it is also those who feel that their power is slipping away and who consequently feel the most threatened.

Johnstone (2010:30) argues that:

[S]ociolinguistics have, in fact, talked about “social meaning” for some time [...] since then, new ways of thinking about identity and new reasons for talking about it have deepened our understanding of what language can accomplish in addition to denotation and pragmatic illocution.

In the case of this article, the meta-linguistic and dialogical associations of codes have been examined, and the manner in which language is correlated with a national identity has also been explored. What has become clear is that identity is performed, as well as being both habitual and ideological. Individuals sometimes, depending on the context, perform identity through the accumulation of stance over a period of time. Linguists have already established that linguistic variation is not just the correlation between social variables and linguistic variants, but, in fact, has ideological and communal indexes.

It is worth investigating further whether this phenomenon of correlating meta-linguistic resources with stance-taking and identity is a universal one, and whether in other countries with sizeable film industries, such as the US or India, celebrities are forced to adopt a similarly positive stance and display their access to the prevalent code in the host country.

**Bibliography**


