Case endings are an important marker of *fuṣḥā* but are by most native speakers considered complicated and difficult. They typically appear only sporadically even in the most formal speech styles. There has been relatively little academic interest in the use of case endings in speech. Research has been characterized by largely impressionistic accounts (Badawi 1973, Meiseles 1977) and more recently by small qualitative investigations of a few individual speakers (Parkinson 1994). There is to date no attempt of giving a comprehensive quantitative description of how the case system is employed in formal speech. This paper aims to help fill this gap. Data on the extent to which case endings are used and how consistently by individuals is presented and analyzed. It is argued that experienced speakers use the case system in varied and productive ways as an integral part of their formal speech style, without relying on fixed phrases. Furthermore, the data indicates that case endings, however few, are seen as a requirement for speech to marked as *fuṣḥā*. Data is taken from a manually annotated corpus of seventeen televised interviews with prominent politicians from Egypt, Syria and Palestine. All interviews were broadcast in the same series of programs on Aljazeera and were recorded under very similar circumstances. Speakers are assumed to be using the most formal register available to them in extempore speech. Each interview is approximately 30 minutes long, giving a total of roughly 15 000 nouns and adjectives annotated for case marking.

The use of case endings in the corpus vary considerably between individuals, from several case markers in every sentence to only a few in the whole interview. Contrary to previous observations (Meiseles 1977, Schulz 1981, Walters 2003) there is in this data no general pattern of decreasing case marking as the interviews progress. Multilevel regression modeling shows a statistically significant slight increase in case marking over time. This suggests that the speakers have found levels of case marking, different for each individual, that they can maintain without much effort. Case endings are evenly spread out in the interviews with clusters only appearing when a phrase with a case endings is repeated in consecutive clause initial positions for rhetorical effect. Furthermore, there is surprisingly little use of fixed phrases with case endings, fixed phrases being defined as stem-suffix combinations in the same syntactical position occurring three or more times (e.g., *bi-ṣaklin [ADJ] ‘in an [ADJ] way’*). Only one speaker produces more than 15 % of his case endings in fixed phrases.

These results shed light the role played by case in the upper part of the diglossic continuum. An empirically based description of how and how much case endings are used in formal speech is particularly important for the development of Arabic language instruction.