The Future of Arabic Sociolinguistics
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One of the main aims of sociolinguistics is to study language variation within or across communities. As Johnstone (2010:30) argues “sociolinguistics 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 this study I explore three cases related to linguistic variation and the individual in the Egyptian socio-political context.

What I hope to show in each of the three cases is that linguistic variation and code choice are not merely the manifestations of different social contexts, but can be understood as the product of an ideological process. I argue that talk about language and linguistic choices may be as significant as the linguistic choices themselves. For that reason, an individual’s linguistic choices may at times not be spontaneous, but performed, and may reflect a wider conflict.

In the first case, a local dialect is talked about and performed in a written text; in the second case individuals are forced to display a positive stance towards a specific dialect and to use it in interviews, even though it is not their native dialect; in the third case, political unrest is manifested through a war over access to linguistic resources, and national identity is indexed through talk about and choice of different linguistic codes. In my analysis of these three cases I use the concepts of indexicality (Silverstein 1996) and stance (1992).