REDEFINING IDENTITY THROUGH CODE CHOICE IN *AL-ḤUBB FĪ 'L-MANFĀ* BY BAHĀʾ ṬĀHIR

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This study examines the use of language and code choice in a modern Egyptian novel, *al-Ḥubb fī 'l-manfā* (Love in Exile) by Bahāʾ Ṭāhir (b. 1935). The study concentrates on the diglossic situation that prevails in the entire Arabic-speaking world, i.e. a situation in which there are two language varieties: a 'High' variety (standard Arabic) and a 'Low' one (vernacular dialects), each with a different function. The study will concentrate on the language varieties, or 'codes', used by the writer to depict dialogues between the different protagonists in the novel. The question posed is whether the dialogues in this, as well as in other novels published in Egypt and the Arab world, reflect realistic linguistic choices on the part of the protagonists, or whether this literature projects a different reality with different rules and language choices. If the latter case is true then language may be viewed as a tool to redefine reality and project different identities. It is argued that the choice of standard or vernacular has a discourse function, well as a creative one. This case study furthers our understanding of code choice in dialogue in the Arabic literature of Egypt, and of the Arab world in general.

Introduction

This study examines the use of standard Arabic (SA) and Egyptian colloquial Arabic (ECA) in the novel *al-Ḥubb fī 'l-manfā* (Love in Exile) by Bahāʾ Ṭāhir.[1] The study poses the question of why writers in Egypt in particular and in the Arab world in general use SA in dialogue, or even why they alternate their usage of SA and colloquial. If literature, as Eid (2003) posits, is supposed to reflect reality outside the stories, then one would expect most if not all dialogues to be in colloquial.

The study argues that the writer uses code choice and code switching between Standard Arabic (SA) and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) in dialogues as a literary device which does not reflect reality but re-defines and reconstructs a different identity for the protagonist with different people in his life, ranging from a waiter he befriends to his children. This re-constructed reality and identity can be explained according to the

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[1] B. Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī 'l-manfā* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1995); translated into English by Farouk Abdel Wahab as *Love in Exile*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001)

concept of indexicality as applied by Woolard to cases of code-switching (2004).

The study starts by defining the phenomenon of diglossia in the Arab world and gives an overview of previous studies that concentrated on the use of SA and ECA in literature. The concept of indexicality will also be discussed as well as that of identity. Then the dialogues in the novel will be analysed with code choice in mind. Finally, the contributions of this study to our understanding of the dynamics of code-switching in literature will be highlighted with reference to a different modern Egyptian novel in which the same linguistic techniques are used in dialogues.

Diglossia in Egypt and the Arab world

The twenty countries in which Arabic is an official language have been described as 'diglossic' speech communities, that is to say those in which two language varieties exist side by side. The official language is Standard Arabic, but there is usually a prestigious vernacular that is spoken in each country. Ferguson's definition of diglossia (1959) has been frequently examined, criticised and cited. However, although his definition may be considered dated now, its validity is unquestionable, in spite of its limitations. Boussofara-Omar (2006: 631) contends that Ferguson's 'predictions' about the distribution and access of SA and the vernaculars are 'insightful'. Since this study will rely on the concept of indexicality for analysing the dialogues, Ferguson's distribution of functions of SA and the vernaculars must be stated. This will become clear below.

According to Ferguson, diglossia is a different situation from one where there are merely different dialects within a speech community. In diglossic communities there is a highly valued H(igh) variety which is learned in schools and is not used for ordinary conversations. The L(ow) variety is the one used in conversations. Most importantly, Ferguson claims that the crucial test for diglossia is that the language varieties in question must be functionally allocated within the community concerned (Fasold 1995: 35).

Ferguson proceeds by exemplifying situations in which only H is appropriate and others in which only L is appropriate (1972: 236). According to him, the following are situations in which H is appropriate: sermons in a church or mosque, speeches in parliament, political speeches, personal letters, university lectures, news broadcasts, newspaper editorials, news stories, captions on pictures, and in poetry. He also gives situations in which L is the 'only' variety used:

Instructions to servants, waiters, workmen and clerks, Conversation with family, friends and colleagues, radio soap opera, caption on political cartoon and folk literature. Thus, according to this definition one would expect informal conversations, for instance, between family and friends or with a waiter to be in ECA. However, the situation in Arab countries is more complicated than Ferguson suspected. The neat distinction that he makes between SA and ECA does not always apply to real life situations, nor does it apply to novels and other literary work as will be discussed below. The diglossic situation in Egypt and other parts of the Arab world may create what Holes (2004) calls 'sociolinguistic tension' but may be also a tool in the hand of writers to use in order to leave the utmost effect possible on their readers. Note the following extract from the novel *Qismat al-ghuramāʾ* (The Debtor's Share) by Yūsuf al-Qaʿīd:

> Mustafa is still Mustafa. He did not change. He still has two tongues in his mouth, two hearts in his chest. A tongue that speaks for him and a tongue that speaks against him. A heart that speaks for him and a heart that speaks against him. When he speaks sincerely his words are in colloquial. A colloquial that was the only variety he knew and used in narration before. But once he starts speaking what they dictate to him, then he speaks in the language of books, and his words become comic!
> (2004: 140).

This extract reflects the tension and ambivalent feelings Egyptians have towards both SA and ECA. Perhaps it also reflects the tension that exists in all Arab countries in which people speak a language at home and learn a different one in school, write in one language and express their feelings in another, memorise poetry in one language and sing songs in another. Whether doing this is practical or not is a moot point. However, as a linguist one knows that whenever one has more than one language or variety at his disposal it is indeed a good thing. Muhra, Muṣṭafā's ex-wife summarises the dilemma of the Arab world neatly when she says that Muṣṭafā still has 'two tongues in his mouth, two hearts in his chest'. Again, despite all the subsequent criticism of Ferguson's theory, his proposal that there are two poles, an H and an L, is still valid, although they both formally and functionally overlap, perhaps more than Ferguson suspected or was ready to admit.[2] Mejdell (1999: 226) posits that the H-L division still has validity.

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2 I assume that the overlap between H and L existed even at the time when Ferguson wrote his article (1959), since Arabic—like any other language—is

Studies on diglossia in literature
Studies that concentrate specifically on dialogues from a linguistic perspective are far and wide in between. Arab writers dealt with the diglossic situation differently and reflected in their language use both their political and social stand as well as the identity of their protagonists. One form of language often associated with the Egyptian playwright Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm in his plays was widely referred to as 'third language' (Somekh 1981: 74). This language was supposed to conform to the syntactic rules of SA and avoid lexical and morphological choices which are either saliently vernacular, or saliently SA (Cachia 1992: 414). This third language would then enable the play to be performed in more than one Arab country without any modification. Ḥakīm discovered early on that use of dialect may hinder his plays from being performed in other Arab countries. (Somekh 1998; Holes 2004; for a general discussion of diglossia in literature see Cachia 1976).

As far as novels and short stories are concerned, the writer Yūsuf Idrīs, who claimed that he is mainly interested in depicting a realistic and concrete picture of Egyptian society in both plot and language, used both ECA and SA in his dialogues. His use of SA in dialogues was usually to juxtapose specific characters with others in his work (Holes 2004:305). For example, he used SA to satirise authority figures as he did in   the 1957 work, *Jumhūrīyat Faraḥāt* (Farahat's Republic) in which a policeman in a poor quarter of Cairo takes a statement from an illiterate young woman, and asks his questions in SA. The woman does not understand what he says. In *al-Laḥẓah al-ḥarijah* (The Critical Moment), written in 1956, Idrīs makes his Egyptian characters speak in ECA and his British ones, who are supposed to speak in English, speak SA. Thus SA is used instead of English in that case. Using the vernacular in dialogues is not only restricted to Egypt but is a phenomenon in the whole Arab world. The Iraqi writer ᶜAbd al-Malik Nūrī is a case in point (Somekh 1998).

As mentioned earlier, the use of vernacular in literature is more than just a construction of an identity of a protagonist, it also reflects the attitude, political affiliations, and ideologies of an author, as is the case of Yūsuf Idrīs whose use of colloquial is to express his sympathy for the socialist system advocated by Nasser (cf. Holes 2004). An author who refused to use the colloquial in his dialogues and indeed narration is the

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dynamic, rather than static and unchanging. For a discussion of linguistic variation and change in Arabic, see Walters (1996).

Egyptian Nobel prize winner, Naguib Mahfouz. Mahfouz says about the diglossic situation in Egypt in a letter to Luwīs ᶜAwaḍ: 'Language duality is not a problem but an innate ability. It is an accurate reflection of a duality that exists in all of us, a duality between our mundane daily life and our spiritual one' (Mahfouz 2006: 100).

It appears from this letter that for Mahfouz, literature is confined to the domain of spirituality and that SA is therefore the appropriate vehicle for it. However, Mahfouz's later style shows 'underlying dialectal structure and rhythm' (Holes 2004:309). Somekh (1998) calls Mahfouz's style in dialogues 'colloqualised *fuṣḥā*', which is described as sentences that appear as SA but with inner features of dialects added to it. Such features may be lexical in nature as when an ECA proverb for example is translated into SA. This 'colloqualised *fuṣḥā*' is characteristic of the work of both Naguib Mahfouz and ᶜAbd al-Raḥman Munīf. However, when illiterates in Mahfouz's novels speak in SA, this according to Holes (2004: 309) 'requires a suspension of disbelief.' Thus, Mahfouz does not try to depict reality in his dialogues at least linguistic reality. This is the case with most writers, as we have seen. And yet, the choice of code clearly serves a purpose, as this study will show.

Diglossia in literature has been examined by a number of linguists. For example, Abdel-Malek conducted a study on the influence of diglossia on the novels of Yūsuf al-Sibāᶜī. According to him (1972: 141), the development of the genre 'novel' in Arabic literature in the early twentieth century resulted in considerable tension between H (SA) and L (ECA), and in response to that tension a new linguistic style appeared in Arabic prose literature (developed by Yūsuf al-Sibāᶜī and others). Abdel-Malek's idea of a mixed written style is similar to the idea of 'Educated Spoken Arabic' (ESA) (cf. El-Hassan 1980), although he specifies no clear rules to define this style. Rosenbaum (2000) studies the occurrence of a mixed style SA and ECA in texts written by Egyptians, a phenomenon which seems to be gaining in popularity. He states that a mixed written style, involving clear shifts between H (SA) and L (ECA), breaks the 'rules, old and new, of writing in Arabic, but does not encounter any serious opposition in Egyptian culture, probably because Egyptian readers have been accustomed to seeing ECA forms in print already for decades' (Rosenbaum 2000: 86).

Eid (2003) analysed the narration and dialogues of eight short stories of Egyptian female writers. Eid contends that dialogue, which is expected to reflect the reality outside the stories is not necessarily in ECA. However, she also referred to the phenomenon of colloquilised *fuṣḥā*, without using the term. She noticed that in writing in general there

is no marking of short vowels, which means that there are no phonological differences between both varieties, SA and ECA. She concludes that in both narration and dialogue the line between SA and ECA is blurred due to the ambiguity of both clear syntactic markers and vowels. Eid also acknowledged cases of switching between ECA and SA in dialogues. Eid (2003) acknowledged that writers use both SA and ECA in their dialogues, some times with a discourse function, as when Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt used SA for internal dialogues and ECA for external dialogues, thus highlighting that there are two separate worlds, an internal one and an external one

It is noteworthy, however, that most of the studies done on the language of dialogues have their own limitations to some extent. First, the phenomenon of third language and that of colloquialised *fuṣḥā* have not been studied systematically, in a manner that would allow rules and patterns to be inferred, whether structural rules, morphological rules or lexical ones. There is a need for a study that attempts to highlight common recurrent patterns of using SA/ECA in dialogues whether in relation to one author or different ones. In addition, few studies have tried to relate the identity of the protagonists to their code choice. One needs more studies that apply linguistic theories to literature and examine how these could help deepen our understanding of language use in literature. This study tries to do so, though on a small scale.

The concept of indexicality; A different perspective
Woolard (2004), when analysing code switching in general, developed the concept of indexicality. Indexicality is a relation of associations through which utterances are understood. For example, if a specific code or form of language presupposes a 'certain social context, then use of that form may create the perception of such context where it did not exist before' (Woolard 2004: 88). If a code is associated with the authority of courtrooms and this code is then used in a different context, then it will denote authority. The language of the speaker would then be considered an authoritative language (Silverstein 1996: 267). Although Woolard does not refer specifically to diglossia in his discussion of indexicality, if one assumes that code switching is not limited to switching between different languages but includes switching between different varieties of the same language, then one could understand diglossic switching in terms of indexicality. SA is associated with authority, formality, detachment, abstractness and all the situations discussed by Ferguson. ECA is associated with family, friends, intimacy, informality and concreteness. Thus if the novelist intentionally makes his protagonist

speak in SA with some people and ECA with others s/he may be laying claims to all the associations of SA or ECA as will be clear in the analysis below.

Identity and code choice

Identity in language is defined by Lakoff (2006: 142) as 'a continual work in progress, constructed and altered by the totality of life experience. While much of the work in support of this belief concentrates on the larger aspects of identity—especially gender, ethnicity, and sexual preferences—in fact, human identity involves many other categories. Identity is constructed in complex ways, more or less consciously and overtly.' Lakoff points to the variability of identity at different stages of one's life and in different contexts. One's identity is made up of more than one part; a mother can also be a professor, a wife, an administrator, a politician, a friend, an Egyptian, a Muslim, an Arab, and so forth.

As Lakoff says, an individual is both a member of a 'cohesive and coherent group' as well as an individual (2006: 142). Bastos and Oliveira (2006: 188) emphasise the fact that identity is both 'fixed' and 'continuous,' in the sense that individuals perceive themselves differently in various situations or contexts. Identity is also manifested through language use, as is the case in the data analysed.

Another term used by McConnell-Ginet (2004), which also refers to one's identity is 'subject positioning'. McConnell-Ginet states that as we talk to one another we are adopting particular subject positions, teacher, pupil, friend…etc. We are also assigning positions to the others with whom we are talking. For example, 'we may condescend or defer to them, express solidarity with them or claim distance from them, and so on' (2004: 139). Gumperz (1982) emphasises the relationship between change of code and change of role.

According to Gumperz, people may mark a change in the role they are playing, or the aspect of their identity they are appealing to, by using a different code. Goffman (1981), in a different study, defines the individual as a speaker who plays different roles and who uses code choice to show the new role s/he plays. Although all the above studies differ in nature, they all seem to imply that there is a causal relation between changing one's role and changing one's code.

Choice of role is often associated with an illocutionary aim, which is the thing that determines the speaker's role in a speech or a conversation at a particular point within it. The speaker's aim may, for example, be to give advice or to give an opinion. He may wish to explain something, or

make a show of his anger or happiness. The speaker will usually choose a linguistic code in order to convey his aim. In my data this means essentially whether he chooses to do so using ECA or SA.

Analysis

Having set the framework for analysis, let me now consider the concrete example of dialogues in *al-Ḥubb fī ʾl-manfā* by Bahāʾ Ṭāhir. The novel examines the life of a journalist who works as correspondent for an Egyptian newspaper in a European country. Throughout the novel, the protagonist is taking stock of his life and achievements, and suffers from frustration caused by his exile as well as a sense of uselessness. We then realise that the journalist has been sent to the European country to be ostracised from the media arena in Egypt. A middle-aged divorcee, the journalist is a symbol of a generation that has been suppressed and oppressed throughout in Egypt and outside. Note that the author himself lived in Switzerland for a while.

(1)

كنت قاهرياً، طردته مدينته للغربة في الشمال. ...قيدني عملي؟..أي كذب!..لم أكن أعمل شيئا في الحقيقة. كنت مراسلاً لصحيفة في القاهرة لا يهمها أنْ أراسلها. ربما يهمها بالذات ألا أراسلها. (1995: 1)

I was a Cairene whose city had expelled me to exile in the North … tied by work? What a lie. I wasn't doing anything, really. I was a correspondent for a newspaper in Cairo that didn't care if I corresponded with it; perhaps it was keen that I did not correspond.
(2001: 1)

The journalist is the narrator of the novel and though he dies at the end, the death comes as a release from all the defeats and disturbances he had to endure. In the end he says:[3]

(2)

لم أكن متعبا. كنت أنزلق في بحر هادىء..تحملني على ظهري موجة ناعمة و صوت ناي عذب.
و قلت لنفسي: أهذه هي النهاية؟ ما أجملها! و كان الصوت يأتي من بعيد. و كان الصوت يكرر يا سيد..يا سيد!..و لكنه راح يخفت و راح صوت الناي يعلو.
و كانت الموجة تحملني يعيدا.

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[3] See the study by Bassiouney (2006), which examines monologues, as opposed to dialogues. In monologues the speaker has more freedom to use ECA or SA - or both together.

تترجرج في بطء و تهدهدني..الناي يصحبني بنغمته الشجية الطويلة الى السلام و الى السكينة. (254 :1995)

I wasn't tired. I was sliding into a calm sea, carried on my back by a soft wave and the melody of a pleasant flute.

I said to myself, 'is this the end? How beautiful!'

The voice was coming from far away, saying, 'sir, sir!' but it kept getting lower as the sound of the flute kept rising.

The wave was carrying me away.

It was undulating slowly and rocking me. The flute was accompanying me, with its long, plaintive melody, to peace and tranquillity.

(2001: 277)

What is of interest to us here is the code used by the author/protagonist. The narration is all given in SA. However, conversations are what are essential for this study. While it is expected, although not always preserved, that narration should be in SA, conversations that reflect real life should be in ECA. Conversations in Egypt between family, friends, colleagues and even an employee and his/her employer are basically in ECA (see Ferguson above). Also conversations in different contexts that include home; visiting friends, making love to wife or girlfriend are in ECA. There are instances when an employee has to use SA as part of his work, if for example the employee is a lawyer and the context is a courtroom. Although there is no clear cut surveys that show exactly the percentage of SA and ECA usage, one can depend on a different kind of medium of comparison. Conversations in soap operas in Egypt are in ECA. Thus a conversation between a husband and a wife is in ECA. A conversation between two friends at any age is in ECA. A conversation between a waiter and a customer is in ECA. Again, except in limited contexts conversations tend to be in ECA and sometimes in ECA with insertions from SA. Soap operas are supposed to reflect reality and yet they are not written. Literature, especially the novel, is in most cases a reflection of reality and a mirror of social, political and personal problems. In *al-Ḥubb fī 'l-manfā* , the protagonist, as was said earlier, is a symbol of his generation and the political frustrations and oppressions around him whether from his own country, Egypt, or from other countries.

The protagonist has a number of conversations with different people that are related to him. He has numerous conversations with his foreign young girlfriend, whom he claims would repeat Arabic words like a

parrot. She does not speak any Arabic, but possibly German or French. His communication with her is reflected in the novel in SA.

This is, in fact, not surprising. The girl interacts with him in a foreign language and he the protagonist/author, is translating this interaction into SA. Translation is usually into the standard language and not the colloquial one. Thus, it comes as no surprise that he uses SA. However, when the author interacts with his only male Egyptian friend in the novel, who is the same age as him and who suffers very similar problems, he also does so in SA. Note the following example in which the main protagonist is speaking to his Egyptian friend.

(3)

قلت: اذن على اي شيء تلومها؟

أخذ يحك جبينه بيده ثم قال: هل قلت أنا اني ألومها؟ كل ما قلته اني أحبها.

و سكت مرة أخرى قبل أن يقول:أنا عائد الآن من عندها ... من البدء ... لم أكن استطيع ان اقاوم ... كرت سنوات عمري كله و تلخصت الحياه كلها في شيء واحد. اني اريد هذه الجميلة لي. أريدها هنا و أريدها الآن ...

ـثم ماذا ماذا حدث؟ ...

ـلم يحدث شيىئ.

ـكيف؟

ـقلت لك لم يحدث شيء! لا تسألني كيف كانت تمسك بيدي و نحن في التاكسي. تقبض عليها و تنشج ... و كانت هي تلهث مغمضة العينين و تحاول التخلص من ثيابها و هي بين ذراعي و تقول بهمس متوتر: نعم، نعم، قبلني هكذا، هكذا هيا.

(104-5 :1995)

'So what are you blaming her for?', I said. He began to rub his forehead with his hand and said, 'Did I say that I blame her? All I said is that I love her.'

He fell silent again before saying, 'I've just come back from her house ... from the beginning … I couldn't help it. The years of my entire life surged and all life was epitomised in one thing: I want this beautiful woman for myself. I want her here and I want her now … .'

- Then what? What happened?

- Nothing happened.

- How?

- I told you nothing happened. Don't ask me how. She was holding my hand in the cab, gripping it convulsively. I kissed her face and every inch of her and she was panting, her eyes closed, trying to get out of her clothes while in my arms, whispering tensely, 'yes, kiss me like that, like that, come on.'

(2001:112-3)

In the above example, the friend is explaining his inability to perform sexually with a girl that he really wants. The subject is very intimate and definitely one does not expect this interaction to take place in real life in SA. But the author/protagonist does not use any ECA at all. He is in fact laying claims to some of the indexes of SA, such as detachment and formality.

Meanwhile, in another interaction between the protagonist and a young Egyptian waiter who eventually turns to fanaticism, the author/ protagonist also uses SA for the interaction. Note the following example:

(4)

سألت يوسف: و لكن ما علاقة الامير بذلك؟

الأمير افهمني اشياء كثيرة يا استاذ، اشياء كانت غائبة عني ... (1995: 224)

'What does the prince have to do with it?', I asked Yusuf.

- Prince Hamid explained many things, *ustaz*, things that were not clear to me.
(2001: 248)

When interacting with foreigners in general SA is always used. In fact, when interacting with a corrupt Arab prince, the whole interaction is also in SA.

(5)

ضغط على يدي و هو يقول: حمدا لله على السلامة. كنت مشغولاً عليك ... (1995: 160)

The prince repeated as he looked at me, 'Thank God you are well. I was actually worried about you, but Yūsuf was constantly reassuring me.'
(2001:170)

One would expect that the whole novel is, in fact, in SA and that is why conversations are also in SA. Given that there are a number of famous prolific authors who choose to use SA only for writing as a 'political statement', one would indeed expect this from Bahāʾ Ṭāhir. However, what is really of interest is that this is not true.

SA here is used as a detachment device by the author to reflect the feelings of exile and nostalgia that dominate the novel. The protagonist, in fact, fails to establish any sound and happy relation with any of the characters except both his children. There is not one single instance in the novel when the protagonist seemed to belong anywhere. He neither

belongs to the European country in which he resides nor to Egypt. His relation with the young European girl is doomed to failure. His friend ultimately disappears. The young Egyptian waiter turns into a fanatic. The Arab prince manipulates him to the utmost and stands for everything he hates and fights against.

The following are some of the interactions he has with his children:

(6)

- ألو يا بابا؟

- أيوه يا حبيبتي ... ازيك يا هنادي؟

- هلكانة من المذاكرة، و الدنيا حرّ جدا

- معلهمش شدي حيلِك يا هنادي هانت ... الإمتحان الاسبوع الجاي، مش كدة؟

- أيوة. إدعي لي يا بابا ... .

جائني صوت خالد عميقا ووقورا و هو يقول بالفصحى:

- السلام عليكم

- و عليكم السلام يا خالد ... إزيك يا ابني؟

- الحمد لله يا بابا ... و انت ازاي صحتك؟ كويس ان شاء الله؟ (88 :1995)

-Hello Dad?

- Yes, love. How are you, Hanadi?

- Studying is killing me. It's very hot here.

- It's okay. Hang in there, Hanadi. The exams are next week, right?

- Yes. Pray for me, Dad.

Khalid's voice was deep and dignified as he said in formal Arabic,

- Peace be upon you.

- … and you too, Khalid. How are you, son?

- I am fine, thank God. And you, how's your health? I hope its fine, God willing.

(2001: 96)

It is only his children that touch his heart in irrevocable ways. In a scream of hope and agony, the protagonist as a father and a man asks his daughter in ECA never to change, to always remain as innocent and as loving of life.

(7)

- خلاص يا هنادي. انا فهمت خالد انك تخرجي و تروحي النادي وقت ما انت عايزة. لكن طبعا لازم تاخدي اذن ماما ...

- بس كدة ... انت تأمر ... باي باي ...

- استني دقيقة يا هنادي

- ايوه يا بابا

ـ باقول ايه يا هنادي ʼسكت لحظة ثم قلتʻ ارجوك يا هنادي..خليك زي ما انت و اوعي تتغيري. (188 :1995)

- Okay Hanadi, I told Khalid that you can go out and can go to the club whenever you want, but of course you have to get your mom's permission … .
- Is that all? That's so easy, bye bye … .
- Wait a minute, Hanadi.
- Yes, Daddy?
- Tell you what, Hanadi. I paused for a moment then added: Please, Hanadi, stay as you are. Don't change. (2001:206-7)

Note the following explanation that comes from his son concerning banning his sister from going to the club:

(8)

ـ يا بابا اصل النادي فيه مساخر و فيه شباب فاسدين و انا ...
ـ اي حتة في الدنيا فيها ناس فاسدين و فيها ناس كويسين. سيبها تتعلم بنفسها و تحمي روحها ...
ـ اذا كنت انا الراجل بطلت اروح النادي. هي تروح؟ حضرتك حتدلعها زي ماما و تسمع كلامها اول ما تنزل لها دمعتين؟ (187 :1995)

'- Well, father, immoral things take place at the club and there are bad young men and…
- There are bad people and good people every place on earth. Let her learn on her own and protect herself …
- If I, a man, have stopped going to the club, how can you expect me to let her go? Are you going to spoil her just as mom does and every time she sheds two tears? (2001: 206)

The explanation is in ECA, although the protagonist perceives that his son is also drifting away from him. His agony is escalated in the past conversation with his daughter, which as was said, comes in ECA. He lays claims to all the indexes of ECA including feelings of intimacy and/or harmony that are not present frequently in the novel. It is precisely because of his unhappiness and agony that he dies happily at the end.

The concept of indexicality can help clarify the use of code-switching and code-choice in this novel. As was established, the protagonist does not just use one code throughout the novel. This implies that the use of the other code is to juxtapose his feelings and attitudes. When he uses SA in dialogues which realistically speaking should be in ECA, he calls

upon the associations of SA in different contexts. SA is associated with formality and even detachment in the case of the protagonist. SA is used to translate foreign languages as when his girlfriend uses SA, which is supposed to be a foreign language. When SA is then used to depict the conversation between the protagonist and his close Egyptian friend it still denotes foreignness in the part of the protagonist. He is a stranger to himself as well as to his closest friends. The same code is used for two different contexts, but with the same indexes. On the other hand, the use of ECA is associated with informality and intimacy and both of these indexes are called upon when he converses with is children. The strangeness prevalent in the whole text is lifted from these short dialogues that are only phone calls and never face to face meetings. Thus, although his children are far in terms of physical distance they are intimate psychologically to his heart. He is also detached physically from his inner self and can only reach it by bridging a physical distance as he does in the case of phoning his children.

Indexicality is also related directly to projection of identity in the part of the protagonist. Going back to the concept of subject positions as developed by McConnell-Ginet (2004), the protagonist adopts a particular subject position with all people around him except his own children. This subject position is that of a formal distant acquaintance, even with his girlfriend. This subject position is expressed through the indexes of SA. Throughout most of the novel the protagonist has a problem in achieving reconciliation with his inner self. His last plea to his daughter which comes in ECA, and which entreats her never to change, is in fact a plea to his soul to reach for him and not to remain elusive and detached, despite his physical existence in a foreign land. His identity is—to use the terms of Bastos and Oliviera (2006:142)—both fixed and continuous. It is fixed 'somewhere else' away from his physical ethnographic existence, but it is also continuous because he remains until his death searching for his release of inner estrangement.

A broader view of code choice in dialogues: implications for further research

Using the diglossic situation as a linguistic tool to construct the identity of protagonists is a phenomenon worth investigation. Although this study concentrates on one novel, the phenomenon is prevalent in other novels. In the classic Egyptian novel, *al-Watad* (The Tent Peg), by Khayrī Shalabī (1986), we have a powerful rural illiterate mother who holds the family together, even though the husband is alive, he is never in the forefront; decisions are taken mainly by the mother. The mother's

power is reflected through her language choice. Since in literature a writer can redefine reality with impunity, in the last chapter of the novel the uneducated peasant mother, Fatima, speaks in SA. The children reply to her in ECA, although we know that this could not have happened in reality. Because it would be almost impossible for an uneducated, peasant mother on her deathbed to start speaking pure SA, Egyptian readers also take this use of SA to be indicative of the power mothers have. Similarly, the son's reply is always in ECA since he does not have any power over the mother. Note the following example in which the eldest son tries to placate the mother by telling her not to take what his young brother said seriously:

(9)

صلي على النبي يا حاجة بقى ... سيبك منه هو يعني الكلام عليه جمرك؟-

Invoke God's blessing on the Prophet, *ḥājja*, please do not think of what he said. He is just saying nonsense. His words do not count.

The elder son tries to calm his mother by asking her to invoke God's blessing on the Prophet and not to take heed of what her younger son said in moments of anger. He speaks in ECA. By asking her to pray to the Prophet he takes the initiative in the reconciliation that the mother seems to refuse by replying in SA.

The mother then starts telling her children her life story and her achievements; all this is done in SA.

(10)

لقد دخلت هذه الدار وهي مجرد جدران..كانوا لا يوافقون على زواج أبيكم مني..و-
كنت وحيدة أبوى ... و لم أكن فلاحة ... فزرعتهما أشجاراً و خضروات..و قال جدكم
لأبيكم كيف تتزوج بنت أرملة لا عائلة لها؟

I had come to your grandfather's house when it was just walls. They did not approve my marriage to your father. I was an only child and I was no peasant then. Since then, I have planted trees and vegetables. Your grandfather then asked your father how he can marry a mere widow with no family.

The mother calls upon the authoritative indexes of SA. Her language choice reflects her identity, which is that of a dominant authoritative figure. Code choice may, then, be used to encode solidarity or intimacy. That this is so is made quite explicit in another recent Egyptian novel, *Kitāb al-Rin* 'The book of Rin' by Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī. In this semi-autobiography, an old man embarks on a journey around Egypt in search

of his identity; code-switching occurs only once in the whole novel, and only once does the narrator uses ECA rather than SA. This happens when the protagonist is faced with the ancient Egyptian statue of Senedjemibra in a museum. He then comments that this statue, to him, represents a long lasting friendship, familiarity and mutual affection. In fact, this is the first time in the novel we witness the protagonist/writer expressing these feelings towards anyone, whether alive or dead. He only feels solidarity with the ancient Egyptian statue. He then describes the colours of the statue vividly and comments that the colours were very fresh as if painted the day before. When he feels affinity with the statue he also finds his true self, as a result the word 'Ren', which means 'name' in ancient Egyptian, acquires meaning and life.

Conclusion

Despite the assertions by some linguists that the diglossic situation in the Arab world creates an uneasy relation with the self (cf. Haeri 2003), this study shows that diglossia can in fact function as a stylistic tool in the hand of authors. Arab authors may choose to redefine and reinvent reality, rather than reflect real patterns of language use, while still lending expression to sincere feelings and hopes. As a writer and an Egyptian, Bahāʾ Ṭāhir knows his tools well: living and writing in a diglossic community, in which authors and readers have several linguistic varieties at their disposal, Ṭāhir uses both to the utmost.

On the one hand, he employs diglossia to project the use of foreign languages, or to convey a sense of linguistic estrangement or 'otherness'. On the other hand, the language of his dialogues is cleverly crafted to model in detail the conflicting identities of an Egyptian in exile. For example, we have seen that by drawing on the indexical values of the respective codes, the author manages to encode varying degrees of intimacy between his protagonists in his dialogues. Ṭāhir is not alone in employing this device: other authors, too, routinely weave cues suggestive of closeness and intimacy between parent and child, or man and wife directly into their dialogues.

Associations with particular codes are not fixed, however: as I have shown in the example of the powerful mother in Shalabī's novel, a 'high' code (SA) does not necessarily project intimacy, but may also be indicative of the power balance between protagonists: In the example above, the son's subjugation to his mother's power is formally expressed in his use of ECA. The old Egyptian man in search of self addresses all people around him in SA and only the ancient Egyptian statue is addressed in ECA. It is also clear, therefore, that Egyptian authors do not

necessarily use one code or another throughout their dialogues but that a certain degree of variation between SA and ECA is not only acceptable, and perhaps expected.

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