University of Warsaw
Faculty of Oriental Studies
Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies

EGYPTIAN
LINGUISTIC
SEPARATISM

A Study in Wikipedia Masri

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Introduction

In many societies of the Arab World, there is identity strife very well documented. However, linguistic dissent, that is, the idea that Arab countries do not share one Arabic language but all have their own native tongues, is seen as heresy. There are several reasons for this state of affairs:

1) An overreaching Sunni Muslim identity somewhat rivals national identity.
2) The age-old scholarly tradition keeps a firm grasp on language perceptions in the region.
3) For political reasons, the shared Arab identity serves the interests of most, if not all, Arab countries.

Furthermore, for the vast majority, their Arab identity is not even a question but a plain and an obvious fact of life. However, there are countries in the Arab world in which large portions of the population do not share the sentiment. Lebanon, with its large Maronite Christian population, and Egypt, with its ten million Coptic Christians, are perhaps the most salient examples of a problem with Arab identity, as being non-Muslim seems like being less Arab or not Arab at all. Morocco is an example of a different kind of "lacking" identity, a strictly ethnic one. The Moroccan Amazigh emphatically do not see themselves as Arabs, even if, for many of them, Arabic, or more precisely, one of the Arabic dialects, is, in fact, their mother tongue. These identities, at least for some, directly oppose Arabism.

Nonetheless, the disenfranchised groups, which the Amazigh and Copts certainly are, and the Maronites might perceive themselves to be due to the impending erosion of their interests and power, find a conflict between their inner reality as well as identity and the current state of affairs. Fighting institutionalized power is pointless. They do not hold sway, but in this digital age, there are more subtle means of achieving their ends.

Due to these circumstances, shedding the linguistic pan-Arab identity and heritage and adopting a more acceptable national one is particularly attractive for these groups. Thus, such ideas constitute the axis of some of their social movements. Their postulates are akin, indeed very similar to one another, as they all directly oppose Arab cultural hegemony, Standard Arabic as the only vehicle for high culture, and the ideology of Pan-Arabism. These movements

are not brand-new phenomena. They have already been studied and given names. In Egypt, it is Pharaonism, clinging to the ancient Egyptian heritage. In Lebanon: Phoenitianism derives a sense of identity from the glorious achievements of the ancient trading-seafaring civilization. In Morocco: Amazighism stresses that the uniqueness of Moroccan civilization stems from its Berber substratum, pre-dating and immensely influencing the culture that came after the Arab conquest and subsequent Arabization.

What unites these tendencies, as manifested by the modern-day online movements, is resentment towards Modern Standard Arabic as the only officially recognized variety of Arabic and the desire to replace it as the official language of the state with the local vernaculars. It is rather logical. Standard Arabic, being a language of more than 20 countries, eliminates what is local. Its transnational status contributes to its global importance as one of the world's largest languages. However, its rigidness, resistance to change, and the relationship it shares with the Quran and Islam render it unacceptable for those who do not partake in or resent the Arabic-Islamic identity. Standard Arabic grammar, vocabulary, and syntax do away with any regionalisms for the sake of international intelligibility. This process, in turn, is seen as an echo of the cultural marginalization of non-Arab and non-Muslim communities of the Arab World. Nevertheless, precisely those factors which constitute the greatness of Arabic, if one may put it so, its global importance and the vastness of its written corpus, as well as its status of Lingua Sacra, make it intolerable for these disenfranchised minority communities.

Moreover, precisely due to these factors, fighting Arabic, opposing its hegemony, and striving towards its replacement on an official level equals tilting at windmills. The overarching interests of Arab Muslims, who do not quarrel with it, and who constitute the most prominent political interest groups in those countries, trample any efforts of that sort. These discussions are not present in political debates in Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco. Communities that share the anti-Standard Arabic sentiment persist and form an undercurrent, if not large and powerful enough to influence the mainstream, then certainly determined to put their mark in the digital environment. It is on the internet that their grievances can finally surface, and their postulates crystallize and gain recognition. Facilitated by the inclusive, uncensored environment of digital spaces, their ideas come to life through websites, blogs, groups, forums, and, perhaps most importantly, free online encyclopedias. The first such online encyclopedia forms the basis for this work.

The establishment of a separate Egyptian Wikipedia edition was a development whose consequences shall reverberate through history, drastically changing the language/dialect perceptions in Egypt and the Arab World. Wikipedia Maṣrī, also known as Wikipedia Masry or Egyptian Arabic Wikipedia, was established in 2008. It was the first edition of the free online encyclopedia in one of the many non-standard varieties of Arabic. As the world's largest free knowledge repository on the internet, Wikipedia has an enormous role in dissipating ide as and shaping attitudes. Studies have proven that information on Wikipedia can affect economic activity, increase citations of articles mentioned on the site, and shape scientific discourse (Hill and Shaw 2020, 168). Wikipedia Maṣrī became the most prominent platform for promoting Egyptian Linguistic Separatism in no time. After more than a decade, it becomes clear that it can also be seen as an attempt at grassroots language planning.

The quality and tone of its articles suggest that the main reason behind creating and developing this site was more than just informational. Two tendencies at the fore of this endeavor are Pharaonism and Egyptian separatism, neither of which is a new invention; instead, they constitute a modern incarnation of intellectual currents popular among the Egyptian elite in the first half of the 20th century. In the open environment of New Media featuring non-professional user-driven content, historically marginalized unorthodox linguistic practices and beliefs can come to light, regardless of any policy currently espoused by those in power, be they government officials or Arabic Language Academies. Wikipedia Maṣrī was to become a platform for disseminating anti-Arabist ideology and promoting ethnic Egyptian separatism. The editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī disseminate the view that the Egyptian identity is unique and independent of the larger Arab community. Even more importantly, they insist that Egyptian Arabic should finally gain legal recognition as the Modern Egyptian language.

Egyptian sociolinguistics has been the subject of many a study. It has been analyzed from the perspective of religion, political ideology, and everyday linguistic practices. The interplay between the Arabic language (*al-fuṣḥà*) and Muslim identity and heritage in Egypt and the challenges of modernizing a sacred and, as is the belief of Muslims, miraculously eloquent language were thoroughly examined by Niloofar Haeri in *Sacred Language, Ordinary People* (2002). In his book *The Arabic Language and National Identity: a Study in Ideology*, Yasir Suleiman explored the most salient ideas that shaped attitudes towards language in the Arab World, painting the picture of Egyptian

intellectual life in the 19th and 20th centuries in great detail (2003). In *Language as Proxy in Egypt's Identity Politics: Examining the New Wave of Egyptian Nationalism* (2018), Mariam Abolezz continues in the footsteps of Yasir Suleiman and applies his methodology to discuss the Egyptian nationalist movement of the 21st century and identifies its ideological, including linguistic, goals. Everyday linguistic practices of Egyptians constitute the basis for the book *Functions of Code Switching in Egypt* by Reem Bassiouney (2006).

As a phenomenon established within the linguistic reality of Egypt, Wikipedia Maṣrī for a long time has been only superficially investigated. Two years after its establishment, in 2010, Ivan Padanovic published *The Beginnings of Wikipedia Masry*, which was the first academic paper that looked into the subject. He was the first to note that this site's creation opened a new linguistic chapter in the history of Arabic dialects. The paper outlines the initial stages the platform went through and examines the arguments of both supporters and opponents of the project. Padanovic was also the first to point out that Wikipedia Masri users engage in what can be called language planning activities, such as setting out the rules of Masri orthography. Both Padanovic's article and Wikipedia Masri have been mentioned in passing by other scholars, such as Marek Siwiec (*Standard Arabic – Core Value OR Value Added?,* 2016) and Mariam Abolezz (*Language as Proxy in Egypt's Identity Politics: Examining the New Wave of Egyptian Nationalism,* 2018). The first map of the various groups and circles whose secessionist ideas contributed to the creation and development of Wikipedia Maṣrī was sketched in the paper *A Whole Branch of Alternative Scholarship – Wikipedia Maṣrī and the Modern Egyptian Language Movement* (Nabulssi, 2021).[1]

This work aims to do the subject of Wikipedia Maṣrī justice and analyze it from as many perspectives as possible: historical and ideological, social, cultural, and religious, as well as purely linguistic, which is concerned with grammar, syntax, and vocabulary.

The first chapter of this book presents the current linguistic situation in Egypt and historical perceptions of language and national identity. It explores the language myth of the superiority of Literary Arabic (*al-fuṣḥà*) and identifies the 19th and 20th century Egyptian thinkers who opposed this notion. This conflict between tradition and modernization, pan-Arabism, and nation-

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[1] Some information presented in this book, especially in Chapters 3 and 4, can be found in that paper.

state identities shape the confines of any discussion of language in Egypt to this day. The colonial and post-colonial overtones of the ideas of Egyptian Linguistic Separatism seem to carry add another layer of complexity to this matter.

The second chapter of this work covers the events that lead to the establishment of Wikipedia Maṣrī. It then describes the heated online debate resulting from the proposal to create an Egyptian Wikipedia site. It discusses in detail the attitudes of its advocates and opponents to shed light on the various linguistic beliefs and attitudes present in Egypt and the Arab World. The chapter is also an attempt at quantifying and analyzing the scope of Wikipedia Maṣrī. It presents and discusses data on domestic and international viewership, article readership, and the almost unwavering number of the site's editors. It also examines the relationship between the rapid growth rates of Wikipedia Maṣrī and the low index of editing depth – the only measurable indicator of the quality of Wikipedia editions.

The main concern of the third chapter is the idea of the Modern Egyptian language championed by the editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī. The chapter examines Wikipedia entries on language and other Egypt-related topics on Wikipedia Maṣrī and Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya. The chapter demonstrates how these two editions differ in describing Egyptian identity, society, cuisine, history, and nationalist thought, indicating that Wikipedia Maṣrī was created to disseminate dissenting opinions on these matters, which would not be accepted in the broader community of Arab editors.

The fourth chapter pinpoints the thinkers and groups who form the ideological backbone of the Modern Egyptian language movement that gave birth to Wikipedia Maṣrī. It presents the works of the forefathers of the Modern Egyptian language movement, such as Bayyūmī Qandīl, Anṭwān Mīlād, and Muḥsin Luṭfī as-Sayyid, as well as identifies Egyptian intellectual and cultural circles endorsing these views.

Chapter five offers an insight into the language of Wikipedia Maṣrī. It lists the rules of orthography prescribed by the Wikipedia Maṣrī team and confronts them with the editorial praxis. It explores the idea of the Egyptian grapholect and the extent to which Wikipedic ʿĀmmiyya relies on *al-fuṣḥà* stylistics in terms of syntax and lexicon. Lastly, it delves into the source domains of loanwords and technical vocabulary, which differ from those prevalent in Modern Standard Arabic.

The sixth and final chapter discusses Wikipedia Maṣrī as a grassroots language planning effort, examining its possible effects on the future status of Egyptian Arabic. Moreover, it demonstrates how such a large corpus of texts could affect the level of prestige associated with Egyptian Arabic and influence the future of academic inquiry into this linguistic variety. This section also briefly discusses two other Wikipedia editions: Wikipedia Darija – the manifestation of Moroccan linguistic separatism, and the North Levantine Wikipedia, an analogical Lebanese endeavor.

All quoted Wikipedia articles have been translated into English by the author of this thesis. Long excerpts in Egyptian Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic are presented in their original written form using the Arabic script. They remain untranscribed because the issue of orthography constitutes one of the main subjects of the analysis. Most crucially, the language of Wikipedia Maṣrī is not pure Cairene Arabic but rather a pan-Egyptian *koinè*, a supralocal variety mixed with Modern Standard Arabic. Devising a set of rules for transcribing the Wikipedia Maṣrī articles would mostly amount to guesswork. Forgoing transcription was the only possible solution to avoid imposing a standard or non-standard character on texts whose register remains ambiguous. In other instances, transcription was provided when it was required for the sake of argument. A table of consonant and vowel symbols of both varieties of Arabic discussed in this book can be found in the Appendix.

Chapter 1
Diglossic Chasm and Its Politics

Egyptian Sociolinguistics

Egypt's linguistic landscape is complex and multifaceted. While there are two principal varieties of Arabic in Egypt – *al-fuṣḥà*, or literary Arabic, and *ʿāmmiyya*, or colloquial Arabic – the situation is far from straightforward. A confluence of factors has contributed to the intricacy of the linguistic environment, including but not limited to regional disparities and socio-economic stratification.

What is often colloquially referred to as Egyptian Arabic, is technically a group of Arabic dialects of Egypt. These can be divided into urban, rural, and Beduin varieties, among which the dialects of Egypt's two largest cities – Cairo and Alexandria – are the most prominent and widely studied. Northern Egyptian dialects share many features with the dialect of the capital, which serves the role of Standard Egyptian Colloquial. This particular variety is called by the Arabs *maṣrī* (Egyptian). It is seen as quite prestigious within Egypt and on a supranational level due to Cairo's status as a cultural center (Versteegh et al. 2007, 8-18).

The phenomenon of diglossia, defined as the complementary distribution of two varieties of the same language used in different spheres of life, is the most critical factor shaping the sociolinguistic reality of Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. As described by Charles Ferguson:

> *Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation* (Ferguson 1959, 336).

The low prestige variety of Colloquial Arabic is used for spontaneous speech and daily communication within this paradigm. Standard Arabic, on the other hand, has a high prestige and is the language of formal writing and speech. Normally, these domains are separate, since it is considered socially embarrassing to use the high-prestige variety to buy groceries, and similarly unacceptable to write a dissertation in non-standard Arabic. In the case of Egypt, however, these domains are not entirely separate, as the spoken variety encroaches on the sphere of formal communication.

In his work on contemporary Arabic, As-Saʿīd Muḥammad Badawī characterizes the linguistic landscape of present-day Egypt in terms that are more complex than the simple dichotomy between *al-fuṣḥà* (literary Arabic) and *ʿāmmiyya* (colloquial Arabic) (Badawī 1973, 85-91). He lists five varieties or levels of Arabic:

- Classical Arabic (*fuṣḥà at-turāṯ*),
- Modern Standard Arabic (*fuṣḥà al-ʿaṣr*),
- Educated Spoken Arabic (*ʿāmmiyyat al-muṯaqqafīn*),
- Literate Spoken Arabic (*ʿāmmiyyat al-mutanawwirīn*)
- Illiterate Spoken Arabic (*ʿāmmiyyat al-ummiyyīn*).

The only stratum of the Egyptian society that uses Classical Arabic is the ulama of Al-Azhar University. Modern Standard Arabic is the language of news and political commentaries, prepared speeches, scholarly pursuits, and the printed word, except for genres such as plays or folk poetry. The well-educated discuss social, political, and artistic matters spontaneously using *ʿāmmiyyat al-muṯaqqafīn*, a colloquial variety influenced by heavy borrowings of standard vocabulary. Spoken Arabic of the educated and spoken Arabic of the illiterate are used in everyday, personal and work-related situations. The former sporadically can be heard in Egyptian television discussions. In contrast, the users of the latter tend not to be contributors to the media due to their low social status and lack of education.

One significant factor that contributes to the intricacy of Egypt's linguistic environment is the fact that higher education and upper-class status do not necessarily confer mastery of Standard Arabic, particularly with respect to productive skills such as writing and public speaking. Conversely, members of the educated lower classes are often the most proficient in Standard Arabic,

perhaps due to the preference of the upper classes for private schools that emphasize English over Standard Arabic.

Another factor at play in Egypt's linguistic environment is the perception of Standard Arabic in the wider society. While mastery of Standard Arabic is often regarded as a mark of prestige, some segments of the population perceive it as elitist or outdated. This may partially explain why some members of the elite do not prioritize the acquisition of Standard Arabic skills. As an alternative, young people from affluent backgrounds frequently seek education abroad, where they are exposed to a broader range of languages and cultures. Consequently, these individuals may be more at ease discussing complex topics, including politics, science, and social issues, in European languages rather than Arabic. This phenomenon has resulted in a linguistic landscape where the use of English loanwords or entire sentences connotes a sense of sophistication or cosmopolitanism (Versteegh et al. 2007, 8-18).

Religious affiliation is another important factor that influences attitudes toward *al-fuṣḥà*, or literary Arabic, in Egypt. The Quranic language is considered the very epitome of rhetorical style and linguistic accuracy due to its unattainable, inimitable perfection (*iʿǧāz*). As such, Literary Arabic is seen as a sacred language by Muslims around the world, including non-Arabs who use it in their daily prayers and recitations. Arabic-speaking Christians, however, do not have the same relationship with *al-fuṣḥà*, although they also read their sacred scriptures in literary Arabic. It is worth noting that the constitution of Egypt designates Standard Arabic (*al-ʿarabiyya*) as the official language of the state. However, Egyptian Copts, who are Christian, face cultural exclusion when it comes to learning and teaching literary Arabic. Because of the belief that mastery of literary Arabic requires extensive knowledge of the Quran, Copts are often considered unfit to become Arabic teachers. This exclusionary perspective contributes to the underrepresentation of Copts in the study of Arabic language and literature at Cairo University, although there are no explicit laws prohibiting their enrollment (Haeri, pp. 48-49). Furthermore, the teaching of literary Arabic in Egypt relies heavily on Quranic quotations, making it a non-neutral religious discourse. This religious association with Literary Arabic and the Quran, combined with the constitutional designation of Standard Arabic as the official language, creates a challenging environment for Coptic students and teachers in Egypt, affecting their education at all levels.

Taken together, these factors contribute to the nuanced and intricate linguistic environment of Egypt. While Standard Arabic remains a critical component of the country's linguistic heritage, its use and status are in constant flux and are influenced by numerous factors, including social class, education, religion and globalization.

Historic Perceptions

To this day in the Arab World, a notion persists that dialects stem from corrupted *al-fuṣḥà* or, more precisely, that during the pre-Islamic (*ǧāhiliyya*) and early Islamic periods, there was no significant difference between the language of everyday speech, the language of poetry, and, after its revelation, the language of the Quran (Versteegh 55). However, in Western scholarship, such a notion is staunchly refuted. According to the prevailing hypothesis, as early as in the pre-Islamic period, Arab tribes that inhabited the Arabian Peninsula, all of whom spoke their own dialects, developed a supra-tribal literary variety of Arabic known as *poetic koinè* (Versteegh 2014, 40-41). Such a view indicates that the situation of diglossia pre-dates the revelation of the Quran and the Islamic conquests. It has been a salient feature of the linguistic reality of Arabs for over a millennium and a half. What fallows is that with the Islamic conquests and the subsequent Arabization and Islamization of the Levant, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Maghreb, Arabs spread their colloquial dialects as well as the language of pre-Islamic poetry and the Quran.[2] Only at the end of the 7th century CE, during the reign of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān did Classical Arabic become the language of administration. It remained, however, the language of scripture, prayers, religious sermons, and Quranic recitation. In daily communications dialects, the descendants of the pre-Islamic tribal varieties of Arabic prevailed alongside the local languages of the conquered lands (Danecki 2012, 28-31). Undoubtedly, by coming into contact with these languages, such as Syriac Aramaic, Persian, Coptic, and Amazigh, Arabic dialects underwent rapid change, including the processes of pidginization and creolization, as well as interference with Classical Arabic.

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[2]   In his book "Quranic Arabic", Marijn van Putten argues that Classical Arabic (the language of the Quran and hadiths) and the pre-Islamic poetic koine should not be understood as identical either.

Naturally, it was the philologists of the Islamicate World who were the first to identify the difference between colloquial or vulgar Arabic as spoken by the general public (ʿāmma) and the literary standard. Among the most prominent treaties which pointed out common mistakes are *Mā talḥanu bihī al-ʿawāmm* by al-Kisāʾī (804), *Iṣlāḥ al-mantiq* by Ibn as-Sikkīt (858), *Durrat al-ġawwāṣ* by al-Ḥarīrī (1122) and *Laḥn al-ʿawāmm* by Az-Zubaydī (1122). Grammarians of the Caliphate attempted to correct the mistakes and eradicate the most prevalent types of solecism (*laḥn*), which must have, at least to some extent, reflected the dialectal forms native to the speakers or writers who committed them. Nonetheless, the spread of incorrect forms was attributed to linguistic contact between Arabs and non-Arabs, marking the source of solecism outside the community of original Arabic speakers (Suleiman 2003, 28-31). By the same virtue, the most remote communities of Bedouins who lived deep in the desert and rarely came into contact with non-Arabs and non-Muslims were seen as preserving the new Arabic language unsoiled by foreign (ʿağamī) influences. Such great concern for the purity and correctness of the Arabic language reflects *al-ʿarabiyya's* importance as the language of the Quranic revelation, from which moral norms and social order are derived. That is why *al-ʿarabiyya* had to be cherished and preserved from corruption. In such a context, any linguistic change could only be interpreted as decay, which remains a notion that affects attitudes toward language in the Arabic-speaking World.

The 17th century, however, brought an exciting development. A traveler named Yūsuf al-Maġribī authored an apology of the Egyptian vernacular entitled *Dafʿ al-iṣr ʿan kalām ahl Miṣr* (*The lifting of the burden from the speech of the population of Egypt*). The *laḥn al-ʿāmma* literature certainly influenced al-Maghribī, but his approach toward linguistic correctness was diametrically opposite. The originality of his work comes from the fact that his purpose was to defend colloquial language rather than to attack or ridicule it. On the contrary, his work exhibits a relatively positive attitude towards the everyday speech of Egyptians. As he points out, Egyptian Arabic was frequently classified as incorrect, even though it complied with *al-fuṣḥà* standard. According to his criteria, a word was considered correct as long as it could be traced back to an existing Arabic root in its form and meaning. At the same time, he did not label Turkish or Persian loanwords as incorrect. Such vocabulary, alongside purely dialectal Egyptian Arabic words, was also listed in his work (Zack 2009). al-Maġribī, however, was not a grammarian or philologist in the traditional

sense. They, for the most part, remained uninterested in urban dialects of the Arabic-speaking world (Versteegh 2014, 130).

19th Century Paradigm Shift

The Arab World experienced a cultural renaissance of *An-Nahḍa* (Awakening) in the second half of the nineteenth century. As a result of a shock brought about by the exposure to European culture, science, and its colonial military might, Egypt and the Levant (at the time regions of the Ottoman Empire) underwent a period of increased intellectual and cultural activity aimed at modernization. This meant that Arabic needed reform to accommodate a host of new terminology required for the translation of European works of fiction and science. The late 19th century gave rise to a collective Egyptian identity that took over more fragmented local, ethnic and religious identities of the previous centuries. Egyptian nationalism found its way to popular culture, and since, by definition, popular means accessible to all, its mode of expression was colloquial. As a thriving cultural center, Cairo's importance grew, marking its dialect as the unofficial spoken language of Egypt (Fahmy 2007). It was portrayed as such in newspapers and magazines written in *ʿāmmiyya*, which were quite popular between the 1870s and 1930s. In 1878 Yaʿqūb Sanūʿ, an Egyptian journalist and playwright, started *Abū Naẓẓāra Zarqa,* a satirical magazine that contained political caricatures both in French and Colloquial Egyptian.

On the other hand, the contact between Europe and the Arab World provoked a large-scale interest in Arabic dialects on the part of European scholars. Arabs themselves met these Western efforts with suspicion, interpreting them as aspects of the "divide and conquer" policy. Such interpretations were not ill-founded. As the Ottoman Empire declined, European colonial ambitions grew and gained momentum. For some time in Algeria, the French authorities introduced a hard-line policy that outright banned the teaching of Classical Arabic. In the case of Egypt, the British administration, which took over the country's affairs after its bankruptcy in 1882, chose a more covert approach of supporting Orientalists in their ideas to promote the Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* in writing with the use of the Latin script (Versteegh 2014, 132).

Wilhelm Spitta, a German who served as the director of the Khedival Library, was the first to formulate such a proposal. He considered diglossia to be

the root cause of low literacy rates in the Arab World and advocated for the use of ʿāmmiyya in writing (Zack 2014, 2-3). He authored *Grammatik des arabischen Vulgärdialectes von Äegypten* (*Grammar of Arabic Vulgar Dialects of Egypt*, 1880), oftentimes labeled as the first par excellence academic study of a modern Arabic dialect. The lists of vocabulary, proverbs, popular sayings, and songs he compiled are valuable sources for studying 19th century Caireene speech.

Spitta's ideas influenced an American scholar, Daniel Fiske, to embark on a project to promote Egyptian Arabic as a literary language written in Latin characters. He published books, booklets, short stories, and teaching materials and established the Society for the Education of Every Egyptian Youth, which was to distribute them in Egyptian schools. In one such text meant for elementary schools, which Lizbeth Zack calls propagandist, Fiske wrote:

> *agdâdna itkallimu fil auwil el lisân el maṣry el qadym, we baʿdên er rûmy, we baʿdên el qibṭy, we baʿdên el ʿaraby. lâkin iḥna binitkallim el lisân el maṣry eg gedyd. da el lisân elly nitkallimuh fil bêt we fil ġêṭ.*

> *(Our grandfathers spoke at first the Ancient Egyptian language, and then Greek, and then Coptic, and then Arabic. But we speak the new Egyptian language. This is the language we speak at home and in the fields.)* (Zack 2014, 7)

As Zack also points out, Fiske considered 19th century Egyptian speech separate from Arabic. He claimed that Egyptians once spoke Arabic, most likely under the erroneous impression that there was a time when Classical Arabic was used in everyday communication. Nonetheless, it is extremely interesting that both the "ancient Egyptian" and "new Egyptian" languages are mentioned in the short fragment cited above, suggesting, purposefully or coincidentally, at least some form of linguistic and ethnic continuity between the two periods.

Standard Arabic was implicated as the main obstacle on the road to development by another Westerner, a British irrigation engineer who designed the Aswan Low Dam, William Willcocks. In 1883 Wilcocks published an article entitled *Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Malta speak Punic, not Arabic*. He alleged that in their daily communication, Arabs used a language that descended from the Canaanite language of the Phoenicians, implying that dialects spoken in the Levant, the Nile Valley, and the Maghreb share no close genetic ties with

Standard Arabic. According to him, the Punic language was introduced to Egypt by the Hyksos. He claimed to have discovered the link between Egyptian and Phoenician while translating the Gospel into Egyptian (Zakariyya Saʿid 1964, 37-38). Another work related to the linguistic situation in Egypt Willcocks is remembered by was the transcript of his lecture *Lima lam tūǧad quwwat al-iḫtirāʿ ladā al-Miṣriyyin al-ān* (*Why Egyptians Now Lack the Power of Invention*), published in 1893 by the *Al-Azhar Journal*. In the speech, he claimed that to Egyptians *al-fuṣḥà* is a foreign language to Egyptians, an artificial, insufficient and difficult one, which lulled any creativity in the brains of its learners. Thus he recommended that Egyptians use their *ʿāmmiyya* in writing so that they may regain the ingenuity their ancient forefathers possessed, but they themselves seemed to have lost. Like many other enthusiasts of *ʿāmmiyya* at the time (Lian 2020, 84), Willcocks supported his claims by employing the analogy of the death of Latin as the literary language of Medieval Europe and the intellectual stimulus the use of national languages provided:

> *For the past 400 years, ever since England finally got rid of the academic Latin language. It began to use its national language, the nation arose just like a strong man arises from slumber, and the name of Shakespeare was recorded on the pages of its new dawn. This did not prevent scholars from studying true Classical Latin. Furthermore, in its turn, Egypt will get rid of the academic Arabic language and use its national language. It shall rise like a strong man who arises from slumber and renew its youth once known to the World, and in this new World, it shall be blessed with innovative thinking and take full advantage of the World's intellectual riches.*
> (Willcocks 1893)

Willcocks put his theories into practice and ventured to introduce the Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* into the realm of literature by translating the Gospel and fragments of Shakespeare's play *Henry IV* into Egyptian.

Willcocks's compatriot, a judge by the name of John Selden Willmore, was also interested in the connection between the Egyptian vernacular and other Semitic languages. Due to the nature of his work, which was an academic-style book, *The Spoken Arabic of Egypt* (1901), rather than an opinion piece, Willmore merely explores the links Egyptian Arabic shares with Hebrew and Aramaic:

The dialect of Cairo presents many forms of very high antiquity. Its precise place in the Semitic family could be more easily determined if the influence which the Quraish dialect has had upon it could be removed. There can be no doubt that it is more closely allied, in structure at least, to the Hebraic and Aramaic branches of the family than is the language of the Koran and subsequent Arabic literature. (…) (Selden Willmore [1901] 1905, XXII)

Willmore also shared the sentiment that *al-fuṣḥà* was the greatest obstacle to spreading literacy in the Arabic-speaking World. He explained that due to diglossia, learning to read and write does not mean simply familiarizing oneself with the characters of the Arabic *abǧad* but instead mastering a different language, *a strange idiom*, in his words. It remained unreasonable to expect such a feat of effort from a working man, thus clinging to *fuṣḥà* as a literary language guaranteed the perpetuation of illiteracy in Egypt (Selden Willmore [1901] 1905, XX).

National Literature and Pharaonism

The interest in *ʿāmmiyya* was sparked by Western thinkers, but in Egypt, their postulates did not fall on deaf ears. On the contrary, their works affected Egyptian intellectuals in a profound and manifold way. The Egyptian vernacular became a serious subject of linguistic research. The idea of simplifying *fuṣḥà*, especially in terms of grammar, gained momentum. Finally, the call inspired Egyptian intellectuals in their linguistic, literary, and social pursuits, out of which grew two important intellectual tendencies, namely the *tamṣīr* (egiptianization) movement and the New Arab Literature. Paradoxically, these two developed within a nationalist context focused on ending the British occupation of Egypt.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Egyptian intellectuals sought to create a new type of literature that was free from traditional constraints and archaic language. They aimed to produce a national literature, called *al-adab al-qawmī*, which would reflect the Egyptian vernacular and modernize Egyptian literature. Daring luminaries of that period, such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956), Taha Ḥusayn (1889-1973), and Salāma Mūsà (1887-1958), were undoubtedly European-oriented in their pursuit of innovation (*taǧdīd*) and keen on emulating European models. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal was perhaps the most zealous supporter of the Egyptianization (*tamṣīr*) of Egyptian literature. In 1913

he published *Zaynab: Country Scenes and Morals* which was the first novel to include dialogue in Egyptian Arabic, primarily as a means of achieving verisimilitude. A host of authors followed in Haykals's footsteps by publishing novels containing dialogue in Egyptian Arabic, among them Yūsuf Idrīs, who authored short stories written entirely in *ʿāmmiyya*. Even Maḥmūd Taymūr gave into the zeitgeist of the 1920s and 1930s, although in his later works, he favored Standard Arabic (Bielawski et al. 1978, 428). Other noteworthy advocates of this new Egyptian literature were the Islamic modernist and the first Arab feminist Qāsim Amīn, and the pioneer of Egyptian socialism Salāma Mūsà. The Egyptian vernacular was also introduced to the realm of poetry. First attempts were made as early as the 19th century; however, in the first half of the 20th century, its use became an established tendency (Armbrust 2001, 37-62).

The Egyptian Revolution of 1919 was a watershed moment for Egyptian identity, a point from which the intellectual elite would turn towards its great Pharaonic past in search of the country's true identity and in an effort to reestablish its greatness (Gershoni and Jankowski 1986, 84). In 1922 Egypt became a nominally independent kingdom. However, its foreign relations, communications, and military remained under British control until 1936, when the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was signed. As the Egyptian nationalist tendencies surfaced, so did the attitudes begin to grow more and more Egypt-oriented and anti-Arab, which in turn influenced the general view of the Arabic language and Arab identity. The negative image of Arabs and the backwardness of Arab mentality served as a backdrop against which *modern* Egypt could shine. These nationalist tendencies culminated in the rise of a particular strand of nationalism, an ethno-territorial secular one, which due to its emphasis on the civilizational continuity in the Nile Valley, came to be known as Pharaonism.

Pharaonism postulated that Egyptians are not Arabs and that their culture is separate because Egyptians are the descendants, both ethnically and psychologically, of the civilization which astonished the World with the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The idea entailed a significant shift in attitudes towards Ancient Egypt, which in previous centuries could not be held in high regard due to Islam's absolute condemnation of polytheism. The interest in Egyptian antiquity among Egyptians themselves was facilitated by the development of Egyptology, whose breakthrough moment was Jean-François Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphs.

The first one to conceive of Egyptian history in terms of a continuum was Rifāʿa aṭ-Ṭahṭāwī (1801-1873) (Gershoni and Jankowski 1986, 11), who was in charge of The School of Languages, the graduates of which formed the backbone of the nationalist movement. His ideas imprinted firmly on Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid (1872-1963), editor-in-chief of *Al-Ǧarīda* and the first dean of Cairo University. However, the most prominent champion of Pharaonism was Ṭaha Ḥusayn, nicknamed "The Dean of Arabic Literature".

In his seminal work *Mustaqbal aṯ-ṯaqāfa fī Miṣr* (*The Future of Culture in Egypt*, 1938), Ḥusayn examined the relationship between the cultures of Egypt and Europe, concluding, that Egypt has always been part of Mediterranean Hellenistic civilization. Ethno-territorial nationalism required a split from Arab identity and reorienting Egypt's affiliation from Eastern, Arab, and Semitic to Western, European, and Aryan.[3] Ḥussayn was not afraid to stir controversy. His book *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (1926), in which he cast doubt on the authenticity of *ǧāhilī* poetry as well as portions of the Quran, was considered blasphemous and cost him his position as the dean of the literature department of the University of Cairo.

It is important to note, however, that despite certain hostility towards Arabism, he did not wish that Egypt sever ties with Standard Arabic, which remained a key to a vast literary heritage he certainly appreciated. Ḥussayn neither advocated for the abandonment of the Arabic language nor particularly supported the use of colloquialisms in highbrow literature. In this regard, his line of thinking was reformist but not radical. It did not strive to give Egyptians a completely separate language. Instead, he emphasized the importance of simplifying the orthography and grammar of Arabic and developing more practical teaching methods:

> *So let us limit ourselves to grammar, morphology, and rhetoric and make these sciences studied in literature classes or something close to that. That is not all. It is necessary to think about literature lessons themselves and about the books that students read, which we call required reading. The old educational system required that boys in secondary schools start literature lessons with pre-Islamic literature and that they read old books that they would remember*

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[3] Intellectuals of the time were influenced by theories of the Ernest Renan about "the Semitic race" being inferior to the "Arian race" (Gershoni and Jankowski, 101-103.)

with anger and resentment when they left school: 'Kalīla wa-Dimna'
and 'Adab ad-dunyā wa-ăd-dīn' You know that pre-Islamic
literature is far from speaking to the souls of contemporary men,
and how does it relate to the souls of young boys?
(Ḥusayn 1996, 191-192)

While Ṭaha Ḥusayn's ideas were of an integral territorial kind, not entirely at odds with Arabism, Salāma Mūsà was a champion of separatist territorial nationalism (Aboelezz 2018b). He urged his compatriots to cast Standard Arabic aside as an unsuitable medium for Egyptian national literature. A journalist, socialist activist, and a prolific writer, Mūsà held a hyperdiffusionist view of the origins of human civilization, which he presented in *Miṣr aṣl al-ḥaḍāra* (*Egypt, the Cradle of Civilization;* 1948). He disregarded Egypt's ties to Arab heritage, as he considered *ʿāmmiyya* to be the actual mother tongue of Egyptians and the Pharaonic past the true source of their identity. *Al-ʿarabiyya*, Mūsà declared, was a dead language, unfit to be the vehicle of expression in modern Egypt. The full elaboration of his linguistic postulates can be found in *Al-balāġa ăl-ʿaṣriyya wa-ăl-luġa ăl-ʿarabiyya* (*Modern Rhetoric and the Arabic Language*, 1945). Mūsà recommended the espousal of the Egyptian vernacular as the state's official language. Following the example of post-First World War Turkey, he supported the adoption of the Latin script. He saw the Arabic script as deficient, the lack of short vowels hindering the teaching of grammar, which contributes to its backwardness. Script change would be a tangible sign of dissociation from the Arab World and a symbolic turn toward Europe. Mūsà was an astonishingly prolific writer, having authored more than 40 books over the span of fifty years, yet, despite his beliefs, he never used *ʿāmmiyya* in any of them.

Pan-Arabism

With the rise of pan-Arabism, at least on an official level, there was no longer any debate about whether the Egyptian *ʿāmmiyya* should become the state's official language. The issue was settled. Egypt was ruled by the living icon Gamal Abdel Nasser, whose line emphasized Arab unity, thus cementing the role of Standard Arabic. In this new political and social milieu, Naffūsa Zakariyyā Saʿīd published an extremely thorough book *Tāriīḫ ad-daʿwa ilà al-ʿāmmiyya wa-aṯāruhā fī Miṣr* (*History of the call ʿāmmiyya and its effects in Egypt*). To this day, her work is hailed by supporters of Arab linguistic unity and said to have finally settled the issue (Abūʿayn 2018). In Saʿīd's view, Europeans,

especially the English, had ulterior motives for studying ʿāmmiyya during the British occupation of Egypt. They were the ones who wanted ʿāmmiyya to take the place of *fuṣḥà* in literary pursuits. he call for the use of ʿāmmiyya in Arab scholarship is interpreted as part of the implementation of the "divide and conquer" policy of the British. Egypt was targeted because it is the heart of the Arab World – right at its center geographically and the most populous. The colonial officers' motives were clear: to estrange Arabs and Muslims from their past and heritage.

Naffūsa Zakariyyā Saʿīd concludes that the co-existence of ʿāmmiyya and *fuṣḥà* is not just a feature of the Arabic language but a phenomenon present in all languages. In her view, is not an anomaly but the norm. The problem of ʿāmmiyya was purposefully created by European colonialists so that they could remedy it by getting rid of *al-fuṣḥà*, thus undermining Arab unity by destroying the strongest bond between Arabs – their common tongue. Not only did they fail in that, but their efforts backfired, demonstrating the shortcomings of ʿāmmiyya and its insufficiency and inadequacy for all modes of expression. The idea of introducing ʿāmmiyya into the domain of scripture and literature has never gained the acceptance of popular opinion. The call or ʿāmmiyya appealed to few. The general public in Egypt readily admitted that in this conflict, it was *al-fuṣḥà* that came with the upper hand and that such views would only gain popularity with the spread of education and increased contacts between Arab countries. Unexpectedly, the colonizers' efforts led to an increased interest of Arab scholars in *al-fuṣḥà*, which in turn strengthened its position and prestige.

Europeans, predominantly European Arabists, led the campaign against the Arabic language. It was a foreign call and a fake one. Ideas of reform and renewal masked its true aim. The public remained attached to *al-fuṣḥà*. This attachment only grew with the development of national awareness. Saʿīd believed that the issue was settled, and in the conclusion of the book, she stated clearly:

> *In light of these facts, we can decide the failure of the call to colloquialism. This call raised many of our literary and linguistic problems throughout this century, which began with a revolution against al-fuṣḥà and ended with a revolution for its sake.* (Zakariyyā Saʿid 1964, 469)

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Erosion of Arab Unity

Arab unity, understood as state-wide political unification such as The United Arab Republic seems like a pipe dream of a bygone era. The relative ease of contact between citizens of various Arab countries has not produced the leveling of dialects on a wide scale. The second half of the 20th century did not witness the abandonment of Egyptian Arabic as a vehicle for artistic expression. On the contrary the split personality of Egypt is represented by two tendencies present in Egyptian arts and literature. The first, classicist, favors Classical Arabic; the second, populist, leans towards orality and the use of Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (Armburst [1996] 2001, 37-62). In 1966, more than fifty years after Haykal published *Zaynab,* Muṣṭafà Mušarafa brought out *Kantara, who disbelieved*, which was the first novel written entirely in Egyptian Arabic. The Egyptian ʿāmmiyya poetry was consolidated by the immense success and popularity of Ṣalāḥ Ǧāhīn (1930-986), ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī (1938-2015), and Aḥmad Fuʾād Naǧm (1929-2013). The Egyptian vernacular has been further elevated due to its presence in cinema, theater, and popular songs. So overwhelming was Egypt's cultural influence on an international level that Egyptian Arabic became well-understood within the Arabic-speaking World. So much so that, until this day, it serves the role of Lingua Franca between speakers of mutually-unintelligible Arabic dialects. On such occasions, many choose to resort to Egyptian rather than *al-fuṣḥà*, either due to a lack of proficiency in Standard Arabic on their part or due to *al-fuṣḥà's* perceived stiffness and formality.

Demythologizing al-ʿArabiyya

As the heyday of pan-Arabism came to an end, so did the issue of Egyptian linguistic and national identity resurface. Among the most controversial thinkers who criticized *al-ʿarabiyya* was a poet, playwright, and thinker Lūys ʿAwaḍ. In many ways, ʿAwaḍ's thinking was in line with the ideas of Salāma Mūsà. His first publication that advocated for the adoption of the Egyptian ʿāmmiyya as a national language was *Plutoland*, a collection of experimental poetry published in 1949. His most controversial work, however, and one chiefly focused on tackling the problem of Egyptian linguistic expression, was *Muqadimma fī Fiqh al-Luġa al-ʿArabiyya* (*Introduction to the Foundations of the Arabic Language*), published in 1980. Almost immediately after its publication, the book was blacklisted in Egypt, although it could be found in

print in other Arab countries. The main charge against its author was that he denied the Islamic doctrine of the inimitability of the Quran (*iʿǧāz*).

The main objective of ʿAwaḍ's book was to demonstrate that Arabic is just like any other language: it undergoes linguistic change and is subject to foreign influence. More controversially, ʿAwaḍ wrote that *al-ʿarabiyya* consists of various linguistic strata and did not emerge as a fully formed, perfect medium in which the Quran was revealed. ʿAwaḍ's claims go against the idea that Arabic is an inimitable language of Heaven where it was conceived in its full linguistic glory with a vast vocabulary that does not need foreign loan words and clear rules of grammar that render it the most precise of all languages. ʿAwaḍ describes the Arabic linguistic superiority purported by Islamic scholars, as a means of religious and political exclusion of non-Arabs in the Islamic World. In his view, Arabic was introduced into Egypt via Islamic culture. However, Egyptians who accepted Islam and adopted Arabic, in turn, had a massive influence on the language by introducing a host of Coptic elements into it (ʿAwaḍ [1980] 2006, 49). ʿAwaḍ developed a rather curious theory explaining the phonetic and phonological differences between the Egyptian vernacular and Standard Arabic on the basis of physiological particularities of the vocal tract within the population of Egypt. This explanation might have been intended as an argument for the racial distinctness of Egyptians from Arabs, even though upon further examination of other Arabic dialects, it becomes clear that the phonetic features of Egyptian speech are not all that unique.

ʿAwaḍ dispelled the issue of Arab superiority by appealing to Egyptian pride in the ancient heritage. According to his theory, Arabs do not originate from the Arabian Peninsula but rather from the Caucasus. What follows is that they are indeed a population that came to the Middle East fairly recently. Their civilization does not have roots as ancient and noble as the Egyptian, Persian, or Phoenician ones.

Current Confusion

For most of the 20th century in Egypt, the discussions of language were by proxy discussions about identity, modernity, secularism, and so on (Suleiman 2003, 93-94). At present, being an Arab is primarily a linguistic identity since trying to define it in ethnic terms leads to even greater ambiguity. Arabs speak

Arabic, no matter what haplogroups can be found in their DNA. This definition, while generally sound, is also reductionist and does not take into account minority groups who do speak Arabic but do not see themselves as Arab. Arabness is and, at the same time, is not a nationality. Countries are defined as Arab by their membership in the Arab League. Nevertheless, each of the League's member-states grants its own citizenship. So we come across this distinction between *qawmiyya* (Arab nationalism) and *waṭaniyya* (state nationalism).

Arabic is the glue of Arabism. Speaking Arabic is what defines being an Arab. Thus, necessarily, linguistic separatism in the Arab World does not simply mean wanting one's dialects to become an independent language. Supporters of such linguistic separatisms need to argue that their dialects are of non-Arabic and non-Arab origin, tracing back their roots to the times before the Arab conquest, even though such claims are impossible to defend from a linguistic point of view. It is striking that the other route – simply trying to elevate the status of dialects to languages- is not enough. Because such attempts have already proven futile, a more radical approach had to be employed. Even more crucially, however, the discussion has never truly been about language, but regaining a lost culture and an idealized identity.

Chapter 2
Uncharted Territories

The emergence of Wikipedia Maṣrī, a Wikipedia site in the Egyptian dialect of Arabic, represents a significant development in the ongoing debate over the primacy of Literary Arabic versus Colloquial Arabic within Egypt's sociolinguistic reality. Established in 2008, Wikipedia Maṣrī was a controversial initiative led by a group of editors who believed that the Egyptian dialect deserved to be recognized as a language in its own right and utilized as a vehicle for scientific discourse. This position was opposed by those who favored the traditional view of restricting regional varieties of Arabic to oral communication only. The establishment of Wikipedia Maṣrī sparked a heated debate among Egyptian internet users, ultimately dividing them into two opposing factions. Those in favor of recognizing Egyptian Arabic as a distinct language argued that it deserved to be studied and developed, while those who opposed this idea feared that it would lead to the fragmentation of Arab linguistic unity.

The creation of Wikipedia Maṣrī was met with resistance by pan-Arabist Wikipedia users who believed that it would set a dangerous precedent and ultimately lead to further division. However, the recent establishment of Wikipedia Darija, a site in Moroccan Arabic, suggests that these fears were not entirely unfounded and that we may be witnessing a domino effect. The creation of Wikipedia Maṣrī and subsequent developments such as Wikipedia Darija highlight the changing linguistic attitudes and tendencies within digital spaces. The inclusive environment of the internet has provided a platform for previously subdued voices and ideas to emerge and be heard. This debate has revealed changing linguistic attitudes and tendencies within digital spaces, and the recent establishment of Wikipedia Darija suggests that we may be witnessing a shift towards the recognition of regional varieties of Arabic as distinct languages.

The Proposal

The proposal to create Egyptian Arabic (Maṣrī) Wikipedia was filed by a user named Ghaly on March 30, 2008. The trial site was launched in the Wikimedia Incubator on April 2, 2008. The establishment of Wikipedia Maṣrī was

announced on the first day of the annual conference of the Wikimedia Foundation – Wikimania, which in the year 2008 was organized in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt. Within 24 days of the launch, the number of articles on the Wikipedia Maṣrī site reached 59, of which Ghaly authored 95%. However, the percentage of articles published by other editors started to snowball as new people joined the editing team. The rapid growth in the number of articles was primarily due to their shortness. Brevity became the editor's long-term strategy, as increasing numbers were to validate the project and prove its popularity (Padanovic 2010, 94).

Unfortunately, by 2020 some accounts have been blocked or deleted, but those still available provide crucial information about their owners. It seems that among the initial editing team, almost native-like skills in English were not uncommon, which could suggest that these editors came from well-off families and received private education (User: Koraiem, n.d.), (User: Matthew S., 2020). Out of seven Wikipedia users involved in the project, there is no doubt about the Coptic faith of four of them, namely Ghaly, the *spiritus movens* of the whole project, Troy 07, Koraiem, and Mamduh (also using the nickname Matthew S.). The remaining three editors had their accounts closed. However, the same general observation that the early editors were mainly Copts was made by Ivan Padanovic in an article published in 2010 (Padanovic 2010, 100).

Ghaly argued that the Egyptian vernacular is a language separate from Arabic because it has an ISO 639-3 code (arz), which is one of the prerequisites for eligibility specified by the language proposal policy of Wikimedia (Language Committee, 2019). [4] According to Ghaly, the principal purpose of Wikipedia Maṣrī would be:

> *(...)providing the information to speakers of Egyptian Arabic in a way similar to what Wikipedia Simple English is doing currently in comparison to Wikipedia English. This will maximize the benefit for speakers. It would be written in layperson terms and a mixture between Egyptian slang and simple Arabic. It will also allow*

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[4] Other requisites are a lack of an already existing Wikimedia Project for the proposed language, sufficient uniqueness of the language (which usually excludes dialects or regional varieties), and a sufficient number of fluent speakers.

writing the names of places and persons in the manner Egyptian media and writers are using (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008).[5]

Ghaly's proposal was accompanied by a description of Egyptian Arabic taken from English Wikipedia and a discussion log in which supporters and opponents of the project could express their opinions. The first argument in favor of the project generated the most disagreement. The user Mamduh wrote:

> *(...)There are people, though, who are moved by certain religious and ideological thoughts to (…) refuse for Egyptian to be treated as a separate language. But, whether or not you are with or against the idea of Egyptian being treated as a "language" of its own and having its own version of Wikipedia, there are still many Egyptians who don't have good enough literacy of Arabic to be able to fully understand Arabic articles on Wikipedia*
> (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008).

Mamduh's comments provoked an argument about whether creating Wikipedia Maṣrī would *shear Egyptians from their roots,* to which Mamduh replied that these roots do not stem from the Arabian Peninsula, asserting that the Egyptian and Arab identities are separate.

Other supporters of Wikipedia Maṣrī, some of whom were also editors of the Arabic Wikipedia, emphasized that Literary Arabic is not widely understood among Egyptians, who are accustomed to media articles written in simplified *al-fuṣḥà* mixed with Egyptian colloquialisms. The consensus seemed to be that Wikipedia Maṣrī was not an attempt to undermine the Arabic Wikipedia, as it would serve different audiences, namely those unable to understand Literary Arabic (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008).

The discussion contains many emotional declarations about identity and linguistic attitudes. The most striking are those expressing absolute disdain for Literary Arabic, and by extension, Arabs understood, perhaps, as those who subscribe to the pan-Arabist ideology. The most fervent proponent of these views was the user by the name of 'One last pharaoh', whose quotes are cited below:

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[5]   All quotes from this discussion were written in English and are cited in their original spelling.

I HATE Arabic!

why are u arabs so angery because of that the egyptians want their own identity? I am proud to be egyptian, proud to be an extremist for the egyptian identity. (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008)

Ghaly's proposal to create Wikipedia Maṣrī generated as much support as opposition. The opponents argued that Egyptian does not exist as a language separate from Arabic since it is not sufficiently developed to be used in all linguistic situations. They argued that there are virtually no scientific books written in Egyptian and that supporters of the project manipulate facts in their favor claiming that there are novels written purely in Egyptian, such as Haykal's *Zainab*. In reality, in this novel only dialogues were colloquial, amounting to no more than 10% of the book's contents. Opponents of Wikipedia Maṣrī raised the point that the semi-literate would not understand complex ideas expressed in Egyptian Arabic any better than explanations given in Standard Arabic. Some of their arguments were incorrect from a linguistic point of view, as they claimed that all who speak Egyptian Arabic or any Arabic dialect possess a native ability to understand Modern Standard Arabic:

Now I'm asking you one question: Do Egyptians understand Arabic natively or not, if yes what your wikipedia will bring to them then? (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008)

Ghaly himself was accused of creating Wikipedia Maṣrī as a space to express his questionable linguistic views and publish articles based on unscientific sources, which he had not been able to do on the Arabic Wikipedia. He was said to have disregarded the policy of the Arabic Wikipedia by creating an article entitled *Venezia* as an alternative for an already existing article entitled *al-Binduqiyya*, which is the proper Arabic name of Venice. In his view, the correct name of the city is the one used by its inhabitants (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008). Moreover, editors of the Arabic Wikipedia complained about the low quality of his works, as they were not adequately sourced and often presented false information.

In light of these accusations, the opinion expressed by the user named Zerida seems to shed some light on the possible motivations for the creation of Wikipedia Maṣrī:

I have never been tempted to contribute to the Arabic Wikipedia not only because my command of Classical Arabic is not sufficiently advanced to write in it but also because of the political culture fostered by the Arabic Wikipedia, which appears to encourage censorship and openly promotes intolerance of varying but perfectly valid and reliably sourced information. (meta.wikimedia.org, 2008)

According to Zerida, Wikipedia Maṣrī was to become a platform for presenting information, which would not have been accepted had it appeared on the Arabic Wikipedia. The reader needs to infer what type of censorship Zerida truly means. Suppose it is political censorship, then there are no apparent reasons why Egyptians would expect to enjoy more freedom of expression than the rest of the Arab World. In fact, in the 2008 World Press Freedom ranking Egypt was classified as 146th. In comparison, many members of the Arab League have been granted significantly higher scores since Kuwait and Lebanon were both awarded the 66th position, the United Arab Emirates 69th, Qatar 74, Bahrein 96, Mauritania 104, Algeria 121, Morocco 122, Oman 123, Jordan 128, Djibouti 134, Sudan 135, and Tunisia 143 (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). There have been instances of blocking Wikipedia by the governments of Saudi Arabia (2006), Syria (2008 and 2009), and Tunisia (2006). All bans were relatively short and did not seem to have influenced the content of the Arabic Wikipedia in the least (Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2017). The publication of images of the Prophet Muhammad on the English version of the site testifies to the ability of the Wikimedia Organization to resist external pressures for the removal of objectionable or offensive content (Wikipedia, 2019).

In general the nature of the Arabic Wikipedia, which allegedly *encourages censorship and openly promotes intolerance,* is not affected by external pressures. What fallows is that the forces of censorship can only come from within. Since the contents of any Wikipedia edition are agreed upon in achieving community consensus, the community itself is the driving force in this equation. Sheer numbers of Arab editors would make it impossible for a minority of Egyptian authors representing certain nationalist and anti-pan-Arabist proclivities to put forward their views on the Arabic Wikipedia site. However, creating a new Wikipedia site and, thus, a new community of like-minded editors would make it possible to override the *status quo.*

Bitter Opposition, Auspicious Circumstances

Voices of criticism towards the idea of Wikipedia Maṣrī did not quiet down after the establishment of the project. In 2009 a Facebook group called *Campaign to destroy Wikipedia* Maṣrī was launched (Ḥamlat tadmīr Wīkībīdīā Maṣrī, 2009). The first post ever published on this group was a call to action for everyone who cares about the Arabic language. Judging by the content and the users' names, the group chiefly consists of Muslim enthusiasts of *al-fuṣḥà* who tend to see Wikipedia Maṣrī as a real threat to the Arabic linguistic heritage, calling it an *attempt to overthrow the Arabic language* and *this malicious project*. The group provides detailed instructions on vandalizing Wikipedia Maṣrī by deleting its content. Despite strong emotions, the effort was short-lived, as the group has remained inactive since October 2011.

ويليام كوكس ترجم الانجيل (العهد الجديد) و كذا مسرحيه من مسرحيات ويليام شيكسبير للغه المصريه.

رد الفعل [تعديل]

اغلب المثقفين المصريين قاومو افكاره بعنف و استمرو يبعتو مقالاتهم لمجلة الازهار مكتوبه باللغه العربيه الكلاسيكيه لحد ما اضطر ويلكوكس انه يقفلها فى اكتوبر 1893. عبد الله النديم كان من الوطنيين المصريين اللى بيكتبو بالمصرى لكن رغم كدا هاجم ويلكوكس هجوم جامد، و يمكن السبب الحقيقى لرفض الطبقه المثقفه المصريه لاقتراحات ويلكوكس هو انه كان بريطانى الجنسيه و مصر كانت محتله من بريطانيا فى الوقت دا و عشان كدا المثقفين اعتبرو ان رفض افكار ويلكوكس جزء من مقاومة الاستعمار.

مصادر [تعديل]

• A War of Words, Language and conflict in the Middle East, Yasir Suleiman, Cambridge University Press (2004).

لا يوجد لغة مصرية اللغة عربية و اللهجة مصريه فبلاش فذلكة على الفاضي

تصانيف: مواليد 1852 | وفيات 1932 | مهندسين بريطانيين

Figure 1: Vandalism of Wikipedia Masri.
Under the article about William Willcocks, a user wrote: There is no such thing as the Egyptian Language. There is the Arabic language and Egyptian dialect. Stop all this fuss about nothing.

Another attempt to undermine Wikipedia Maṣrī represented a more formal approach. In 2014 an unnamed user filed a proposal for the deletion of Wikipedia Maṣrī. Its author argued that Egyptian Arabic is a kind of slang rather than a language. He pointed out that Egyptian has no formal rules of spelling and grammar and seemed genuinely concerned about the precedent Wikipedia Maṣrī set for the users of other Arabic dialects, which he expressed in an emotional claim:

*having Wikipedia Maṣrī, is a huge deal of turning Wikipedia into
politically divided than nations and cultures contributing together,
DO NOT TURN WIKIPEDIA INTO A POLITICAL DIVISION !*
(meta.wikimedia.org, 2008)

Although the author raised some valid points, he could not articulate his claims correctly in English, which might have hurt the reception of his claims. Eventually, the proposal was rejected due to procedural errors, and the Wikipedia Maṣrī project remained open.

It is important to note that the ultimate decision-maker reviewing all language proposals for Wikipedia is The Wikimedia Foundation Language Committee, established in 2006. As of yet, it has never had any Arabic-speaking members (meta.wikimedia.org, n.d.). The Committee is willing to treat Arabic like a family of languages rather than dialects, all of which are fit to have their own Wikipedia sites as long as a sufficiently big group of native speakers expresses a wish to start a new site and manages to obtain an ISO code validating their claims of linguistic separateness. While assessing new language proposals, the question of preexisting scientific works written in dialects has never been raised. Over the years, several proposals for Arabic Wikipedias have been rejected, among them Bahraini Arabic, South Levantine Arabic, Northwest African Arabic, and Algero-Moroccan Arabic. The main reason for rejection expressed by the Language Committee was the lack of volunteers interested in developing prospective new sites. Curiously enough, purely linguistic reasons appeared only once. In a notification rejecting the proposal for South Levantine Arabic, a member of the Language Committee authoritatively stated that *the request is a mix of North and South Levantine Arabic interest. They are two different languages*
(meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Requests_for_new_languages/Wikipedia_South_Levantine_ Arabic, 2008).

It seems to be an overstatement that North and South Levantine dialects constitute separate languages. Due to their geographical proximity, they share so many phonological, grammatical, and lexical features that the differences do not significantly impede communication between their respective users. This notwithstanding, the Language Committee acts according to a fixed set of general rules. In the case of Arabic dialects, they created a leeway for the pursuit of linguistic division and differentiation, which would otherwise demand a more thorough substantiation.

The Scope of the Phenomenon

Despite many controversies, Wikipedia Maṣrī has been successful in attracting visitors, with an average of around 5.5 million views per month from 2016 to 2021. This traffic has continued to increase over time, reaching a peak of more than 18 million views in January 2021. However, it is important to note that while the Arabic Wikipedia remains the most widely used site in Egypt, it is not necessarily the most popular in all Arab countries. In some places, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Djibouti, and Comoros, users prefer the French Wikipedia, while in others, such as Lebanon, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Somalia, they prefer the English edition.

The variation in the most popular language edition across different Arab countries reflects the complex sociolinguistic reality of the region. It reveals the ongoing struggle between the competing forces of globalization and the desire to preserve and promote local cultures and identities. It also highlights the influence of historical and political factors in shaping language attitudes and preferences. The preference for French in some Arab countries, for example, can be traced back to the colonial legacy of French influence and education in those areas.
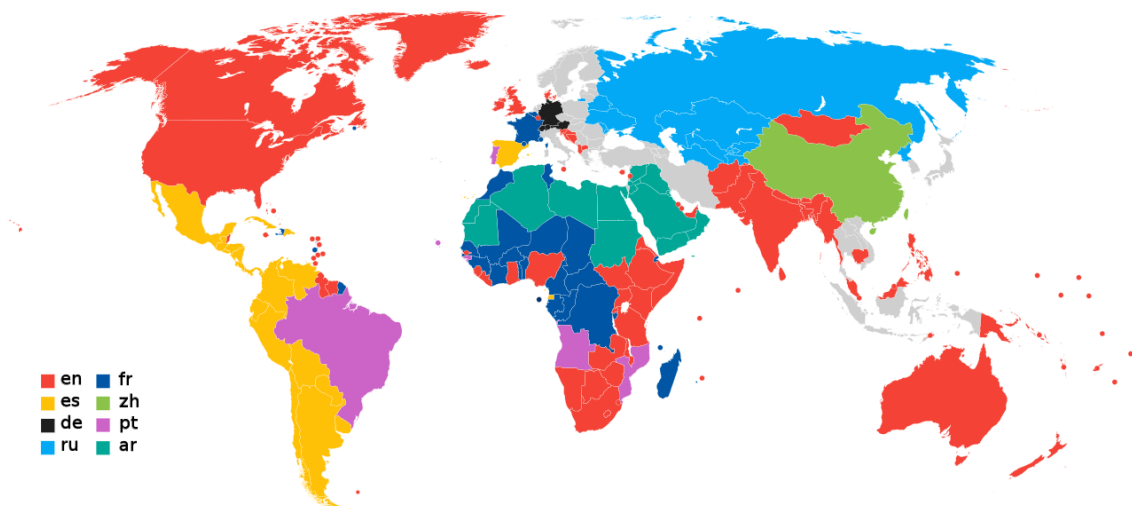

Figure 2: Most popular edition of Wikipedia by country in February 2021 (Wikimedia Commons, 2021)

Despite its establishment as the first Arabic dialect-based Wikipedia site, Wikipedia Maṣrī has not overtaken the popularity of the Arabic Wikipedia in Egypt. According to data from 2016, the Arabic Wikipedia remains the most widely viewed Wikipedia site in the country, with 60% of users accessing it.

The English edition also gained a significant viewership, with 33% of all Egyptian viewers accessing it, while the Russian site received 3% of all views. In contrast, Wikipedia Maṣrī accounted for only 2% of all Wikipedia traffic in Egypt.

Although the creation of Wikipedia Maṣrī was initially met with opposition and concerns about its potential to divide the Arab linguistic community, it did not have a significant impact on the popularity of the Arabic Wikipedia. Contrary to what its opponents professed, Wikipedia Maṣrī did not cause an exodus of users and editors from the Arabic site, as it continued to grow at a steady pace. The steady growth of the Arabic Wikipedia, even in the presence of Wikipedia Maṣrī, suggests that users and editors continue to value the Arabic language as a means of communication and scientific discourse.
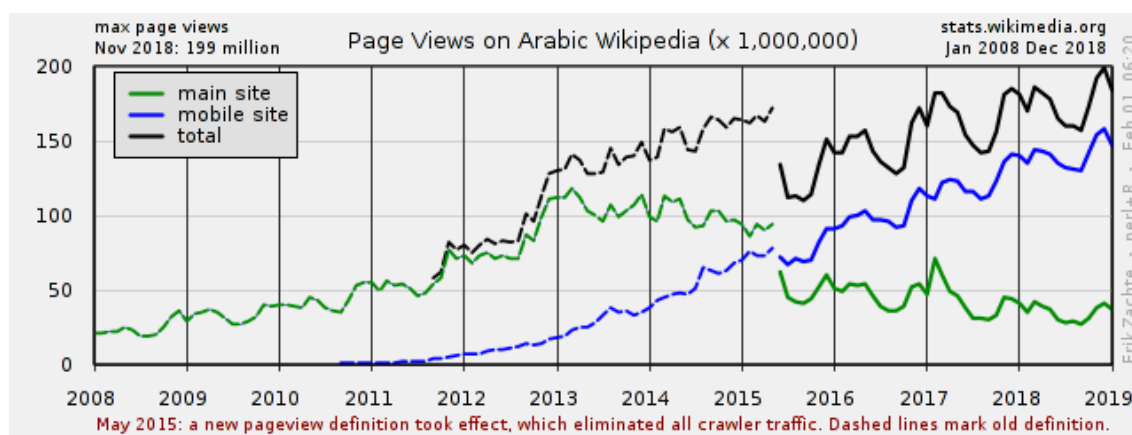

Figure 3: page views on Arabic Wikipedia (2008-2019)

Egyptians constitute the most considerable portion of Wikipedia Maṣrī readers. The site is also relatively popular in other Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Jordan, and Syria, as well as in the USA, Germany, and France. The considerable readership of Wikipedia Maṣrī in Saudi Arabia and the USA may well be due to the fact that the largest Egyptian migrant diasporas can be found precisely in these countries. It is only logical to assume that in the USA, Germany, and France, migrants are the ones who use Wikipedia Maṣrī. In contrast, when it comes to Arab countries, it is impossible to reach such a conclusion confidently. In comparison, the Arabic Wikipedia registers most views from Saudi Arabia and Egypt consistently each month, at least since December 2015 (stats.wikimedia.org/#/ar.wikipedia.org/reading/page-views-by-country/normal, n.d.).

The high number of views on Wikipedia Maṣrī highlights the importance of using colloquial Arabic in digital spaces, and how it can foster engagement and interest in scientific and scholarly pursuits. The increasing popularity of the site also indicates a growing acceptance and recognition of Egyptian Arabic as a distinct language variety with its own unique features and characteristics. This recognition could potentially lead to the further development and standardization of Egyptian Arabic as a language.
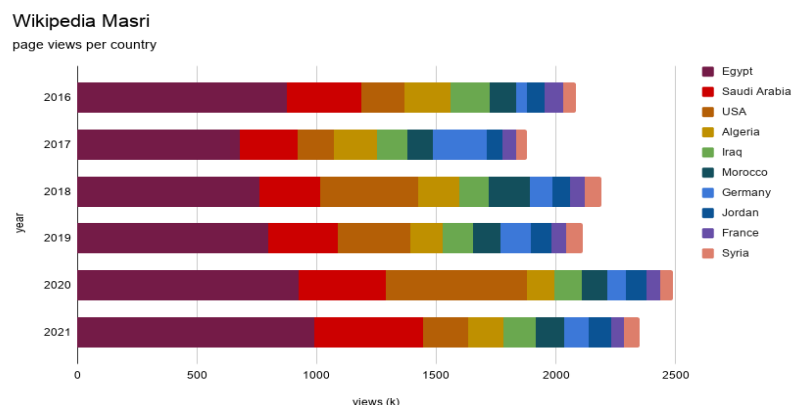

Figure 4: Wikipedia Maṣrī views per country (2016-2021)
(stats.wikimedia.org/#/arz.wikipedia.org/reading/page-views-by-country/normal, n.d.)

To Capture a Zeitgeist

In any language edition of Wikipedia, the top-viewed article of all time is the Main Page, which is also true for Wikipedia Maṣrī. The search page usually fallows closely. Surprisingly, on Wikipedia Maṣrī it is not the case, as the second most widely read article of all time is *Listat tartīb il-mumassilāt il-būrnūgrāfīyāt ḥasb is-sinn min il-akbar li-il-aṣġar* (*List of pornographic actresses by age, from oldest to youngest*). According to Wikimedia Statistics, in the year 2016, the article even outperformed the Main Page. The list is a meticulously compiled index of hundreds of names of female adult film performers with links to Wikipedia entries about them. In 2016 and 2017, articles about sex and sexuality dominated the list of the top five most-read articles. The trend has diminished, as administrators closed the articles they saw as unscientific, such as *Harmful effects of masturbation for girls*, deleted in the middle of 2018.

The most widely read Wikipedia Maṣrī articles cater to male audiences. In general, across all languages, Wikipedia is skewed towards men in most regards (Hill and Shaw 2020, 163), and there is even a WikiProject called *Women in Red* that aims towards eliminating gender discrepancy. Indeed, the list of top-

viewed articles on Wikipedia Maṣrī may suggest that women are at the center of attention only as objects of desire. This is not entirely true, as, throughout the years, non-sex related articles about women consistently reached the top 10. It remains an unresolved question why the popularity of articles about pornography on Wikipedia Maṣrī far exceeds the viewership of such content on the Arabic Wikipedia, even though both language editions cover most same topics.

No.	Name	View
Wikipedia Maṣrī – top viewed articles per year		
	2016	
1.	List of pornographic actresses by age, from oldest to youngest	775,327
2.	Category: Prostitutes	362,057
3.	Main Page	499,102
4.	Category: Pornographic Actresses	196,764
5.	Category: Search	160,507
	2017	
1.	Main Page	1,857,379
2.	List of pornographic actresses by age, from oldest to youngest	471,127
3.	Category: Prostitutes	261,583
4.	Sara Jay (pornographic actress)	220,176
5.	Category: Search	214,562
	2018	
1.	List of pornographic actresses by age, from oldest to youngest	369,349
2.	Main Page	353,508
3.	Category: Search	195,563
4.	Egyptian Army Ranks	136,973
5.	Harmful effects of masturbation for girls	123,944
	2019	
1.	Main Page	549,581
2.	List of pornographic actresses by age, from oldest to youngest	306,417
3.	Egyptian Army Ranks	176,269
4.	Islām Ṣubḥī (Quran reader)	164,212
5.	Category: Search	135,222

2020		
1.	Main Page	460,188
2.	List of pornographic actresses by age, from oldest to youngest	231,275
3.	Tyrone Smith (American musician)	217,047
4.	Egyptian Army Ranks	180,501
5.	Category: Recent modifications	147,022

Table 1: Wikipedia Maṣrī top viewed articles per year (2016-2020)
(stats.wikimedia.org/#/arz.wikipedia.org/reading/top-viewed-articles/normal, n.d.)

Quantity Over Quality

Wikipedia is available in over three hundred independently written language editions, out of which Wikipedia Maṣrī is the fourteenth largest site, with a total of 1,208,760 articles. Astonishingly, the Arabic Wikipedia consists of a smaller number of articles – 1,104,837, even though it has almost 45 times more active users and four times as many administrators (meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias, 2019). The sheer number of articles generated by such a small-scale community may seem impressive, but the effects of their labor leave much to be desired.

The only measurable indicator of the quality of Wikipedia language editions is depth or editing depth since academic quality proves impossible to compute accurately. The idea behind measuring editing depth comes from the general tendency of collaborative work to yield more accurate results by combining the judgments of many independent observers. In the case of Wikipedia, as is the case of many other scientific endeavors, aggregating many independent efforts translates to a higher quality of information. Studies have proven that compounding efforts of many users, be they amateurs, can produce results virtually indistinguishable from scientific inquiries conducted by experts (Kittur and Robert, 2008).

Article depth is determined using the following equation:

$$\text{Depth} = \frac{\text{Edits}}{\text{Total}} \cdot \left(\frac{\text{NonArticles}}{\text{Articles}} \right)^2$$

NonArticles = pages, redirects, images, "project" pages, categories, templates, and all talk pages

Total = NonArticles + Articles

One can only apply the formula to those Wikipedia language editions which exceed 10,000 articles. As of February 2021, 151 sites meet this requirement. Out of those, the English Wikipedia has the highest depth of 1054. The Arabic edition is the eighth in terms of depth, with a score of 223, while Wikipedia Maṣrī achieved the lowest depth rate of all editions – 0.12 (meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_article_depth, n.d.). It is not coincidental that the edition with the highest depth score, the English Wikipedia, is also the one with the most users – 41,070,445, as well as users per article – 6,262,616.
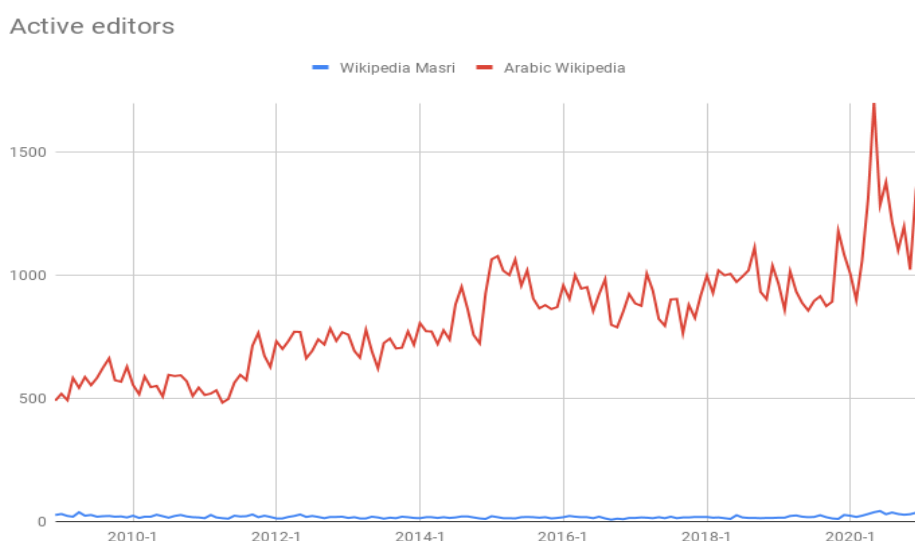

Figure 5: Active editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī and Arabic Wikipedia (2010-2020) (stats.wikimedia.org, n.d.)

The low ratio of edits per article stems from the fact that the number of active editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī is but a fraction of the number of editors actively engaged in developing the Arabic Wikipedia. Ever since its establishment in 2008, the group of Wikipedia Maṣrī editors has never exceeded 50 people, with a record low of 12 in December 2014, May 2018, and November 2019, and a monthly average of 21 editors. The average number of the Arabic Wikipedia editors is 40 times as many – 830. The graph demonstrates that the Arabic Wikipedia is experiencing fluctuations in the number of its editors. However, the general trend is upward, with a recent monthly record high of 1549 editors in January 2021. In contrast, throughout the site's existence, the number of Wikipedia Maṣrī editors could be described as fixed, with only a slight increase starting around April 2020.

As a matter of fact, Wikipedia Maṣrī has the second-lowest ratio of users per article,[6] all the while experiencing one of the highest growth rates, as it is

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[6]   Aex aequo with the Min Nan, Chechen, Tatar, South Azerbaijani, and Minangkabau Wikipedia sites.

ranked 14th out of 298 sites. The median article length of 1,253 words secures Wikipedia Maṣrī a perfectly middling score. However, the edition contains only seven articles that exceed 30,000 words and fourteen between 10,000 and 30,000 words meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias_by_sample_of_articles, n.d.).

Without a doubt, these data suggest that the editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī are a handful of enthusiasts resolved to develop the site by creating new articles and thus achieving new Wikipedia milestones rather than focusing on correcting and polishing entries that already exist.

Growth of Wikipedia Maṣrī

Number of articles	Date
Official establishment of the Wikipedia Maṣrī site	November 24, 2008
100 articles milestone	December 6, 2008
200 articles milestone	December 21, 2008
500 articles milestone	January 22, 2009
1,000 articles milestone	January 31, 2009
5,000 articles milestone	March 7, 2010
10,000 articles milestone	March 5, 2013
20,000 articles milestone	December 20, 2018
50,000 articles milestone	January 6, 2020
100,000 articles milestone	February 1, 2020
500,000 articles milestone	May 11, 2020
1,000,000 articles milestone	July 28, 2020

Table 2: The growth of Wikipedia Maṣrī

One of the strategies that ensure the rapid growth of Wikipedia Maṣrī content may well be copying entries from the Arabic Wikipedia and altering them so

that they comply with writing instructions for the Egyptian vernacular. It is difficult to prove that any specific article published on Wikipedia Maṣrī was created in this way. Nonetheless, it is no mere coincidence that out of the seven longest Wikipedia Maṣrī articles (Naguib Mahfouz, Moliere, Islam, primate, obesity, Spain, and Madrid), three contain paragraphs almost identical to their Arabic counterparts. The article about primates is the most striking example, as 35 out of 37 of its paragraphs, equating to 90% of the content, are identical to the corresponding article on the Arabic Wikipedia. The article about Madrid is only slightly less conspicuous since only about 1/3 of the text, or 36 paragraphs, bear significant similarities with its Arabic counterpart.

In comparison, the article on Moliere has only seven paragraphs that seem extracted from the Arabic version and slightly altered. Table 3 presents excerpts from the nearly-identical articles on primates and Madrid extracted from Wikipedia Maṣrī and the Arabic Wikipedia. Any differences between the two versions have been highlighted in green. Both texts, but especially the one about primates, contain negligible differences, the vast majority representing spelling variants and, rarely, differences in vocabulary, but never syntax. The excerpts are so similar that it is impossible that they were authored by editors working independently. In the world of Wikipedia, publishing translations of already-existing articles is common practice since these texts do not fall under the category of copyright material. Thus the strategy of copying entries appears to explain in the most plausible explanation such a tiny community of unpaid Wikipedia Maṣrī contributors managed to produce more than a million articles over a span of twelve years.

Madrid		
(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2008a)	(Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2005)	Translation
مطار باراخاس	مطار باراخاس	Barajas airport
مطار مدريد هوه مطار باراخاس الدولى.	مطار مدريد هو مطار باراخاس الدولي.	Madrid airport is the Barajas International Airport.
باراخاس هوه المحور الرئيسى لطيران ايبيريا.	باراخاس هو المحور الرئيسي لطيران ايبيريا.	Barajas is the main hub for Iberia Airlines.
وبالتالى باراخاس هوه البوابة الرئيسية	وبالتالي باراخاس هو البوابة الرئيسية	Thus Barajas is the main gateway

(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2020)	(Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2013)	Translation
لشبه الجزيرة الايبيرية من أوروبا	لشبه الجزيرة الإيبيرية من أوروبا	to the Iberian Peninsula from Europe,
وأمريكا وبقية العالم. مجموع الركاب	وأمريكا وبقية العالم. مجموع الركاب	America, and the rest of the world. Total passengers are
دلوقتى اكتر من 52 مليون مسافر سنويا,	حالياً أكثر من 52 مليون مسافر سنويا،	currently over 52 million passengers annually,
وده بيخللى باراخاس واحد من أكبر 10	وهذا يجعل من مطار باراخاس واحد من أكبر 10	which makes Barajas Airport one of the world's top 10
مطارات العالم فى الازدحام.	مطارات العالم في الازدحام.	congested airports.
و علشان الزيادة السنوية فى عدد	وبسبب الزيادة السنوية في عدد	Due to the annual increase in the number
المسافرين قريبة من 10%	المسافرين القريبة من 10%	of passengers close to 10%,
اتبنت محطة جديدة رابعه	أنشئت محطة جديدة رابعه	a new fourth terminal was built
(صالة المطار رقم 4)	(صالة المطار رقم 4)	(Airport Terminal 4),
و ده عمل انخفاض كبير فى حالات التأخير	وتسبب هذا في عمل انخفاض كبير في حالات التأخير	and this caused a significant decrease in delays,
و زود القدرة الاستيعابية للمطار لأكتر	وزود القدرة الاستيعابية للمطار لأكثر	increased the airport's capacity for more
من 70 مليون مسافر فى السنة	من 70 مليون مسافر في السنة	than 70 million passengers per year,
واتعمل مدرجين جداد للمطار	وبني مدرجين جديدين للمطار	and built two new airport runways,
و ده خللى باراخاس يبقاله اربع (4) مدرجات مطار.	ليرتفع عدد مدرجات مطار باراخاس إلى 4 مدرجات.	bringing the number of Barajas airport runways to 4 stands.

Primate		
(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2020)	(Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2013)	Translation
الوضع القانوني والاجتماعي	الوضع القانوني والاجتماعي	Legal and social status
يحتفظ بالرئيسيات في حدائق الحيوان	يحتفظ بالرئيسيات في حدائق الحيوان	Primates are kept in zoos
في جميع أنحاء العالم.	في جميع أنحاء العالم.	around the world.

تاريخياً، كانت حدائق الحيوان	تاريخياً، كانت حدائق الحيوان	Historically, zoos were
في المقام الاولانى إحدى مرافق الترفيه،	في المقام الأول إحدى مرافق الترفيه،	primarily recreation facilities,
ولكن في الآونة الأخيرة تحولت	ولكن في الآونة الأخيرة تحولت	but more recently, they have shifted
للتركيز على التعليم وحفظ الأنواع	للتركيز على التعليم وحفظ الأنواع	to focus on education, preserving species,
وإجراء البحوث حولها.	وإجراء البحوث حولها.	and conducting research on them.
تتميز العديد من حدائق الحيوان الآن	تتميز العديد من حدائق الحيوان الآن	Many zoos now feature
بالعروض الطبيعية وبتوفير	بالعروض الطبيعية وبتوفير	natural landscapes
المواد التعليمية للجمهور؛	المواد التعليمية للجمهور؛	and provide educational materials for the public.
في الولايات المتحدة العديد من الأنواع	في الولايات المتحدة العديد من الأنواع	In the United States, many species
المشاركة في برنامج خطة بقاء الأنواع	المشاركة في برنامج خطة بقاء الأنواع	Are part of the Species Survival Plan program,
اللى وضعتها رابطة حدائق الحيوان	التي وضعتها رابطة حدائق الحيوان	established by the Association of Zoos
وأحواض السمك من أجل	وأحواض السمك من أجل	and Aquariums in order to
تحقيق أقصى قدر من التنوع الوراثي	تحقيق أقصى قدر من التنوع الوراثي	maximize the genetic diversity
للأنواع المهددة الأسيرة.	للأنواع المهددة الأسيرة.	of captive threatened species.
حدائق الحيوان وغيرها	حدائق الحيوان وغيرها	Zoos and other animal
من مؤسسات رعاية الحيوان عموماً	من مؤسسات رعاية الحيوان عموماً	welfare organizations generally
تعارض مبادرات حقوق الحيوان	تعارض مبادرات حقوق الحيوان	oppose animal rights initiatives
وإصرار بعض المنظمات الحقوقية	وإصرار بعض المنظمات الحقوقية	and the insistence of some animal rights organizations
على إطلاق جميع الرئيسيات	على إطلاق جميع الرئيسيات	to release all primates

من حدائق الحيوان لسببين أساسيين:	من حدائق الحيوان لسببين أساسيين:	from zoos for two basic reasons:
أولاً، الرئيسيات المولوده في الأسر	أولاً، الرئيسيات المولوده في الأسر	First, primates born in captivity
تفتقر إلى المعرفة والخبر ة	تفتقر إلى المعرفة والخبرة	lack the knowledge and experience
من أجل البقاء في البرية إذا أفرج عنها.	من أجل البقاء في البرية إذا أفرج عنها.	to survive in the wild if they were released.

Table 3: Article comparison: Wikipedia Maṣrī and Arabic Wikipedia

Chapter 3
A Separatist Perspective

Linguistic Separatisms

Linguistic separatism refers to a political and social movement that seeks to separate a particular linguistic group from a larger political or cultural entity. As explained by Fishman (1991, 372), linguistic separatism is based on the belief that language is not only a means of communication, but also a fundamental aspect of identity, culture, and heritage. Linguistic separatism can be motivated by various factors, such as the desire to protect and preserve a language and its associated culture, the perception of linguistic oppression by a dominant group, or the pursuit of greater political and economic autonomy. As Fishman (1991) notes, linguistic separatism can take many different forms, ranging from passive resistance to more radical demands for political and territorial separation. However, the ultimate goal of linguistic separatism is to establish a separate political entity based on linguistic identity. This can have significant political implications, such as the creation of new states or the restructuring of existing ones. Linguistic separatism can challenge the dominant political and cultural order and lead to conflict, but it can also contribute to the recognition of linguistic diversity and the creation of more inclusive and democratic societies. Ultimately, the success or failure of linguistic separatism depends on a range of factors, including the strength of the linguistic community, the level of support from other groups, and the willingness of the larger political entity to accommodate linguistic diversity. The Basques in Spain, the Flemish in Belgium, and the Corsicans in France are among the most prominent examples of linguistic secessionism in Europe (Spolsky 2004, 70, 164). These groups advocate for the recognition of their language as the official language in their regions, often as part of a larger demand for political autonomy or even independence. This movement has important political implications for the countries in which it occurs, as it challenges the traditional centralized model of the nation-state and raises questions about the distribution of power between the central government and regional or local authorities.

Egyptian linguistic separatism has some similarities and differences when compared to other linguistic separatist movements around the world.

One similarity is the use of language as a central component in the construction of a separate identity and culture. Another similarity is the role of history and culture in the creation of a separate identity. In the case of Egyptian linguistic separatism, there is a focus on the Coptic heritage and its role in shaping Egyptian identity. Similarly, other linguistic separatist movements, such as those in Catalonia or the Basque Country, emphasize their unique cultural and historical traditions as a means of asserting their separate identity and distinctiveness from the dominant culture.

One key difference is the level of political autonomy sought by linguistic separatist movements. In the case of Egyptian linguistic separatism, there does not seem to be a clear political agenda for creating a separate state or political unit based on linguistic identity. Instead, the focus is on the recognition and promotion of the Egyptian vernacular language as a unique and important aspect of Egyptian identity. In contrast, other linguistic separatist movements, such as those in Catalonia or Scotland, seek greater political autonomy and even independence from the dominant culture.

The Language of Egypt

The establishment of Wikipedia Maṣrī was not merely an attempt to create a new platform for online discourse but rather a manifestation of a wider sociolinguistic movement in Egypt. At the heart of this movement lies the claim that Egyptian Arabic is not a dialect but a language in its own right. The editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī have made it clear that their intention is to promote the Modern Egyptian language rather than the Arabic language, which they see as a foreign and imposed tongue. The concept of the Egyptian Language is thoroughly explored in the eponymous article on Wikipedia Maṣrī, which boasts almost 6,000 words and a lengthy list of references. This article represents a manifesto for the Modern Egyptian language movement and a call to arms for its adherents.

According to the article, the Modern Egyptian language is the dominant language in Egypt and the mother tongue of 76 million people. It has several dialects, such as Cairene and Alexandrian, but it is a distinct language from Arabic. The article further asserts that Egyptians from the south speak Ṣaʿīdī, which is also a separate language with its own ISO639-3 code, contradicting itself later by claiming that Buḥayrī and Ṣaʿīdī are also dialects of the Egyptian

language. This inconsistency highlights the complexity of defining linguistic boundaries and the fluidity of language use.

Wikipedia Maṣrī's entry on the Egyptian language makes several claims that are untrue. The article's assertion that Maṣrī is the language of all Egyptian songs and films is a sweeping generalization that does not take into account the legacy of notable Egyptian artists such as Umm Kulṯūm, who did not exclusively sing in Maṣrī. Furthermore, the claim that Maṣrī is a Hamitic language is erroneous, as there is no Hamitic branch within the Afro-Asiatic language family (Danecki 2012, 17). Such classification is contrary to current scholarship.

In this article, the authors consider the Egyptian vernacular language to be Hamitic, which means that it is genetically distinct from Arabic, a Semitic language. They claim that the Modern Egyptian Language is the latest stage in the evolution of the Egyptian Language, which includes three earlier stages: hieroglyphic, demotic, and Coptic. According to the authors, while Egyptian has borrowed some vocabulary from Arabic, its roots are not Semitic. Instead, Egyptian has absorbed words from other languages such as Turkish and French. However, the largest source of borrowed vocabulary, consisting of about 5,000 words, comes from the Coptic language. (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2021).

We find yet another contradiction in the section entitled *Ism al-luġa (The name of the language)*. This time Egyptian is said to be *a western kind of Arabic. However, it resembles Gulf or Syrian Arabic more than Algerian Arabic* (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2021). It is important to note that the division between Eastern and Western dialects of Arabic is roughly speaking the border between Egypt and Libya. Hence, dialectologists usually classify Egyptian as an Eastern, not a Western variety of Arabic. It is possible that the author merely made a mistake since no reference was added to support his or her claims.

In the section about geographical distribution, we come across another inconsistency, as this time, the number of native speakers of Egyptian is estimated at 100 million, not 76. Egyptian is also called the Lingua Franca of the region. It is said to owe its spread to the popularity of Egyptian pop culture and Egyptian teachers working abroad. However, admittedly, the trend has diminished.

Another discrepancy between information found on the Egyptian and Arabic Wikipedia sites concerns the history of language use in Egypt. The choice of words used to describe these events reflects different perspectives among editors of the two sites and sheds light on their views on the conquest of Egypt and the Arabization of the administration. The Islamic conquest of Egypt in the 7th century marked the beginning of a new era for the region, both politically and linguistically. During the Umayyad Caliphate, the Arabization of the Egyptian administration led to the decline of the Coptic language, which was the native language of the majority of Egyptians at the time. The adoption of Arabic as the official language of the administration and the wider society was a significant factor in the replacement of Coptic by Arabic as the dominant language in Egypt.

Interestingly, the choice of words used to describe the conquest of Egypt suggests a difference in perspective among editors. While the term *al-fatḥ al-islāmī li-Miṣr* (the Islamic conquest of Egypt) is commonly used in Arabic, editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī prefer the term *ġazw al-ʿArab li-Maṣr* (The Arab invasion of Egypt). The use of such terms might reflect the author's perspective on the conquest of Egypt and the Arabization of the administration. *Ġazw is a warring, or warring and plundering expedition* (Lane 1984, 2257). At present, it is often used to describe wars perceived as unjust, such as the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. In contrast, the term *fatḥ* has positive connotations, as it suggests that the military action is legitimate and justified. This might explain why authors of the Arabic Wikipedia overwhelmingly favor the use of the term *fatḥ* to describe the conquest of Egypt, as did the chroniclers of the early Islamic period. For instance, Al-Balāḏurī's *Book of the Conquests of Lands* and Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's *The Conquest of Egypt* both use the term *fatḥ* to describe the events of the year 641 (Pinker, pp. 60-62).

According to Wikipedia Maṣrī, Egyptian is not a sacred language. In the author's words the language of Egyptians *is a tool, not a goal. It is nothing more than a means he uses to communicate with others and express his thoughts – an instrument, not a sacred thing.* (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2021). This paragraph is supposed to demonstrate the main difference between the Modern Egyptian language and Literary Arabic, which because of its connection to the Quran and the Islamic liturgy, serves the role of a sacred language.

The article acknowledges that the Modern Egyptian language has not yet been officially recognized by the state of Egypt, even though it is widely taught as

a foreign language in Egyptian universities and abroad. The language has an ISO 639 code, arz, which acknowledges its separateness from Arabic.

The authors suggest that there was a time in Egypt's history when the Egyptian vernacular could have gained official recognition. The period before the 1952 Egyptian revolution is described as the language's golden age, and the interest in the spoken language among intellectuals such as Qāsim Amīn and Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid was part of the national movement of the first half of the 20th century. However, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who favored pan-Arabism over Egyptian nationalism and moved in the direction of Arabization, is blamed for the language's decline. In the 21st century, some activist groups and the Liberal Egyptian Party have advocated for official recognition of Modern Egyptian, but their proposals did not gain popularity among the Egyptian people. The article suggests that this lack of support may be due to the fact that from a very early age, schools instill the idea that the language spoken natively by Egyptians is *a poor, distorted version of Arabic*. Additionally, the refusal to recognize Egyptian as a language may be influenced by fanatical religious beliefs and politicized educational programs.

The question of whether Egyptian is a language or a dialect is the subject of an entire segment of the article. The author acknowledges that since most words in Egyptian come from Arabic, Egyptian is usually referred to as a vernacular and a dialect of Arabic. He or she then goes on to explain that the origin of the vocabulary is not a determining factor, since in English there are more words of Latin origin than there are purely Germanic words. They then conclude: English is considered a Germanic language because it shares more grammatical and morphological features with German than with French. Furthermore, while this is true, the author then claims that *the grammatical system of English is very similar to that of German, so much so that it is sometimes said that English is simply a dialect of German!* (original punctuation).

The statement seems to propose an extreme theory. There is never any explanation as to who exactly is the source of the claim that English and German are the same language. It is quite possible that the author's inspiration was the writings of Bayyūmī Qandīl, whose works are cited as sources for the article. In his book *Ḥāḍir aṯ-ṯaqāfa fī Miṣr* (*The Present State of Culture in Egypt*), Qandīl discusses the issue of the blurred lines between what is considered a dialect and what is considered a language. He also examines

the origins of the English language and comes to the conclusion that *we can say that English, German, and Dutch are dialects and not languages* (Qandīl 2008, 151-152). His remarks are based on a misreading of Carroll Reed's[7] remarks on Germanic dialects, taken from her book Dialects of American English, which he quotes extensively. Qandīl misconstrues Reed's words:

> *Linguists speak of English, German, and Dutch as 'Germanic dialects' because they derive from a common parent and are closely related.*
> (Reed 1977, 2).

While Reed describes the continuum of Germanic dialects, and later refers to English as *a dialect derived from a Germanic language branch,* Qandīl confidently concludes that English is not just Germanic, but straight-up German.

According to Wikipedia Maṣrī, Egyptian shares most of its vocabulary with Arabic, but inherits its morphological and grammatical systems from Coptic. The aforementioned scholar Bayyūmī Qandīl was the first to propose this view. The absence of *iʿrāb* or case endings in the latter is the most notable grammatical difference between Arabic and Egyptian. In the same article, contemporary Egyptian is said to have two distinct registers: high (*al-fuṣḥà*) and low (*ʿāmmiyya*). High Egyptian is used for the discussion and writing of topics that are scientific and of high prestige. The high-prestige variety of Arabic (*al-ʿarabiyya al-fuṣḥà*) has no presence in Egypt, according to the article. Such a statement is both untrue and surprising, since *The Present State of Culture in Egypt* by Bayyūmī Qandīl is primarily written in *al-fuṣḥà* Arabic. Unless, of course, the only difference between High Egyptian and Standard Arabic is the author's national affiliation.

The existence of many Egyptian dialects, such as Alexandrian or rural, is the final argument presented in the article to prove that Egyptian is not a dialect of Arabic. According to the author, a dialect of a dialect is an impossibility which means that a dialect remains indivisible: *If we say that it is a dialect of an absent language (imaginary or invented), it is indeed a mistake*. This notion contradicts the current paradigm in dialectology, which divides regional dialects into dialects of smaller units like cities, villages, or even

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[7]   Qandīl also misspells her name as Carol Reed while using the Latin script (2008, p. 160).

districts. These can be further subdivided by religion, profession, age, and even gender. The rest of the article will not be discussed here, as it contains relatively uncontroversial general descriptions of the phonology, grammar, and syntax of the Egyptian vernacular.

Reclaiming the Pharaonic Past

In order to discern the true raison d'être of Wikipedia Maṣrī, its articles must be examined and compared with those published on the Arabic Wikipedia. Wikipedia Maṣrī can be seen as a separatist effort, both in terms of language and content. Many articles published on Wikipedia Maṣrī are not original works but translations, mainly from Arabic or English. It does not mean, however, that Wikipedia Maṣrī presents precisely the same information which can be found elsewhere. On closer examination, it becomes apparent that Wikipedia Maṣrī was established to present specific Egypt-related topics in a way that would never be accepted on the Arabic Wikipedia, as it often goes against widely-held views taught at schools.

The first glimpse of these differences comes from the article on Egypt. According to Wikipedia Maṣrī, Egyptians are:

> *a Mediterranean ethnic group that entered and inhabited the Nile Valley for thousands of years. They are one of the oldest human races. Their history goes back to 13,000 BCE. The daily language of the Egyptians is Egyptian.* (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2008c)

The Egyptian entry expresses views of Egyptian ethnic separatism or separateness from the Arab World, consistent with the views of Ṭaha Ḥusayn (Ḥusayn 1996, 293-295). On the Arabic Wikipedia, we read that *Egyptians are the inhabitants of Egypt and a people of the Arab World* (Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2019).

In contrast, the article on Wikipedia Maṣrī focuses on the development of the Egyptian national identity, which took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The article explains the overlap between modern Egyptian nationalism and secularism, which remains at odds with Arab nationalism and Islamism. In turn, the Arabic Wikipedia presents quotes from the Egyptian constitution, according to which Egyptians are part of the Arab nation, striving for its integration and unity. At the same time, Egypt constitutes a part of the Islamic World. The Arabic edition of Wikipedia states that Arabic is

the state's official language and that the Egyptian dialect is a branch of Arabic. In contrast, Wikipedia Maṣrī summarizes the dialect versus language conundrum and expresses the view that:

> *Although the official language in Egypt is Arabic, no one in Egypt is born to speak it without [prior] learning. The use of Arabic is limited to administrative transactions and the written press.*

Other minority languages present in Egypt and the percentage of the population that uses them are meticulously listed in this article: Bedouin (1.6%), Sudanese (0.6%), Nubian (0.3%), Domari (0.3%), Baja (0.1%) and Siwi. The article also contains a detailed list of demographic groups. It states that the vast majority of the inhabitants of Egypt are *of the Egyptian race* (90%) and live around the Nile Valley, Alexandria, and the area of the Suez Canal. Other ethnic groups include Nubians, Berbers, Bedouins, Beja, and Domien, as well as small communities of Armenians, Circassians, and Europeans. The purity of the Egyptian race appears to be a crucial nationalist issue since Egyptians experienced prolonged contact and co-existence on the same territory with Macedonians, Greeks, and Arabs. However, as the article assures:

> *Recent scientific studies have shown that despite all the occupations and foreign migrations to Egypt throughout history, at least 90% of today's Egyptians keep the same blood.*

Thus Egyptians are described as genetically different from عربان (ʿUrbān) – pure Arabs of Bedouin descent. Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya paints the picture of a far less diverse society, both linguistically and ethnically, stating that 98% of the population is Egyptian. In contrast, the remaining 2% consists of Berbers, Nubians, Beja, and Bedouins. The articles in question exemplify two divergent attitudes – one emphasizing pan-Arab linguistic and ethnic unity and the other representing polarly opposite views.

Regarding religion, the section on Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya presents no information about the polytheistic beliefs of Ancient Egypt. It focuses on the position of Islam as the largest and the only official religion in the republic. However, it mentions that Christianity, the Bahāʾi Faith, and other religious denominations also have followers in Egypt. It points out that the lack of official statistics makes it difficult to estimate the number of those who consider themselves non-religious. Estimates quoted on Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya put the number of Copts at around 3 to 4.5 million, representing from 4% to 6% of

the population. Data presented on Wikipedia Maṣrī estimate the population of Coptic Christians in Egypt at 15%.

The first paragraphs of the religion section discuss Osiris's prominent role in the ancient Egyptian religion. The pre-Christian beliefs are discussed again in an entry on Egyptians (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2008d). The holiday of the Pharaoh Ramses' birth and the celebration of the day he came into power are both described in the present tense, suggesting that Egyptians celebrate them up to this day:

> *Egyptians love holidays and weddings immensely, and they care about their celebrations, which have been inherited from generation after generation over more than seven thousand years. Egyptians celebrate Šamm an-Nasīm,[8] the Egyptian New Year, the holiday of the Death the Nile,[9] the Harvest Festival, the birthday of "Raʿ Msū," Ramses the second, and the day he assumed the throne.*

Identity

When it comes to the question of identity, the entry on Egyptians (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2008d) presents perennialist views on Egyptian identity. Being Egyptian is seen as an invariable quality shared by Egyptians from time immemorial – the dawn of the Ancient Egyptian civilization. The article states that the Egyptian identity is not African since they are not black, nor is it Christian since Christianity came to Egypt with the Byzantine invaders. It is emphatically not Arab since the Arab presence in Egypt dates back only to the 7th century CE. Thus, according to the author, the Egyptian identity is unique:

> *It means that Egyptians are no other thing. They are the owners of a civilization of more than 7,000 years. Egyptians are a nation whose members share a distinct civilizational, cultural, religious, moral, and linguistic heritage.*

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[8]   An Egyptian holiday marking the beginning of spring.

[9]   The name comes from the belief that the Nile flooded because it was filled with tears, as the Goddess Isis wept for her dead husband, Osiris.

The article of the same title on the Arabic Wikipedia (Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2008) discusses the Egyptian identity from an outsider's perspective, presenting its development throughout the years and focusing on its mutable nature. It explains that Egyptians derive their identity from various periods to varying degrees. For example, the question of national identity came to the fore in the early 20th century when Egyptians sought to end the British occupation:

> *This was the period of Pharaonic nationalism – that is, ethnic and secular. Ṭaha Ḥusayn is the most prominent proponent of this movement, as he did not consider Egypt part of the Arab World. Such an attitude was typical among Egyptians in the 20s and 30s. However, in the latter decade, Levantine intellectuals made tremendous efforts to change the Egyptian notions of belonging.*

The shift of attitudes is traced back, in the article, to the shared experience of the fight for independence from Britain that brought Egyptians closer to the countries of the Arab World. In turn, this common cause gave rise to Arab-Islamic political sentiments. The change was temporary. The Egyptian identity evolved once again when they began to question Arabism after the setback of 1967 and the end of Nasserism. While the article acknowledges that the Egyptian identity is unique, it also stresses that Egypt is the cultural center of the Arab World.

As a subject tightly connected to identity, Egyptian nationalism is mentioned in various entries. Perhaps the most accurate view on the differences between Wikipedia Maṣrī and Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya can be obtained by comparing the article *The Egyptian School of Nationalist Thought* (Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2008; Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2009a) with the one on *Egyptian nationalism* (Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2012). The two articles differ significantly in form and tone. The one published on Wikipedia Maṣrī, sums up ideas of the most prominent ideologues of the Egyptian School of Nationalist Thought. At the same time, Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya gives a more general overview of the term throughout history.

Wikipedia Maṣrī affirms the positive role of Egyptian secular nationalism seen as an impulse for the advancement of the culture and economy of the nation:

(…) Egypt's return to its true identity and its authentic national consciousness is a guarantee of creating the conditions necessary for the nation's advancement.

The article presents information that aims to debunk the cultural falsification, the time-honored myth that the Egyptian culture is part of the Arab heritage. In fact, in this intellectual framework, Arabs are described as having an inferior culture, inherently unsophisticated, as the *primitive desert perspective* is said to characterize Arabic literature. For Egyptians, the advancement could only be achieved by eliminating foreign, primarily Arab, elements that pollute and pull it backward. The concluding paragraph suggests that Egyptian ethnic and cultural separatism are well-founded views. Egyptians who obtained Nobel prizes in literature and science are described as proving that their civilization is unique and distinct from Arab heritage.

The entry on Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya explicitly states what Wikipedia Maṣrī only ever alludes to. Namely, secular Egyptian nationalism is particularly attractive to religious minorities, the most obvious of them being Copts:

Regarding trends, the Copts want a secular Egyptian national culture to guarantee their rights. The Islamic forces deem appropriate the establishment of a state based on the principles of Islamic law, spreading religious values, limiting the dissolution of morals, and preserving the Arab identity.

The article presents views that secular nationalism in Egypt is a lost cause, the evidence for this claim being violent clashes between Christians and Muslims in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Since the Egyptian revolution of 2011, religious tendencies have been on the rise, inflaming the Pan-Arab sentiments and causing them to gain momentum. Assertions of that sort are nowhere to be found on Wikipedia Maṣrī.

The article on the history of Egypt is another example of the polemic character of Wikipedia Maṣrī (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2009c). The text structure is unlike what most Wikipedia readers would expect. It presents a chronological overview of periods and historical events, answering the question of what happened rather than why it happened and what it means. The article addresses a reader who already has basic knowledge of the history of the rulers of Egypt. Is divided into five sections: eras of expansion, eras of occupation and independence, periods and eras of Egypt's history, a summary of the history of Egypt, and sources.

The section on expansion discusses rulers such as Pharaohs Ahmose I and Thutmose III, the Abbasid-era governor Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, the Ikhshidid and Fatimid dynasties, and Muḥammadʾ Alī Pasha. The text does not even provide years or centuries of their rule, suggesting that presenting chronological data is not the author's primary objective.

The eras of the Persian, Roman (including Byzantine), Arabic, Ottoman, and English rule are considered periods of occupation that halted Egypt's advancement. Wikipedia Maṣrī describes the period of Roman occupation as having some positive aspects since it was then that *Christianity entered Egypt and Coptic art flourished.* In contrast, Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya (Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2004) stresses that the Romans and Byzantines oppressed Copts. By the editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī, the year 641 is considered the beginning of the Arab invasion (ġazw غزو) and the occupation (iḥtilāl احتلال) of Egypt. The vocabulary used in the article differs significantly from the usual way Arabic Language sources describe these events. Both Arab chronicles from that period, as well as Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, overwhelmingly favor the word (fatḥ فتح), exhibiting a much more positive attitude towards these developments (Pinker 2017, 60-62). Wikipedia Maṣrī authors describe the Arab rule as a period of economic collapse and deterioration:

> *The Arab period is a period of occupation that began with the Arab invasion of Egypt in the year 641 and ended with the establishment of the independent Tulunid state in the year 868. In this period, governors ruled Egypt as representatives of the Arab caliphs. Egyptians paid tribute, taxes, and tolls, and no Egyptian was nominated to a high rank. Egypt was continually plundered until the emergence of the Tulunid state in 868 when Egypt became independent. It did not pay taxes to the Arab caliph, and life began to flourish in Egypt.*

According to the article, it was the Tulunid period of relative independence that witnessed prosperity in Egypt:

> *When Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn began his rule in 868, the Tulunid state was established and separated from Arab rule. In this period, a great revival occurred, and sovereignty and independence were fully restored in the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk eras.*

These claims stand in sharp contrast with what Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya has to say on the subject:

> *Islam entered Egypt during the reign of the Arab Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Ḫaṭṭāb and under the leadership of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ in the year 641 AD. During the period of Arab-Islamic rule, Egypt witnessed progress in the fields of architecture and arts, such as architecture, decorations, and Islamic-style inscriptions, and many mosques, castles, and walls were built.*

These quotes illustrate how the Wikipedia Maṣrī view of the history of Egypt differs from the standard narrative present in Arab culture. When evaluating historical periods, the two Wikipedia editions agree that British rule was a foreign occupation that depleted Egyptian resources.

The two editions of Wikipedia present conflicting information on Egyptian cuisine, even though the structure of both sections is strikingly similar or even parallel. This suggests that the Wikipedia Maṣrī version was written as a polemic with Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya to prove that it remained relatively unaffected by Turkish and Levantine influences:

(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2008d)	(Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2008)
Egyptian cuisine is famous for its Egyptian flavor. Many think that Turkish cuisine influenced Egyptian cuisine, but this is not true. Many of the foods that the Egyptians think were Turkish, in fact, existed in Egypt before the Turkish occupation in 1517, including, for example, the dish of *kišk al-māz*.[10] It contains a lot of Egyptian food that has been present for thousands of years among the Egyptians. Those are *baladī* bread, *fisīḫ*, and cakes prepared for *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* and Egyptian Christian holidays, and the colored eggs (eggs of Šamu) in Šamm an-Nasīm. Among the most famous Egyptian foods found in Egyptian cuisine are grilled foods, including kebabs and kufta, *mulūḫiyya*, taro stew, fried cheese, *fiṭīr mušlaltit*,[11] *kišk*, and sweets such as black honey, *baqlāwa*, *kunāfa*,[12] *basbūsa*, *qaṭāyf*,[13] and *muššabak*.[14] These are all ancient Egyptian dishes from the Middle Ages.	Egyptian cuisine is famous for its unique taste, with plentiful influences that enrich it, mainly Turkish and Levantine influences in desserts. Many Egyptian foods have been in existence for thousands of years among the Egyptians, such as the bread that the Egyptians called *ʿayš baladī*, *mulūḫiyya*,[15] lentils, and feast cakes on *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr*, *fūl mudammasl*,[16] *fisīḫ*,[17] colored eggs (eggs of Šamu) in Šamm an-Nasīm, etc. Turkish cuisine has greatly influenced Egyptian cuisine and, in turn, was influenced by it. It gave Egyptian cuisine a distinct flavor in addition to its Egyptian flavor. The most famous Turkish foods that are found in Egyptian cuisine are kebabs, kufta, Circassian food, and *šāwarmā*, along with sweets such as *baqlāwa*, etc. Lewantine sweets have also entered the Egyptian kitchen and are known as Eastern Levantine sweets.

Table 4: Egyptian Cuisine: Wikipedia Maṣrī and Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya comparison

Comparing equivalent articles on the two Wikipedia editions is not the only means of shedding light on what the Wikipedia Maṣrī project is supposed to achieve. Examining what issues appear only on Wikipedia Maṣrī and investigating which matters remain absent from it can determine the main focus points of the project. Among such entries, the most intriguing is *The Imaginary History of Egypt* (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2009d). It discusses erroneous ideas about the ancient Egyptian civilization widespread in Europe and the Arab World before the advent of modern Egyptology and archaeology. The article declares that both Coptic Christians and Arab Muslims are disinterested in investigating the ancient Egyptian past. It also carefully examines falsehoods and fantasies found in Arab chronicles written by

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[10] Dried bulgur and sour milk dough with asparagus.

[11] Flaky layered pastry.

[12] Desert made with dough or pastry, soaked with sugar syrup, and typically layered with cheese.

[13] Small, triangular doughnuts fried in melted butter and served with honey.

[14] Sweet crispy fritters in a spiral shape.

[15] A dish of jute mallow, also known as Jew's mallow.

[16] Cooked broad beans with oil.

[17] Ancient Egyptian celebratory fish dish.

al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Taġrī-Birdī, Ibn Iyās, Ibn al-ʿIbrī, and al-Ǧabartī. Before Jean-François Champollion managed to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs, *theories of ignorant astrologers, magicians, and clerics from East and West appeared.* These fictitious narratives invented by Arabs were also repeated by Egyptian chroniclers and historians, who *used to transmit what they heard and read from the Arabs, regardless of their conviction or lack thereof.* These narratives disseminated by Arab chroniclers were meant to explain the existence of Ancient Egyptian monuments and artifacts from an Islamic point of view, mainly drawing from the Quran, which is hostile towards all manifestations of polytheism (Wood 1998, 189). This article attempts to reclaim the proud Pharaonic past and strip it of the fallacious medieval narratives. In the same vein as the entries on cuisine, identity, and history, the text aims to finally settle issues that could diminish the sense of Egyptian national pride.

Chapter 4
The Modern Egyptian Language Movement[18]

The Modern Egyptian language movement has been gaining momentum in recent years, as a growing number of intellectuals and activists argue for the recognition and preservation of the Egyptian language as a distinct entity. They see the promotion of the Egyptian language as a means of reclaiming national identity and resisting cultural hegemony. The establishment of Wikipedia Maṣrī was a significant milestone in this movement, as it provided a platform for the dissemination of scientific knowledge in the Egyptian vernacular, challenging the notion that Arabic is the only language suitable for scholarly pursuits. While the Arabic Wikipedia remains the most widely used site in Egypt, Wikipedia Maṣrī has carved out a niche for itself, attracting millions of viewers every month and contributing to the visibility and legitimacy of the idea of the Modern Egyptian language.

For many, it was Wikipedia Maṣrī that brought the idea of Egyptian linguistic separatism to their attention. In general, academic circles of the Arab world see the attitude supporting the secession of the Egyptian vernacular from the Arabic language as linguistic heresy. Conventional authorities are clear on the matter. Egyptian is but a Low Prestige variety of Arabic. However, claims presented by the authors of Wikipedia Maṣrī boldly contradict what is usually taught at universities and written in textbooks, both in Egypt and abroad.

The study of references used in the creation of an article about the Modern Egyptian Language can provide valuable insight into the background and context in which these ideas emerged. By examining the connections between different sources such as thinkers, websites, cultural institutions, and political parties, we can gain a better understanding of the article's content. Table 5 reveals that the authors of the article relied heavily on online materials from enthusiasts of the Modern Egyptian Language, rather than reputable institutions. The LoghaMasri forum and Masrilanguage blog were the most cited sources, accounting for 53% of all references used to support the article's claims. Books were the second most cited type of reference at 13%, followed by

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[18] Some sections of this chapter have appeared in Nabulssi, Zuzanna. 2021. "A Whole Branch of Alternative Scholarship – Wikipedia Maṣrī and the Modern Egyptian Language Movement." Oriental Studies Series of the Committee of Oriental Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences XLIV: 176-89. However, it has been expanded upon.

websites at 8.5%, and online newspaper articles at 6%. However, 15% of references could not be classified as they were no longer available or the links had expired. Notably, Coptic-affiliated and liberal media outlets made up a significant proportion of all sources cited in the article.
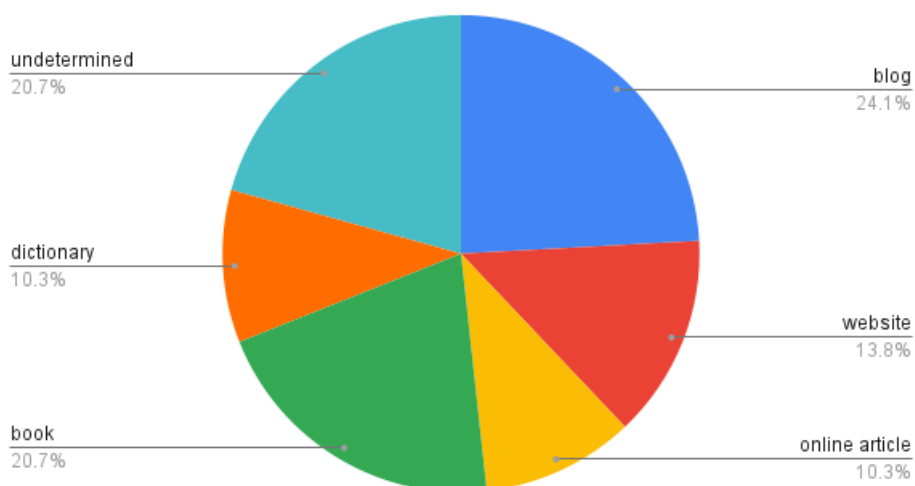
Reference Types

Figure 6: Reference Types

Reference	Type	Online status[19]	Occurrences
http://logha Maṣrī.team-talk.net/	online forum	unavailable	18
http:// Maṣrī language.blogspot.com	blog	available	7
Al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddin	website	available	2
Wikivoyage	website	available	1
Stshenouda.com	website	available	1
Youm7 (*al-yawm as-sābʿ*)	online newspaper article	available	1
Inscriptions Suggest Egyptians Could Have Been First to Write". *The New York Times*. December 16, 1998	online newspaper article	available	1
Omniglot	online encyclopedia	available	1
Anṭwān Mīlād, *Al-luġa ăl-miṣriyya al-ḥadīṯa: dirāsa waṣfiyya*	book	n/a	1

[19] All retrieved on February 20, 2021.

Bayyūmī Qndīl, *Difāʿān ʿan turāṯinā al-Qibṭī*	book	n/a	1
Bayyūmī Qndīl, *Ḥāḍir aṯ-ṯqāfa fī Miṣr*	book	n/a	1
ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Maġribī, *Dirāsa fī al-luġa al-Miṣriyya*	book	n/a	1
De Lacy O'Leary, Colloquial Arabic	book	n/a	1
Gershoni, I., J. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs* (Oxford University Press: 1987)	book	n/a	1
Muʿǧam farǧ li-ăl-ʿāmmiyya ăl-miṣriyya wa-ăt-taʿbīrāt ăš-šaʿbiyya li-ăṣ-ṣunnāʿ wa-ăl-ḥirfiyyīn al-miṣriyyīn fī ăn-niṣf aṯ-ṯānī min al-qarn al-ʿišrīn	dictionary	n/a	1
Qāmūs al-luġa ăl-ʿāmmiyya ăl-miṣriyya (Maktabat Lubnān: 1999)	dictionary	n/a	1
Yūsuf al-Maġribi, *Rafʿ al-iṣr ʿan kalām ahl Miṣr*	17th-century dictionary of Egyptian Arabic	unavailable	1
Egyptian Arabic UCLA Language Materials Project	undetermined	unavailable	1
al-iṣdār 19 – an-nāšir: is ay al-intirnīšinal	undetermined	unavailable	1
Albadeel	undetermined	unavailable	1
Baḥs biyuwaḍḍaḥ inn il-maṣrīyyn biytkallimū luġa Maṣrīyya ḫāṣṣa bihim wi-mā-biytkallimūš lahga ʿarabiyya	undetermined	unavailable	1
Penatlas.org	undetermined	unavailable	1
frankowia.com	undetermined	unavailable	1
		TOTAL:	47

Table 5: Modern Egyptian Language article reference list

LoghaMasri and the Modern Dialogue

LoghaMasri was an online forum established to promote discussion, unity, and education surrounding the Egyptian language. Maṣrilanguage is another online source, created by an enthusiast rather than a scholar, dedicated to analyzing, standardizing, and teaching Modern Egyptian Language, with a focus on providing learning materials for English speakers (Masrilanguage.blogspot.com, 2011).

Interestingly, the blog also advertises LoghaMasri forum, indicating that the two sites share a common network of users.

The third most cited website, *Al-ḥiwār al-mutamaddin*, known in English as *Modern Dialogue*, is a media platform that provides news and opinion pieces in alignment with secularism, human rights, and civil society. Two of the website's articles serve as references for the Wikipedia article on the Modern Egyptian Language. The first, written by Fatḥi Sayyid Faraǧ in 2007, is a commentary on Mahdi Bunduq's article *Al-luġa wa-ăṯ-ṯaqāfa aš-šaʿbiyya ăl-maḏlūmaʾ* (On the Oppressed Language and Popular Culture) and synthesizes the works of Bayyūmī Qandīl. The second article presents Fīlīb ʿAṭiya's views of the Modern Egyptian Language as a direct descendant of the Ancient Egyptian Language, which is presumed to be superior to Arabic due to its age.

Bayyumi Qandil – the father of the movement

Bayyūmī Qandīl (1942-2009) was a leading figure of the Modern Egyptian Language movement, famous for his nationalist and linguistic theories. Qandīl obtained a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and was an accomplished author of both fiction and non-fiction. His short stories featured dialogues in Egyptian Arabic, with one story being written entirely in Egyptian. Qandīl's work is most well-known for his linguistic theories, particularly his belief that Egyptians have their own unique civilization, separate from the Mediterranean and Arabia's barren nomadic pastoralism. Qandīl's seminal book, *Ḥāḍir aṯ-ṯaqāfa fī Miṣr (The Present State of Culture in Egypt)*, published in 2008, challenged Ṭaha Ḥusayn's *Mustaqbal aṯ-ṯqāfa fī Miṣr (The Future of Culture in Egypt)*, which argued that Egypt was part of the Mediterranean civilization.

Qandīl believed that the Egyptian civilization has its roots in the Coptic heritage and is more ancient and sophisticated than that of the Arabs, whom he considered primitive and unwilling to modernize. He emphasized that Egyptians are not Arabs and that their culture, language, and history are distinct. In his book, Qandīl aimed to reclaim the Coptic heritage, with language being central to his argument. He claimed that Egyptians speak a language that is a natural extension of the old and the new. Unlike other scholars, such as Salāma Mūsà, who discussed the need to reclaim the Coptic heritage, Qandīl actively put his theories into practice and authored some chapters of

The Present State of Culture in Egypt in the Egyptian vernacular. Today, Qandīl is remembered as a prominent figure of the Modern Egyptian Language movement, who sought to assert Egypt's unique identity and cultural heritage through language.

According to Qandīl, two languages and what follows two cultures coincide in Egypt. The first one is at the same time official and foreign. In contrast, the genuinely national and native one is informal and unofficial. They remain in constant strife, the Arabic culture being in the position of the attacker and the Egyptian one being the one attacked:

> *It is the finest culture in the region in the sense that it is more humane, more tolerant, more accepting of others, more rational, broader, richer in myths, and more eloquent in expression than the Arab-Semitic culture claimed by the Anglo-American experts and their followers among our academics to be the prevalent and dominant culture wiping away any vestiges of the other original, national, autochtone cultures in Egypt, such as the cultures of Nubia, Beja, and Siwa.*

> *What this means, frankly speaking, is that the loss of Egyptian culture, and this is a goal pursued by historical enemies of the region most of the time secretly and sometimes openly, is a loss for the Egyptians, as well as for all residents of the region of all nationalities, including Semites themselves, that is, both Arabs and Hebrews.* (*Qandīl* 2008, 17-18)

The book's motto is: *We defeated them and made them forget the worship of their Gods (a Greek proverb)*, which could possibly suggest to the reader that the author has a negative view of the Arab-Islamic conquest of Egypt. In his works, Qandīl openly advocated for the return to Coptic ethnic and cultural identity rather than Coptic religious identity. It becomes clear that the book's message is overall hostile to the idea of the pan-Arab Umma, united by the pure and sacred Arabic Language.

In Qandīl's view, the presence of Arab culture, and its vehicle – Standard Arabic, is a result of an invasion. This culture is foreign, but the educated are often blind to this truth as they have undergone extensive indoctrination through schools, universities, and the media. While the first wave of Arabization of "the land of

Isis", as Qandīl calls Egypt, happened in the Middle Ages, another was relatively recent. In his view, the British inspired the creation of the Arab League and the spread of pan-Arabism as a means of achieving their political gains. He considers this move a covert perpetuation of British colonialism in Egypt. (Qandīl 2008, 32). In the post-Second World War context, Britain exercised her influence to promote pan-Arabism and, through its means, obliterate Egyptian nationalism by disrupting the connection between modern Egyptians and their ancient roots and historic lands (Qandīl 2008, 34). This clever scheme aimed precisely at Egypt, the heir of the most ancient and splendid civilization on the face of the Earth, whose historical continuity is unparalleled. (Qandīl 2008, 34). Another strategy to dismantle Egyptian unity was the effort by western scholars to "Islamize" Egypt. They always emphasized that Egypt is a Muslim country, even though culture is a broader phenomenon than religion. That is, many countries, such as France or Japan, national culture encompasses more than one denomination. Qandīl sees that in the case of Egyptian culture, the idea that it encompasses more than one religion (Islam) is purposefully omitted and ignored by American-lead Western academics. This situation is perpetuated to strengthen the more elusive transnational religious unity instead of the tangible national-linguistic and territorial bonds that unite Egyptians. The goal of the British was to "melt" the Egyptian identity into the more significant Arab World national identity, while the goal of Americans was to replace Egyptianness with sectarian and denominational identities.

Arab culture	Egyptian culture
Semitic	Hamitic
Asian	African
Arabian Peninsula	Nile Valley
nomadic and pastoral	agrarian and sedentary
warlike	peaceful
foreign to Egypt	native to Egypt
sexism	gender equality
literacy	illiteracy
backed by the West	conspired against by the West
dominance of Islam	secularism and religious pluralism
conservatism	tolerance

Table 6: Characteristics and values ascribed by Qandīl to Arab and Egyptian cultures.

To Qandīl *al-fuṣḥà* is a *dead foreign language* (2008, 180), not used by Egyptians whose mother tongue is the Modern Egyptian Language, the direct descendant of the Ancient Egyptian Language. As the fourth stage of the Ancient Egyptian Language (the other three being hieroglyphic, demotic, and Coptic), the Modern Egyptian Language is not Semitic but Hamitic in origin *(*Qandīl *2008,* 207-208, 352).

The main proof he presents for his claims is that the Modern Egyptian Language inherited its analytic nature (no case endings) and sentence structure from the Coptic language. He also traces the etymology of words currently used by Egyptians to demonstrate that they are falsely attributed to Arabic when they are actually of Coptic origin. He explains that the name al-Qāhira (Cairo) comes from a Coptic expression meaning *land of Ra* (Qandīl 2008, 161). This is contrary to a widely accepted view that the name comes from the word *the Conqueror* or *the Victorious*, referring either to the planet Mars or the hopes of the Fatimid dynasty to defeat the Abbasids finally. The idea of the Coptic origins of the name appears in Paul Casanova's book *Les noms coptes du Caire et localités voisines* (1901, 191). However, he calls it *just a guess*. At the beginning of the entry, he emphasizes that the name seems 'unquestionably Arabic.'

Bayyūmī Qandīl also advocates for the official recognition of the language and recommends abandoning Arabic letters and replacing them with the Greco-Coptic script. To separate the Modern Egyptian Language further from Arabic, he suggests gradually introducing Coptic vocabulary. Programs fighting illiteracy are futile in their current form because they focus on what is "Arab" – foreign and remote, rather than what is Egyptian – native and tangible (Qandīl 2008, 58). Teaching standard Arabic is not eradicating illiteracy. In his view it is eradicating Egyptian national identity and cultural genocide.

The Present State of Culture in Egypt contains echoes of anti-orientalist discourse. According to Qandīl, the notion of ʿĀmmiyya was popularized by Anglo-American academics and became uncritically accepted by Egyptian scholars such as Muḥammad al-Badawī (Qandīl 2008, 351). He insists that American scholars shape linguistics facts and impose their views of the linguistic situation in Egypt. They are then copied by Egyptian scholars, while Egyptians themselves do not have a hand in shaping their symbolic reality.

The main weakness of Qandīl's work is his absolute disregard for other dialects of Arabic. The Egyptian way of speaking is more different from *al-fuṣḥà* than

from other dialects spoken in the Mashriq, especially regarding grammar. That is not to say that Egyptian Arabic does not have unique characteristics. It certainly possesses a host of unique features. The pronunciation of the voiced velar plosive /g/ and the post position of question words and demonstrative pronouns are just the most stereotypical features of Egyptian speech. The core of Qandīl's linguistic falsehood lies in his ignorance of systemic differences between all Arabic dialects and Literary Arabic. He purposefully ignores the existence of other dialects. Compared to Literary Arabic, all lack case endings and the dual grammatical number, have a subject-verb-object sentence structure, and exhibit either a reduced or increased number of phonemes, both vowels and consonants. To further his argument, Qandīl first creates a linguistic reality of Literary Arabic – Modern Egyptian Language opposition. Then describes it and draws conclusions based on this false duality. The most shocking aspect of Qandīl's continuing popularity is that his compatriots and supporters are willing to act as if they have never heard a Syrian or a Lebanese speak. At the same time, they complain about the Levantine film industry ousting Egyptian productions from the market.

Ānṭwān Mīlād – Qandīl's deciple

Another influential book within the Modern Egyptian Language Movement is Anṭwān Mīlād's *Al-luġa ăl-miṣriyya ăl-ḥadīṯa: dirāsa waṣfiyya* (*The Modern Egyptian Language: a Descriptive Study*), with an introduction written by none other than Bayyūmī Qandīl. Mīlād obtained a BA in the Hebrew language and literature. He has worked as a journalist for a weekly Egyptian newspaper, *Waṭanī,* the purpose of which is *shedding light on Coptic culture and tradition as authentically Egyptian, a topic largely disregarded or little understood by Egypt's media (Waṭanī, 2017)*. As the title indicates, Mīlād's book results from a study that started in the year 2007. In four chapters, the author draws comparisons between the Modern Egyptian Language and the ancient Egyptian one. Just like Bayyūmī Qandīl, he refuses to use the word ʿĀmmiyya. According to Mīlād, the Modern Egyptian Language includes seven dialects: Cairene, Alexandrian, dialects of the Nile Delta, dialects of the northeast (the channel dialects), the Sinai dialect, the Nubian dialects, and the dialects of Upper Egypt. Once again, the author sees the decline of the prestige of the Egyptian

dialect/language due to a steady flow of petrodollars into Gulf and Syrian media materials and considers it a coordinated effort.[20]

Cultural Salons of Cairo and Alexandria

Two cultural salons were essential in developing the Modern Egyptian Language Movement. The first one, established by a single salonnier, Muḥsin Luṭfī as-Sayyid, was located in the district of Heliopolis in Cairo. The second, started by a group of intellectuals, is based in Alexandria and operates in the Jesuit Cultural Center.

As an author, Anṭwān Mīlād was influenced by Bayyūmī Qandīl. He encountered Qandīl's ideas in the cultural salon of Muḥsin Luṭfī as-Sayyid (1926-2019) (Zomra Alex, 2014), an Egyptologist who translated the Book of the Dead into Arabic. In his activism, Muḥsin Luṭfī as-Sayyid followed in the footsteps of his uncle Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid (1872-1963). The latter was one of Muḥammad ʿAbduh's disciples. Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid is remembered as an influential thinker and an editor of *al-Ǧarīda*, as well as an architect of Egyptian nationalism. He was convinced that Egyptians were not part of the Arab nation, which was a rather prevalent notion in his time (Hourani 2014, 177-178). The nephew of the Professor of the Generation, Muḥsin Luṭfī as-Sayyid, organized bi-weekly discussions for which thinkers from all walks of life would gather. These gatherings gave birth to the Mother Egypt Party (Miṣr al-Umm), currently known as The Liberal Egyptian Party (*al-Ḥizb al-Maṣrī ǎl-Lībrālī*). It advocates for religious neutrality, secularism, and recognition of the Egyptian people's vernacular as the state's official language.

The Jesuit Cultural Center located in Alexandria hosts the Zomra cultural salon established by Aḥmad Zayid, Mīnā Ṣmuway, and Hiba Yūns an-Nīl (Zomra Alex, n.d.). The group gathers weekly at the Cleopatra Jesuit Library to discuss various cultural topics and creative works. Members of the Zomra Salon also actively participate twice a month in the meetings of the Jesuit Book Club. The salon strives to promote peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance, and social progress and affect the broader Egyptian culture by setting trends and spreading new ideas through personal interaction, and its website (Zomra

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[20] It raises the question: if Egyptians speak a separate language, different than Arabic and its dialects, why would they expect other nations to watch their TV series without subtitles, dubbing, or a voice-over?

Alex, n.d.), Facebook fan page (facebook.com/Zomra.Alexandria, n.d.), and YouTube channel (youtube.com/user/ZomrAlex, 2011). The channel contains 150 videos of discussions and lectures that took place in the Jesuit Cultural Center. Many of them revolve around the same issues the proponents of the Modern Egyptian Language care about the most, such as the ancient Egyptian religion and language, Egyptian nationalism, Coptic identity, secularism, and liberalism, as well as specific thinkers and authors, such as Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, and Bayyūmī Qandīl. Among the materials published on the YouTube channel of the salon is an almost two-hour video of a book signing meeting with Anṭwān Mīlād and the discussion of his book *Al-luġa ăl-miṣriyya ăl-ḥadīṯa: dirāsa waṣfiyya* (Zomra Alex, 2014).

Fatḥi Sayyid Faraǧ is officially affiliated with this institution as a member of the al-Ġad Association at the Jesuit Cultural Center (Modern Dialogue, n.d.). A series of sixteen of his lectures, which amount to almost 17 hours of video material, was filmed at the center (Zomra Alex, 2017). In these videos, Fatḥi Sayyid Faraǧ discusses topics such as the works of Muḥammd ʿĀbid al-Ǧābrī about the inner workings of the Arab mind, the Arab-Islamic heritage, the backwardness of the Arabs, and the analysis of Bayyūmī Qandīl's book *The Present State of Culture in Egypt.* Zomra's you tube channel has 7160 subscribers, and since November 18, 2011, it has acquired almost half a million views. By no means is it a popular social media outlet. Nonetheless, its existence and moderate viewership prove that theories accepted by the editors of Wikipedia Maṣrī are not fringe ideas. Admittedly, they do not belong to the academic or cultural mainstream either.

The Liberal Egyptian Party

Among political parties in Egypt, the Liberal Egyptian Party is the most known for its endorsement of the Modern Egyptian Language. The party was founded by the attendees of the cultural salon of Muḥsin Luṭfī as-Sayyid, among them Bayyūmī Qandīl, in 2003 under the name "Mother Egypt Party." Due to the nature of the Egyptian political system, the party remained unofficial. Latter attempts at registration under the new name (the Liberal Egyptian Party) were also unsuccessful. The party has clear ties to the Modern Dialogue site. The party's leader Maḥmūd al-Firʿawnī has published many articles on this site,

including the party's program and his presidential strategy, suggesting that he, Farağ, and Mīlād all belong to the same social and institutional circle.

The party's motto is *Egypt above all*, which refers to the *Pharaonians* school of thought from the 1920s and 1930s. The Liberal Egyptian Party appeals to those who cherish the ideals of liberal democracy, secularism and religious neutrality of the state, Egyptian ethnic and linguistic separatism, Coptic heritage, minority rights, and freedom of expression (al-Firʿawnī 2013b).

The party's leader believes that modern Egyptians are not Arabs, neither genetically nor in terms of language, as their vernacular shares ties to the speech of their ancient ancestors (al-Firʿawnī 2013a). In al-Firʿawnī's view, many African countries colonized by the British use English as their official language; however, their citizens do not think of themselves as English. Similarly, neither should Egyptians accept the folly that their identity has anything to do with Arabism.

In an article written in 2012, al-Firʿawnī presented his presidential program, even though he could not run for the presidency due to minimum age requirements (al-Firʿawnī 2012). His ideas included:

- changing the Egyptian flag to include the pyramids and the Sphinx;
- removing the adjective "Arab" from the official name of the Egyptian state;
- leaving the Arab League;
- abandoning the idea of sister-Arab States, especially regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Following the events of the Arab Spring, the Liberal Egyptian Party merged with the Social Democratic Egyptian Party, which did not pursue the LEP's language policy goals (Aboelezz 2018a).

Thinkers operating within the framework of Egyptian linguistic separatism want to deny any genetic ties between Egyptian and Semitic languages. They argue that the Modern Egyptian Language is Hamitic in origin because Ancient Egyptians were Africans rather than Semites from Asia. They sing praises for the civilization of the Nile Valley while simultaneously degrading and dismissing any achievements made by Arab Muslims. The Modern Egyptian Language Movement can be characterized as a loosely affiliated conglomerate of intellectuals, cultural circles, and political parties. While some

connections between them are apparent, others – not so much. Nonetheless, certain sentiments seem to permeate all of these groups.

The idea of the Modern Egyptian Language remains relevant and influential among intellectuals of liberal persuasion, nationalist views, and secularist aspirations. These ideas, in turn, are in line with the interest of the Coptic community. Coptic Christians have made significant contributions to the movement and constitute a significant portion of its brainpower. Perhaps, the most significant one, as it is clear that Coptic identity and heritage underpin the Egyptian separatist thought in its entirety. Nonetheless, it would be a faulty generalization to claim that only Copts are involved. The Modern Egyptian Language Movement transcends the social demarcation line between Egyptian Christians and Muslims.

Chapter 5
Wikipedic ʿĀmmiyya Revisited

In an article published in June 2010, Ivan Padanovic characterized Wikipedia Maṣrī as being *very much dependent on al-fuṣḥà* and exhibiting *a high degree of informality and linguistic variation,* as well as *multivocality* [which] *might at times amount to cacophony* (Padanovic 2010, 122). At that time, Wikipedia Maṣrī had barely reached the 5,000 article milestone. More than a decade later, Wikipedia Maṣrī has passed its infancy stage. The number of articles has grown exponentially, surpassing 1,000,000 in July 2020. That is why it is essential to re-examine the Wikipedic ʿĀmmiyya as the scale of the endeavor has changed.

This chapter aims to answer the following questions: What exactly is the language of Wikipedia Maṣrī? How do editors deal with the fact that there is no standard way of writing Egyptian? Were they able to reach a consensus and work out a set of unified spelling rules? To what degree are those applied? What are the most widely observed tendencies, and what are the main areas of variance? These questions need to be solved first so that we arrive at the final dilemma: to what extent the Wikipedic ʿĀmmiyya is dependent on *al-fuṣḥà* standard?

The Egyptian Grapholect

Writing rules in Wikipedia Maṣrī are geared towards establishing Egyptian Arabic as a grapholect,[21] a written variant of a language analogous to a spoken dialect. The rules of creating, correcting, and editing Wikipedia Maṣrī entries are enumerated in a meta article entitled *How to write* (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2013). The eleven general rules of writing Wikipedia Maṣrī advise the editors to:

1. Be relaxed about writing as long as they are not biased.
2. Try to provide sources for what they write.
3. Write, amend, translate, and change articles but not to insult anyone.
4. Write however they like, but remember that the Cairene way is the most popular way of writing in Egyptian.
5. Try to be neutral.
6. Avoid defaming anyone.

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[21] Grapholect – a blend of grapheme and dialect, a term coined by Einar Haugen.

7. Avoid transferring copyrighted material.
8. Log in so their contributions are registered under their names, not IP addresses.
9. Know that misspellings will happen, but any user can correct them.
10. Always try to explain the reason for modifications, especially for revising the edits of others.
11. Try to encourage and help new users.
12. Correct mistakes, if they spot any, as long as they remain unbiased since Wikipedia is an open encyclopedia.

Moreover, authors are advised to choose a way of writing and follow it, especially within one entry. In general, letters of the Arabic *abǧad* are to be used. The letter ق appears in 'words of Arabic origin,' regardless of whether users of ECA would usually pronounce it as a voiceless uvular plosive /q/ or a glottal stop /ʔ/. [22] Letters that in MSA symbolize interdental fricatives symbolize alveolar sounds in Wikipedia Maṣrī entries: ث represents voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and ذ stands for voiced alveolar fricative /z/. The orthography of the letter ى, which can only appear in the word-final position, creates some ambiguity since this sign can symbolize the vowel /i/ or /a/.

Additional signs could serve to signalize the pronunciation of:

1. voiced postalveolar fricative /ʒ/ – چ (e.g. چيلاتى – ice cream, from the Italian word gelato; چو بايدن – Joe Biden; چينيڤ – Geneva)
2. voiceless postalveolar affricate /tʃ/ – تش (e.g. تشامبيونز ليج – Champions League; تشايكوفسكى – Tchaikovsky)
3. voiced labiodental fricative /v/ – ڤ . (e.g. بادوڤا – Padua; ڤينيسيا – Venice; أنطونيو ڤيڤالدى – Antonio Vivaldi
4. voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ – پ (e.g. اپوستول كاراميتيڤ – Apostol Karamitev; پاليرمو – Palermo)

Feminine nouns ending with ة in MSA are usually written with a final ه in Wikipedia Maṣrī, unless they appear as the first part of the construct state, in which case the word is spelled with ة to reflect its pronunciation as /t/. Diacritics should be added to avoid ambiguities. The hamza should not be noted at the beginning of a word. It can appear in the middle or at the end of these words, in which Egyptians pronounce it as a glottal stop. For greater clarity,

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[22]   Transcribed as /ʾ/

prepositions and conjunctions should be spelled separately from the word they precede.

The table below demonstrates the practical application of spelling rules recommended in *How to write,* based on seven of the longest Wikipedia Maṣrī articles.[23] The table shows general tendencies and spellings that could be classified as inconsistencies or mistakes.

Letter	ECA sound	Exceptions and mistakes
ق	glottal stop /ʔ/ اللى قبله القبطى المعروف دلوقتى	دلوأتى
	voiceless uvular plosive /q/ القاهره ثقافى قسم الفلسفه	
ث	voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ ثورة الثلاثيه الحديثه	voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ الكثير ثلاثة اشه كثيراً
ذ	voiced alveolar fricative /z/ استاذ تلميذ الشحاذ	
ى	word-final /i/ vowel مصرى حوالى فى	اللي في الاسلامي
	word-final /a/ vowel	

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[23]   Entries: Naguib Mahfouz. Moliere, Islam, Primates, Obesity, Spain, and Madrid.

		اتسمى مصطفى موسى
hamza	glottal stop noted after the definite article al- الإجتماعى الأرستقراطيه للأحياء الشعبيه	unnoted although pronounced تأثير noted in word-medial position although normally not pronounced رئيس
	unnoted in word-initial position اول ايام	noted although word-initial أكتر إغتيال
ه (feminine nominal ending)	vowel /a/ الروايه المصريه الحديثه رساله جامعيه	consonant /t/ in the construct state ادويه التخسيس منظمه الصحه العالميه
ة (feminine nominal ending)	consonant /t/ in the construct state لغاية 1988 مجموعة قصص بطبيعة الحال	vowel /a/ دكتور امراض النسا والولادة لدرجة ان

Table 7: Wikipedia Maṣrī spelling in practice

The use of the letter ى at the end of words creates two possible pronunciations and thus does not contribute to clarity. Nonetheless, it is a salient feature of Egyptian writing, be it in MSA or ECA, a clear marker of the Egyptian grapholect. Nonetheless, the rule is not consistently observed, as in the articles on primates and obesity, it is substituted with the letter ي in the word-final position around 50% of the time. However, in some articles, such substitution appears sporadically (Islam, Naguib Mahfuz) or not at all (Madrid). Rules governing the use of the letter ث are generally obeyed, except for the word كثير as well as numerals, which appear in this form at least twice in three articles. The spelling of hamza is perhaps the least regulated aspect of the Wikipedia Maṣrī orthography, as it can but does not have to be noted in the middle or at the end of words. It rarely appears in word-initial position, although there are

exceptions to that rule, particularly words written with an initial hamza in *al-fuṣḥà* (e.g., أكثر). Instances of hypercorrection occur as well, where hamza appears at the beginnings of words, in which it should not appear even according to the MSA spelling (e.g., *إغتيال). Hamza can also appear in place of the letter ق in words in which it is pronounced as a glottal stop, such as دلوأتى, even though such spelling goes against the Wikipedia Maṣrī rules.

It is important to note that the spelling using Arabic letters and omitting short vowels leaves at least some dose of ambiguity whether these texts are written in compliance with the rules of the Cairene variety of Arabic. According to the writing instructions of Wikipedia Maṣrī, it is acceptable to write in any local variety as long as the writing remains understandable to a broader Egyptian audience. Unvocalized text, which retains the letter ق and leaves out short vowels, is less dialect-specific than text written in Latin script, including all vowels. Adopting the Latin script would require determining all vowel sounds, thus imposing a less flexible standard with fewer possible pronunciation variants.

Letters of the Latin alphabet were adapted for writing ECA, and it is permissible to write Wikipedia Maṣrī articles in the Latin script. The ECA Latin script was modeled after the Maltese alphabet, the only Semitic language written predominantly in the Latin script. Despite some genuine efforts, introducing the Latin Script to Wikipedia Maṣrī failed very early on, as the list of articles written in this script contains only 16 entries (Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2009b). The idea fell short, even though it did promise some significant advantages, the most important of which is the clear visual difference between CEA and MSA texts. A way of writing that required noting all short vowels and those consonants, which are actually pronounced, regardless of the Arabic consonantal root they were derived from, could contribute to a more unified national Egyptian pronunciation. On the other hand, it would leave less leeway for dialectal variety.

The introduction of the Latin script created a new set of problems, such as marking geminated consonants and setting out capitalization rules. Moreover, letter-sound equivalents were in some cases doubled, as the letter k represents both the voiceless uvular plosive /q/ and voiceless velar plosive /k/, while the letter q corresponds to a glottal stop /ʔ/ in words such as *waqt* and *Israqil*. However, the main disadvantage of this script stems from the fact that it would have to be mastered as a separate skill. For those unable to read or write any European languages, learning another alphabet could turn out quite

discouraging, and even those familiar with the Latin script would be forced to add special signs, such as ɛ, ħ, ǧ, ō, ā, and ē, to their computer keyboards.

Latin Alphabet	
Masr balad fe camāl carq karret Afrikya, we ɛala ħedodha men ec camāl es sāħel eg ganubi-c carqi betāɛ el Baħr el Motawasset we m'n ec carq es sāħel ec camāli-l ǧarbi betāɛ el Baħr el Aħmar we koll mesāħet Masr melyōn km² taqriban. Masr balad Afrikeyya bass fi ħetta men aradiha, elli heyya Cebh Geziret Sina, fe karret Asya. El esm er rasmi howwa Gomhoreyyet Masr el ɛarabeyya.	Egypt is a country in the North-East of the continent of Africa. At its Northern border, is the Southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and at its Eastern border, is the North-Western shore of the Red Sea. The whole of Egypt's area is almost one million km². Egypt is an African country, but a part of its area, namely the Sinai Peninsula, is on the continent of Asia. The official name is The Arab Republic of Egypt.
Masr ɛandaha ħedud men el ǧarb maɛa Libya we men eg ganub maɛa-s Sudān we men ec camāl ec carqi maɛa Israqil we Ketāɛ Ǧazza, we-l Baħr el Aħmar beyefselha ɛan el Ordon we-s Soɛodeyya, we Kanāt es Sewēs elli betefsel gozqaha-lli f Asya ɛan elli f Afrikya.	In the West, Egypt has a border with Libya, in the South – with Sudan, and in the North-East with Israel and the Gaza Strip. The Red Sea separates it from Jordan and Saudi Arabia, while the Suez Canal separates the part of Egypt in Africa from the one in Asia.
(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2009b)	

Table 8: Wikipedia Maṣrī article in Latin script

The *Fuṣḥà* – *ʿĀmmiyya* Overlap

By its very nature, written *ʿāmmiyya* simply has to differ from the spoken one regarding sentence length and structure. Production of spontaneous utterances is a much more intuitive process, the results of which are usually less precise, deliberate, and cohesive than written statements. This factor significantly affects how one can analyze the language of Wikipedia Maṣrī and conclude the extent to which it depends on *al-fuṣḥà* standard. Indeed it is often difficult to draw a clear line of division between *al-fuṣḥà* and *ʿāmmiyya* since the two share so many features. Especially *ʿāmmiyya al-muṯaqqafin*, the highest of spoken registers, is influenced by *al-fuṣḥà* to a large degree. Rather than seeing these two as binary oppositions, they could be conceived of as a spectrum with fuzzy boundaries (Danecki 2009, 38). What complicates the situation even further is the virtual lack of other texts of this kind, namely encyclopedia entries, written in *ʿĀmmiyya*. Since the situation is unprecedented, there is nothing to compare the Wikipedia Maṣrī style with in order to determine the degree to which it is independent of *al-fuṣḥà* stylistics.

As Ivan Padanowic noted about the WM articles: some of them are translated from Wikipedia Al-ʿArabiyya. This creates opportunities for *fusha* elements to creep into texts that are intended to be written entirely in ʿ*ammiya* (Padanovic 2010, 121). Many MSA lexical items are easy to identify since there have no morpho-semantic counterparts in ECA (e.g., *ǧaʿala* – جعل). Sometimes, forms are mixed, or they consist of a bound morpheme of one code and a free morpheme of another (e.g., بتنفذ [*bitnaffiz*] – she implements). However, in some cases of shared vocabulary, the difference is only a low-level phonological one. Furthermore, oftentimes differences pertain to the category of short vowels, typically unmarked in writing. That is why certain items in ECA and MSA look precisely the same in written form, even though their vowel and, in some cases consonantal, the structure is different:

Arabic script	MSA pronunciation	ECA pronunciation
نتكلم	natakallamu	nikkallim
حمار	ḥimār^{un}	ḥumār

Table 9: Unmarked differences in pronunciation: short vowels

Similarly, when it comes to the pronunciation of consonants, the differences between MSA and ECA are not marked in spelling. The letter ق is mostly retained, even in words in which ECA users would realize it as a glottal stop. The letter that represents the stereotypically Egyptian sound /g/ is ج so that words that appear in both varieties are spelled the same way, although they are pronounced with different consonants:

Arabic script	MSA pronunciation	ECA pronunciation
وقت	waqt	waʾt
قال	qāla	āl
جملة	ǧumla^{tun}	gumla
خرجنا	ḫaraǧnā	ḫaragnā

Table 10: Unmarked differences in pronunciation of consonants

As proposed by Reem Bassiouney, neutral elements are those characteristic neither of MSA nor ECA but instead shared by both (Bassiouney 2006, 34). These abound, especially in the absence of noted case and mood endings and short vowels. A host of morphemes would be pronounced differently in ECA and MSA. However, it cannot be unambiguously inferred from their Arabic-script spelling. They share the same visual representation, making unvocalized

text deceivingly visually more similar to Standard Arabic than it would seem if read aloud according to dialectal rules of pronunciation.

Style and Register

The style of Wikipedia Maṣrī entries varies significantly in terms of register. Some texts resemble *al-fuṣḥà* very closely; others contain very few, if any, elements characteristic of Standard Arabic. The easiest way to determine the nature of the linguistic variety used by Wikipedia Maṣrī editors is to compare an excerpt with its Arabic counterpart from which it was translated. There is no shortage of such entries translated from MSA into CEA since translating articles from other languages is common.

As the table below demonstrates, there are instances of articles on Wikipedia Maṣrī and Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya which are virtually identical. The only real difference between the two versions is the spelling of the initial hamza, ى or ه, which, when it comes to Wikipedia standards, has barely any significance as "the Egyptian spelling" is quite widespread even in MSA texts. In the Egyptian text, two words are missing, but the difference in the overall meaning of the two excerpts is minute. A large number of MSA markers are present in the texts, such as morphologically expressed passive voice (قُتِلَ *qutila*), VSO word order (أخذ عدد المسلمين *aḫaḏa ʿadad al-muslimīn*), full noun inflection (قتيلا) *qatīl^{an}*, demonstrative pronouns (ذلك *ḏalika*), periphrastic passives (تم أسر *tamma asr*) and the particle قد *qad*.

Islam	
(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2008a)	(Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.)
وأخذ عدد المسلمين يتكاثر شيءا فشيئًا، الى أن استطاعوا أن يواجهوا اهل مكة فى ساحات المعارك، فكانت غزوة بدر بتاريخ	وأخذ عدد المسلمين يتكاثر شيءًا فشيئًا، إلى أن استطاعوا أن يواجهوا أهل مكة في ساحات المعارك، فكانت غزوة بدر بتاريخ
17 مارس سنة 624 م، الموافق فى 17 رمضان سنة اثنتين للهجرة. وانتصر جيش المسلمين وقُتِل من المكيين حوالي 70 قتيلا منهم ابو جهل عمرو بن هشام المخزومي سيد قريش،	17 مارس سنة 624 م، الموافق في 17 رمضان سنة اثنتين للهجرة. وانتصر جيش المسلمين وقُتِل من المكيين حوالي 70 قتيلا منهم أبو جهل عمرو بن هشام المخزومي القرشي سيد قبيلة قريش،
فى حين قتل من المسلمين اما لا يتجاوز أربعة عشر شخصا. ذلك بالرغم من التفوق العددي لجيش مكة. كما تم اسر 70 فردًا من قوات جيش مكة، وأطلق سراح الكثير منهم لاحقًا مقابل	في حين قتل من المسلمين ما لا يتجاوز أربعة عشر شخصًا. ذلك بالرغم من التفوق العددي لجيش مكة. كما تم أسر 70 فردًا من قوات جيش مكة، وأطلق سراح الكثير منهم لاحقًا مقابل

فدية. وقد أثارت الهزيمة أهل مكة فجمعوا جموعهم في العام التالي، والتقوا بالمسلمين عند جبل أحد وكروا عليهم وهزموهم.	فدية. وقد أثارت الهزيمة أهل مكة فجمعوا جموعهم في العام التالي، والتقوا بالمسلمين عند جبل أحد وكرّوا عليهم وهزموهم.
Differences between texts: neutral element initial hamza, ى or ه	
Furthermore, the number of Muslims gradually increased until they were able to confront the people of Mecca on the battlefields. The Battle of Badr was on March 17, 624 AD, corresponding to Ramadan 17, two years after Hijra. The army of Muslims triumphed, and about 70 of the Meccans were killed, including Abū Ǧahl ʿAmr bin hHišām al-Maḫzūmī al-Qurayšī, the chief of the Quraysh tribe, while no more than fourteen of the Muslims were killed. This is despite the numerical superiority of the Meccan army. In addition, 70 members of the Makkan army were captured, and many were later released in exchange for ransom. The defeat stirred the people of Mecca, so they gathered their crowds the following year, met the Muslims at Mount Uhud, and attacked and defeated them.	

Table 10: Identical texts on Wikipedia Maṣrī and Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya

It is no mere coincidence that an article on Islam has been transplanted from the Arabic Wikipedia to Wikipedia Maṣrī almost verbatim, as *al-fuṣḥà* Arabic is the liturgical language of Islam. The text has hardly been altered, as even spelling inconsistencies were preserved (شيئًا شيءًا *šayʾan fa-šayʾan*). The very presence of such an article on the Wikipedia Maṣrī site could be construed as a counterargument to the claim that Egyptian is a language completely separate from *al-fuṣḥà* Arabic.

Another much more prevalent type of article pertains to a category of mixed style. However, its style is not *fuṣḥà ʿāmmiya* as defined by Rosenbaum to be a kind of style that mixes *al-fuṣḥà* grammar and vocabulary dotted with some colloquial borrowings to add the flavor of informality. *Fuṣḥà ʿāmmiya* is not a literary equivalent of code-switching or code-mixing but rather an intentional style that contains elements of both *al-fuṣḥà* and *ʿāmmiyya* to create a new, unique linguistic quality (Rosenbaum 2000, 72). Most Wikipedia Maṣrī texts do seem to mix some elements of MSA and CAE. However, they rarely exhibit a level of *al-fuṣḥà* compliance comparable to that of what Rosenbaum classified as *Fuṣḥà ʿāmmiya*. Wikipedia entries lack dynamic narration. Due to their encyclopedic nature, they abound with nominal sentences. These, in turn, are fairly neutral, especially since Wikipedia articles contain such a high percentage of vocabulary which is not in everyday use but which is borrowed (from MSA or other languages, for that matter) and used by the speakers of *ʿāmmiyyat al-muṯaqqafīn* that is – the highest registers of the colloquial language, while disusing cultural or social topics.

Two excerpts presented below both contain a more significant proportion of noun phrases than finite verb phrases. The tendency to nominalization is present in discursive MSA writing, as this syntactic ploy gives the impression of objectivity (Holes 2004, 320-321), a quality particularly desired in an encyclopedic definition. Thus their style does seem quite elevated, mainly because it is verb forms, rather than nouns, that are accurate markers of the register that reveal whether it is full-fledged *al-fuṣḥà* or something else entirely.

Primates	
(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2020)	(Wikipedia al-ʿArabiyya, 2013)
زي ما هو الحال مع الليمور، فسلف سعادين العالم الجديد مش محدد بردو.الدراسات الجزيئية للمتواليات النووية المتسلسلة وصلت لتفاوت كبير للمعاد المقدر للانشقاق بين سعادين العالم الجديد والسعادين نازلة الأنف، بيتراوح م بين 33 الى 70 م.س.م، بينما أظهرت الدراسات المستندة للتسلسلات الميتوكندرية نطاق أضيق بيتراوح بين 35 الى 43 م.س.م. ويُحتمل أنَّ السعادين دي اجتازت المحيط الأطلنطي من أفريقيا إلى أمريكا الجنوبية في خلال العصر الفجري عن طريق التنقل بين الجزر ، وأكيد اللي سهل عليها كده كان أعراف منتصف الأطلنطي وانخفاض مستوى سطح البحر. بس في علماء شايفين أن سبب تشتت الرئيسيات دي بيرجع للأنجراف القاري، لأن المحيط الأطلنطي مكنش واسع في وقتها زي دلوقتي، ف قدرت السعادين الانجراف بسهولة مع الركام القاريّ من أخشاب وأشجار عايمة، إلى الجزر المتبعثرة لحد وصل الى العالم الجديد.	كما هو الحال مع الليمور، فسلف سعادين العالم الجديد غير محدد هو الأخر. أسفرت الدراسات الجزيئية للمتواليات النووية المتسلسلة عن تفاوت على نطاق واسع للموعد المقدر للانشقاق بين سعادين العالم الجديد والسعادين نازلة الأنف، يتراوح بين 33 إلى 70 م.س.م، بينما أظهرت الدراسات المستندة إلى التسلسلات الميتوكندرية نطاقاً أضيق يتراوح بين 35 إلى م.س.م. يُحتمل أنَّ هذه السعادين اجتازت المحيط الأطلسي من أفريقيا إلى أمريكا الجنوبية خلال العصر الفجري عن الفجري عن طريق التنقل بين الجزر، ولابد أن ما سهل عليها ذلك كان أعراف منتصف الأطلسي وانخفاض مستوى سطح البحر. بالمقابل يُعزي البعض تشتت تلك الرئيسيات إلى الأنجراف القاري، إذ لم يكن المحيط الأطلسي واسع في وقتها كما اليوم، فتمكنت السعادين الانجراف بسهولة مع الركام القاريّ من أخشاب وأشجار عائمة، إلى الجزر المبعثرة ومن ثم إلى العالم الجديد.
Differences between texts:	
neutral element　initial hamza, final ى/ي, or final ة/ه　MSA element　ECA element	

As in the case of lemurs, the origin of New World monkeys is unclear. Molecular studies of concatenated nuclear sequences have yielded a widely varying estimated date of divergence between platyrrhines and catarrhines, ranging from 33 to 70 mya. In contrast, studies based on mitochondrial sequences produce a narrower range of 35 to 43 mya. The anthropoid Primates possibly traversed the Atlantic Ocean from Africa to South America during the Eocene by island hopping, facilitated by Atlantic Ocean ridges and a lowered sea level. Alternatively, a single rafting event may explain this transoceanic colonization. Due to continental drift, the Atlantic Ocean was not nearly as vast at the time as it is today, so the monkeys were able to drift effortlessly with the continental debris of floating timber and trees to the scattered islands and then to the New World.

Table 11: Modern Standard Arabic elements and Egyptian Colloquial elements

Imaginary History of Egypt	
(Wikipedia Maṣrī, 2009d)	(Ḥawās, 2014)
تاريخ مصر الخرافى هو تاريخ مصر اللى كان معروف قبل فك شامبوليون للهيروغليفيه المصريه وإهتمام الأوروبيين بإكتشاف تاريخمصر الحقيقى عن طريق الابحاث العلميه والإكتشافات الاثريه. تاريخ مصر الخرافى ده موجود فى كتب القرون الوسطى و ساعات لغاية دلوقتى فى عقول غير المثقفين.	تاريخ مصر الخرافى هو تاريخ مصر الفرعونى كما كان معروفا فى الماضى قبل تمكن العلامة الفرنسى شامبليون من فك شفرة الهيروغليفية المصرية، وقبل أن يهتم العلماء والباحثون باكتشاف تاريخ مصر الفعلى عن طريق البحث العلمى والاكتشافات الأثرية. تاريخ مصر الخرافى ذاك نجده فى مؤلفات القرون الوسطى وإلى اليوم حتى فى عقول بعض الناس.
Differences between texts:	
neutral element initial hamza, final ى/ي, or final ة/ه MSA element ECA element	
The imaginary history of Egypt is the history of Egypt, which was known before the decoding of Egyptian hieroglyphs by Champollion and the interest of the Europeans in discovering Egypt's true history through scientific research and archaeological discoveries. This imaginary history of Egypt is found in medieval books and sometimes up until now in the minds of non-intellectuals.	The imaginary history of Egypt is the pharaonic history of Egypt as it was known in the past, before the French scholar Champollion was able to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphs and before scholars and researchers were interested in discovering Egypt's actual history through scientific research and archaeological discoveries. We find the imaginary history of Egypt in medieval writings, and to this day, even in the minds of some people.

Table 12: Neutral elements in Wikipedia Maṣrī and in Modern Standard Arabic

Paradoxically, the main differences between MSA and ECA texts presented above pertain to the category of neutral elements, which elude any sharp classification. Elements that mark the MSA or the ECA variants are fewer than neutral elements. They can be further divided into sub-categories:

1) Grammar words
a) particles of nominal phrase negation (e.g., ECA مش [miš] vs. MSA غير [ġayr] – not)
b) pronouns (e.g., ECA دي [dī] vs. MSA هذه [hāḏa] – this)
c) conjunctions (e.g., ECA زي ما [zay ma] vs. MSA كما [kamā] – as)
2) Noun forms (e.g., MSA الباحثون [al-bāḥiṯūn] – researchers)
3) Verb forms and participles (e.g., ECA شايفين [šayfīn] – they see)
4) Phrases (e.g., ECA وساعات لغاية دلوقتى [wi-saʿāt li-ġāyit dilwaʾti] vs. MSA وإلى اليوم حتى [wa-ilà al-yawm ḥattà] – sometimes up until now)

Orthographical differences are minute and scarce, as only two instances of divergent spelling of the same word were noted in the first text and only three in the second.

Verbs and Clauses

The language of Wikipedia Masri is heterogeneous, a hybrid of Standard Arabic and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and word order. Generally, Standard Arabic is a language that deploys the verb-subject-object (VSO) order, while its dialectal varieties, including Egyptian, are usually classified as using the subject-object-verb order (SOV). However, many entries on Wikipedia Masri seem to defy this classification. Dynamic narration can be primarily found in biographies presented on the site, which are the only entries that seem to favor verbal clauses over nominal ones. Interestingly, these texts are not necessarily copy-pasted versions of Wikipedia Al-Arabiya materials.

On the contrary, as Dalida's biographical note clearly shows, there are texts in which dialectal grammatical forms abound, yet the predominant word order is VSO. The article contains 52 clauses, in 20 of which the verb precedes the noun. Only in 6 clauses do we find the supposedly typically dialectal SVO order. Since Egyptian Colloquial Arabic allows pronoun-dropping and null-subject clauses, null-subject clauses constitute the bulk of the text, that is, 26 instances.

Another interesting feature of the mixed register employed in the article about Dalida is the use of passive constructions. While spoken Egyptian Arabic usually expresses passive voice with verb forms such as *itkatab* (it was written) or *insaraq* (it was stolen), in this particular article, we come across some typical literary structures. The first is the internal passive (*kutiba* – it was written), virtually absent from everyday Egyptian speech. There can be no doubt that

the sentences الحياة مابقتش تحتمل (*il-ḥayā mābaqatš tuḥtamal* – life is no longer bearable) andبني ليها تمثال (*bunya līhā timsāl* – a monument was built for her) both employ the internal passive, even though grammatical forms used in their direct proximity are strictly dialectal (مابقتش *mābaʾatš*, ليها *līhā*). The second marker of the mixed *al-fuṣḥà-Ammiya* register is the dummy verb *tamma,* most commonly associated with Modern Standard Arabic of the media (Versteegh 2014, 55). It appears twice in the text: زفافهم اللي هيتم *zufāfhum illī hayitimm* (their wedding that would take place), تم انقاذها *tamma inqazha* (she was saved). Interestingly, in one instance, this verb is even combined with a dialectal future tense particle *ha-* (هيتم).

Dalida
Translation
Wikipedia Masri ("Dālīdā" 2009)

English	Arabic
Dalida felt that he did not love her like at the beginning. In Cannes in July 1961, Dalida met the actor Jean Sobieski and fell in love with him. In January 1962, Lucien Morris divorced her because he discovered her betrayal. Dalida lived off of Jean, and they separated in 1963. In October 1966, Dalida met the Italian songwriter and singer Luigi Tinco. They got engaged in January 1967 and announced their wedding that would take place in April of the same year. They took part in the festival in San Remo, Italy, on January 27, 1967.	حست داليدا أن هوه مبقاش يحبها زي الاول و في مدينة كان في يوليو 1961 قابلت داليدا الممثل جان سوبيسكي ووقعت في حبه و في يناير 1962 طلقها لوسيان موريس بسبب اكتشافه لخيانتها لي و عاشت داليدا من جان و انفصلوا عن بعض في سنة 1963 و في أكتوبر 1966 قابلت داليدا كاتب الاغاني و المغني الايطالي لويجي تينكو و اتخطبوا في يناير 1967 و أعلنوا عن خطط زفافهم اللي هيتم في شهر أبريل من نفس السنه و تطوعوا في مهرجان في مدينة سان ريمو في ايطاليا 27 يناير 1967
The song "Ciao amore ciao" and the night were tragic because, after the failure at the festival, Luigi committed suicide in his room in a hotel, and Dalida was the first to discover his body. Dalida attempted suicide on February 27, 1967, in the same room by overdosing on sleeping pills, but she was miraculously saved. She remained in a coma for five days and suffered from depression. In October 1967, she met a young Italian man and got pregnant after two months. She decided to abort secretly, except with the knowledge of her brother and cousin.	كانت الأغنية ciao amore ciao وكانت ليلة مأسوية لان بعد فشلهم في المهرجان انتحر لويجي في اوضته في فندق و داليدا اول من اكتشف جثته فحاولت داليدا الانتحار في 27 فبراير 1967 في نفس الاوضه بجرعة زائدة من الحبوب المنومه لكن تم انقاذها بمعجزة و فضلت في غيبوبة لمده خمس ايام و تعرضت داليدا الاكتئاب في أكتوبر 1967 قابلت شاب ايطالي و حملت منه بعد شهرين وقررت الاجهاض سرا الا بمعرفة اخوها وبنت عمها
After the abortion, she became sterile. Because of the first suicide attempt, Dalida decided to undergo psychological treatment. She even traveled to India for psychotherapy. On October 21, 1972, through Pascal Severan, she met Richard Chanfrey, known as Count de Saint-Germain. Dalida was suffering from depression due to the suicide of her ex-husband Lucien Morris on September 11, 1970, and Luigi Tinco's suicide, as well as her mother's death in 1971.	وبعد الاجهاض اصبحت عاقم بسبب محاولة الانتحار الاولي قررت داليدا العلاج النفسي حتي انها سافرت الي الهند للعلاج النفسي في 21 اكتوبر 1972 عن طريق باسكال سيفران قابلت ريتشارد شانفري المعروف باسم الكونت دي سان جيرمان كانت داليدا بتعاني من الاكتئاب بسبب انتحار طلبقها لوسيان موريس في 11 سبتمبر 1970 و انتحار لويجي تينكو ده غير وفاة والدتها في 1971
Dalida quickly fell in love with Richard, who claimed he could turn lead into gold. Dalida was fond of his	وقعت داليدا في حب ريتشارد بسرعة و كان ريتشارد بيدعي أنه يقدر يحول الرصاص لدهب كانت داليدا معجبه بشخصيته

colorful personality and love for her, and they recorded the song "Et de l'amour" in 1975. Despite their love for each other, they separated in 1981. Two years after their separation, Richard committed suicide on July 20, 1983. Dalida was left all alone with no husband or children. In 1986, she recorded the French song "Les hommes de ma vie," in which she explains her failed emotional life and all the men in her life who committed suicide.	الملونه و حبه ليها و سجلوا اغنية et damour, في عام 1975 و رغم حبهم لبعض الا أنهم انفصلوا في سنة 1981 بعد سنتين من انفصالهم **انتحر ريتشارد** في 20 يوليو 1983 **بقت داليدا** وحيده لا زوج ولا اطفال في سنة 1986 سجلت الأغنية الفرنسية Les hommes de ma vie واللي بتشرح فيها عن حياتها العاطفية الفاشلة و عن كل الرجالة اللي كانوا في حياتها انتحروا
Dalida suffered severe depression in 1987 and decided to commit suicide on the night of May 2, 1987. She took a hefty dose of sleeping pills and a glass of alcohol to increase the effect of sedatives. She passed away on May 3. Before committing suicide, she wrote a message (forgive me.... life is no longer bearable). She was buried in the Montmartre cemetery in Paris, and a life-size statue was built for her.	**عانت داليدا** الاكتئاب الحاد في سنة 1987 و قررت الانتحار في ليلة 2 مايو 1987 اخدت حبوب زائده من المنوم و كاس كحول لزيادة تأثير المهدئات و توفت في نهار 3 مايو و كتبت قبل متنتحر رسالة (سامحوني....الحياة مابقتش تحتمل) اتدفنت في مقابر مونمرتر بباريس و **بني ليها تمثال** بالحجم الطبيعى لها.

Table 13: VSO order in Wikipedia Maṣrī

Even though entries in which VSO word order is favored over SVO exist, by no means do they constitute the majority of all texts published on Wikipedia Masri. Nonetheless, the fact that examples of VSO clauses are not infrequent seems to suggest that the authors of Wikipedia Masri remain influenced by *al-fuṣḥà* stylistics. The VSO word order and literary passive forms are not a stereotypical part of everyday Egyptian speech, but could conceivably appear in the utterances of the educated elite (*ʿāmmiyyat al-muṯaqqafīn*). While employing such a device serves the purpose of elevating the Wikipedic *ʿāmmiyya*, it can also be seen as proof of the extent to which the editors of Wikipedia Masri have to resort to *al-fuṣḥà* in order to achieve narrative flow.

clauses	Articles			
	Dalida	Cleopatra	Jesus	Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi
subject-verb	6	9	13	1
verb-subject	20	8	9	0
nominal	0	5	9	1
null-subject	26	15	11	11
Total number	52	37	43	13

Table 14: Word order in Wikipedia Maṣrī texts

The Air of Cosmopolitanism

Staunch critics of Wikipedia Maṣrī have long believed that Arabic dialects lack sufficient vocabulary to serve the role of written languages. It is simply impossible, they say, to use them to formulate precise, unambiguous definitions. The Egyptian Wikipedic enterprise could be seen as a litmus test of these claims. However, its outcome remains open for interpretation, as it becomes clear that Wikipedia Maṣrī is an encyclopedia written in a mixed style bespeckled with loan words of various origins.

Many of these are loanwords borrowed chiefly from English, such as ايتش آى ڤى HIV, الهوموسكشواليتى homosexuality, السوفت وير software. Their spelling often includes additional letters or pairs of letters such as ڤ, چ, or تش used to reflect the pronunciation in their languages of origin. This, in turn, indicates that these words are recent loans, not yet fully integrated into the Egyptian phonological system (Hafez, 1996). However, it cannot also be excluded that in some cases (e.g., computer الكومبيوتر), these additional letters are used as a means of distinguishing the Egyptian grapholect from MSA since most Egyptians are unable to pronounce the voiceless bilabial plosive sound /p/. Another device contrived to easily differentiate the Egyptian grapholect form MSA lies in the spelling of proper nouns, especially toponyms, which reflects as closely as possible the pronunciation of the word in its language of origin.

	Wikipedia Maṣrī	Arabic Wikipedia
Proper nouns		
Venice	ڤينيسيا	البندقية
Geneva	چينيڤ	جنيف
Palermo	پاليرمو	بَلَرْم / باليرمو
Portugal	پورتوجال	البرتغال
The Mediterranean Sea	البحر المتوسط	البحر الأبيض المتوسط
Azerbaijan	اذيربايچان	أذربيجان
Slavs	السلاف /الصّقالبة	السلافيين / السلاف / الصقالبه
Roman Catholic Church	كنيسة الروم الكاتوليك	الكنيسة الرومانية الكاثوليكية
iPhone	آي فون	آيفون
Neoplatonism	افلاطونيه جديده	أفلاطونية محدثة
Pythagoras	بيثاجوراس	فيثاغورس

iPhone	آي فون	آيفون
Nucleic acid	الحمض النووى	الحمض النووي الريبوزي منقوص الأكسجين / حمض الديوكسي ريبونيوكليك / الحمض النووي الصبغي
English loan words		
HIV	ايتش آى فى	فيروس العوز المناعي البشري
feminism	فيمينيزم	النِّسْوية أو الأَنْثوية
Champions League	تشامبيونز ليج	دوري أبطال أوروبا
homosexuality	الهوموسكشواليتى/ El homosekcualiti	مثلية جنسية
lesbian	ليزبيان	السحاقيات
computer	الكومبيوتر	حاسوب
mobile phone	موبايل	الهاتف المحمول / النقال / الخلوي/ الجوال / المتحرك
hardware	الهاردوير	عتاد الحاسوب
software	السوفت وير	برمجيات الحاسوب
biology	بيولوجيا	علم الأحياء
Mesopotamia	ميسوبوتاميا	بلاد الرافدين ما بين النهرين
Typical dialectal words		
woman	ست (الستات)	امرأة
obesity	تخن	سمنة
hippopotamus	سيد قشطة	فرس النهر
playing cards	الكوتشينه	ورق اللعب
tolerance	التوليرانسيه	تسامح

Table 15: Technical vocabulary on Wikipedia Maṣrī

Chapter 6
Grassroots Language Planning and Its Implications

The sentence *A language is a dialect with an army and a navy* is perhaps the most widely quoted definition to settle dialect/language disputes. The Egyptian vernacular possesses both, yet it is officially not a language. This creates a discrepancy between what some Egyptians perceive as a common and logical relationship between languages and states, that is, nation-states in which the linguistic standard is modeled on the speech of the intellectual elite and their linguistic reality. Wikipedia Maṣrī can be seen as a means for mitigating this dichotomy and driving change from the bottom up, as those involved in the project engage in what can be described as grassroots language planning.

In its most basic definition, language planning means affecting the status of a language. Traditionally the term has been understood as deliberate efforts of official institutions (Nahir, 2003). However, it has recently been observed that *a great deal of language planning occurs in other societal contexts at more modest levels for other purposes* (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997, 3). In most cases, governments are involved at some low level, at the very least. However identifying informal groups as actors influencing language policy is not without precedent (Padanovic 2010, 104). Language planning activities are twofold: status planning and corpus planning, both of which lie within the scope of Wikipedia Maṣrī creators' activities. Status planning involves language selection and implementation. In this case, the choice is to consider Egyptian a national language and advocate its use in all spheres of social interaction. Language implementation usually translates to issuing official policy and adopting a language into the educational system, which lies beyond the competence of Wikipedia Maṣrī editors. Paradoxically, Egyptian Arabic is already present at schools and universities, even if it is not in an official capacity. Although textbooks are written exclusively in *al-fuṣḥà*, they are discussed and explained in the local dialect, even at universities. The second type of language planning – corpus planning, relates to regulating aspects of language such as orthography, pronunciation, structure, vocabulary, registers, style, and the preparation of language material (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997, 22). Tackling these issues was

essential in developing rules for writing Wikipedia Maṣrī entries since Egyptian Arabic has not been codified as a written language.

Language Planning Goals

While no official language planning agencies have been engaged in the development of Wikipedia Maṣrī, the project nonetheless involves activities that serve goals set out by language policymakers. Many authors have listed possible language planning goals (Bassiouney, 2009, 189-270; Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997, 59-83), and despite some differences, the general catalog compiled by Moshe Nahir (Nahir, 2003) can serve as a basis for this analysis. According to him, these goals include (1) language purification, (2) language revival, (3) language reform, (4) language standardization, (5) language spread, (6) lexical modernization, (7) terminology unification, (8) stylistic simplification, (9) interlingual communication, (10) language maintenance, and (11) auxiliary-code standardization. Not all of these goals are attempted by the Egyptian Wikipedic endeavor since Egyptian Arabic does not need a revival, and it is quite impossible to reform in-existent orthographic rules. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of Wikipedia Maṣrī may well be seen as serving most of these ends.

1. Language Purification

Language purification stems from the objection to borrowings and entails ridding the lexicon of foreign words. In the case of Wikipedia Maṣrī, it is not so much introducing Coptic-derived words, although these postulates are also present in the movement. The purification effort of the Wikipedia Maṣrī users is changing the perceptions about the origin of Egyptian words, arguing for their ancient Egyptian origin and attempts to disprove their Arabic provenience.

2. Language Standardization

Undoubtedly, language standardization lies at the heart of the Wikipedia Maṣrī venture. Typically it involves creating rules of orthography and unifying the lexicon. Thus, this is a kind of codification expected to create a supra-local linguistic variety. In fact, Wikipedia is used as a specialized dictionary, as it contains specialized terms that are impossible to find in even the most advanced dictionaries. The feature providing access to matching entries in all other available languages has proven helpful for both learners of foreign

languages, translators, and even in situations when native speakers are better versed in technical and specialized vocabulary in a global language (such as English) but need to learn the terminology in their mother tongue.

3. Language Spread

The goal of language spread implies creating a shift in the number of speakers of one language at the expense of another. In this case, it means increasing the number of writers using Egyptian Arabic and destigmatizing the use of Egyptian in formal written contexts in an attempt to transplant it from the domain of orality into the domain of scripture and spread its use in a written manner. The rationale for language spread is often political, as is the nature of the Modern Egyptian Language movement.

4. Lexical Modernization

Lexical modernization can be understood as enriching the lexicon of a previously unwritten language. While Egyptian was not an utterly unwritten language, Wikipedia Maṣrī is the first attempt at covering the topics of medicine, technology, science, etc., purely in Egyptian. Its scope is infinitely vast, as is the scope of any encyclopedia, which aims to describe all things known to humans. By its very nature, such an attempt involves creating, borrowing, and adjusting new concepts and putting them into words, be they loans, coins, or otherwise.

5. Terminology Unification

Terminology unification means establishing a unified vocabulary of primarily technical terms, clarifying and explaining them, and removing ambiguity when one term is applied to various concepts or various terms are used in a speech community to denote the same concept. This is usually achieved by means of creating glossaries and dictionaries, in the absence of which Wikipedia Maṣrī serves the role. The systematization of knowledge is intrinsically connected with the systematization of terminology.

6. Stylistic Simplification

The most obvious goal of the Modern Egyptian Language movement, of which Wikipedia Maṣrī is a manifestation, is a stylistic simplification or reducing the discrepancy between the language of bureaucracy and scientific discourse and the language of the public. As the proponents of Wikipedia Maṣrī argued,

its target audience is those unable to comprehend technical definitions in Modern Standard Arabic, not having received sufficient instruction. Stylistic simplification involves reducing obsolete stylistics and overly complicated grammar, which are the perceived features of Standard Arabic, and adopting more straightforward 'laymen' linguistic conventions.

7. Interlingual Communication

Interlingual communication implicates facilitating communication between different language communities through the use of Lingua Franca. A common theme of articles on Wikipedia Maṣrī is that its authors promote the Egyptian vernacular as a regional spoken language of communication between users of these Arabic dialects, which lie far away from each other on the dialectal spectrum, which renders them, to a large extent, mutually unintelligible.

8. Language Maintenance

Language maintenance includes preserving the language in inauspicious circumstances, these being educational, social, or economic. While by no means is Egyptian threatened to lose its position as the dominant variety of language used in Egypt, its prestige has been eroding for decades now. It is no coincidence that efforts to raise the status of the Egyptian vernacular by creating an enormous database of freely available texts happen when we are witnessing a decline in the popularity of the Egyptian dialect due to a shift in pop culture production.[24]

An Egyptian Arabic Corpus

A vast corpus of written literature is one of the prerequisites for revitalizing endangered languages. Written languages tend to be viewed as carrying more prestige, and prestige makes people willing to become invested in a language. The choice of Wikipedia to demonstrate the separateness of the Egyptian speech was indeed a prudent one. Wikipedia is widely used and recognized, it is also free, which is extremely important in a country where one-third of the population lives below the poverty line, yet almost everyone has a smartphone connected to the internet. It is a free and open-source collection

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[24] Disney decided to dub its cinematic productions in *al-fuṣḥà ʿāmmiya* rather than Egyptian. The Gulf-Levantine entertainment industry keeps gaining popularity and ousting Egypt from its undisputed (pop)cultural leadership position in the Arab World.

of texts which can be freely processed. Thus Wikipedia Maṣrī can serve as a model for future writing, a reference for more obscure terminology, and a guide for the rules of orthography.

Most importantly, however, Wikipedia is a collection of well-organized natural language data or, in essence, a massive corpus of human-generated texts. As such, it can be utilized as a base for a corpus-based or corpus-driven linguistic study of written Egyptian dialect. Thanks to modern technology, such an endeavor is feasible and not overly complicated. To create a corpus of all texts published on Wikipedia Maṣrī, the Wikipedia database has to be downloaded, which can be done for free at https://dumps.wikimedia.org/. Wikimedia databases are not copyrighted, so processing is allowed for scientific purposes. The database downloads in a compressed file with the extension bz2, which can be unpacked with bzip2. The file should be cleared of HTML and hypertext markup using the free Genism modeling library available on the internet, for which there are ready-made scripts to accomplish this task. Then the unpacked markup-free .txt file can be imported from the computer straight to a corpus manager and text analysis software platform such as Sketch Engine. The corpus created from the database updated on June 2, 2021, contains over 3,530,784 words. Such a corpus would be the most extensive corpus of Egyptian Arabic available online (Eddakrouri, n.d.). By comparison, the Egyptian Colloquial sample in arabiCorpus contains only 164,457 words (arabicorpus.byu.edu, n.d.). The corpus created using Sketch Engine can be tagged automatically with the POS tagset for Modern Standard Arabic tool. Although designed with literary Arabic in mind, the tagset produces satisfactory results for texts written in Egyptian, which was verified by creating a trial corpus by manually uploading 203 articles downloaded from Maṣrī Wikipedia. The sample corpus comprises 261,799 words, of which the number of unique lexemes is 32,342. For the English language, such Wikipedia text corpora already exist (English-corpora.org, n.d.).

They provide an excellent opportunity to generate lists of concordances, synonyms, and collocations. Most crucially, they make it possible to create specialized corpora for particular topics. As a field of study, written Egyptian Arabic has yet to be given due scientific attention, especially regarding the language of social and natural sciences.

Other Separatisms in the Arab World: Lebanon and Morocco

The creation of Wikipedia Masri was an important event, as it set a precedent for other free encyclopedias in Arabic dialects. There have been tens of proposals for the creation of such sites. So far, two of them have proved successful. Wikipedia Darija, or the Moroccan Arabic Wikipedia, was approved by the Language Committee in *July 2020*. The proposal was filed by the user Schihab, who, right from the start, argued that the site could help in standardization efforts:

> *There is no existing unique source of truth to write words.*
> *Wiktionary will make it possible for users to share and assemble*
> *their knowledge.* ("Requests for New Languages/Wikipedia
> Moroccan – Meta" n.d.)

The site remains one of the smaller editions of Wikipedia, containing a little over five thousand articles. It has gathered quite a community of active editors since its editing depth index of 205 is only slightly lower than the depth index of the Arabic Wikipedia (236). Editing depth is the only reliable measure of the quality of Wikipedia articles, so Moroccan Arabic Wikipedia is among the top twenty language editions of the free encyclopedia.

It is quite curious that the creation of the Moroccan Arabic Wikipedia preceded the Moroccan Amazigh Wikipedia, even though the very notion of Darija being a language remains questionable. At the same time, the latter is an undisputed fact.[25] It is entirely plausible that because most Moroccan Amazigh people cannot write Amazigh, Wikipedia Darija serves as a substitute. In Morocco, the Amazigh language was never successfully introduced into curricula. The now-dissolved Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), charged by the government to standardize Amazigh, chose to impose the Tifinagh script and create a new written standard. This decision has made any grassroots movements even more difficult. There is an institutional imperative to write Amazigh in the script, which has never been successfully taught in Moroccan educational institutions (Guzik, Krasnopolski, and Nabulssi 2020).

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[25] Unless we delve into the question of whether Moroccan Amazigh is a family of languages or one highly dialectized language. Either way, no Wikipedia edition could serve the purposes of the Amazigh language community. At the same time, it could be argued that the (Standard) Arabic Wikipedia is the only Arabic-language Wikipedia needed in the whole Arab World.

Since the Moroccan Darija does not have strong connections to Arabism, it could be seen as much more acceptable for the Amazigh, especially if it is conceived of as having Amazigh roots. Indeed, the article *Dāriǧa* on the Moroccan Wikipedia edition claims that it is a language with the syntax inherited from Tamazight, and the words that came from Tamazight and Arabic while being heavily influenced by Portuguese, French, and Spanish ("Dāriǧa" 2021). Once again, the local vernacular is seen as pluralistic and inclusive, unlike Standard Arabic, which symbolically represents cultural hegemony and forced unification.

The North Levantine Wikipedia or Wikipedia Šāmī is the newest incarnation of digital activism fighting for the recognition of Levantine Arabic as a separate language. The proposal was submitted in June 2015 by the user PersonneSyrienne. The user claimed that North Levantine is an Arabic-derived language spoken by more than 20 million people. Even though the discussion page contains more votes against the idea (22) than for it (3), in August 2021, the Language Committee approved the creation of the North Levantine Wikipedia ("Requests for New Languages/Wikipedia Levantine Arabic – Meta" 2015). As of 2022, the site is still in its incubation stage. It contains only six stub articles, two of which are written in Latin script and four of which use Arabic characters. There is a high probability that this language edition is an effort of Lebanese linguistic separatism. However, due to the merely rudimentary nature of the site, it is not easy to draw further conclusions.

While the user who filed the proposal saw North Levantine as an Arabic-derived language, the article *Lebanon* on this site ("Wp/Apc/Libnen – Wikimedia Incubator" n.d.) links to the lebaneselanguage.org site. This site belongs to the Lebanese Language Institute (LLI), a non-profit organization providing resources to teach *the Modern Lebanese Language*, primarily to children of Lebanese migrants living outside Lebanon. The institute promotes the idea that the Lebanese people of today do not speak a dialect of Arabic or an Arabic-derived language. According to the LLI:

> *Lebanese is a Semitic language that was derived from the Aramaic language. Aramaic replaced the Canaanite language that the Phoenicians spoke in the region until around the days of Jesus Christ.*

Thus, Modern Lebanese is said to be a language of Semitic origin, mostly Phoenicio/Syro-Aramaic, with a significant admixture of Arabic and Turkish. Just like the Modern Egyptian Language Movement, the proponents of Modern Lebanese appeal to a much more ancient heritage than Arabic. It is highly likely that the Lebanese Language Institute is Maronite-affiliated since one of its projects is translating the Holy Bible into Lebanese. If so, another similarity between Egyptian and Lebanese linguistic separatism is that these ideas seem to come from and appeal to Christian communities.

General Conclusions

1. Wikipedia Maṣrī is a grassroots initiative presenting a minority view of Egyptian linguistic reality. Its roots lie in the nationalist doctrines of the 1920s and 1930s. The interest in ancient Egyptian history, and Pharaonism forming the central axis of the movement.

2. The Egyptian linguistic separatism underpinning the Wikipedia Maṣrī project is ethnic in nature. Its linguistic basis stems from dubious claims. The idea remains rejected on an official institutional level yet remains present in certain strata of Egyptian society, mainly consisting of well-educated, liberally-oriented secularists and Copts.

3. Creating a large body of texts available online for free and covering a wide array of topics will, in time, affect how Egyptian Arabic is perceived at home and abroad. On many levels, it disproves the claims that no Arabic dialect is suitable for academic or, in general, advanced writing purposes. As Wikipedia Maṣrī grows and improves in quality, it will serve as a model for composing written works in Egyptian Arabic.

4. By the very nature of the written text, the language of Wikipedia Maṣrī differs significantly from what is described in textbooks and academic publications as Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. After all, it is not a spoken language but a language of scripture, employing stylistic devices and lexical items rarely used in spontaneous oral utterances. The resemblance to Modern Standard Arabic, which the Wikipedic ʿammiyya certainly bears, is no excuse for ignoring the phenomena in scientific inquiry.

5. The copyrights-free status of Wikipedia Maṣrī creates a significant opportunity for researchers to conduct corpus-based and corpus-driven studies. It can also be treated as a database for developing Natural Language Processing and Deep Learning technology, especially

machine translation, all of which are disproportionately more advanced in the case of Modern Standard Arabic than in Arabic dialects.

6. The Wikipedia Maṣrī endeavor proves that with the advent of New Media, speech communities have much more agency in shaping their linguistic reality. They become agents of linguistics change and language planning. Even if their activities remain unrecognized at an official level, their ability to change public perceptions will only grow.

7. The confusion, criticism, and opposition Wikipedia Maṣrī has received, is yet another proof that in the Arab World, language is a metonymy of identity. Thus, language discussions are proxy discussions of nation, religion, and Arab unity or lack thereof.

8. Language is a highly charged topic in Egyptian society, and any attempt at linguistic reform is automatically regarded with suspicion. Both sides of the conflict – Egyptian linguistic separatists and supporters of Arab linguistic unity, suspect their opponents of conspiring with foreign, Western, post-colonial forces.

Expectations for the Future

Creating the Egyptian version of the World's largest and most widely accessible knowledge repository is no trivial thing. While the Oxford Internet Institute researchers claim that the difference in opinion led to the Wikipedia Maṣrī split (Oxford Internet Institute, n.d.), it is only part of the reason. The other part is the simple unwillingness or inability to produce quality material in Literary Arabic. This factor could also partly explain the relative absence of MENA representation and voice from Wikipedia and other platforms of global online reach. Separatist Wikipedic efforts, successful (Wikipedia Darija) and abandoned, prove that creating online content in country-specific varieties of Arabic is a growing trend. Without the constraints of propriety and decorum present in traditional media and print outlets, comparable user-driven online enterprises are expected to grow, deepening the rift between the de facto and de jure status of Egyptian and other varieties of Arabic even further.

Figure 7: Pharmaceutical company website written in Egyptian Arabic

Essentially there are two scenarios for the foreseeable future:

1. A miraculous educational improvement coupled with a vast-reaching cultural campaign leads to an exponential increase in MSA proficiency in Egyptian society. Linguistic attitudes of Egyptians change as they become aware that the present generation of young Arabs did not grow up watching Egyptian television and is not necessarily proficient in the Egyptian ʿāmmiyya. This realization, coupled with the increase in the prestige of MSA, leads to the erosion of Maṣrī's prestige in Egypt.
2. The effectiveness of Modern Standard Arabic education remains as it is – insufficient. The prestige of MSA continues to erode as the growing prestige of English is ousting it. Young educated Egyptian people become more comfortable using English or a mix of English and Egyptian Arabic to discuss social, cultural, philosophic, technical, and artistic topics. The diglossic chasm becomes absurdly inconvenient for the functioning of society.
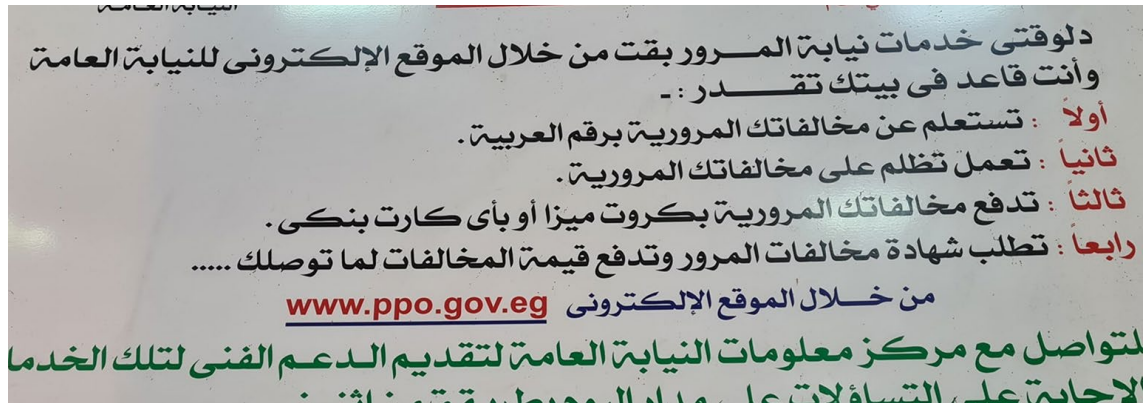
Figure 8: Information board with instructions written in Egyptian Arabic. Governmental office, Cairo, 2022.

The first scenario is what the supporters of Arab unity would wish to come true. However, the current state of affairs in Egypt suggests that the more probable scenario is the second one. Only an event of unimaginable magnitude or a charismatic pan-Arabist leader on par with Nasser could change the course Egypt seems to follow. In the current political, cultural, and economic climate, the situation in which Egypt re-assumes its position as an unquestionable leader of the Arab World seems highly unlikely. Only to this end could the Egyptian national pride bear to sacrifice the Egyptian Language cause.

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Appendix

Transcription				
character	**Standard Arabic**		**Egyptian Arabic**	
ء	ʾ	Unnoted at the beginning of word	ʾ	Unnoted at the beginning of word
ا	ā		ā	Only when actualy pronounced as a long vowel
ب	b		b	
ت	t		t	
ث	ṯ		s t	
ج	ǧ		g	
ح	ḥ		ḥ	
خ	ḫ		ḫ	
د	d		d	
ذ	ḏ		z d	
ر	r		r	
ز	z		z	
س	s		s	
ش	š		š	
ص	ṣ		ṣ	
ض	ḍ		ḍ	
			ẓ	
ط	ṭ		ṭ	
ظ	ḍ̣		Ẓ, ḍ	
ع	ʿ		ʿ	

غ	ġ		ġ	
ف	f		f	
ق	q		q	when pronounced as a uvular plosive
			ʾ	when pronounced as a glottal stop
ك	k		k	
ل	l		l	
م	m		m	
ن	n		n	
ه	h		a a	
ة	a	at the end of word	it	
	at	at the end of word that is the first part of status constructus		
و	w		w	
	ū		ū	Only when actualy pronounced as a long vowel
ي	y		y	
	ī		ī	Only when actualy pronounced as a long vowel
			a	
ى	à		a	

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Wikipedia Maṣrī is more than merely an Egyptian Arabic dialectal version of the popular free online encyclopedia. At its core lie Egyptian linguistic separatism and Pharaonism, with Wikipedia Maṣrī serving as a contemporary representation of these ideologies. In many respects, it embodies a modern iteration of intellectual currents that gained popularity among the Egyptian elite during the first half of the 20th century.

Is the Egyptian identity unique and independent of the larger Arab community, as the Wikipedia Maṣrī authors seem to claim? Do these assertions warrant legal recognition of the Modern Egyptian language? This book delves into these questions, exploring the grassroots language planning tools employed by the authors to propagate these ideas and examining potential repercussions for the future status of Egyptian Arabic. Will other emerging Arabic dialectal versions of online encyclopedias follow a similar trajectory? These intriguing inquiries form the basis of Zuzanna Nabulssi-Masełbas's comprehensive sociolinguistic study on Wikipedia Maṣrī.

Through the lens of this online encyclopedia, Nabulssi-Masełbas guides the reader through the complexities of modern Egyptian linguistic separatism, unraveling its intricacies and nuances. The Egyptian Wikipedia is not so much an object as a source of knowledge offering insights into the social attitudes of Egyptians concerning Arabism at large.

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