Vulgar and Literary Arabic in Nineteenth-century Egypt: A Study of Three Textbooks¹

Liesbeth Zack
University of Amsterdam

Introduction

This paper describes the use of colloquial Egyptian Arabic, Classical Arabic and mixed/Middle Arabic in textbooks written in the second half of the nineteenth century by native speakers of Egyptian Arabic. These textbooks were written in a period of increasing contact between Egypt and the West and were aimed at teaching foreigners Egyptian Arabic, which would be useful for them while travelling or doing business in Egypt. The books were meant to be used as conversational tools, focusing on practical information presented in word lists, useful sentences, and dialogues, and sometimes also containing a section on grammar. Some also focus on more formal language, such as used in letter writing. The Arabic in these works is written either in transcription, in Arabic script, or both.

Many of the more well-known textbooks of Egyptian Arabic from the nineteenth century were written by orientalists such as Spitta (1880), Vollers (1890), Haggenmacher (1892), and others. However, these always raise the question of how good (or bad!) their Arabic was, who their teachers and their informants were, how they collected their materials, and other issues. It was not

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper presented at AIMA 5 in Strasbourg, March 2017. It is part of a research project titled “The making of a capital dialect: Language change in 19th-century Cairo”, which is funded with a VENI grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.
uncommon for such orientalists to have learned Arabic in Europe from Maronite teachers before travelling to Egypt, and therefore influences from Levantine Arabic cannot be excluded.\(^2\) These issues can be minimized by looking at books written by native speakers of Egyptian Arabic, and doing so will help to arrive at a picture of what the Arabic language looked like as it was used by the Egyptians themselves. For this study, three textbooks were selected, in chronological (and alphabetical) order: Cadri (1868), Hassan (1869), and Nakhlah (1874).\(^3\) The selection was made on the basis that all three books were written by native speakers, within less than ten years of each other, with the purpose of teaching colloquial Arabic to foreigners, and that they all contain extensive dialogues, making them easy to compare.\(^4\) The books were geared towards a French, German, and English speaking readership, respectively.

In these three books one can detect a clear interference from Classical Arabic in the colloquial Arabic, and vice versa. This paper looks into how the authors themselves qualified the language they used in their books, looking at the terminology they used to describe different varieties of Arabic. The paper also investigates how colloquial Arabic and Classical Arabic are used in the books, how they interfere with each other, and how this results in mixed

---

\(^2\) See also the discussion in Manfred Woidich and Liesbeth Zack, “The g/j-question in Egyptian Arabic Revisited,” in *Arabic Dialectology in Honour of Clive Holes on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by Enam Al-Wer and Rudolf de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 47–49.


language varieties. This mixing is demonstrated in a small case study that investigates the use of modal verbs in combination with syndetic and asyndetic clauses.

1. The Authors and Their Books

The following paragraphs will give a short biography of each author, as well as an overview of the contents of the books. The transcription methods that were used by the authors will be explained as well, as this will facilitate the reading of the sample phrases.

1.1 Mohamed Cadri/Muḥammad Qadrī Pasha (1821–1888) was born in the province of al-Minya. He studied English, Italian, French, Turkish, and Persian at the famous Madrasat al-alsun (‘School of Languages’) in Cairo, as well as Arabic and Islamic law at al-Azhar University. He was an important figure in Egyptian society, holding the posts of Minister of Public Instruction (wazīr al-ma‘ārif) and Minister of Justice (wazīr al-ḥaqqāniyya). Cadri wrote several works on law, as well as several Arabic conversation books. In this paper, his Nouveau guide de conversation française et arabe (published in 1868) will be discussed. The preface starts with a long introduction on the history of Egypt and ends by stating the purpose of the book: to make it easier for Europeans to learn Arabic, and for Arabic speakers to learn French. The book consists of more than 800 pages, published in two volumes. Volume one is a vocabulary divided into categories such as “Des

5 The first name is the one given on the title page of the book, while the second is the transcription of the Arabic version of the name. The same also holds for the other authors.


7 See Cadri, Nouveau guide, xiv.
“fruits”, “Des meubles”, “Des domestiques”, “Maladies et accidents”, and many others. This is followed by a section titled “Exercices pratiques sur la conjugaison des verbes avoir et être”, which contains sample sentences rather than exercises. The second volume, which constitutes the largest part of the book (pp. 218–839) is entitled “Phrases familières et conversations sur les verbes”. It contains sixty chapters with phrases in the form of dialogues, which all revolve around a verb, such as “Répondre”, “Demander”, “Donner”, and “Acheter”.

Note on the transcription: For ǧ, Qadrī often uses the transcription dj, for instance in al djism ‘le corps’, but sometimes he uses g, e.g. al fagr ‘l’aurore’. This raises the question whether this is a reflection of Classical Arabic, or of another dialect, such as Cadri’s rural dialect from the Minyā region or Levantine Arabic. He writes q/ with c, ck, or k, e.g. wact ‘temps’ and dakîk ‘exact’. For s, he uses both s and ç, for h he uses kh and for š he uses ch, based on the pronunciation of these letters in French, the language in which the book is written.

1.2 Anton Hassan
(1819–1876) was born Muḥammad Ḥasan in Cairo, where he studied at the Polytechnic School. In the mid-1830s he travelled to Austria with four other Egyptian students as a member of one of Muḥammad ʿAlī’s educational missions. He first did his preparatory studies for four years in Graz, and from 1843 he studied metallurgy and mining in the small village of Vordernberg. The purpose of the mission was for these students to return to their homeland after graduating to assist Egypt in mining metals. Hassan, however, did not finish his studies and decided not to return to Egypt but rather to stay in Austria. His first employment was as a proofreader at the Staatsdruckerei in Vienna. He was baptized Anton Hassan in 1849 and married an Austrian woman in 1854. He worked as an Arabic teacher at the Polytechnic Institute in Vienna starting in

8  See also Zack, “Nineteenth-century Cairo Arabic,” 558.
9  Cadri, Nouveau guide, 1.
10 Ibid., 16.
11 Ibid., 300.
12 Ibid., 76.
1851 and was appointed professor of colloquial Arabic at the Oriental Institute in Vienna in 1861. He died in Vienna in 1876. The work under discussion here is the *Kurzgefasste Grammatik der vulgär-arabischen Sprache mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den egyptischen Dialekt*, published in 1869. It contains a grammar (136 pages), exercises (37 pages), dialogues (65 pages), and reading texts (20 pages); the latter are in Classical Arabic rather than the dialect. The topics of the dialogues are “Begrüssungs-Formen und Erkundigungen um den Gesundheitszustand”, “Vom Wetter”, “Von der Zeit”, “Vom Alter”, “Vom Sprechen”, “Vom Lehren und Lernen”, “Vom Wissen”, “Vom Kennen und Erkennen”, “Vom Sagen”, and “Vom Haben und Sein”. As Hassan confesses in the preface, the first part of his book containing the grammar is based on earlier works by Caussin de Perceval, al-Ṭanṭāwī, Wahrmund, and Wolff. He was criticized for this by Spitta, who notes that only the dialogues contain new, original material. There-

---


fore, this paper will only focus on the dialogues and not on the grammar section of the book.

Note on the transcription: Hassan’s transcription method is influenced by the German spelling, with h transcribed as ch and š as sch. The spelling ç is used for both s and ş. Hassan is the only one of the three authors who uses a consistent system of transcription, and he is also the only one who consistently transcribes ‘ayn (with ‘).

1.3 Yacoub Nakhlah/Ya’qūb Naḥla Rūfayla Bey
(1847–1905 or 1908) was a Copt from Cairo. He was a teacher of English and Italian at the Coptic School and was later appointed director of the school. He founded the newspaper al-Waṭan and established several schools in Cairo and the Fayyūm. His most famous publication is Tārīḥ al-ʿumma al-qibṭiyya (“The History of the Coptic Community”), while he also wrote several books on language. The book under discussion here is his New Manual of English and Arabic Conversation, published in 1874. Nakhlah’s New Manual was intended both for foreigners who wanted to learn Arabic and for Egyptians who wanted to learn English. Nakhlah provides a preface in both English and Arabic. The book caters more to the needs of learners of Arabic than to learners of English, as it starts with a grammar of Egyptian Arabic (42 pages), while no grammar of English is given. The second part of the work is an English–Arabic vocabulary. The vocabulary is not divided into subjects like Cadri’s, but is arranged alphabetically. The third part contains “Familiar Phrases and Conversations”, which cover such topics as “Meeting”, “Blame”, “The Laundress”, and “In a Shop”. The book consists of 277 pages.

Note on the transcription: Nakhlah’s transcription system is based on English, with h transcribed as kh, š transcribed as sh, oo for ā, and ee for ī. Another peculiarity is the doubling of some letters: hh for h, tt for t, dd for d, and ss for s (but not consistently; they are also transcribed with a single h, t, etc.).

---

21 Ibid., 560.
22 Ibid., 561.
2. Terminology

The following paragraphs discuss how the authors themselves described Arabic and its different varieties (dialect, Classical Arabic, mixed Arabic).

2.1 Dialect, Vulgar Arabic, Literary Arabic

The term ‘dialect’ is found only with Hassan, both in the title: *Kurzgefasste Grammatik der vulgär-arabischen Sprache mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den egyptischen Dialekt* and in the preface. The other two works do not use this term. In another nineteenth-century textbook of Egyptian Arabic, al-Ṭanṭāwī’s *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire*, the author writes: “Je crois devoir dire ici quelques mots sur la difference des deux dialectes”. However, he does not refer to two different dialects here, but rather to the two varieties of spoken colloquial Arabic and written Classical Arabic, as becomes clear from the exposition on the differences between those two that follows.

The phrase generally used for colloquial or dialect in textbooks from this period is ‘vulgar Arabic’. This term has a long history, going back to the grammars written in the seventeenth century by missionaries linked to Italian missions, such as Domenicus Germanus de Silesia’s (1588–1670) *Fabrica overo Dittionario della lingua volgare arabica* (1636) and Antonius ab Aquila’s (d. 1679) *Arabicæ linguæ novæ et methodicæ institutiones […].* The term was used in analogy with the situation of Latin and Italian, the latter being called ‘lingua volgare’.

However, Girard argues that the ‘vulgar Arabic’ of these seventeenth-century missionary
grammars is not the equivalent of what modern researchers would call ‘dialectal Arabic’, but rather

[...] pourrait correspondre à une langue hybride mêlant un arabe littéraire ou standard à des caractéristiques propres aux dialectes proche-orientaux. Il s’agirait en substance du moyen arabe qui circulait au Proche-Orient avant la Nahda.27

Doss agrees with this and states in her study of Savary’s Grammaire de la langue arabe vulgaire et littérale28 that the same is true for grammars and glossaries from the nineteenth century and that the ‘langue arabe vulgaire’ mentioned in Savary’s title is not pure dialect, but rather a language variety in which dialect, Standard Arabic and substandard Arabic (i.e. Middle Arabic) are mixed:

Je voudrais suggérer que c’est à cet arabe mélangé, mixte ou moyen arabe que font référence les auteurs de grammaires et de glossaires du XIXᵉ siècle (J.-F. Ruphy, J.-J. Marcel, Caussin de Perceval et d’autres) lorsqu’ils parlent d’« arabe vulgaire ». Cette forme d’arabe est présentée par ces auteurs comme modèle, étant donné que c’est à elle qu’ils sont confrontés dans la pratique journalière de la langue. Ils en observent sans doute l’usage dans les écrits ordinaires. S’y mêlent le dialectal, le standard normé et le standard sous-normé.29

She concludes:

Le concept d’arabe vulgaire recouvre une réalité complexe. Il ne s’agit pas d’une forme d’arabe dialectal, mais plutôt d’une forme

Vulgar Arabic and Literary Arabic in Nineteenth-century Egypt

d’arabe mixte, comme nous pouvons l’observer à travers les grammaires et les glossaires produits au XIXᵉ siècle.30

Although Doss speaks of nineteenth-century grammars, Savary’s book was actually written in the 1770s and published posthumously in 1813. It therefore predates Cadri, Hassan, and Nakhlah’s books by almost one hundred years. This begs the question as to whether the same claim can be made of the vulgar Arabic used in these three books.

Nakhlah uses the term ‘vulgar conversational Arabic’,31 while Cadri writes of ‘l’idiome vulgaire’ as well as ‘langage usuel’.32 Doss raises the valid question whether ‘language usuel’ means the dialect or Middle Arabic.33 While Cadri and Nakhlah are rather vague in their description of the type of Arabic they use, Hassan discusses this topic extensively.34 He makes a distinction between three varieties: ‘vulgäre Umgangssprache’, ‘vulgäre Schriftsprache’, and ‘grammatische Sprache’. The first term refers to ‘zahlreiche Mundarten oder Volksdialekte’. The third term, the ‘grammatical language’, is also called ‘Koransprache’ by Hassan and coincides with Classical Arabic. However, Hassan indicates that his book uses the ‘vulgäre Schriftsprache’ or vulgar/colloquial written language. He describes this as “einen gewissen veredelten Dialekt”, which is used “[im] feineren gesellschaftlichen Um- gang”. He defines it as follows:

30 Ibid.
31 Nakhlah, New Manual, i. Also in other textbooks not discussed here: ‘langue arabe vulgaire’ in Michel Bey Saleh Chagavat, Vocabulaire français-italien-arabe, contenant les mots en français, en italien et en arabe, la prononciation figurée et les phrases les plus usitées de la conversation = Mu‘gām luġa faransāwī wa-’īlālī wa-‘arābī (Cairo: Emin Hindié, n.d.) and al-Ṭanṭāwī, Traité, ‘vulgar Arabic’ in Gabriel Sacroug, The Egyptian Travelling Interpreter or Arabic without a Teacher for English Travellers Visiting Egypt (Cairo: P. Cumbo, 1874).
32 Cadri, Nouveau guide, xv. Al-Ṭanṭāwī, Traité, v uses the term ‘langue usuelle’.
34 Hassan, Kurzgefasste Grammatik, 1.
Die vulgäre Schriftsprache besteht aus Wörtern und Ausdrücken, welche den untersten Volksklassen theils bekannt, theils aber auch unbekannt oder doch minder geläufig sind. Sie unterscheidet sich von der Umgangssprache nur durch diese bei den niedereren Volksklassen, wie schon oben erwähnt, weniger oder gar nicht vorkommenden Wörter, Ausdrücke und Redensarten. Übrigens wird sie ohne Vocalzeichen geschrieben, und beim Sprechen hört man die kurzen Endvocale oder die grammatischen Endungen, selbst wenn ein Suffix folgt, fast nie; dadurch unterscheidet sie sich vorzüglich von der grammatischen oder Koransprache, in welcher fast jeder Consonant ein Vocalzeichen oder ein diakritisches Zeichen hat, und wo jeder Vocal nach bestimmten Regeln ausgesprochen wird. Daher kommt es, dass Wörter, die auch in der Vulgärsprache üblich sind, nach der grammatischen Aussprache oft ganz verschieden lauten.\textsuperscript{35}

He adds that this language variety is used in the gospels and catechisms printed in Rome, as well as in modern prose works. From his description, it appears that the ‘vulgäre Schriftsprache’ is a rather ambiguous matter: it is distinguished from the colloquial by its use of vocabulary and expressions from Classical Arabic, while at the same time it is distinguished from Classical Arabic by the lack of case endings. However, ‘colloquial Arabic with Classical Arabic expressions’ and ‘Classical Arabic without case endings’ are two different things, two distinct varieties on the continuum between pure colloquial and pure Classical Arabic, one of them closer to the former and the other closer to the latter, so it is unclear what exactly Hassan meant. Using Badawī’s five language levels,\textsuperscript{36} the first variety would coincide with the ‘āmmiyyat al-muṭaqqafīn, while the second would be closer to fuṣḥā al-‘aṣr, with the difference that Hassan explicitly refers to a written variety.

The term Classical Arabic is not used in the three books. As shown above, Hassan speaks of the ‘grammatical language’ or the ‘language of the Koran’. However, in Western terminology, the usual term for the written language at that time was ‘literary Arabic’ (see for instance Cadri’s preface: “J’ai traduit chaque phrase

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Al-Sa‘īd Badawī, Mustawayāt al-‘arabiyya al-mu‘āṣira fī Miṣr (Cairo: Dār al-ma‘ārif, 1973), 89.
VULGAR AND LITERARY ARABIC IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT

littéralement et vulgairement”\(^{37}\)).\(^{38}\) This was also of a mixed variety in the nineteenth-century grammars and textbooks, as will be shown below.\(^{39}\) When considering that both vulgar and literary Arabic are mixed varieties, this then raises the question as to how these two varieties of Arabic related to each other in these textbooks.

2.2 The Arabic Terminology

The three books each have an Arabic title, as well as a title in the foreign language. Hassan’s work is titled \(Ahsan\ al-nuḥab \ fī \ mā’rifat lisān al-‘arb\) ("The Best Selected Pieces for Learning the Arabic Language"), which is also the Arabic title (of course not incidentally) of al-Ṭanṭāwī’s \(Traidē de la language arabe vulgaire\). Cadri’s book is titled \(al-Durr al-nafīs \ fī luḡatay al-‘arb wa-l-faransīs\) ("The Precious Pearls Concerning the Languages of the Arabs and the French"). In these two titles, no reference is made to colloquial Arabic, only to \(lisān al-‘arb\) and \(luḡat al-‘arb\) ‘the language of the Arabs’. Nakhlah’s title \(al-Tuḥfā al-murdiya \ fī ta’allum al-luḡa al-ingīlīziyya\) ("The Pleasing Treasure for Learning the English Language") does not refer to the Arabic language at all, but was clearly intended to appeal to Arabic speakers who wanted to learn English.

Only Nakhlah’s textbook contains a preface in Arabic, but this is not very enlightening, as he also only refers to \(al-luḡa al-‘arabiyya\) in general terms without reference to distinctive varieties. Again, this preface was intended for the Arabic-speaking readers who were not interested in learning Arabic, but in learning English, so it was not necessary to make the distinction.\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) See also Larcher, “Diglossia arabisante”, 53, who traces the first attestation of this term back to Francisco Canes’ (1730–1795) \textit{Gramatica arabigo-espanola, vulgar y literal}\ (1775).
\(^{40}\) For an overview of the Arabic terminology for the colloquial and Classical Arabic and its history, see Larcher, “Diglossia arabisante” and “Al-lughha al-fuṣḥā”. According to Larcher, the terms \(luḡa āmmīyya\) and \(luḡa fuṣḥā\) did not appear until the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century (see Larcher, “Diglossia arabisante”, 58). Mejdell places the coining of the term āmmīyya in the context of the Nahḍa, see Günvor Mejdell, “From \(kalām ahī Miṣr\), to \(al-āmmīyya\, luḥga miṣrīyya\ and \(luḥhayt al-umm\ – What’s In a (Metalinguistic) Concept?” Lecture given
no other terminology related to the Arabic language found in the main text of the three books.

3. The Three Books: Varieties of Arabic and Language Mixing

The following paragraphs will analyse the language varieties used in the three books. The focus point will be on the dialogues, as this is the only section the three books have in common.

3.1 Cadri

Cadri divides the dialogues into four columns, with French in the first column, transcribed Egyptian Arabic in the second column, Egyptian Arabic in Arabic script in the third column, and what Cadri calls literary Arabic in the fourth column. However, the interesting thing is that the transcribed Egyptian Arabic is not always identical to the Egyptian Arabic in Arabic script, as can be seen in these examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>A quelle heure reçoit le ministre des affaires étrangères.</th>
<th>Nazir il khâridjiieh ystacbil innas emteh</th>
<th>في أي ساعة ناظر الخارجية يستقبل الناس</th>
<th>في أي ساعة يستقبل وزير الخارجية الناس</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Il reçoit tous les vendredis à quatre heures.</td>
<td>Biystacbilhoum is sa’a arba’a yòm il djoum’ah</td>
<td>هو يستقبل الساعة أربعة في يوم الجمعة</td>
<td>إنه يستقبل الناس في الساعة الرابعة من يوم الجمعة</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between the transcribed Egyptian Arabic and the Egyptian Arabic in Arabic script is the use of *emteh* in the former and *‘at what time’* in the latter. Also, in the former, the *bi*-imperfect is used in *biystacbilhoum*, while the latter has *‘* without the *bi*-imperfect. The only difference between the Egyptian Arabic in Arabic script and the literary Arabic (columns 3 and

---

at the workshop “Language Change in the Arab World”, University of Amsterdam, 15 December 2015.

4) is in the word order (SVO in the former, VSO in the latter); there is no difference in the lexicon, except for the use of the Classical Arabic انا in example 2.

The following shows even more variation in the Arabic phrases:\(^42\)

| 3 | Où avez-vous couché hier? | Enta bitt fên embâreh | أنت بت فين امبارك | Ain bêt Âms أنت عند أحد | بت عند بعض احبشي
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>J’ai couché chez un de mes amis?(^43)</td>
<td>Ana bitt and wàhid sâhbi</td>
<td>أنت بيت عن أحد من أصحابي</td>
<td>بيت عند بعض حبيتي</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In example 4, we see the very colloquial Egyptian Arabic expression wàhid sâhbi in transcription,\(^44\) the more classical expression واحد من أصحابي (which, however, can also be used in Egyptian Arabic), and the purely Classical Arabic expression بعض احبتي.

The last example to show the difference between Egyptian Arabic in transcription and Arabic script:\(^45\)

| 5 | Votre père vit-il encore? | Howa abouk lessa thaïb | يا ترى أبوك لسه حى - طيب | هل أبوك على قد الحياة إلى الآن |

The translation in transcription (lessa thaïb ‘still all right’) is not a literal translation of the French ‘vit-il encore’. The Egyptian Arabic in Arabic script gives as an alternative the more literal translation لسه حى ‘still alive’.\(^46\) Also, the two phrases use a different in-

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 642–643.
\(^{43}\) Sic, with question mark.
\(^{44}\) See Manfred Woidich, Das Kairenisch-Arabische: eine Grammatik (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 213 for this use of wàhid followed by a limited number of words meaning ‘friend’, ‘colleague’, ‘relative’, etc.
\(^{45}\) Cadri, Nouveau guide, 784–785.
\(^{46}\) The word fàyyîb is used today with the meaning of ‘good of character’, as in e.g. da râgîl fàyyîb ‘he’s a good man’, as an adverb/interjection meaning ‘all right, ok’, and in the expression kûlî sâna w-inta fàyyîb ‘may you be well every year’. However, in the nineteenth century, the word fàyyîb used to have the meaning of ‘good’ in general and could be used as an adjective or an adverb, e.g. اننا طيب كثير مع الوزير ‘I’m on very good terms with the vizir’ (Al-Ṭanţâwî, Traité, 50), in kunna katabna el-gawâb ennahar-da kân tâjjîb ‘if we had written the letter today, it would have been good’ (Spitta, Grammatik, 184). It cannot be used with this
terrogative: *howa* in transcription, and *يا ترى* in Arabic script; both are used in Egyptian Arabic, but only *يا ترى* can be used in Classical Arabic. It is unclear why the author chose to use two options, as he does not comment on this, but it could be in order to teach the learner two vocabulary items. The fourth column gives the Classical Arabic expression *على قيد الحياة* for ‘vit-il’. From these examples, we can conclude that the Egyptian Arabic written in Arabic script is sometimes less colloquial than the transcribed Egyptian Arabic. However, this is not a rule, and often the two are in fact identical.

Many of the supposedly colloquial phrases contain some Classical Arabic, such as the use of *abi* (instead of the Egyptian equivalent *abūya*) and *yourīd an* in the following example:

| 6 | Mon père veut que je soit médecin. | *abi yourīd an akoun hakīm* | أن أبي يريد أن يكون حكيم |

This is especially the case in the first part of the book containing the sample sentences with ‘être’ and ‘avoir’. In the second part, the colloquial contains fewer literary Arabic features.

### 3.2 Hassan
Hassan’s approach is completely different from Cadri’s: his dialogues are given in German and Arabic, the latter in both transcription and Arabic script. The content of the Arabic in transcription and Arabic script is exactly the same, as is shown in the following examples:

---
48 Cadri, *Nouveau guide*, 208–209. *yirīd* still existed in the dialect of Cairo of that time, although today it has been completely substituted by *ʿāwiz/ʿāyiz*, the present participle of the verb *yiʿūz* (see Woidich, *Das Kairenisch-Arabische*, 317–318, who does not mention *yirīd* as one of the verbs with the meaning ‘to want’). However, the prefix *you–* in combination with *an* in this example indicates that it is Classical Arabic rather than Egyptian Arabic.
49 See also Zack, “Nineteenth-century Cairo Arabic,” 559.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>من منذ زمن طويل</td>
<td>min munz zāman thawīl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>من مدة قليلة</td>
<td>min múdde qalīle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ما هوش من زمان</td>
<td>mà hūsch min zamān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ما يعرفشي قيمة الوقت</td>
<td>mà jāʾ rifšchi (jiʾ rafšchi) qīmat el-waqt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>لا يعرف أزى يصرف الوقت</td>
<td>là jāʾ rif ezājj jáčrif el-waqt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>يلزم تدبیر الزمن وتوفره</td>
<td>jālzam tadbîr ez-zāman wa taufîru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>هذا يحتاج لمدة طويلة</td>
<td>hâzā jahtâg limūdde thawîle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>هذا الشغل يأخذ له مني زمنا كثيرا</td>
<td>hâzā esch-schughl jāčhud lu minnī zāmanān ketirān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>يبفوت اوقاته في الفارغ</td>
<td>bijufáwwit auqâtu fiʾ l-fârīgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>اهنا فاضيين = عندنا وقت</td>
<td>éhān fādhijin = ʿândnā waqt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 18   | لسا ما تزوجتش | lissā má tazaw-wāgtisch | Ich bin noch nicht verheiratet^{51} |
| 19   | ما يعرفشي يجاوب لما حد كلهمه | mà jiʾ rafšchi jugâwib lāmmā hadd jukâllimu | Er weiss nicht zu antworten, wenn man mit ihm spricht^{52} |

^{51} Ibid., 203.  
^{52} Ibid., 227.
One of the defining characteristics Hassan mentions of vulgar written Arabic is the absence of case endings (see part 2.1, above). It is very fortunate that Hassan provided the transcription of the Arabic phrases, so the reader can get an idea of how he intended them to be pronounced. For instance, in min munz zāman thawil in example 7 there are no case endings. However, omitting these creates the problem of three consecutive consonants in munz zam-an, which is not possible in Cairene Arabic. The same problem occurs in ‘ándnā in example 17, which would have the suffix -ina in Cairene Arabic in order to avoid the cluster of three consonants. It is therefore unlikely that this reflects the actual pronunciation of the time.\footnote{See for instance Spitta, Grammatik, 152, who states that a vowel needs to be inserted between a noun ending with two consonants and a following possessive suffix beginning with a consonant.}

It is also interesting that the two Arabic columns contain the same information, while a more colloquial or more Classical pronunciation is sometimes indicated in the middle column, such as in example 10, which gives for the colloquial pronunciation mā jiʿrafschi as an alternative for the more classicizing mā jáʿrifsc̄hi. The latter has the dialectal negation mā—...sch, thereby creating a mixed form. This is also the case in example 18, which has the Classical Arabic prefix ta- for form V rather than the Cairene prefix it-, but the negation mā—...sch.

This mixing of Classical and colloquial morphological features is very common in Hassan’s dialogues. Also, some phrases display a clear tendency to use Classical Arabic vocabulary and morphology with Egyptian Arabic pronunciation, such as example 7: munz with the Egyptian pronunciation of the ġ as z, and example 8: qal-ile instead of colloquial ‘ulayyile, but with the colloquial pausal ‘imāla -e.\footnote{This was still in use in that era, although slowly disappearing; see Haim Blanc, “La perte d’une forme pausale dans le parler arabe du Caire,” Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph 48 (1973–1974).} Switching is also found on the sentence level, such as in example 11: là jáʿrif ezájj, with the Classical Arabic negation là jáʿrif in combination with the Egyptian Arabic vocabulary item ezájj ‘how’. It is interesting how in examples 10 and 11 three options are given for saying ‘he doesn’t know’: mā jáʿrifsc̄hi, mā jiʿrafschi, and là jáʿrif, without any explanation. A similar situation is found in examples 14 and 15, which in meaning are almost identical except for the tense, but example 14 has the Classical
Arabic demonstrative حا fa and the accusative case ending -an in the object زمنان كتيران,\(^{55}\) while example 15 has the Egyptian Arabic postposed demonstrative deh and no accusative ending. In the grammar section of the book, the demonstratives are given as هذا fazi and this haulây [sic], but the author added the observation that in the ‘Vulgärsprache’ these are دا deh, دى di, and دول dôl.\(^{56}\) Nevertheless, this must have been confusing for somebody trying to learn the language.

In the following examples, the Classical Arabic prefixes ج- and ج- are used in phrases that otherwise contain colloquial Arabic morphology and syntax, such as the negation with م-...sch in example 20, the ت- imperfect in example 21, and the object suffix -اكم in example 22:\(^{57}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ما عنديش وقت اضيعه</td>
<td>ich habe keine Zeit zu verlieren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>يبيرصرف وقته فيما يفيد</td>
<td>er macht von der Zeit einen guten Gebrauch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ما عنديش وقت اكلمك</td>
<td>ich habe keine Zeit, mit Ihnen zu sprechen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3 Nakhlah

Nakhlah gives the phrases in three columns, with the English phrases in the first column, Egyptian Arabic in transcription in the second, and mixed Arabic in Arabic script in the third, as shown in these examples which are taken from a dialogue called “The Laundress”:\(^{58}\)

---

\(^{55}\) Apparently, the dash on ā does not indicate vowel length, but only that it is written with an alif.

\(^{56}\) Hassan, Kurzgefasste Grammatik, 86–87. Another interesting observation is that هذا fa is, according to Hassan, contracted to هل hal. This was clearly not the case in Cairene Arabic, but it is a feature of Levantine Arabic (see, e.g., Samia Naïm, “Beirut Arabic,” in Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics, online edition, edited by Lutz Edzard and Rudolf de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2011) for the dialect of Beirut). Hassan failed to mention this.

\(^{57}\) Hassan, Kurzgefasste Grammatik, 194–195.

\(^{58}\) Nakhlah, New Manual, 251.
**LIESBETH ZACK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I have some linen to wash.</td>
<td>andi hha-wâyig bid-di aghsilhom</td>
<td>عندي ثياب أريد أن تغسلهم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>When will you bring it back?</td>
<td>tegibeehom aymta</td>
<td>متي ترجعهم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I shall want it in three days.</td>
<td>ana âwiz-hom bâd talât-tiyâm</td>
<td>اني اعوزهم بعد ثلاثة ايام</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I’ll try.</td>
<td>lamma ashoof</td>
<td>اجرب * ا سوف</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Nakhlah’s textbook the Egyptian Arabic in general shows very few influences from Classical Arabic. However, the Arabic written in Arabic script contains a good deal of dialectal vocabulary. Examples from the phrases above are the use of the verbs اعوز (example 26) and اشوف (example 27), as well as –hum (referring to non-animate تيواح) in examples 23, 24, and 26.

In some cases, two options are given, one of which is more classicizing and the other more colloquial, e.g. in example 28, in which the Classical Arabic ﻫﻞ يﻮﺟﺪ is given beside the colloquial فيه for ‘is there’.59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Is there any news to-day?</td>
<td>ﻫﻞ يﻮﺟﺪ شئ من الاخبار</td>
<td>هل يوجد شيء من الأخبار اليوم</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I am thinking of one thing.</td>
<td>ﻫﻞ يﻮﺟﺪ شئ من الاخبار</td>
<td>هل يوجد شيء من الأخبار اليوم</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following example, the colloquial حاجه is given as an alternative for ﻫﻞ يﻮﺟﺪ:60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I am thinking of one thing.</td>
<td>ﻫﻞ يﻮﺟﺪ شئ من الاخبار</td>
<td>هل يوجد شيء من الأخبار اليوم</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a syntax level, there are many influences of the dialect as well, e.g. in the word order SV in example 30:61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Is the post come?</td>
<td>ﻫﻞ يﻮﺟﺪ شئ من الاخبار</td>
<td>هل يوجد شيء من الأخبار اليوم</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59 Ibid., 231.
60 Ibid., 229.
61 Ibid., 260.
In example 31, the modal verb نقدر is not followed by أن, but by an asyndetic clause:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>ﻥﻘﺪر ﺍﻵن ﻟﻨﺬھﺐ</td>
<td>Now; we can go. – yalla bina baka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This last example illustrates a feature that is found very frequently in Nakhlah’s book and that will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

4. Case Study: Modal Verbs with Subordinate Clauses

The following is a small case study, which will discuss in more detail how one specific feature – modal verbs followed by a subordinate clause – is attested in the three books. Modal verbs are verbs expressing concepts such as ‘to be necessary’, ‘to want or wish’, ‘to hope’, and ‘to be possible’. In Classical Arabic, these modal verbs can either be followed by ʾan + an imperfect verb in the subjunctive or by a maṣdar. I will focus only on the first type.

In Egyptian Arabic, modal verbs are followed by an asyndetic sentence with an imperfect verb, e.g. ʿāwiz yirūh ‘he wants to go’ or tiʾdar tištāgāl ‘she can work’. Using a modal verb with an asyndetic sentence in so-called ‘literary Arabic’ therefore indicates influence from the dialect. This is a very common feature in Middle Arabic. Blau states that “[s]ubordinate asyndetic clauses are very frequent […] and especially object clauses: تستطيعون تستمرون ‘you can spend the night awake’.”

Studies of Egyptian papyri from the first millennium indicate that already at that time, asyndetic modal clauses were used very frequently.

62 Ibid., 250.
63 See Spitta, Grammatik, 349 for the nineteenth century, and Woidich, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, 311–312 for modern Egyptian Arabic.
64 Joshua Blau, A Handbook of Early Middle Arabic (Jerusalem: The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002), 52.
65 See Eva Mira Grob, Documentary Arabic Private and Business Letters on Papyrus: Form and Function, Content and Context (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 131 and Simon Hopkins, Studies in the Grammar of Early Ar-
4.1 Cadri
In Cadri’s book, the results are very straightforward: 100% of the modal clauses in the literary Arabic phrases are syndetic. Some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Où vos amis veulent-ils aller?67</td>
<td>إلى اين احبائك يريدون ان يذهبوا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je veux bien retourner dans mon pays, mais je n’en ai pas les moyens.68</td>
<td>الى ذلك لخلو يدي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je ne puis pas entrer.69</td>
<td>لا يمكنني ان أدخل</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je n’ai pas pu faire ce que vous m’avez dit.70</td>
<td>لم يمكنني ان أفعل ما أمرتني به</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’aime faire un tour de promenade, après avoir déjeûné.71</td>
<td>احب أن أتريض قليلا بعد ان أفتر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il m’est impossible de manger advantage.72</td>
<td>لا أستطيع أن أسبرد شيئا</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Nakhlah
In Nakhlah’s book, the results are quite different: 47% of the modal verbs are followed by ‘an, while 53% are followed by an asyndetic clause. The following are examples of syndetic clauses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You must know.74</td>
<td>يلزمك ان تعرف</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must not do so any more.75</td>
<td>يلزم ان لا تفعل هكذا ثانيا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish to go.76</td>
<td>اريد ان اروح</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot stay.77</td>
<td>لا أقدر ان أتأخر</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


66 The two columns containing Egyptian Arabic have been intentionally omitted here.
68 Ibid., 310–311.
69 Ibid., 328–329.
70 Ibid., 394–395.
71 Ibid., 404–405.
72 Ibid., 442–443.
73 The column of transcribed Egyptian Arabic has been omitted.
74 Nakhlah, New Manual, 220.
75 Ibid., 227.
76 Ibid., 245.
The following are examples of asyndetic clauses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can’t go now.</th>
<th>لا أقدر اروح الآن</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is what I can assure you.</td>
<td>يمكنكني أؤكد لك هذا</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me what o’clock it is?</td>
<td>هل تقدر تقول لي كم الساعة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not like to go to bed late.</td>
<td>لا أحب أنوم وحري</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish to go to the citadel</td>
<td>أريد أتوجه إلى القلعة</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot play with you.</td>
<td>لا أقدر ألعب معك</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently used verbs in this category are يرید, يقدر, and يلزم. Of these three, يرید is followed by a syndetic clause in 55% of the cases, يقدر in only 11% of the cases, and يلزم in 100% of the cases. The fact that يلزم is always used in combination with a syndetic clause is not surprising, as this is the only one of these verbs that was not used in Egyptian Arabic. In contrast, both يرید and يقدر had Egyptian Arabic equivalents yirid and yi’dar. Therefore, it is not surprising to see a more frequent occurrence of asyndetic clauses with these two verbs, as this could be due to the influence of Egyptian Arabic. It is also interesting that يمکن, which occurs twice, is both times followed by the suffix -nī, which is not possible in today’s Egyptian Arabic, but is nevertheless followed by an asyndetic clause: “يمکنني أؤكد لك هذا” “that I can assure you”.

Gunvor Mejdell notes that in her corpus of spoken mixed Arabic in modern Egypt, either yumkin + ‘an or yumkin + maṣdar is used, or yimkin is used as an adverbial modifier, but only marginally as a modal verb.

---

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 258.
79 Ibid., 207.
80 Ibid., 218.
81 Ibid., 235.
82 Ibid., 254.
83 Ibid., 258.
84 Ibid., 275.
85 See Spiro, Grammatik, 213, 478.
She does not mention a construction like the one used by Nakhlah, with يمكن followed by an object suffix and an imperfect verb, for her data on modern mixed Arabic.

4.3 Hassan

Of all the modal clauses in Hassan’s dialogues, 18 % are syndetic and 71 % asyndetic. The remaining 11 % consist of the conjunction ʾan (which is pronounced ʾinn in Egyptian Arabic) after lazim ‘to have to’ and بّديد bidd ‘to want’, e.g. lazim ان الإنسان يوزن كلامه ‘Man muss seine Worte abwägen’88 and bidd ما بذيش أنى اعرفه ‘Ich will nichts davon wissen’.89

It should be noted that the number of modal clauses followed by ʾan + an imperfect is low. Hassan seems to favour the construction with a ماشدar (e.g. بلازم مطاوعة الزمن ‘Man muss der Zeit nachgeben’).90 The following are examples of syndetic clauses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Arabic</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>مَا هَٰذَا الْحُمْمَاء واَلَمْ تَقْدِر اَنْ تَنَام طُول الْلِّيْلَ</td>
<td>Sie hat das Fieber und kann die ganze Nacht hindurch nicht schla- fen.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا يَقْدِر اَلْإِنْسَان أَنْ يُطِلْعُ بَزَأ</td>
<td>Man kann nicht ausge- hen.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا يَمْكِنُكَ أَنْ تَفْعَلْ شَيْاً</td>
<td>Sie vermögen gar nichts zu thun.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مَا هَذَا الَّذِي أَرَدْت اَنْ أَقُول</td>
<td>Das ist nicht dasjenige, was ich habe sagen wollen.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88 Hassan, Kurzgefasste Grammatik, 213.
89 Ibid., 224.
90 Ibid., 196.
91 Ibid., 184.
92 Ibid., 189.
93 Ibid., 227.
94 Ibid., 235.
Examples of asyndetic clauses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beispiel</th>
<th>Ubersetzung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>لازم تعاشر الجمعيات</td>
<td>Besuchen Sie die guten Gesellschaften. 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عرف يعاشر الناس طيب</td>
<td>Er kennt die Welt gut. 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اننا اقدر احمي نفسى</td>
<td>Ich werde mich wohl zu vertheidigen wissen. 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا بد ييفنى يعرفنى</td>
<td>Er wird mich kennen lernen. 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ادى غاية ما يقدر يقوله الإنسان</td>
<td>Das ist Alles, was man sagen kann. 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>يمكنك تستمع درسك</td>
<td>Können Sie Ihre Lection aufsagen? 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dialect item يعرف (with the meaning of ‘to know how to do something’) is always followed by an asyndetic clause. This is not surprising, as it cannot be used with this meaning in Classical Arabic, where it has the meaning of ‘to know’, ‘to recognize’, and so forth and where it is followed by ‘anna. The other dialect items, لازم and بـ، are either followed by an asyndetic clause or by ‘anna, as mentioned above. The item يريده, which can either be Classical Arabic ‘yurid or dialect ‘yirid, occurs twice, both followed by a syndetic clause. In both cases, the verb forms are Classical Arabic: تريد turid 101 and اردت arâd. 102 The results for يمكن are comparable to those of Nakhlah: it is used as a verb rather than the modern-day adverb and is followed by an object suffix and an asyndetic clause.

---

95 Ibid., 206.
96 Ibid., 227.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 231.
99 Ibid., 235.
100 Ibid., 238.
101 Ibid., 208.
102 Ibid., 235.
Conclusion

The authors of the three textbooks discussed in this paper had the intention of providing foreign learners of Arabic with samples of both spoken and written Arabic. However, they approached this in different ways, which gives us clues to how people thought about the different registers of Arabic in the nineteenth century. The main difference lies in the fact that Cadri translated each phrase into three varieties of Arabic, Nakhlah into two varieties, and Hassan into only one. This approach enabled Cadri and Nakhlah to make a distinction between vulgar Arabic on the one hand and literary Arabic on the other. The literary Arabic used by Nakhlah is much more influenced by the colloquial than Cadri’s, as demonstrated in the case study of the asyndetic modal clauses, which are common in Nakhlah’s text, while they are absent in Cadri’s. On the other hand, Cadri’s Egyptian Arabic shows more traces of literary Arabic than Nakhlah’s. Hassan chose to use only one variety, which he called ‘vulgäre Schiftsprache’ (‘vulgar written language’). In the Arabic he uses, colloquial and Classical morphology and vocabulary are mixed. Although Hassan called it a written language, from his description and the types of dialogues presented in the book it appears that he intended it to be spoken rather than written. The language displays the three characteristics that Ryding uses to describe Educated Arabic: “A higher, more formal register than the colloquial of primary discourses of familiarity among family and acquaintances; a mix of literary and colloquial lexical items; absence of ʾiʿrāb, the markers of desinential inflection (case and mood).”\(^\text{103}\) While Hassan himself characterized the variety of Arabic he used both as colloquial Arabic with Classical Arabic expressions and as Classical Arabic without case endings, studying the language reveals that it is much closer to the first description, which coincides with what is generally known today as Educated Spoken Arabic, or Badawī’s ʿāmmiyyat al-muṭaqqafīn.\(^\text{104}\)

---


\(^{104}\) Badawī, *Mustawayât*. 

256
VULGAR AND LITERARY ARABIC IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT

References


Vulgar and Literary Arabic in Nineteenth-Century Egypt


Sacroug, Gabriel. The Egyptian Travelling Interpreter or Arabic without a Teacher for English Travellers Visiting Egypt. Cairo: P. Cumbo, 1874.

LIESBETH ZACK


Vollers, K. Lehrbuch der aegypto-arabischen Umgangssprache, mit Uebungen und einem Glossar. Cairo: Im Selbstverlage des Verfassers, 1890.


