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AL-LOGHA

SERIES OF PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS

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Al-Logha is a refereed semi-periodical journal of the Cairo Linguists Group concerned with research in linguistics and related fields. The journal publishes essentially papers resulting from the seminars organised for the group at the Arab & African Research Center, 5 Hassan Barada Street, Giza. Other contributions (in Arabic, English and French) are also welcome. Inquiries should be directed to Gerda Mansour or Madiha Doss at the above address or by e-mail to:

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AL-LOGHA

Eighth issue: June 2010

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Wherever Arabic is used in transcription we have adopted the following system: contributions from competent phoneticians use the IPA. In other articles we tried to avoid alienating transcriptions and use English equivalents where they exist and for other sounds the following: (except in names and titles)

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ح} &= \text{H} \\
\text{خ} &= \text{kh} \\
\text{ص} &= \text{S} \\
\text{ض} &= \text{D} \\
\text{ط} &= \text{T} \\
\text{ظ} &= \text{Z} \text{ (colloquial)} \\
& \text{or DH} \text{ (standard)} \\
\text{ق} &= \text{q} \\
\text{ذ} &= \text{dh} \\
\text{ع} &= \text{c} \text{ (raised /c/)} \\
\text{غ} &= \text{gh}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ش} &= \text{sh} \\
\text{ث} &= \text{th} \\
\text{ح} &= \text{h} \text{ (apostrophe)} \\
\text{Short vowels:} &= \text{a, u, o, i} \\
\text{Long vowels:} &= \text{a, u, o, i} \\
\text{semi-vowels:} &= \text{y (yigib)} \\
\text{w (wägib)}
\end{array}
\]

PREFACE

In this issue of Al-Logha we present a collection of articles on the Arabic language from various linguistic fields, two of the studies having been discussed at previous Cairo Linguists' seminars. They range from Arabic lexicography, to morphological and syntactic analyses in preparation for computerized dictionaries, to a historical study of linguistic change in Arabic and a sociolinguistic analysis of the very latest appearance of Arabic in cyberspace.

The study by Dina El Kassas (in French) is a contribution to the contrastive analysis of French-Arabic syntax, bearing in mind the kind of entries required for a computerized bilingual dictionary. It focuses on the French syntactic constructions “de + verb (infinitive)” and “à + verb (infinitive)”, these two words being highly frequent function words followed by a verb in the infinitive – both categories not found in the Arabic language and hence presenting problems in translation. She sets out to observe syntactic regularities and identifies underlying templates, then describes the syntactic contexts in which these prepositions occur, with the aim of arriving at a typology of occurrences. Lastly she proceeds to a classification of Arabic equivalents.

Muhammad Al-Sharkawi's study on the historical development of Written Arabic focuses on word order in the sentence as an indicator of a broader syntactical development. He selected and analysed examples from two time periods, namely the 9th and the 20th/21st centuries, and comes to the conclusion that form and function
of word order are the same in these periods, and that consequently, this feature cannot be used as a basis for marking linguistic periods in the history of Arabic. The preliminary results of his study point to the need for further examinations to justify the widely used developmental terminology such as “Old Arabic”, “Classical Arabic”, “post-Classical Arabic” and finally “Modern Standard (written) Arabic”.

Shaimaa Sadek’s study investigates the different approaches to morphological analysis of Arabic by Arab grammarians and modern linguists, as they apply to verbal nouns of tri-literal verbs. Her aim is to reach a generalized model of morphological representation which could be used to account for derivation of these nouns directly from the tri-literal root and describe the morpho-phonological changes needed to reach the realized surface form of the verbal noun from an assumed underlying representation. Her data analysis arrives at a list of 26 templates for verbal nouns, each having its own vocalic melodies, but varying greatly in number of occurrences. Her assumption is that this model could be used in teaching these nouns, as well as being implemented in computational programs dealing with Arabic morphological structures.

Ivan Panovic selected Wikipedia Masry, officially launched on November 24, 2008 and written in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, for his discussion of the sociolinguistic controversy surrounding the use of ECA in writing. It is situated in the ongoing debate and the cultural tensions between the two varieties of Arabic in contemporary Egyptian society. In this study he examines the language ideologies held by the Egyptian Wikipedians, and the ways in which these ideologies manifest themselves linguistically in the entries, by analysing a set of examples of a highly varied language output. Through these examples he demonstrates how linguistic differences between Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Colloquial have been creatively manipulated and even exaggerated, in order to secure recognition for what they perceive to be an “independent language”.

Mohammad Gomaa El-Derby’s study (in Arabic) addresses in detail the linguistic shortcomings of Al-Mo’jam Al-Wajeez (The Concise Dictionary), one of the publications of the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo. His critical review itemizes and classifies an abundance of mistakes, both in the content and the methodology of this dictionary, thus proving its unsuitability for the target students in the final years at Secondary School. A careful perusal of his critique should help in improving future editions of this dictionary.

Gerda Mansour
THE BEGINNINGS OF WIKIPEDIA MASRY

Ivan Panovic
University of Oxford

In the summer of 2008, a group of Egyptian students began the first Egyptian Wikipedia, a project that started with a small team of students from the University of Alexandria. The project grew quickly, and within a few months, the Egyptian Wikipedia had more than 1,000 articles and was attracting hundreds of editors.

This work was completed through support of the ORS/Clarendon/ Dervorgilla Scholarship, jointly sponsored by the University of Oxford and Balliol College. It is a part of my doctoral research which I conduct at the Oriental Institute of the University of Oxford, under the supervision of Professor Clive D. Holmes. I thank him and the editors of this journal for their critical feedback. After my presentation "Translating Identity Away – from fuṣūlsa to 'amniyya – the case of Wikipedia Masry" at GURT 2010 (Georgetown University Round Table – Arabic Language and Linguistics, Washington D.C., March 12-14, 2010), in which I talked about some parts of this paper as well, I have benefited from several comments, and would particularly like to acknowledge those of Professor Yasir Suleiman and Yonatan Belinkov. All the remaining shortcomings are my responsibility.
Ivan Panovic

Having been officially launched on November 24, 2008, Wikipedia Masry (WM) became the first Wikipedia to be collaboratively written in one of the colloquial varieties of Arabic – the Egyptian "ammitya. [1] It was proposed on March 30, 2008 and started as a developing project on April 2, 2008, in the Wikimedia Incubator. The proposal was accepted in July 2008 and the announcement was made on the first day of Wikimania 2008 in Alexandria. As of November 24, 2008, the Egyptian Arabic Wikipedia became an official Wikipedia."[1] Arabic Wikipedia (WA, written in fiSha) has been in existence since July 2003. On 15 January 2010, it contained 118,870 articles.

Now in its second year of existence, Wikipedia Masry has grown to a phase in which it contains nearly 6,000 articles. The number of active contributors is still rather small, yet their entries seem to be growing.

The fact of the matter is that a lot of these articles are, to use Wikipedia term, "stubs", short articles in need of expansion. For example, by choosing an option to visit a “random page” (صفحة عنوانية) one can easily stumble upon a page such as "1831" (accessed 15 January, 2010) which should contain information about important events in that particular year, as well as dates of birth/death of famous people, but contains virtually nothing. This testifies to a strategy of “Masry Wikipedians” to start new entries/articles just for the sake of


increasing their number with the hope of expanding them later. This constant growth, in turn, should reaffirm the significance of WM as an encyclopedic source. While this group of Masry Wikipedians is enthusiastically undertaking the project of building a web-based encyclopedia written in 'ammitya, their endeavor – expectedly enough – is not being carried out without controversy and resistance, thus compelling them to actively defend and redefine the project’s raison d’être, particularly the status of the chosen linguistic variety. What makes Wikipedia Masry interesting is its ambition to use 'ammitya in scientific discourse; which – unlike literary writing, traditionally more flexible and open to colloquial – has been the exclusive domain of fiSha.

So far, Wikipedia Masry has been discussed and criticised in numerous forums, blogs, and a few Facebook groups. Main arguments against it express the attitude that writing in 'ammitya represents a “degradation” of Arabic and echo all those familiar tropes constitutive of a metalinguistic discourse that resurfaces in the Arab world every once in a while, the discourse “in which [Standard Arabic and its associated dialects are the topic of contention between parties with irreconcilable ideological differences” (Suleiman 2004: 60). Tackling these arguments from a linguistic point of view is a futile task. They are grounded in folk belief about language and “the immunity of folk belief from empirical or logical refutation derives first and foremost from its ideological nature” (Suleiman 2004: 61). As such, these arguments are indexical of “extralinguistic issues” –
Ivan Panovic

they “signal metonymically the concern with identity, modernization, tradition, change and globalization” (93).

One of the key reference points on which Masry Wikipedians base their argument, and their claim for the independent status of “Masry” is arz, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) code for Egyptian Arabic. When submitting his proposal to the Wikimedia Foundation language committee, a Wikipedia with a username Ghaly, formulated his request as follows: “Egyptian Arabic (Masry) as a language is spoken by more than 70 million people in Egypt and other countries, it has ISO 639-2 and ISO 639-3 Codes which is arz.” Initially, Ghaly had envisioned Wikipedia Masry to be “written in layperson terms and a mixture between Egyptian slang and simple Arabic” so that it provides “the information to speakers of Egyptian Arabic in a way similar to what Wikipedia Simple English is doing currently in comparison to Wikipedia English.” Some ten days later, and after being criticised for an attempt to actually start a “Simple Arabic Wikipedia”, Ghaly revised his argument, claiming that he had never intended that:

I used the example for demonstration purposes only, I recognise Egyptian Arabic as a language as many other people do, I have no intention to start a simple Arabic Wikipedia as I think the Arabic

---

wikipedia is developing really well and I edit on it a lot, I have started more than 300 articles myself there.3

Following a debate, the project was approved and “مصرى” found its place on the Wikipedia menu of languages within the zone of the letter M, while “العربية” is, expectedly enough, listed under A. It needs to be pointed out that what founders of Wikipedia Masry actually have in mind when delineating the kind of Masry that should preferably be used for writing WM articles, could in fact more precisely be called qaahiry, or maybe even masraawy – Cairene (Egyptian Arabic), which Woidich rightfully labels “the Egyptian Standard” (1994: 493) – so, not just any (rural or urban) variety that partakes in the linguistic make-up of the country, but the one which carries the highest prestige, thus conferring on its speakers the highest symbolic capital which those coming from other parts of the country, if they are to move up socially, have yet to acquire by accommodating linguistically to the speech patterns of the capital. Therefore, one of the “general principles” for writing WM articles states:

كتب بالشكل الذي يعجبك، بل القاهرة هي الطريقة المشهورة لكتابة

الكلام المصري، المهم بفهمها المصريين

“Write any way you like, but Cairene is the well-known way for writing Egyptian. The main thing is that (all) Egyptians understand it.”

(طريقة الكتابة)

Throughout Wikipedia Masry, its language has more than one name. Judging by the main entry, its “official” name should be

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3 [http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Requests_for_new_languages/Wikipedia_Egyptian_Arabic#Description_of_Egyptian_Arabic_from_English_wikipedia.5B1.5D – accessed 15 January 2010]

4 [http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Requests_for_new_languages/Wikipedia_Egyptian_Arabic#Description_of_Egyptian_Arabic_from_English_wikipedia.5B5D – accessed 15 January 2010]
Ivan Panovic

The Beginnings of Wikipedia Masry

to the ideas of Bayumi Qandil whom WM, in a lengthy and elaborate article, identifies as one of the representatives of the “Egyptian School of Nationalist Thought”. Given the brevity of many WM articles, and the length at which, in their respective articles, Egyptian nationalist thinkers (such as Salama Musa or aforementioned Bayumi Qandil) or certain cultural and historical themes have been dealt with, it is clear that Masry Wikipedians are the proponents of Egyptian territorial nationalism of a kind that sets itself apart from Arab or Islamic nationalisms, seeking to carve out a specifically Egyptian identity, the uniqueness of which is confirmed by the alleged existence of a separate, Egyptian, language, and is reaffirmed by an imagined continuity of territorially-bound Egyptianness that uninterrupted stretches back to pharaonic times. Hence the ease with which Masry Wikipedians seem to embrace and promote some radical and even erroneous ideas about language. Since “[t]he conflict between standard Arabic and the colloquial [in Egypt] is an expression of ideological differences about Egyptian national identity” (Suleiman 2006: 142), the radical linguistic claim serves here to give strength and support to a nationalist aspiration. Therefore, it serves “a higher purpose” — such a claim might manipulate or even distort the linguistic facts, but its main task is to define/establish a language as an important cultural ingredient in identification practices that would be accepted by, and inclusive of all Egyptians. Given the country’s demographic composition, such nationalism can rely neither on ethnicity nor religion as possible allies in accomplishing its mission. If it is to be something shared by all, it has to be language. However, It is
not enough for that language to unite all Egyptians; it also has to
distinguish them, set them apart from the “others”. This is why it has
to be so “different”, so “independent”.

The fact that Ghaly, spiritus movens of this project, as well as –
judging by their contributions and/or user pages – some other WM
users are Christians should not be underestimated. Members of the
minorities or marginalised groups tend to be more active in the field of
identity politics, more eager to look for alternatives to practices and
ideologies, which members of the dominant group(s) might
comfortably and unreflectively adhere to. Some of the opponents of
Wikipedia Masry have been quick in picking up on the religious
affiliation of some prominent WM users, using it as a counter-
argument against this project which is then seen as antagonistic to
Islam and/or the Arab nation.6 It almost goes without saying that there
are also those who see in Wikipedia Masry yet another Jewish plot.7

On January 6, 2010, in a coffee shop in downtown Cairo, I
interviewed Nabil (a pseudonym), a twenty-three year old Masry
Wikipedian, who talked to me about his long-term engagement with
Wikipedia. A student of English, Nabil described himself as
“passionate about languages”.

6 This is a familiar pattern. Writing about Salama Musa and Lewis Awad,
two main Egyptian advocates of the use of the dialect in writing, Suleiman
reminds us that “[t]he language-defenders subjected [them] to ferocious
attacks. Their Copt background was used as a stick with which to beat
them.” (2004:79)

7 Watch, for example, the Youtube video listed in the Appendix [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmzZKUCjYbw]
Ivan Panovic

were against, many supported it, there were many attacks, they still
attack us. It’s a real battle.

Until the day we had our interview, Ghaly and Nabil had never met
each other. Nabil still contributes to all three Wikipedias – in English,
Arabic and Masry. Nabil is a Muslim.

What unites Nabil and Ghaly is not necessarily hatred towards
Islam or Arabs. It is their similarly articulated nationalism, and their
love and appreciation for their native tongue that brings them together.
The fact that both of them, as well as some other Masry Wikipedians,
continue to contribute to Arabic Wikipedia is neither paradoxical nor
surprising. Although it helps us see them in a light different than the
one cast on them by their opponents (for whom they are traitors,
ignoramuses, illiterates, conspirators, agents, enemies of Arabic,
Arabs and Islam, etc.), this should not be taken to mean that they are
inevitably active supporters of it, schizophrenics who spend their time
building and improving Arabic Wikipedia by writing in fasSha just to
go on later to defy it, by writing in 'ammtiyra on Wikipedia Masry.
Simply, as far as contemporary Arabic and its varieties are concerned,
Wikipedia in fasSha was there first to meet their desire to participate in
a collaborative act of creating and disseminating knowledge, a desire
that earlier could have been fulfilled only through their participation in
Wikipedia’s editions written in foreign languages they might have been
good at.

For many people around the world, being a Wikipedian is a serious
business, an endeavour to which they dedicate a lot of time and effort.
At the same time, Wikipedia is a site of contest among various

The Beginnings of Wikipedia Masry

perceptions of what constitutes valid, reliable information, and how
that information should be delivered. With numerous acts of editing,
deleting, reformulating, reverting, vandalism and edit-wars, especially
in the articles dealing with sensitive and controversial topics,
Wikipedia often becomes a battlefield of competing world views,
visions, and ideological positions. My argument is that this contesting
character of Wikipedia, as well as Masry Wikipedians’ concern with
the content and linguistic form of Wikipedia articles, should be
accounted for in order to understand this kind of cross-wikedian
code-switching in which some of them engage. When participating in
Arabic Wikipedia, it is the content they care about. Given that the
ideological allegiances of many fasSha-only contributors to Arabic
Wikipedia differ in their treatment of particular topics, Masry
Wikipedians concerned with those topics will have to keep a watchful
eye over the evolving and changing content. The form, however, is
already given and codified. All they have to know is how to write it
properly. They do not have to have any emotional investment in it.
And they most likely do not. On the other hand, Wikipedia Masry,
which is to be written in a variety that, due to its uncodified state,
needs their attention and elaboration, remains their primary project
which their joint efforts and emotions are directed. It is where
they have to struggle with both content and form.

I do not wish to imply here that all Masry Wikipedians think and
act alike. Quite the contrary! With its discussion pages, Wikipedia

8 Go, for example, over the history of editions and changes of the WA article
on Copts. Some of the editors contribute both to WM and WA.
Ivan Panovic

offers a wonderful opportunity to look behind the scene and witness the ongoing debates, not only between Masry Wikipedians and their opponents, but also among Masry Wikipedians themselves. It opens a window onto a microcosm in which proposals are made and discussed, options debated, preferences and choices criticised or approved, positions of power and authority negotiated and shifted, and finally, certain decisions made and general guidelines for the group’s activity endorsed. Since it is made up of individuals joined around a common interest, or a set of interests, Wikipedia could be approached as a sort of anthropological laboratory in which to observe how old ideologies are reproduced, and how some new ones might be coming into being.

It would be wrong to assume that WM is all about nationalism. A lot of it is indeed about language. But it is also a kind of project where the language practice and its output go hand in hand with nationalist ideologies. This is why Masry Wikipedians are not merely a group of young Egyptians who write in ʿammīyya. They are at the same time—be it even on a small-scale level—language planners.

Language planning refers to the efforts to manage, modify or influence the habitual practice of individuals as part of a community. There are two kinds of language planning: status planning and corpus planning. Status planning refers to the process of selecting a language or a variety for use. Corpus planning is the process by which the language or variety selected is codified, i.e. choices are made to standardise spelling, grammar, lexicon etc. (Bassiouney 2009: 205)

Masry Wikipedians are engaged in both kinds of language planning. On the level of status planning, their choice is clear—it is ʿammīyya or, as they call it, “Masry’ that is to be used by the community of users. However, that choice is met with certain difficulties—ʿammīyya is anything but codified. It does not have an official status; it is not taught in schools; it has never been subjected to official corpus planning, and has therefore not received sufficient attention and treatment so as to get a widely accepted set of orthographic guidelines. Those who want to write in it are left to their own intuition, knowledge of fuṣHa, and a possible reader’s experience gained through their exposure to other ʿammīyya texts.

In such a situation, Masry Wikipedians were compelled to come up with recommendations on how to write in “Masry”—اِزاَى تَكِبِفِي وُسَبِيْلٍ مَصرى A special page (WM: ʿammīyya: طريق التعبئة) is devoted to these guidelines, at the beginning of which we read:

Wikipedia Masry is written in the Egyptian language, spoken by Egyptians, and it is written in the way they write it in their letters to each other in their everyday life. Egyptians write Egyptian in novels, stage plays, popular poetry, as well as in comic magazines, advertisements and a little bit in newspapers.

Then follows the first instruction on how to write “Masry”, which is a rather liberal one, apparently aimed at encouraging as many new contributors as possible:

مُكِنُّ يَكْتِبُ المصْرِيُّ بِأَيْ رَطْبَةَ طَالِئَةٍ أَيْ مَصرِيُّ مُكِنُّ يَكْتِبُها. مَا دَام تُشُرِّف
تكَبُ بالمصْرِيْ أَكْبَرَ الَّذِي تَعْرَفُ فِي وُسَبِيْلٍ مَصرى.
Ivan Panovic

Egyptian can be written in any way as long as any Egyptian can understand it. If you know how to write in Egyptian, write what it is that you know in Wikipedia Masry.

This is followed by a list of eleven “general principles” given in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be relaxed when writing as long as you are not biased.</td>
<td>حاول أن تحسن في الكتابة طالما لم تتحيز.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to quote sources for what you are saying.</td>
<td>حاول تحضير المصادر التي تجيء منها كلامك.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write, edit, translate, and change the articles, but do not insult anyone.</td>
<td>حاول كتاب، تعديل، ترجمة، وتغيير القالات بس ما تقدح حسب.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the way you like, but Cairene is the well-known way for writing the Egyptian language. What is important is that Egyptians should understand it.</td>
<td>حاول كتابة بالشكل الذي تحب، بس الديروي هي الطريقة المشهورة لكتابة الكلام المصري؛ الهم يفهمها المصريين.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to be neutral.</td>
<td>حاول تكون كاملاً.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not defame anyone.</td>
<td>ما تدعش عجلك.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not copy sources that are copyrighted.</td>
<td>ما تقتلك ماد يحتوي كلامك مخالفين.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to sign in so that your contributions are saved under your name and not your IP address. And don't forget to sign with ———— on the discussion page.</td>
<td>حاول تسجيل دخلك عند مداخلة مساهماتك IP بالاسم كلامك مش اسم عنوان الباكيو، و ما تنسى تضيء ———— في صفح المداخلة.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, these principles are intended as a general guide of conduct for the users. Most of them are translations/adaptations of general Wikipedia rules. They are advisory much more than prescriptive and, except for the fourth one which recommends the use of Cairene and has been discussed above, they do not deal with issues of linguistic form or orthography. These issues are, in turn, addressed in a list of “hints on orthography” the most important of which could be summarised as follows:

Even though one of the users developed a Latin-based alphabet (modelled after the one used for Maltese), his proposal was rejected, and the Arabic script is now predominantly used for writing Masry in Wikipedia Masry. An option is left to those who, for one reason or another, wish to use Romanised script, however, this practice seems to be discouraged. It is suggested that in the title of the articles only the conventional Arabic letters should be used. Within the body of the article, however, it is allowed to use three additional letters in
rendering the phonemes /pl/, /ʃ/, and /ɬ/. These are: ﻓُذِّ. The letter .sy should not be used with two dots written underneath it, because “it is not a common way of writing it among Egyptians.” Instead, ٍ (without dots) should be used, but since these two are the same letter, if someone wants to write the form with dots, “no problem” (مباشر). “Feminine -ة” is to be written “according to its pronunciation”, that is, it should be marked with two dots only when the noun is the first part of a construct state. Otherwise, it should be written as ٍ.

“Qaf” should be retained in words “of Arabic origin.” The letter ٤ should be retained in those Arabic words where it is pronounced as /s/, and substituted with ٥ in those cases where it is pronounced as /t/. The same goes for ٤ which is to be kept when pronounced as /s/, and replaced with ٥ when it is pronounced as /d/. At the beginning of the words starting with the glottal stop, only “al-wa” should be used, “hamza” is to be used in its medial and final position. Again, if someone wants to mark “hamza al-qaf” at the beginning of the word, “no problem”. Finally, it is considered easier and clearer to write a preposition as “separated from the word that comes after it”, such as ٤ ف اوروبا (in Europe), reflecting two different pronunciations /fi’/urubba:/ /f/-urubba/), rather than ٤ ف اوروبا.

According to Holes, “[i]n different areas of the Arab world, different traditions for transliterating the local dialect have grown up” (2004: 93), “but the general aims are the same: to spell the dialectal consonants in the way they are pronounced and reflect, insofar as that is possible in a script that lacks short vowel marks, the salient junctural, prasal and phonotactic features of the dialect that would be obscured by the standard orthographic conventions” (95). The WM orthographic guidelines, except in the case of feminine ending, do not address the issue of how “the salient junctural, prasal and phonotactic features” of ٍاممٍيٍّ should be dealt with in writing, leaving it up to the WM article writers to decide, for example, which instances (if any) of contextual shortening or extending of certain vowels are to be marked in script. In addition, the “piece of advice” about preserving the letter “qaf” instead of replacing it with “hamza”, qualifies the above conclusion made by Holes, given that in Cairene ٍاممٍيٍّ, as it is the case in some other urban dialects of Arabic, voiceless uvular plosive /q/ is almost exclusively backed and thus realised as a glottal stop /ʔ/ (Holes 2004: 73).

A small number of examples of substituting “qaf” with “hamza” have indeed been attested in some of the WM texts:

الاصابع - (وقت دراسه) / (وقت دراسه) - “during his studies”, or
(القصيدة) / (القصيدة) - “poems”

Also – and that being case much more in discussions than in the articles themselves – I have encountered a few instances of hypercorrection in the opposite direction, where the usual colloquial realisation of /q/ as a glottal stop is over-generalised in writing so that “qaf” appears in an etymologically unjustified position where “hamza” would be expected:

وكانوا يدخلوا أكل في الورد - (للورد) / (للورد) - “they used to bring food into the room” – the word is of
Turkish origin and there are no etymological reasons for the restitution of “qaf” – (WM: درر الدر)

Still, based on my experience with "ammiiyya texts in general, and WM texts in particular, I maintain that, except in certain instances, the retention of “qaf” is the much more favoured Egyptian practice of writing "ammiiyya."

As was previously noted, WM orthographic guidelines are very few. Adding to that the fact that they are rather flexible and not strictly enforced, but just recommended, probably in an expectation that authors – who themselves must undoubtedly vary in terms of education and experience in reading and writing – will "try" to observe them, it is no wonder that WM texts exhibit a high degree of variation. As for the paucity of rules on how to handle "ammiiyya in writing, it should be stressed that even when fuSHa orthographic rules are strictly applied to the verb phrase, the written outcome may – in many instances – leave little doubt about the word's colloquial rendering. This particularly holds true when the verb is embedded in-between the poles of the discontinuous negative morpheme m(a)-sh, prefixed by temporal/aspectual markers b(i)-/h(a)-, and/or followed by suffix/es indicating bound pronominal direct object and/or pronominal complement, which, according to Holes, at least in the case of Cairene "should be included as part of the verb phrase on phonological grounds" (2004: 217):

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"Cleopatra committed suicide so that she would not fall captive to the enemy." (WM: كليوباترا لسامة : اولاد

"Cleopatra had four children" (ibid.)

"When he was born, they pierced his ear to protect him from the evil eye since people would think he was a girl, which is a rural custom." (WM: مرسال

"it [language] becomes petrified because it expresses something that existed a long time ago, and no longer exists." (ibid.)

"Welcome to Wikipedia Masry. You can start a page about any topic and I will make a link to it [that topic] on the main page" (WM – main page, discussion)

It is in the realm of rendering nouns and prepositional phrases where the writers might feel tempted to "experiment" orthographically. Apart from instances of hypercorrections, overgeneralisations (قُرَد) and pure mistakes (typographic or grammatical), this experimentation might also be due to the fact that a

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10 A famous exception would be the widespread appearance of the form اَيِّى /lawd/, particularly in its adverbial use ("very").

11 Note also the insertion of اَى to mark the change of the plural of the type "دَف" into دَف when preceded by numbers 3-10.

12 Note the writing of prepositions, contrary to the relevant suggestion.
strict adherence to etymological orthography could undermine the previously discussed ideological position that 'ammitya is a distinct language, different and separate from fuSHA.

It should be kept in mind that Wikipedia is an evolving, collaborative project where new articles are being added while the old ones are being edited. While it is important for Masry Wikipedians to start new entries, thus justifying their Wikipedia by its constant growth, they are very much involved in edits and expansions of the existing articles. These interventions can be traced on the “history” pages that accompany each article. Although, as far as I was able to observe, some of these interventions are of a linguistic nature, most of them are directed towards the content of the articles. Therefore, it is not rare to find a piece that has been edited many times, yet still demonstrates a very high degree of variation:

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Minister in the government of Ismail Sidy, as well as the representative in the Senate and President of the Academy of the Arabic Language. According to the book “The Notables of the Academy of the Arabic Language” by Muhammad el-Husseini, while Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed acted as President of the Academy, the Free Officers of the July 23 Revolution offered him to become president of Egypt, but he refused (lit. he said “no”). He also worked as the President of the National Library...

In the excerpt above, contrary to the WM orthographic guidelines, feminine /h/ is marked throughout the text in all instances where it would not be pronounced. At the same time, and again in contrast to these guidelines, the form وراء أمناء, clearly marks the correct ‘ammitya pronunciation, and so does the above cited. Similarly, the forms رائد رائد and رائد رائد depart from more usual لإنه ألو and إنه لإنه ألو. Although in close proximity, the forms تنب وينب and تنب تنب, as well as أ部主任弹簧 and أ部主任弹簧, are in free variation. Since “urban” dialects, such as Cairene and Damascene [...] have [Subject-Verb-Complement] as the normal order for all types of messages” (Holes 2004: 253), the verb-first type of sentence that opens the paragraph and continues itself through a syntactic coordination of several predicates (including the embedded verb-first clause “عرض عليه الضباط الأحرار “...” غرض عليه الضباط الأحرار “...) might be seen as having a fuSHA flavour.13 The same goes for the lexical choice of the verb يصبح ("to become"). And finally, what is more interesting, the fuSHA-like use of circumstantial qualifier (Haal-accusative) – اسم راي – could be symptomatic of an attempt at “elevating” the style in a stretch of what aims to be colloquial sentences.

13 This is not to suggest that SVCOMP is the only word order in ‘ammitya. For an elaborate overview of syntactic, semantic and discourse-related factors governing word order in both Modern Standard and spoken Arabic, see Holes 2004: 250-264.

Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed graduated from Law School in 1894. During his studies, he became acquainted with Imam Muhammad Abduh and got influenced by his reformist ideas. He worked as the Minister of Education, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, then Deputy Prime
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However, this is not quite the case. Once compared to the equivalent WA article, the text quoted above is no more than an attempt at “translating”, or more precisely, “colloquialising” a paragraph previously written in fuSHa.¹⁴

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"Egyptianisation" of verbal forms according to ‘amniyya morphological patterns (all examples being of pattern V)

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| أن يصبح | syntactic adjustment (and, again, orthographic modification) |

¹⁴ The part which is omitted from the article in Wikipedia Masry is given in square brackets.
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could hardly support Masry Wikipedians' previously quoted claim that "Modern Egyptian language is [...] actually a separate language of Hamitic (African) origin, [...] different from Arabic." (WM - اللغة - الإمبراطورية الخليجية)

At the same time, this text is indeed an extreme example of lexical, morphological, syntactic and stylistic "hybridisation" that sometimes occurs when Masry Wikipedians take *fuShA* as their point of departure. As such, it should not be taken as representative of the overall linguistic outlook of Wikipedia Masry. There are, in fact, a lot of articles that are more consistent with the desire and determination to write in Masry, such as the entry on the "Egyptian School of Nationalist Thought" (WM - مدرسة الفكر الوطني المصرية - single-handedly written and edited by an experienced, very active and well-read contributor, Samsam22.

However, even there one can notice certain syntactic and stylistic features that bring the language of this text closer to the style of contemporary expository prose in what is usually labelled Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Apart from instances of the verb-first type of sentence and strict agreement of nisba-adjectives, these would also include:

1. deflected agreement between the plural human subject and its preceding predicate:

   "Their leaders were many Egyptian thinkers and writers."

   According to Holes, "[u]nlike in MSA, agreement between V and

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   S in the modern dialects is not dependent on word order: an initial V agrees with a following S in the same way as it does when S is initial" (2004: 264). The initial verb in the example above clearly does not agree fully with the following subject.15 Belnap provides a corpus-based description of agreement variability in Cairene Arabic, but his paper "focuses particularly on the variation between 'deflected' (feminine singular) and 'strict' (plural) agreement with plural head nouns [...]" (1993: 98 – emphasis mine), so it is hard to use his findings in accounting for what seems to be an MSA feature in these examples.16

2. the "proper"/"literary" way (from the prescriptivist point of view) of constructing *Daafa* containing more than one head-noun:

   &nbsp;

   "the Egyptian national identity and its dissociation from the Arab culture and history" / "[the necessary conditions] for the Egyptian nation to rise, advance and develop as a progressive, efficient state"

   as opposed to the example found in the same excerpt – الأول ثالث ر ة نقُد الصوره الفلكي ("first, [through] the analysis and critique of the wrong image") – which represents a type of coordinated structure

15 Neither, for example, do those in the sentences quoted earlier:

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that has become quite common in contemporary media MSA (Holes 2004: 204).

and finally, frequent resorting to nominalisation:

"Egypt's ability to shake off from its robe the stains that had got stuck to it, rise and progress together with the advanced, developed nations."

"In order to achieve authenticity, it is necessary to purify the Egyptian culture of alien elements, especially those from the Arab region."

"how a new, beautiful image of Egypt could be created"

Here, it is interesting to note that nominalisation in MSA, as a "syntactic ploy that allows the writer to give the required flavour of objectivity to his or her statements and claims" (Holes 2004: 320), although perfectly acceptable (yet less frequent) in dialects, is interpreted by Holes as a possible "avoidance strategy: one of the means [...] by which written style can be distanced and consciously marked as different from dialectal Arabic" (323). Here, it is obviously employed as a means of elevating the style of a written Arabic dialect.

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Similarly, in some other articles in Wikipedia Masry, another feature of contemporary journalistic Arabic is attested – the use of periphrastic passives:

"[...] the Egyptian deity Osiris-Apis, from which the name Serapis is derived."

"[...] in the Middle Ages, Latin was the language of Europe and it was linked to religion in such a way that departing from Latin used to be considered blasphemy and atheism [...]"

A general conclusion is that despite Masry Wikipedians' intention to write in "Masry", many examples of variation could be found at
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Wikipedia Masry. They signal that active editors of WM articles apparently have no desire or time to intervene linguistically in already existing articles, not even when it comes to promoting those few WM recommendations. They do not seem to try to “polish” the texts and make them formally consistent, thus setting up orthographic standards for the community to use. If codification and standardisation are about reducing inconsistencies, prescribing what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is not, how much variation and under which circumstances could be tolerated, then a conclusion based on this preliminary assessment of a corpus of WM texts is that, over its first year of existence, Wikipedia Masry has been taking a more heteroglossic approach.

As for the relationship between the language of Wikipedia Masry and other, previously studied, "mixed" forms of Arabic, there are two inter-related key points at play – (1) the multi-user/writer character of the great majority of WM articles, and (2) mixing as the norm vs. mixing as an unintended outcome. Previous work on mixed forms (e.g., Bassiouney 2006, Eid 2002, Holes 1993, Mejdel 2006, Rosenbaum 2000) suggests that mixing is a choice, a strategy, an outcome of a single speaker's (or writer's, in the case of Rosenbaum's fushammiyya) decision to mix. As such, it is a voluntary act (probably even more so when it comes to writing). Such mixing correlates to the topic, speaker's change of roles, intended effect on the audience etc. In the case of Wikipedia Masry, on the other hand, proclaimed/promoted choice is Masry, and mixing, when it appears, seems to be an involuntary outcome of several contributors’ attempt to write in

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Masry. Of course, it is not always possible to draw a clear-cut line between fuSHA and ‘ammiyya at every linguistic level and many (particularly lexical and syntactic) features are shared between the two, especially in higher registers of educated speakers ‘ammiyya.

Given the virtual non-existence of relevant ‘ammiyya texts that could be looked up to as models when writing encyclopedic entries in ‘ammiyya, an important factor contributing to the occurrence of fuSHA elements in WM articles is that some of them are translated from Wikipedia al-Arabiyah. This creates opportunities for fuSHA elements to creep into texts that are intended to be written entirely in ‘ammiyya.

Masry Wikipedians manipulate (and at times even augment) linguistic differences between fuSHA and ‘ammiyya in order to secure and sustain recognition for what they perceive to be an “independent language”. This in turn often results in a highly mixed written discourse throughout Wikipedia Masry with a number of innovative and unusual (primarily lexical and orthographic) solutions.

In a thought provoking study of “a unique case in the history of drama translation in Egypt”, the translation of Othello produced by an Egyptian psychoanalyst Moustapha Safouan in 1998, Sameh Hanna discusses Safouan's "strategic use of ‘ammiyya" in relation to its being grounded "in a heterodoxic understanding of language, identity and the relation between them” (2009: 158):

My translation of Othello into spoken Egyptian was meant to show that spoken Arabic, as well as any living language, has all the ingredients that make it possible to get an admirable literature out of it. I chose Shakespeare because his greatness is indisputable. If it is possible to translate him into our mother tongue, disdainfully
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disparaged as 'vulgar', then the proof is given that our mother tongue
too can attain the 'sublime'.
Moustafa Safouan (quoted in Hanna 2009:169)

Hanna, however, points to some instances where, despite his
intention to produce a translation entirely in ‘ammīyya, Safouan “had
to use fuṣḥa, both in his discourse on the translation and in the
translation itself” (2009: 176), which Hanna describes as a
“paradoxical” aspect of Safouan’s project, apparently emerging from a
discrepancy between his determination to bring Shakespeare to
“disadvantaged Egyptians […] who do not have a university degree
nor mastery of classical Arabic and can only understand and
appreciate the language variety they use in everyday life” (168), and
his eventual use of a form that, as he later admitted, was “addressed to
‘intellectuals with enlightened minds’.” (176)

Masry Wikipedians apparently share Safouan’s ambition to bestow
upon ‘ammīyya the status of a written language. And just as in the case
of his translation, their “heterodox” endeavour brings about
“paradoxical” results. Their programmatic statements and lexical
coinages reflect an ideology that sees ‘ammīyya as separate and
different from fuṣḥa. But their texts, whether “translated” or
originally written, suggest that – lexically, grammatically and
stylistically – this “wikipedic” ‘ammīyya is still very much dependent
on fuṣḥa.

Wikipedia Masry is still in its beginnings. It is yet to be seen how it
will be developing over time. In their genre analysis of on-line
encyclopaedias, Emigh & Herring conclude with an expectation of

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“increasing formality and homogeneity across the lifespan of a
Wikipedia entry, as well as differences in formality between
beginning and experienced contributors” (2005: 10). This finding,
they argue, goes against expectations of greater informality which is
conditioned by the very principle of open-access. If formality comes
with age, it will be interesting to follow young Wikipedia Masry as it
grows older. For the time being, it is characterised by a high degree of
informality and linguistic variation. Its multivocality might at times
amount to cacophony. However, Wikipedia Masry remains an
ambitious and in a way daring attempt at creating yet another place in
cyberspace for Egyptians to do something which, in the realm of
social practice, is still often perceived as “degrading” – to write in
their native tongue.
Appendix

The primary site of the debate about Wikipedia Masry is, naturally, Wikipedia Masry itself. Nearly every Wikipedia page (be it an article, a user's profile, or, for example, a help-page) has its discussion section (WM: المنقولة لصفحتك الرئيسيه), so does it WM main page. See also WM: صفحات المناقشة.

An insight into the debate spurred on by this project in the Egyptian and Arab blogsphere could be gained through an overview offered by Global Voices at [http://globalvoicesonline.org/2008/12/07/egypt-egyptian-dialect-wikipedia/].

On Facebook, there are by now several WM-related pages and groups:

- (support group) http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=37256146758&ref=sear ch&id=36812494.2570127035..1
- ("Anti Wikipedia Masry") http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=44371851245&ref=sear ch&id=36812494.2570127035..1
- ("No to Wikipedia Masry") http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=54335774858&ref=sear ch&id=36812494.2570127035..1
- ("Campaign to destroy Wikipedia Masri") http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=75335596943&ref=sear ch&id=36812494.4214208992..1

An engaged, anti-WM Youtube clip “The Extinction of FuShA” (القرارات léلاة العربية الصحي) could be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmbZkUCjYbw [accessed 15 January 2010].

It would be nearly impossible to provide all the web-references about this debate. Here, I provide just a small sample of relevant links:

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http://egyptianchronicles.blogspot.com/2008/12/egyptian-dialect-wikipedia.html
http://Sabar5air.wordpress.com/2009/01/11/wikipedia-masri/
http://article.gmane.org/gmane.org.wikimedia.foundation/33419
http://www.hazemkhaleld.com/blog/%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%88%8A%D8%A7/D8%A7/D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7/%D9%88%D8%A7/D8%A8%8A%D9%84%D9%85%8B%85%8B%81/D9%8A%D8%96F/
http://www.teedoz.com/2009/%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%8D%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7/%D8%A8%8A%D9%84%D9%85%8B%85%8B%81/D9%8A/
http://gaberism.net/2008/12/12/%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%83%D9%8A%D8%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7/%D9%85%8B%81/D9%8A/

N.B. - all links checked and active on 15 January 2010.
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