published without fear of legal action."

Approaches to Arabic Linguistics is a very carefully edited collection of solid essays, and the editors deserve praise; the only major slip in accuracy I noticed is the disorderly, uncorrected transcription of Clive Holes's article, probably attributable to the original transcription, a kind of *Vorlage* written by the Jordanian collector of the poems. The usability of the rich contents of the volume is substantially increased by a 57-page index. Above all, the versatility and high quality make it most rewarding reading for students, teachers, and researchers working in the field of Arabic linguistics.

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Gunvor Mejdell, *Mixed Styles in Spoken Arabic in Egypt. Somewhere between Order and Chaos*. Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics. Vol. 48. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006. ISSN 0081-8461, ISBN-13: 978-90-04-14986-1, ISBN-10: 90-04-14986-4. 481 pp.

Ever since Charles A. Ferguson's classic article *Diglossia* (1959), the concept of diglossia in Arabic has been elaborated and modified by several researchers who point out that Ferguson's description is too categorical and overlooks the range of sociodialectal variation. Thus, Haim Blanc (1960) identified five different stylistic levels: plain colloquial, koineized colloquial (with levelling devices), semi-literary or elevated colloquial, modified classical, and standard classical. Also, El-Saʿīd Muḥammad Badawi (1973) defines five levels which he places within the continuum of contemporary Egyptian Arabic, two in the domain of Standard Arabic (*fuṣḥā al-turāṯ*, *fuṣḥā al-ʿaṣr*) and three in the sphere of Colloquial Arabic, reflecting different levels of the speakers' education (*ʿāmmiyyat al-muṯaqqafīn*, *ʿāmmiyyat al-mutanawwirīn*, and *ʿāmmiyyat al-ummiyyīn*), each level sliding into the next as "the colours of the rainbow". Gustav Meiseles (1980) identifies four levels (Literary or Standard Arabic, Oral Literary Arabic, Educated Spoken Arabic, and

Basic or Plain Arabic), whereas Shahir A. El-Hassan (1977), Youssef Mahmoud (1986), and T.F. Mitchell (1986) posit a single intermediate variety, Educated Spoken Arabic, "created and maintained by the constant interplay of written and vernacular Arabic" (Mitchell). Concepts such as triglossia and multiglossia have also been used in order to describe the complicated linguistic situation. In an article published in *Festschrift* Badawi (1991 [1996]), Ferguson revisits the issue and claims that 'diglossia' is still the most appropriate label since "the analyst finds two poles in terms of which the intermediate varieties can be described; there is no third pole". Mejdell strongly agrees with this view, preferring—in my opinion with good reason—the term 'diglossic continuum' to designate the situation in Arabic speech communities. All the other 'levels', however many levels one proposes, are, in Clive Holes's words, "probabilistic, not absolute".

Gunvor Mejdell's monograph is an empirical investigation of the language use within a specific 'genre', the panel presentation at a public seminar. The data consist of four presentations at a public seminar on problems of higher education in Egypt, organized by the American University in Cairo in 1991, and two presentations at a literary seminar on a newly published short story collection, organized at the Tagammuᶜ party premises in Cairo in 1988. The length of both recordings is approximately one hour, and very careful and systematic transcripts (34 pages) are given in the appendix. Although the speakers were to some extent mentally prepared, none had an underlying written paper. Five of the seven speakers were subsequently interviewed about their educational background and their linguistic preferences; they also assessed the kind of social setting of their presentations. Asked about the linguistic form used, they recognized it as some kind of compromise, as the high *fuṣḥā* variety would sound pedantic and artificial in the context of all-Egyptian listeners.

In the analysis of the material, the basic question was: to what extent do speakers of extratemporaneous academic monologue respond to a similar setting in a similar way? Would the speakers converge in their use of variant forms; if so, to what extent and for what items? Would their choice of variants provide evidence for an existent or emerging norm regulating speech of this kind? How

long has the process of conventionalization been proceeding?

In view of the limited material, Mejdell judiciously concentrates the investigation on variable grammatical features of high frequency, and thoroughly discusses all the occurrences in context, thus going deeper than previous stylistic analyses based on purely statistical counts and correlations, among which especially D.E. Schulz, *Diglossia and Variation in Formal Spoken Arabic in Egypt* (1981) addresses the same questions. The linguistic variables selected for the analysis by Mejdell are: (a) complementizers: Standard Arabic (= SA) *ʾan, ʾanna* vs. Egyptian Arabic (= EA) *ʾinn* (*ʾinnu*) or zero; (b) demonstratives: SA *hāḏā* + variants vs. EA *da* + variants; (c) negations: SA *la/lā, lam, lan, laysa, ma/mā* vs. EA *ma...š* and *miš*; (d) the relative phrase: SA *allaḏi/allaḏī* + variants vs. EA *illi*; and (e) pronoun suffixation on verbs and nouns.

It is characteristic of Mejdell's painstaking study that she discusses and carefully defines all the key concepts she uses. A central concept is *genre*, which she defines in terms elaborated by Halliday (1968) and Bakhtin (1986). In the words of the former, "it is not the event or state of affairs being talked about that determines the [linguistic] choice, but the convention that a certain kind of language is appropriate to a certain use." This certain use, if recurrent, constitutes a 'genre', and the conventionalization of a certain kind of language for this genre produces a 'style'. According to Bakhtin, the genre has normative force: it influences the structure of the text and its style, i.e., the grammatical and lexical features. From this standpoint, Mejdell's investigation explores the behaviour of speakers in a recurrent situational context, which typically would develop its speech genres (extemporaneous academic discourse, panel presentations) or subgenres (literary seminar), and the focus is on linguistic features.

Before discussing the stylistic range used in the presentations, Mejdell clarifies her stylistic analysis on the basis of the notions of 'indicator' and 'marker', as defined by Labov (1972). According to this terminology, 'marker' is a variable which has taken on social evaluation and is perceived at a conscious level. Markers have stylistic value; indicators tend not to. Thus, variants of structural features that are different in SA and EA are indicators of these

language forms, while only variants that are perceived as significant by the speakers are stylistic markers.

A central notion is also 'saliency', which as a perceptual phenomenon reflects an awareness of speakers and listeners with regard to certain features and makes these amenable to monitoring and conscious use to a larger extent than features which are less salient. The crux of this distinction has been reflected in a few previous studies on variation in Arabic. Thus, studies on phonological variation show that the SA unvoiced interdental /t̲ / appears to be highly marked for SA, as a matter of fact more marked than its voiced counterpart /d̲/ and other SA variants. In the domain of morphology, the morpheme *bi-* is one of the most important indicators of Colloquial Arabic, but it appears to have only little stylistic value. It may co-occur with SA verbal forms and other SA features that are quite high on the continuum, without distracting from a style being perceived as elevated. Consequently, it cannot be regarded as a stylistic marker. On the other hand, EA negative particles appear to be perceived as strong EA markers. Another strong marker of colloquial style is the use of the negations *miš* and *ma...š*. In the academic panel discussions analysed by Mejdell, they are avoided by most speakers. Among the other features investigated, the complementizer shows greater variability in use and has weak salience as a colloquial marker; as to pronoun suffixation, its low stylistic salience combined with lesser complexity makes the EA variants more attractive to use than the SA variants, which involve active monitoring of case and mood functions. Further colloquial indicators investigated are the defined article *il-* and the 3rd p. sing. feminine morpheme *-it* in the perfect, which have a very low stylistic value.

An interesting factor probably influencing the choice of variants is based on Trudgill's observation (1986) that certain forms are overtly stigmatized because there is a high-status variant of the stigmatized form, and this high-status variant tallies with the orthography while the stigmatized variant does not. Among the variables analyzed by Mejdell, the negations, relatives, and demonstratives have in EA variants that may be avoided in an SA-oriented style because they do not tally with the orthography based on SA variants. On the other hand, the orthographical shapes of

the complementizer and pronominal suffixes can be realized as either SA or EA, and the colloquial forms are therefore fully acceptable in rather formal Arabic. For this phenomenon, Mejdell gives a plausible common sense explanation: such visible differences are strongly focused on, and mistakes are corrected in school education, whereas 'mental' colloquial forms which are not reflected in writing would go unnoticed.

It was hypothesized at the outset that a recurrent situation such as panel presentations in an academic setting would represent a *genre*. A thorough study proves that the features analyzed show a most uneven distribution of variants across speakers. For example, one speaker does not use any EA negations and hardly any EA demonstratives, while all others use both EA and SA variants of all features. On the other hand, another speaker displays a preference for SA variants in most variables, but frequently uses EA negations. Two of the speakers have a clearly SA-oriented discourse style, while one speaker is obviously EA-oriented. The statistics were complemented by data for some typical EA function words, and the comparison showed the same interspeaker distribution as the analyses of the complementizers, demonstratives, negations, the relative phrase, and pronoun suffixation on verbs and nouns.

It must therefore be concluded that speakers do not respond to a similar setting in a similar way.

Mejdell is, however, not content with this well-based conclusion, which disregards contextual factors. She points out that the situation or context itself is stylistically ambiguous, and accordingly, the speakers have different perceptions about the degree of formality that it represents. As a matter of fact, the two seminars may not be as similar as first assumed, but, due to differences in topic and audience, they rather represent different 'subgenres' of 'academic panel presentations'.

Well versed in sociolinguistic literature, not only concerning Arabic, but languages in common—as is evident from the versatile, relevant references—and using theoretical tools with circumspection, Gunvor Mejdell has written an exemplary study on a most complicated issue. Although based on necessarily limited material, the results of the investigation are convincing, thanks to the skilfully selected linguistic variables, the thoroughness of the

theoretical discussion, and the admirable precision in the use of key concepts.

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