



Students' Attitude Towards Arabic Language Varieties: The Case of the Fuṣḥā Arabic

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Abstract: *Arabic speaking countries live in diglossic communities. This is where two or more varieties of a language are used by the same speech community. This paper examines students' attitude towards Arabic language varieties. It focuses mainly on Egyptian students' attitude towards the fuṣḥā on one hand and the Egyptian Arabic (EA) variety on the other. A survey of fifty university students from the American University in Cairo and Ain Shams University, Cairo was conducted using the questionnaire instrument. The data was analysed descriptively. The study reveals that Egyptian students have a slightly positive attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic. Notwithstanding, they tend to exhibit positive affective and behavioural tendencies towards EA. Based on this, the study proposes that language planners and for that matter, Arab states should adopt a vibrant 'status planning', whereby fuṣḥā is properly recognized and widely used in official and state institutions and functions.*

Keywords: language attitude, diglossia, Arabic language varieties, fuṣḥā, Egyptian Arabic (EA)

Introduction

Arabic speaking countries live in diglossic communities. Diglossia is a situation where two or more varieties of a language are used by a single language community. *Ferguson* (1959) maintains that a state of Diglossia supposes a language situation where different varieties of the language are used interchangeably. In addition to the standard variety, there are other primary varieties, which may be local or even regional. Often, the standard language is a highly codified superposed variety that has a complex grammatical structure (p345). Although a lot of modification has occurred since *Ferguson* (1959) first introduced his concept of diglossia,

the fact remains that Arabs have different attitudes towards the fuṣḥā on one hand and the other varieties in the Arab world on the other (Bassiouny, 2009). This paper thus investigates Egyptian students' attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic, which is the official Arabic variety, vis-à-vis the Egyptian variety of the Arabic language. It discusses the general view of the current linguistic situation in Egypt and reviews relevant literature. Consequently, the paper surveys a sample of students to determine their perception and attitude towards the diglossic situation in Egypt.

Overview of the linguistic situation in Egypt

Fuṣḥā Arabic is the official language of Egypt (Haeri, 1997). It refers to the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is used in formal discourse and in Arabic news broadcast on radio and television as well as in the print media (Ryding, 2005; Holes, 2004). Arabic replaced the Copto-Egyptian (an Afro-Asiatic language) language after the conquest of Egypt by the Muslims in the 7th century. Arabic since then has made inroads in Egypt and has continued to maintain its status irrespective of several attempts by successive colonial rulers to change the status-quo. According to *Tignor* (1966) the British, for instance, relegated Arabic to a lesser position in public schools because it sees it to be "too imprecise" as a wheel for science and development. Incensed with this stance, *Tignor* (1966) maintained that nationalist movement carried a lot of protests and the then British administrator, Lord Cromer was forced to reverse that educational policy in order to quell the unrest.

The Egyptian Arabic (EA), which is a variety of the Arabic language, is actually a continuum of dialects spoken by more than 80 million Egyptians (Kaye, 1998). The EA or the ʿāmmiyyat is regarded as the prestigious among the vernaculars in Egypt (Abdel-Jawad, 1986; Haeri, 1997). Besides, due to the political and cultural influence of Egypt among the Arabs, the EA is widely understood in the Arabic speaking world. According to *Versteegh* (2001), Egyptian Arabic is well understood within the Arab world. Besides, Arabs from other countries can easily adjust their speech to Egyptian if desirable (Versteegh, 2001:139).

The Arab world, including Egypt lives in a diglossic situation (Badawi, 1973; Bassiouny, 2009). The diglossic situation is a linguistic situation in which different varieties of a language live side by side within a speech community and are used for different functions and under different circumstances. Another dimension of a diglossic situation as pointed by *Ferguson* (1959) is the existence of both a high and codified variety of language as against a low variety that is used in ordinary conversation. In the case of Egypt, whether or not the fuṣḥā is still regarded as a high variety needs further investigation.

The diglossic situation in Egypt for that matter has caught the attention of many writers. A pioneering work in this regard, is El-Said Badawi's monumental work on the linguistic situation in Egypt in his book (*Mustawayāt al-arabiyya al-muāšara fī Misr 'Levels of contemporary Arabic in Egypt'*) published in 1973. Badawi explains that spoken Arabic has five multi-levels and people shift between them in their conversation

depending on sociolinguistic factors like the educational achievement of the speaker. According to Badawi (1973), each of these levels has its own distinctive linguistic properties and social functions (Wahba, 1996). These five levels are: fuṣḥā al-turāth (Classical Arabic); fuṣḥā al-‘aṣr (Modern Standard Arabic); ‘āmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn (Educated Spoken Arabic); ‘āmmiyyat al-mutanawwirīn (Semi-literate Spoken Arabic); ‘āmmiyyat ‘ummiyyīn (Illiterate Spoken Arabic). Thus, the choice of a level by a speaker mainly depends on one’s educational level.

Importantly, religious scholars like the late *Abdal-Hamid Kishk* (died December 1996) and *Muhammad Metwali Alsharawi* (died June 1998) used more of the Egyptian Arabic than the fuṣḥā in their religious discourses. *Amr Khalid*, a seasoned Muslim preacher is also fond of using the Egyptian Arabic in his preaching.

Another phenomenon of the linguistic situation in Egypt is the role of English among the educated. According to *Kachru* (1992:233), English has gained a high status in Egypt and it is becoming among one of the “expanding countries” where it is being acknowledged as a universal second language. A cursory observation of the educated, including students of AUC affirms *Kachru*’s view. *Schaub* (2000) in his study of English in Egypt pointed out that English is “not only the language of academics but serves as a lingua franca for socializing outside the classrooms” (*Schaub*, 2000).

Code switching between Arabic and English among well-educated young Egyptians is another distinct current linguistic situation found in Egypt, although subtly. *Schaub*’s (2000) view that it is done for the purposes of prestige and nothing else does not give a true picture of the reality. His view, probably, might have been influenced by the lack of the appreciation of the cultural dimensions under which those English words/phrases are used. For instance, Egyptian students maintain that they prefer to use words/phrases of insulting nature in English rather than in Arabic for reasons of culture and taboos. Again, you may hear children when you pass by, saying to you sentences like “what’s your name?” They are evidently practicing what they are being thought at school.

In spite of these linguistic realities in Egypt, it is obvious that Arabic, especially the Egyptian Arabic variety shall continue to dominate the linguistic environment for reasons of religion and affinity to the global Arabic speaking world. That said, this paper further looks at previous writings on attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic, which is assumed to be the real bonding feature, and the official variety among all the Arabs.

Studies on Language Attitude

In attitudinal language studies, language is viewed by those who speak them as marker of their identity and loyalty. According to *Fishman* (1971), language is “a referent for loyalties and animosities” as well as an indicator of status and relationships within every speech community.

Al-Mamari (2011) studied 23 foreign students learning Arabic in Oman in a quasi-longitudinal study, their perception of Arabic diglossia and Arabic as foreign language. He found that students are very aware of the diglossic situation in the country. Although confused about the situation in

their earlier levels of education, their ability to use the fuṣḥā Arabic and to relate to the local variety speaking public improved as they attain higher levels in their study. Besides, Al-Mamari (2011) also found that most students agree on the value of learning the spoken dialect besides the fuṣḥā. Al-Mamari's study did not provide information on his participants' motivation for learning Arabic. This information is vital because that will equally have an impact on their attitude towards the other varieties, like the Egyptian variety.

In a related study of Egyptians' attitude towards the use of the Egyptian Arabic in religious discourse, *Soliman* (2008) concluded that Egyptians do not see the Egyptian Arabic as a corrupt form of fuṣḥā Arabic. According to *Soliman* (2008), they see it rather as easier and beautiful. More importantly, it provides them with more vocabularies to express themselves than Classical Arabic (*Soliman*, 2008:159). This view is equally corroborated by *Ferguson* (1959) where he also claims among other things that Egyptians have positive attitude toward their language and even claim it to be the closest to the fuṣḥā. They also believe it is the easiest to learn. Arguably, some of these claims could be accepted but as to whether it is the closest to the fuṣḥā needs more empirical evidence. The role of Egypt in the Arab world, though, cannot be disputed.

Haeri (1997) who studied language, state and class in Egypt found on her question on whether Egyptians prefer ʿāmmiyyat (i.e. EA) or fuṣḥā or have no preference, she found that 68% of her respondents preferred Egyptian Arabic to fuṣḥā, 11% preferred fuṣḥā and 10% liked both. These and other findings are an exact reflection of the state of fuṣḥā in Egypt. It is not considered as a mother tongue but a variety that is reserved for religious and official discourses. *Haeri's* (1997) work explains that the Standard Arabic carries more prestige due to religious-cultural and political reasons, but not for its socio-economic function.

In a study of Palestinian students' attitude towards Modern Standard Arabic and Palestinian city Arabic, *Assaf* (2001) investigated 22 Palestinian students at San Francisco State University in a 32-item questionnaire. His "*findings indicate that generally, MSA is deemed more appropriate for formal settings*" and that is used by the highly educated group in society. Besides, he concluded that the highly educated use "*MSA at a higher rate than the less educated*" (*Assaf*, 2001). In the same vein, there is a tendency by even the less educated to use MSA in formal settings. However, *Assaf's* study cannot be generalized to include situations in all Arabic speaking countries. First, his study was done in a non- Arabic speaking environment. It is likely that the use of fuṣḥā is a unifying code among the Arabs in the diaspora and that may have affected their attitude towards it. Besides, the education variable he used (i.e. the high and the less educated) is relative. The high educated variable in the study refers to those who hold a bachelor's degree or higher and the less educated are "*those who have completed high school and are pursuing undergraduate*" course (*Assaf*, 2001). While education is an important variable in a study of this nature, other variables like identity and religion are equally important for consideration.

Another study with non-Palestinian Arabs in the diaspora (like the Egyptians for instance) will shed more light on this topic. As other studies above have shown, *Assaf* (2001) also concluded that the choice of variety

also depends on a particular situation. However, he concluded that both fuṣḥā and the Palestinian Colloquial Arabic (PCA) are vital in the Palestinian society, and that the increase or decrease of the vitality of either of the two does not happen at the expense of the other.

Dakwar (2005) also studied the attitude of 30 randomly selected children towards MSA. They are monolingual Arabic-speaking native Palestinians in Israel who have been introduced to the “*fuṣḥā in their first three years of schooling*” (Dakwar, 2005). He used a semi-structured interview process to elicit data. 57 percent of children indicated they would like to learn fuṣḥā and that they enjoy learning it. When asked why fuṣḥā is important, 50 percent said for learning reasons while 27 percent mentioned communication reasons. Interestingly, when asked “*Which language is more important to learn, Arabic, Hebrew or English?*” (Dakwar, 2005) 53 percent mentioned English while 30 percent mentioned Arabic. The rest of the population mentioned Hebrew. About 63 percent of them said it is easy to learn fuṣḥā, while 37 percent said it is not. While the study is on children and perhaps may not provide an accurate approximation of the fuṣḥā situation, nevertheless it is still vital because the attitude of children reflects that of the adult. The study makes some important revelations. Generally, the children’s attitude toward fuṣḥā could be said to be positive.

Studies on attitude towards Arabic varieties have mostly looked at the varieties spoken by the Arabs other than the fuṣḥā. The present study will focus on the attitude of Egyptian university students towards the fuṣḥā Arabic, which is purported to be the official variety in all the Arabic-speaking countries. The study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Egyptian students’ attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic?
2. To what extent do Egyptian students consider the fuṣḥā as an important variety?

Material and Methods

A closed format questionnaire that consists of 12 attitude statements, using the Likert-type scale, was designed and administered to investigate students’ attitude towards the subject-matter. The choice of questionnaire among other research instruments is informed by its adaptability. As *Dörnyei* (2010) notes, they can be used for different people and at varying situations. An open-ended question was included in the questionnaire.

Participants

Egyptian university students were the target of the present study. A convenience sample of fifty students was randomly selected to participate in the study. They comprise 25 students each from the American University in Cairo (AUC) and Ain Shams University (ASU). The two Universities are located in the New Cairo and Cairo city of the Cairo Governorate respectively. The study was not limited to any particular type of students because it sought to get information from students of different

disciplines, including the Sciences and the Humanities. The two Universities provide a broad spectrum of categories of Egyptian university students that will enrich the study. While AUC represent an affluent and an upper class private university, ASU constitute a public institution where most Egyptians attain their university education. These two institutions not only represent the Egyptian population, but they also provide rich information from students of diverse economic and social background.

Instrument and Administration

A five-point Likert type scale questionnaire was used to collect data on the study. The questionnaire has two main parts. The first solicits demographic information about students, such as gender, level of student, and their majors. The second part features twelve questions designed to find out the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of attitude. These three characteristics of attitude according to *Wenden* (1991) are evaluative. The cognitive components (questions 2, 3,8,10 and 13) of the questionnaire investigate students' beliefs and opinions about fuṣḥā. The affective domain (questions 1, 6, 7 and 11) looks at their feelings, likes or dislikes while the behavioural aspect (questions 4, 5, 9 and 12) explores their intention and/or action towards fuṣḥā. It is important to mention that the questionnaire was designed in both English and Arabic and each student was asked to choose the one s/he is comfortable working with.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed descriptively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The open-ended question was analysed by annotating the main themes and drawing conclusions out of them. Students' responses were categorized under the three main attitudinal variables of cognition, attitude and behaviour. The analysis of the cognitive questions of the questionnaire provides answer to the first research question: What is the Egyptian students' attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic? On the other hand, questionnaire items that interrogated the affective and the behavioural attitude of students answer research question two: to what extent do Egyptian students consider the fuṣḥā as an important variety? As mentioned above, the cognitive questions investigate beliefs and opinions while affective and behavioural questions examine feeling, likes, intentions, etc.

Results

The results of the data analysis are presented below, according to the three attitudinal domains, namely; the cognitive, affective and behavioural components, as noted earlier. This is preceded by a brief biographical data about the participants in the study.

Biographical Data

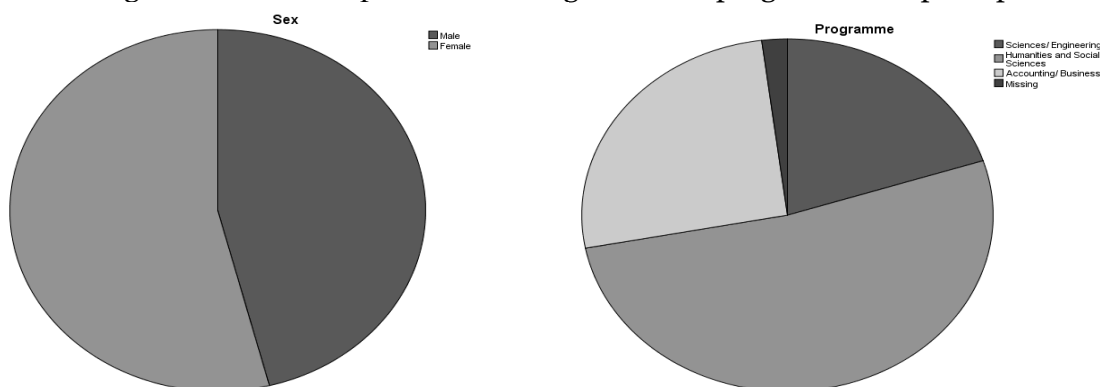
Fifty university students participated in the study, mainly from the Sciences and Engineering, the Humanities and the Social Sciences, and Business/Accounting. Students studying Arabic language were excluded from the study to forestall possible biases. It is feared that their status as language students may affect their responses. Table 1 below provides the categorization of the students who participated in the study and their programmes.

Table 1. Distribution of Gender and Programmes

Institution	Gender		Programme			Total
	Male	Female	Sciences/ Engi- neering	Huma- nities and Social Sciences	Accounting/ Business	
The American University in Cairo	12	13	10	6	8	24
	24%	26%	41.7%	25.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Ain Shams University	11	14	0	20	5	25
	22%	28%	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	23	27	10	26	13	49
	46%	54%	20.4%	53.1%	26.5%	100.0%

In both institutions, the number of females who participated is higher than the males. 46% of males participated as against 54% of females. All students (41.7%) in the sciences and engineering are from AUC while 80% of students in the humanities and the social sciences are from ASU. More than half of the students, i.e., 53.1%, who participated are from the humanities and the social sciences. The pie chart below gives a pictorial representation of the gender and programmes offered by participants.

Figure 1. Pictorial representation of gender and programmes of participants



Cognitive Domain

Items number 2, 3, 8 and 10 in the questionnaire were designed to investigate students' cognitive domain of attitude towards fuṣḥā Arabic. Students' responses to those items are presented in tables 2(A) and 2(B) below. In order to simplify the interpretation of this and subsequent results, both Disagree and Strongly Disagree will be considered as one item, i.e. Disagree. Agree and Strongly Agree will also be considered as Agree.

Q2. Fuṣḥā is more important to me than ʿāmmiyyat			Q3. It is easy to learn fuṣḥā		
	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	2	4.0	Strongly Disagree	7	14.0
Disagree	18	36.0	Disagree	19	38.0
Don't Know	4	8.0	Don't Know	4	8.0
Agree	18	36.0	Agree	18	36.0
Strongly Agree	8	16.0	Strongly Agree	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0	Total	50	100.0

Table 2 (A) above shows that 52% of students agree that fuṣḥā is more important to them than ʿāmmiyyat while 40% disagree. Interestingly, the same proportion was realized on whether fuṣḥā is easy to learn or not. While 52% said it is not easy to learn it, 40% said it is easy. Table 2 (B) below also shows that 66% agreed that fuṣḥā allows them to integrate with other Arab nationals and only 22% representing 11 students disagree. More than half of the students (54%) prefer fuṣḥā to be used in all official engagements. A sizable number (36%) though, disagree with this position. For all the four items that represent the cognitive domain of attitude, the mean percentage for those who disagree is 37.5%. On the other hand, the mean for students who said they agree is 53%.

Q8. Studying fuṣḥā can be important for me because it will allow me to converse with other Arabs freely			Q10. I prefer fuṣḥā to be used in all official engagements		
	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Strongly Disagree	1	2.0	Strongly Disagree	5	10.0
Disagree	10	20.0	Disagree	13	26.0
Don't Know	5	10.0	Don't Know	5	10.0
Agree	23	46.0	Agree	20	40.0
Strongly Agree	10	20.0	Strongly Agree	7	14.0
Total	49	98.0	Total	50	100.0
Missing	1	2.0			
Total	50	100.0			

Affective Domain

The Affective domain as discussed earlier looks at students' feelings, likes, dislikes etc. Items 1, 6, 7 and 11 in the questionnaire were used to measure this domain. The response to these items is shown in tables 3(A) and 3(B) below.

On whether participants enjoy speaking fuṣḥā or not, there was a split among students. 38% of participants said they do while another 38% said they do not enjoy it. A quite substantial number of students (24%) were undecided. Ironically, 70% of participants said they enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak fuṣḥā. This is interesting because there should have been a positive correlation between the two items. A higher figure should have said they enjoy speaking fuṣḥā as well or vice versa. Perhaps, this is one of the shortcomings of attitudinal measurements or rather a reflection of students' integrative attitude towards fuṣḥā and an affiliation to the general Arab speaking world. 26% said they do not enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak fuṣḥā.

Table 3 (A). Responses of students to the affective domain of attitude

Q1. I enjoy speaking fuṣḥā				Q6. I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak fuṣḥā		
	Freq.	%	Cumul. %	Freq.	%	Cumul. %
Strongly Disagree	4	8.0	8.0	3	6.0	6.0
Disagree	15	30.0	38.0	10	20.0	26.0
Don't Know	12	24.0	62.0	2	4.0	30.0
Agree	14	28.0	90.0	24	48.0	78.0
Strongly Agree	5	10.0	100.0	11	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0		50	100.0	

As a reflection of participants' likeness or not of the fuṣḥā, 64% said they would spend their time studying other things rather than the fuṣḥā and another 58% said they do not enjoy TV programmes that are aired in fuṣḥā. An appreciable figure, 34% said they enjoy TV programmes in fuṣḥā. 24% percent were undecided as to whether they will spend their time in studying other things rather fuṣḥā.

Q7. I would rather spend my time studying things other than fuṣḥā				Q11. I enjoy watching TV programmes (like talk shows, soap operas, etc.) in fuṣḥā		
	Freq.	%	Cumul. %	Freq.	%	Cumul. %
Strongly Disagree	4	8.0	8.0	11	22.0	22.0
Disagree	2	4.0	12.0	18	36.0	58.0
Don't Know	12	24.0	36.0	4	8.0	66.0
Agree	20	40.0	76.0	16	32.0	98.0
Strongly Agree	12	24.0	100.0	1	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0		50	100.0	

Behavioural Domain

The behavioural domain here measures students' intent and action towards the fuṣḥā. Items 4, 5, 9 and 12 on the questionnaire were designed to measure that domain. For this analysis however, item 12 has been omitted because of the fear of misinterpreting the word "disparage" as in "When I hear non-native Arabs speak fuṣḥā, I often disparage them". Most AUC students asked for the meaning of disparage and the fear is that students may have provided feedback that is not the intent of the item.

Table 4 below shows that 78% of students have a positive intent toward fuṣḥā and said they wish they could speak it perfectly. Only 16%, representing 8 students disagreed. On whether they wish no newspaper uses ʿāmmiyyat, 40% agreed that newspapers should not use ʿāmmiyyat and another 44% said they disagree but that newspapers could continue using it. Understandably, about half of the students, i.e. 42%, disagreed that they would speak fuṣḥā outside the university if they had the opportunity to do so. Another 34% agreed that they will use fuṣḥā outside of the university if they had the opportunity. It is interesting to note that about a quarter of the participants, 24% were undecided. A cross tabulation of students' responses to the behavioural domain is in table 14 below.

	Q4. I wish I could speak fuṣḥā perfectly			Q5. I often wish no newspaper or magazine uses ʿāmmiyyat			Q9. If I had the opportunity to speak fuṣḥā outside of the university I would do that most of the time		
	Freq.	%	Cumul.	Freq.	%	Cumul.	Freq.	%	Cumul.
Strongly Disagree	1	2.0	2.0	8	16.0	16.0	6	12.0	12.0
Disagree	7	14.0	16.0	14	28.0	44.0	15	30.0	42.0
Don't Know	3	6.0	22.0	8	16.0	60.0	12	24.0	66.0
Agree	23	46.0	68.0	16	32.0	92.0	13	26.0	92.0
Strongly Agree	16	32.0	100.0	4	8.0	100.0	4	8.0	100.0
Total	50	100		50	100		50	100	

Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the result of the investigation. The findings are discussed in relation to the two research questions that this study sought to answer.

Research Question 1: What is the Egyptian students' attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic? - To answer this question, the cognitive components of the attitude were grouped together, and the responses were calculated percentage wise. The result reveals that student have a fairly positive attitude towards fuṣḥā. A little above one-half of the students indicate that fuṣḥā is more important to them and they would prefer that it is used in all official engagements. They also mentioned that fuṣḥā helps them to integrate with other Arab speaking nationals. This result is similar to what *Zughoul and Taminian* (1984) revealed about the linguistic attitudes of Arab university students toward Arabic.

The study, though, found that learning fuṣḥā, according to the participants, is difficult. What the study could not reveal is what students perceive to be difficult about studying fuṣḥā. Perhaps this could be as a result of the linguistic distance, especially at syntactic and morphological levels between the fuṣḥā and the ʿāmmiyyat (Haeri, 2000:63). Although students have a rather positive attitude towards fuṣḥā, their overt use of it, if any, does not match this disposition.

In terms of gender, male students seem to have shown more favourable attitude toward fuṣḥā than the female. The role of the gender here is very important in assessing why there is mismatch “*between what individuals assert to be the language that fits their cultural, political, and religious ideals and their actual linguistic production*” (Eckert, 1999). Gender plays a vital role in terms of the individual's choice of a language. In effect, this explains the mismatch between the actual language production and the ideal language expected from a particular gender that may fit a cultural or

religious situation. Another possible explanation is that the fuṣḥā belongs to the public domain where men are more vibrant. Women on the other hand are expected to exhibit 'linguistic conservatism' and practice their activities in the private domain where the 'aamiyya belongs to. However, *Labov* (1982) explained that this is in contrast with Western speech communities where women have been found to use standard forms more often than men do.

The supposed difficulty in fuṣḥā is often as the result of contempt for fuṣḥā Arabic that is shared by some local Arab intellectuals. As a solution to the seeming perception of difficulty students have about studying fuṣḥā, albeit their positive attitude towards it, some scholars have suggested a triangulated approach toward solving the problem.

Research question 2: To what extent do Egyptian students consider the fuṣḥā as an important variety? - Both the affective and behavioural domains were used to answer this question. Items in the affective domain provided a mixed result. A little over one-third of students said they enjoy speaking fuṣḥā with the same number of students saying they do not enjoy speaking it. It should have followed that a relative number of students would enjoy (or not) speaking and listening to people who speak fuṣḥā. However, that was not the case since about two-thirds of students agree that they enjoy listening to those who speak fuṣḥā. The explanation may be because of the affection students would like to exhibit with other Arab nationals. This does not necessarily manifest in their daily activities. This attitude could be described as a positive integrative attitude, which according to *Gardner and Gliksmann* (1982) represents participants willingness to relate to the other language community, which in this case, is the other Arabic speaking countries.

In all, the study reveals that students have negative affective attitude towards fuṣḥā. They would rather spend their time learning other things rather than fuṣḥā. Besides, they do not enjoy programmes aired in fuṣḥā. Obviously, Egyptian students' affection to the 'āmmiyyat outweighs that of fuṣḥā. The finding supports *Abdel-Jawad's* (1986) claim that Egyptian Arabic is regarded as prestigious among Egyptians.

Behaviourally, students implied that they would like to speak fuṣḥā perfectly. This was inconsistent with whether they would like to speak fuṣḥā outside the university when they have the opportunity. Only 34% agreed to do that as against 78% of students who said they would like to speak fuṣḥā perfectly. Perhaps, what this apparent inconsistency means is that speaking fuṣḥā perfectly is restricted to formal situations while speaking 'āmmiyyat is adopted in all informal settings outside the university. In his study of Palestinian students' attitudes towards MSA and Palestinian City Arabic (PCA), *Assaf* (2001) posited that students deemed MSA to be appropriate in formal settings and the PCA appropriate for informal settings. Considering the statistical mean of the affective and the behavioural domains, that is 3.22 and 3.23 respectively, this investigation can reveal that students somewhat averagely consider the fuṣḥā as an important variety of Arabic.

One would have expected students to have more positive attitude towards the fuṣḥā because of their cultural affinity to it. Besides, written discourses at the universities are mainly organized around the fuṣḥā. The

standardized language of higher education, that is fuṣḥā in this case, 'encourages new senses of community and affinity' (p.647). If so, the reason for this lackadaisical attitude students show towards the fuṣḥā, although not negative, would need further investigation.

Conclusion

Generally, the study revealed that Egyptian students have a slightly positive attitude towards the fuṣḥā Arabic. On whether fuṣḥā is still an important variety, the study also reveal that students were unenthusiastic about the importance of fuṣḥā. Any mention of its importance to them was mainly related to its religious and cultural history to the Arabs. An analysis of the open-ended question, on whether fuṣḥā is important and why, shows that the importance that student attach to fuṣḥā is more or less because of its relation to the Islamic Scripture, i.e. the language of Quran. Besides, it acts as a unifying variety among the Arabs.

In the light of the above findings, this study would like to state generally, that Egyptian students have shown no negative attitude towards fuṣḥā. For this, it is recommended that language planners and for that matter the Arab states should adopt a vibrant 'status planning' procedure as suggested by *Wardhaugh* (2010), were the fuṣḥā is properly recognized and widely used in official and state institutions and functions. There is no doubt that the ʿāmmiyyat would continue to be used in daily activities. However, the implication of this suggestion is that Arabic shall gain more prestige and takes its right position in the community of states with the use of a unified single variety among all the Arabs. This step if taken shall not only bring about the continuity of the Arab culture, but also maintains its national integrity as also suggested by *Zughoul* (1980).

Non-native Arab affiliation to the Arab world even becomes stronger with the existence of a unified code of communication. This is true because the use of the fuṣḥā would undeniably make the learning and using of Arabic effective, in that it is a vehicle for a large body of written Arabic traditions and culture.

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