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On the Way to Understand the Pan-Arab Voice

Mona Farrag Attwa

1. Introduction: framework

Morrow & Castleton (2007) state that satellite channels and the Internet have spread Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), strengthened the bond among the Arab countries and help standardize the Arabic dialects. In 2011, after the Arab Spring, Temlali argues that the transnational Arab satellite channels solidify the unity of the Arabic language. On the one hand, he views MSA as entering “its golden age” (p.49), facilitating communication between the elites from across the Arab world, a communication that had in earlier times been hindered by national varieties. On the other hand, an increased sense of pride in one’s home country brought more dialects to be heard on home TV. The direct coverage of the ordinary people who incited the Arab Spring demonstrations increased the amount of dialectal broadcast.

These features of dialects and MSA create superdiversity on transnational TV channels in the Arab world in line with the label Blommaert & Backus (2011: 4) gave it: a “tremendous diversification of diversity”. In cross-dialect communication, each Arab individual brings biographical indexicalities of values, meanings, and identities, while at the same time projects a commonly shared pan Arab history, culture, and ideologies.

In a superdiverse communicative practice, Jørgensen (2008) claims that polylingualism is the norm of communication. Following this norm:

language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages; this entails that the language users may know _ and use _ the fact that some of the features are perceived by some speakers as not belonging together. (Jørgensen 2008: 163)

Accordingly, Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, and Møller (2011) suggest the linguistic “feature” to be the level of linguistic analysis in superdiverse societies. This level is more dynamic and is expected to provide a better representation of the sociocultural values,

meanings, and attitudes associated with language use. They define features in terms of units and regularities:

Units are words, expressions, sounds, even phonetic characteristics such as rounding. Regularities are traditionally called “rules”, but they are not rules in the legal sense, or even the normative sense. They are regularities of how units are combined into larger units in processes through which the larger units become associated with meanings. (Jørgensen et al 2011: 30)

This paper presents the preliminary results of a data-driven PhD dissertation. Applying the linguistic feature as the unit of analysis, the study takes the Arabic version of *The Voice*, the pan-Arab TV singing competition known also as *'Ahlā Ṣōt*, as a case study to investigate linguistic features accessible to and employed by Arabs in cross-country communication, relating the indexicalities of these features to identity and ideology. This paper explores the use of features of national dialects, the interlocutors' dialects, and MSA presenting the outcomes of a first analysis. The complete analysis and results will be presented in the thesis that is to appear in 2020.

It is first important, however, to provide meanings of three fundamental terms used in the study: Arabism, Arabness, and identity. I will then shed light on recent studies done on Arabic cross-country communication.

2. Definitions

In this section I will provide a global view of three fundamental terms used in this study: Arabism, Arabness, and identity. The terms are discussed in more details in the larger PhD dissertation.

2.1. Arabism

Looking up the term Arabism, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online refers to the entry “Pan-Arabism (Ideology)”. The Encyclopedia defines the terms as:

Nationalist notion of cultural and political unity among Arab countries. Its origins lie in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when increased literacy led to a cultural and literary renaissance among Arabs of the Middle East. This contributed to political agitation and led to the independence of most Arab states from the Ottoman Empire (1918) and from the European powers (by the mid-20th century).

Albirini (2016) discusses the term in light of the terms “nation”, “state”, and “Arab nationalist movement”. He also makes the reference to the Arabic concept *qawmiyya*, from “*qawm*” or folk or people, meaning ‘nationalism’. He cites Kallas (2007) saying that this term has been used in literature to refer to Arab’s sense of their “common ethnic and linguistic heritage” (p. 128). It is noteworthy to see how Albirini concludes that Arab nationalism:

falls under what Smith (1986) calls “essentialist” view of the nation, in which the nation is materialized or theorized through political myths of common descent, history, culture, territory, sense of solidarity, and other sociocultural symbols. In this approach, language is often a key component of national identity construction. (Albirini 2016: 129)

Two points attract the attention in these two sources. First, where Encyclopedia Britannica Online bracketed the term as (ideology). Second, where Albirini uses the expression “political myth”. Both instances imply the term may be an imaginable idea;

may not be a factual reality. By looking at my data, I will try to see where my informants stand from that.

2.2. Arabness:

Arabness is different from Arabism. Nydell (2012) produced an informative study on understanding Arabs. In order to describe *what* and *how* Arabs are, she covers aspects such as beliefs and values, friends and strangers, emotion and logic, personal issues, men and women, social formalities and etiquette, the role of the family, religion and society, Islamism, similarities and differences between Arab countries, and the Arabic language. She introduces Arabs as “the people in some eighteen countries *who speak the Arabic language*” (Nydell 2012: xi). Emphasis is mine to reflect how speaking Arabic is in the heart of understanding what and how an Arab is. She argues further that Arabs do not have the same ethnic (Arabian) origin, they speak different dialects of the language, and have different costumes and appearance. Then she says, not all Arabs are Muslims. Christians make up 5% of Arabs, and there are a few thousand Jews in the Arab countries. She rightly says “*Arab* is a cultural and political term” (ibid.) (emphasis not mine). Arabness as a term used in this study embraces all the above aspects and I check the results of my analysis as well on instances that may relate to Arabness.

2.3. Identity

Albirini (2016), reviewing others, describes identity as “a dynamic construct that is negotiated among social actors within immediate situational elements such as time, place, event, and occasion as well as in larger social norms, power relationships, cultural traditions, ideological concepts, and discursive practices” (Albirini 2016: 123). I find it is also important to mention how he elaborates on this definition. He argues that at the same time where Arab social and political systems provide the framework and boundaries within which Arabs define themselves in relation to others, the social system does not prevent the speakers’ ability “to exercise their choices and make decisions based on their membership in the social system and their understanding of different contextual factors” (ibid). Albirini (2016) raises three issues to which this research, in its larger scale, may contribute to as well. The issues are: first, to find if and how language contributes to Arabs’ projection of their identity; second, the influence of diglossia on the formation of personal and social identities and the related indexicalities; third, the significance of the existence of local and global languages side by side in the same social sphere.

3. Arabic Cross Country Communication

Studies on Arabic cross country communication are still rare. While the results in the existing studies (see Soliman (2015) for an extensive review) reflect the mechanism of communication between Arabs, globalized pan-Arab media setting imposes new factors on the dynamics and powers of this communication. First, it is important to briefly look at the communication studied in research-created settings on formal and informal topics. I mention the results of Soliman (2015), Abu-Melhim (2014), and Chakrani (2014).

Soliman (2015) finds that Arabs in cross country communication predominantly maintain their own dialects. Resorting to MSA to facilitate communication is rare compared to

older studies or to her expectations. Intelligibility happens through a number of strategies by the speaker and the listener. Speakers may replace localised lexis with a more common one or MSA equivalent, or acquaint their listener with the meaning of the localised lexis. As for the listeners, they depend on a number of strategies for comprehension: 1. Familiarity with the item due to previous exposure of the dialect. 2. Guessing the meaning from the context. 3. Guessing the meaning by relating it to familiar cognates in other Arabic varieties. 4. Asking their interlocutor for meaning. 5. Ignoring an item if it is not a content word. From her data, Soliman reports cases of comprehension failure due to unfamiliarity of a non-cognate and absence of contextual clues.

Abu-Melhim (2014) finds that when conversing together in an informal setting, Arabs adopt different linguistic accommodation strategies such as switching between different Arabic varieties, including MSA. His data show that speakers tend to use Educated Spoken Arabic (ECA) over MSA, especially when the interlocutors' dialects are in cases unintelligible. These strategies are used to ensure the listener understands what the speaker is saying, and to negotiate or clarify the meaning. The prime goal of all these strategies is clarity of communication.

Chakrani (2014) looks at the attitude behind accommodation strategies used in inter-dialectal communication. He finds that capitalizing on the prestige of Mashreqi Arabic obliges the non-Mashreqi Arabic speakers to accommodate and style shift. Agreeing with the findings of S'hiri (2002) and in line with Hachimi (2013), Mashreqi Arabic speakers feel no obligation to style shift due to their attitude that they possess the prestigious form of Arabic, and they are expecting the non-Mashreqi Arabic speakers to accommodate due to the attitude of the allegedly incomprehensible dialects. However, Maghrebi Arabic speakers tend to use humour to challenge this norm. By insisting on using their own dialect, Maghrebi Arabic speakers assert their in-group identity and defy the pretext of incomprehensibility, which Mashreqi Arabs capitalize on. These accommodative strategies are used due to the burden caused by this attitude to the conversation. This burden sometimes pushes Chakrani's informants to shift to English for "communicative efficiency and to level linguistic asymmetries" (ibid.)

4. Study and Research Questions

The setting in the above studies causes Arabs to employ certain strategies to have a successful communication. Looking at communication taking place in a globalized pan-Arab TV setting, it is observed that Arabs display different dynamics. This study aims to answer the following questions: In order to have a comprehensible communication in a globalized pan-Arab TV setting, 1. To what extent do Arabs use features of their national dialect? 2. To what extent do Arabs use features of their interlocutor's dialect or MSA? The rest of this section briefly introduces the setting and the data. Since this paper presents preliminary results of the study, these questions are phrased in order to focus on the results presented here.

It is important to note that the results are seen within media context as well; trying to understand where pan-Arab media stands from the use of these features. The media is represented, at least in this paper, by the presenters and teleprompters (the reading screens provided to presenters in live shows). Since the PhD study aims as well to relate the results to questions of Arabism, Arabness, Identity, and ideology, a brief reflection on

Arabism and Arabness questions is presented at the end of the discussion section as a lead to the results of the PhD study.

4.1. The Setting:

The Voice, 'Ahlā Ṣōt, (debuted on September 14, 2012) is one of the most popular talent shows in the Arab world. It is broadcast worldwide from Beirut, Lebanon, from the studios of the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (the Saudi-owned MBC Group). The format of the show is based on its original Dutch format created by media tycoon John de Mol. The case study, the second season of the program premiered on Saturday, December 28, 2013, is composed of three stages that run over 14 weekly episodes: the blind auditions (5 episodes), the battle rounds (3 episodes), and the live performances (6 episodes). (In Arabic: *Eṣ- ṣōt we Bas*, *El-muwāgha*, and *El-ʿurūd El-mubāšra*).

In order to guarantee a wider viewership, MBC Group aired the show at 9 pm, KSA time, on two consecutive weekend days. On Friday, a rerun of the previous week's episode is broadcast, while the new one is broadcast on Saturday. This peak time on television and the strong social media platform contributed to the high rate of viewership that was estimated in the finale by 100 million viewers (Vivarelli, 2014).

The couches are Kazim As-Saher, an Iraqi composer, singer, and poet; Asi El-Hellany, a Lebanese singer; Saber Reba'y, a Tunisian composer and singer; and Sherin Abdelwahab, an Egyptian singer (Representing four of the five main dialectal regions of the Arab world, Versteegh 1997: 145). Moreover, the main presenter of the show is the Egyptian actor and presenter Mohammed Kareem, who is joined in the live performances by the Lebanese presenter, Emee Saiyah. The Lebanese presenter Nadine Najim presents the backstage sections from the blue room.

The globalized and superdiverse aspects in the show do not come only from the diversity of the judges, presenters, and the contestants, but also through the interplay of international, pan-Arab, and national traits that are present in the show. Reaching an international audience outside the Arab world is clear from preserving the name of the show, *The Voice*, and the international format that is repeated in all countries hosting the same show. Moreover, the invitation of Ricky Martin at the end of season 2 to debut his new songs "Adrenalina" and "Come With Me" (Vivarelli, 2014) gives the show a wider international resonance.

4.2. Data Description:

For this paper, a corpus is built from the "communication instances" in episodes 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, and 10 (two episodes of each different phase of the competition respectively). This selection is to include any different type of communication in the different phases of the program. The corpus of the PhD study will include 4 more episodes.

By "communication instance" I mean the parts of the show where a conversation between at least two people is taking place. Therefore, when an informant is addressing the audience, their speech is not considered a communication instance. Likewise, when a speaker appears to be talking to someone else but there is no response on the screen from the interlocutor, their speech is not included in the data. This is to ensure that communication is taking place; either by conveying or negotiating the meaning.

Transcription is made using the CLAN program of CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System). As mentioned, linguistic features are the units of analysis¹.

The 72 informants and their dialects are: 13 from Egypt (egy); 13 from Lebanon (leb); 13 from Morocco (mrc); 12 from Iraq (irq) - one of them is from Kurdistan Iraq but introduces himself as Iraqi; 7 from Syria (syr); 4 from Tunisia (tun); 4 from Saudi Arabia (sau), 2 from Jordan (jor); 1 from Palestine (pal); 1 from Palestine, Tunisia, and England (pal, tun, eng); 1 from Sudan (sud), and 1 from Algeria (alg). This means there are 18 informants from the Maghreb countries.

5. Analysis and Results

A number of practices characterize communication in the data. These practices will be fully analyzed and discussed in the PhD thesis. This paper focuses only on two practices: The first concerns the issue of to what extent the informants use features of their national variety of Arabic. The second practice relates to the question to what extent the informants use features of their interlocutor's dialect or MSA. As a kind of spin off the paper reflects on the notions of Arabness, Arabism and identity.

5.1. Using national dialects:

In this section, I provide examples that the informants communicate, predominantly, using the distinctive features of their national dialects. Following general linguistic conventions (Versteegh, 1997; Holes 1995), I analyze the examples looking at the distinctive features of the dialects on the phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, syntactic, and idiomatic levels. However, the analysis presented in the tables reflect the levels of the distinctive features as they appear in each example. This means that one example may show all five levels of analysis while another may show only two levels. In the feature analysis tables below, the following abbreviations are used: interdentals; interdentals; inter: interrogative; demo: demonstrative; prep: preposition; pron: pronoun; v: verb; and neg: negation.²

The 13 **Egyptian** informants in the data mainly use Egyptian dialect features. For example:

Ex. 1. Sherin, in episode 1, speaking to Lebanese Asi
ēh, 'enta ṭab 'enta we ḥiyāt 'abū-k gebt dih menēn? ya'nī 'amal'ta-hā wallā 'enta 'eš'tarit-h ā gahzah?
 What? You, by the life of you father, where did you get this from? I mean did you make it or buy it ready-made?

Table 1.1. Distinctive features of the Egyptian dialect in the example:

Ex.	Phonological	Lexical	Morphosyntactic	Syntactic	Idiomatic
1.					

Egy - Leb	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. /g/: <i>gebt, gahzah</i> 2. /ē/: <i>ēh, menēn</i> 3. The open flat vowels with no imala: 'amal'ta-hā, 'eš'tarit-hā 4. The stress shift to the penultimate syllable: 'amal'ta-hā, 'eš'tarit-hā 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inter: <i>ēh, menēn</i> (what, from where) 2. Demo: <i>dih</i> (this) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. v pattern with object pron: 'amal'ta-hā, 'eš'tarit-hā 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The inter word at the end of the question. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>we ḥiyāt 'ab ū-k</i>
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The 7 **Syrian** informants in the date use distinctive features of the Syrian dialect. For example:

Ex. 2. Hala, in episode 2, speaking to the four judges:

'anā 'awal šī biddī 'il-kun 'ino 'intu bi-l-nisbā 'il-lī 'arba' madārās, biddī 'iḥṭār (singing)

I, first thing, would like to say to you that, for me, you are four schools, I would like to choose (singing)

Table 1.2. Distinctive features of the Syrian dialect in the example:

Ex. 2.	Phonological	Lexical	Morphosyntactic	Idiomatic
Syr -Leb/ Egy/Tun/Ira	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The shift of /q/ to /'/: 'il-kun 2. The high rise imala: bi-l-nisbā, madārās 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. šī (a thing) 2. biddī (I want) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prep and attached pron: 'il-lī (for me) 2. The object pron: "kun": 'il-kun 3. v pattern: 'iḥṭār 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. bi-l-nisbā 'il-lī

The 13 **Lebanese** informants use distinctive features of the Lebanese dialect. For example:

Ex. 3. Asi, in episode 1 speaking to Egyptian Wahm:

wahm, men wēn ḥaḍret-ēk?...taḥiyē kibirē lā 'il-ik wa li-'ada'-ēk wa hay el-ḡarḥa bi-ṣawt-ēk 'llī bi-tšla' el-'ālib min ḡuwā

Wahm, where are you from?...Greetings to you, your performance, and your husky voice that takes the heart from inside.

Table 1.3. Distinctive features of the Lebanese dialect in the example:

Ex. 3.	Phonological	Morphosyntactic	Idiomatic
Leb - Egy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Imala: wēn, ḥaḍretēk, taḥiyē, kibirē, li-'ada'-ēk, bi-ṣawt-ēk 2. /ḡ/: el-ḡarḥa, ḡuwā 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inter: wēn 2. Demo: hay 3. Prep and attached pron: 'il-ik (for you) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. bi-tšla' el-'ālib min ḡuwā 2. lā 'il-ik

The 13 **Moroccan** informants in the data use distinctive features of Moroccan dialect. For example:

Ex. 4. Khawla, in episode 9 speaking to Lebanese Nadine and sending a message to Iraqi Kazim:

'anā ka new'ad-u baš kul marra n-qadim maqtar min dak šī 'illī ka n-qadim min qabl, ħint min ġūr-u huwā 'anā ma-n-qdir-š n-dīr fi haḍā el-birnāmağ.

I promise him that every time I will give more than what I gave before, because without him I would not be able to manage in this program.

Table 1.4. Distinctive features of the Moroccan dialect in the example:

Ex. 4.	Phonological	Lexical	Morphosyntactic
Mrc - Leb/Irq	1. /q/: qabl 2. /ğ/: el-birnāmağ 3. CCV cluster: n-qadim, ma-nqdir-š	1. baš (that) 2. šī (something) 3. ħint (because) 4. n-dīr (to do well)	1. Aspect marker: k- 2. The use of (n) in first person indicative: ni-w'ad-u, n-qadim, ma-n-qdir-š, n-diir 3. The neg: ma-n-qdir-š 4. Demo: dak

It should be noted that, during the show, sometimes MBC provides subtitles to the Moroccan contestants and their family and friends. However, the informants themselves on the show are not affected by this practice since it is only provided to the audience. Discussing this practice is not within the scope of this paper but it will be treated in the thesis.

The 12 **Iraqi** informants in the data use distinctive features of the Iraqi dialect. For example:

Ex. 5. Mihvaan, an Iraqi from Kurdistan Iraq in episode 1, speaking to the four judges:

šint 'a-tmanā ya'nī kursi te, te-tlaf 'alai-yah, we ha-l-yōm, 'etnēn šāra-t 'aš'ab 'alai-yē. fā ha-l-yōm 'āni yi-šarf-nī 'a-ḥṭār 'ustād kādīm el-sāhir

I was hoping one chair turns for me. Today, I have two chairs. It became harder for me. Today I am honored to choose Mr. Kazim As-Saher.

Table 1.5. Distinctive features of the Iraqi dialect in the example:

Ex. 5.	Phonological	Morphological	Morphosyntactic	Idiomatic
Irq - Tun/ Leb/Egy/ Irq	1. Shift of /k/ to /š/: šint 2. Interdents: /t/ 'etnēn, /d/ 'ustād, and /ḍ/ kādīm	1. 'ānī (I)	1. v pattern: te-tlaf 2. Demo: ha-	1. te-tlaf 'alai-yah

The 4 **Tunisian** informants use distinctive features of the Tunisian dialect. For example:

Ex. 6. Aida, in episode 9 speaking to Lebanese Nadine:

'anā farḥān-a barša b-el-'adā' 'ellī qadamt-ū we farḥān-a bi-l-rad el-f'el mtā' el-mušahid-ī n, qā'd-a na-qra f-el-twīt-āt ma'nāta kul-hum nās t-šāğā' fī-ya we qā'd-in yišawṭ-ū-l-ī.

I am so happy with the performance I gave and I am so happy with the reaction of the audience. I am reading the tweets, and all the people are encouraging me and voting for me.

Table 1.6. Distinctive features of the Tunisian dialect in the example:

Ex. 6.	Phonological	Lexical	Morphosyntactic	Idiomatic
Tun - Leb	1. /q/: <i>qadamt-ū, qā'd-a, na-qra, qā'd-īn</i> 2. /ǧ/ <i>t-šaǧa'</i> 3. CCV cluster: <i>mtā', t-šaǧa'</i>	1. <i>barša</i> (a lot) 2. <i>ma'nāta</i> (meaning) 3. Genitive exponent: <i>mtā'</i>	1. The use of (n) in first person indicative: <i>na-qra</i> 2. Gerund: <i>qā'd-a na-qra, qā'd-īn yiṣawṭ-ū-l-ī</i>	1. <i>ma'nāta</i> 2. <i>t-šaǧa' fī-ya</i>

The 4 Saudi informants use distinctive features of the Saudi dialect. For example:

Ex. 7. Muhammed Hashem, in episode 6, speaking to Egyptian Sherin:

'anā bas ǧīt 'ustāza širīn 'ašān 'aǧul-ik 'and-ī el-mušmila fī-ṭ-ṭabaga. el-'uǧniya 'anā bi-ša rāḥa ya'nī mā-nī murtāḥ fī-hā...wallah, mmm, ya'nī, mū lōn-ī.

I just came, Mrs Sherin, to tell you that I have a problem with the tone. The song, I am, honestly, not comfortable in it...by God, mmm, it is not my style.

Table 1.7. Distinctive features of the Saudi dialect in the example:

Ex. 7.	Phonological	Morphosyntactic
Sau - Egy	1. /ǧ/: <i>ǧīt</i> 2. Shift of /q/ to /g/: <i>'aǧul-ik, fī-ṭ-ṭabaga</i> 3. The damma in active participle: <i>murtāḥ</i>	1. Neg: <i>mā-nī, mū lōn-ī</i>

The Palestinian informants use distinctive features of the Palestinian dialect. For example:

Ex. 8. Sherin, a contestant in episode 1, speaking to Egyptian Kareem:

šūǧl-ī 'ad mā 'aṭān-ī quwé, 'ad mā Ḥallā 'alb-ī biǧad yišīr 'aqwā lessa.

My work, as it gave me power, it made my heart even stronger.

Table 1.8. Distinctive features of the Palestinian dialect in the example:

Ex. 8.	Phonological	Lexical	Idiomatic
Pal - Egy	1. Imala: <i>quwé</i> 2. /q/: <i>quwé, 'aqwā</i> 3. /ǧ/: <i>biǧad</i>	1. <i>yišīr</i> (to become) 2. <i>'aṭān-ī</i> (gave me)	1. <i>lessa</i>

5.2. Shifting to another dialect or MSA:

The data shows in cases that informants use features of dialects that are not their national one. From the data it can be concluded that this use is not to facilitate communication nor for the sake of clarity. The main aim for this use seems to be to create

a funny light atmosphere. The use of non-national dialect or MSA are marked in bold in the examples.

Ex.9. In Episode 2:

*SHR: <i>šū ha-l-malāk el-'abyaḍ!</i> <i>gamīla gedan, šakl-ek ḥelw gidan we 'inšallah rabena yuwafa-'ik, lākin miš ha-ywafa' šāber</i> .	*SHR: <i>What a white angel!</i> <i>So beautiful, your look is very nice! God's willing, HE will grant you success, but HE wont grant Saber success.</i>
*SBR: (laughing) <i>dah bo'd-ek!</i>	*SBR: (laughing) <i>This is far from you!</i>
*NNC: <i>rabena ha-ywafa' šāber li-'an-nī ma'ah</i>	*NNC: <i>God will grant Saber success because I am with him.</i>
*SBR: (laughing) <i>dah bo'd-ek, dah bo'd-ek</i>	*SBR: (laughing) <i>This is far from you!</i>
*ASI: <i>šāber bad-ak šī?</i> (running after Nancy)	*ASI: <i>Saber, do you want something? (running after Nancy)</i>
*SBR: (running after Asi) <i>ta'ālā ya-bn-ī. ta'ālā, 'inta rayeḥ fēn? ta'āl, ta'āl.</i> (to Sherin) <i>yalla, šubur-nā we nul-nā</i>	*SBR: (running after Asi) <i>Come, my boy, come! Where are you going? Come! Come! (to Sherin) We were rewarded for our patience!</i>
*SHR: <i>šeḥet-ēn 'a 'alb-ak</i>	*SHR: <i>You have it with double health on your heart!</i>

In this example, there are features from different dialects. Sherin says “*šū ha-l-malāk el-'abyaḍ*” using Lebanese features with an Egyptian accent to praise Lebanese Nancy on her outlook. Then she continues the rest of her utterance with Egyptian features. Second, Saber responds to Sherin’s teasing using Egyptian idiomatic expression “*dah bo'd-ek*”. Saber keeps using Egyptian features even when he talks to Lebanese Asi who is chasing beautiful Nancy outside the stage, saying: “*ta'ālā ya-bn-ī. ta'ālā,*” and “*'inta rayeḥ fēn?*” Saber keeps using Egyptian features in the idiomatic expression “*šubur-nā we nul-nā*” in order to tease Sherin. Interestingly, Sherin replies to him using a Shami idiomatic expression pronounced in Egyptian accent “*šeḥet-ēn 'a 'alb-ak*”.

In this example, shifting to Lebanese features on Sherin’ part is one of her ways to be funny; either with the Lebanese constant or the Tunisian colleague. Likewise, Saber’s one of the ways to be funny is to use Egyptian features, either with Egyptian Sherin or Lebanese Asi. An important thing to note is that idiomatic non-national features are used, not just common everyday language lexis. These are idiomatic expressions to praise, to challenge, to wonder about an action, to praise one’s own achievement, and to wish a good health after a meal respectively.

Ex.10. In Episode 2, Asi to Kazim

*ASI: <i>h-'aw'ed-ak bi-munāfasē ṭaḥnē</i> <i>wa sa-'urīk-a 'ayu-hā al-qayšar</i>	*ASI: <i>I promise you a fierce competition</i> <i>And I will show you, Ceaser!</i>
*KDM: (laughing) <i>na'am, na'am</i>	*KDM: <i>yes, yes</i>
*ASI: <i>man huwa al-ḥilānī</i>	*ASI: <i>Who is the Hilaanii.</i>

Although, Asi starts using Lebanese features, his following utterances are in MSA “*wa sa-'urīk-a 'ayu-hā al-qayšar*” where the future aspect marker “s-”, the verb pattern and

morphology “*sa`sa-`urik-a*”, the calling particle “*’ayu-hā*” and the nickname of Kazim in the Arab world as “*al-qayṣar*”. The whole MSA features may have been triggered by this nickname, which in itself is used commonly with the MSA features “*al*”, “*/q/*”, and “*/ai/*”. In addition, the use of MSA adds a funny comic touch to the challenge Asi is presenting to Kazim. It alludes to historical Arabic movies where it is a common thing among Arabs to imitate and act out in funny situations by using MSA features.

Ex.11. In Episode 9, Kareem to Saber:

*KRM: <i>’entā ’ešnū ḥwāl-ak?</i>	*KRM: <i>How are you?</i>
*SBR: <i>lā bās el-ḥamdulillah</i>	*SBR: <i>Fine! Thanks God!</i>
*KRM: <i>lā bās?</i>	*KRM: <i>Fine?</i>
*SBR: <i>ca va!</i>	*SBR: <i>Ca va!</i>
*KRM: <i>’aḥwāl-ak meriḡla?</i>	*KRM: <i>You are doing fine?</i>
*SBR: <i>ca va, aussi?</i>	*SBR: <i>Ca va, aussi?</i>
*KRM: (laughing) <i>mumkin ti’alim-nī kalām gedīd ba’a</i>	*KRM: (laughing) <i>You can teach me new words then.</i>

In this example, the last sentence “*mumkin ti’alim-nī kalām gedīd ba’a*” (you can teach me new words then) is in Egyptian features. It shows two things: the awareness of an intended use of the features of his interlocutor’s Tunisian dialect, and that there are metalinguistic discussion and learning happening backstage. This last sentence is triggered when Saber asks Kareem in French “*ca va, aussi?*”, which is a typical Tunisian dialect feature. He uses this feature in a funny gest to challenge Kareem’s knowledge of the Tunisian dialect.

Kareem shows a repeated pattern of using features of different dialect with his interlocutors mainly asking “How are you?” This is repeated with Moroccan, Iraqi, Tunisian, and even Kurdish interlocutors. This use can be seen as a gesture from the media host to welcome the different Arab countries and dialects.

In episode 10, an important instance in the data suggests an attitude of avoidance to mention incomprehensibility. In an interview between a Moroccan contestant and a Tunisian contestant hosted by the Lebanese presenter, Nadine, the Tunisian contestant said clearly that he did not understand what the Moroccan contestant was saying. Nadine, said “we will cut on this talk” then she addressed the Moroccan saying of course we are sure of your good intentions, which implies that she did not fully understand what he was saying. This instance suggests other important strategies as discussed in the coming section.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This study investigates the extent Arabs use features of their national dialect and the extent they use features of their interlocutor’s dialect or MSA in order to have a successful communication in a pan-Arab globalized TV setting. In line with Soliman (2015), the above analysis shows that Arabs predominantly use distinctive features of their own dialects in their cross country communication. The use of MSA features or the interlocutors’ dialect features are used to add a funny tone or to be friendly and

welcoming to the interlocutors. Use of features of the interlocutor's dialect or MSA is not mostly used in order to have a comprehensible successful communication.

What is presented in the show is basically polylingualism guiding mutual comprehensibility among and between Arabs. Despite the subtitles added by MBC to the viewers in case of Maghrebi speaking informants, informants on the show appear in no need of subtitles to achieve comprehensibility. Informants do not *explicitly* resort to the strategies mentioned in previous literature: no use of MSA or the interlocutor's dialect, no asking for meaning, or even the speaker acquainting their listeners with meanings. Example 11 suggests that resort to these strategies is happening backstage, but not on the screen.

The instance of episode 10 mentioned above, which comes once in this part of the data, may suggest that Arabs in this globalized show avoid expression of incomprehensibility. In this setting, Arabs are intentionally using distinctive features of their own dialect as a clear statement of their Arab belonging and identity. Asking for clarity or negotiation of meaning might have undermined the idea of pan-Arabism, and distracted everybody away from the show. The other side of the coin of this intentional choice is an equally intentional choice to use or not use features of another dialect.

Although the Maghrebi-Mashreqi ideology (Hachimi 2013) is not within the scope of this paper, but this instance beside the subtitles, draws the attention to the position of the media with regard to the attitude of incomprehensibility towards the Maghrebi Arabic mentioned above in Chakrani (2014). At the time where MBC has the practice of providing subtitles to Moroccan contestants, they cut on any explicit speech of incomprehensibility (towards Moroccans in this instance), even if this speech is coming from a Maghrebi Tunisian.

This instance as well, if seen while considering the teleprompters provided to the presenters, imply that media is actually encouraging national dialect use. Both presenters of the live shows, the Egyptian Mohammed Kareem and the Lebanese Emee Saiyah, mostly maintain their dialects while introducing the show and addressing the judges. It is a common procedure for media during live shows to provide script to be read by the presenters on teleprompters to help them remember their speech and maintain professionalism while talking. Seeing both presenters each speaking in his own dialect suggest that the teleprompter are actually written in two different dialects; the Egyptian and the Lebanese. This result may need further investigation though. However, as a preliminary result, it can be said that media in pan-Arab TV setting encourages national dialect use while avoiding expression of incomprehensibility.

It is important to note that the media, the judges, and the contestants share a common repertoire of the diverse features of all the dialects and MSA. They also have one topic of discussion: singing. This facilitates comprehension. However, strategies like classicizing, rephrasing, and negotiation of meaning is not present in the data under concern. The challenge that Saber presents to Kareem in Example 11 implies that levelling is the strategy that the informant use. From this example, it seems that Saber intentionally uses a feature of Tunisian dialect that he was not using before. The reason he chooses to use it is to challenge Kareem in his knowledge of Tunisian dialect. It seems that he wants to take Kareem to another level of the dialect. However, one instance is not enough to generalize and this result needs further analysis to be detected.

Actually the practice of Kareem, the media, to use features of his interlocutor's dialect create a feeling of embracing of all Arabs. Use of features from the interlocutor's dialect

send the message of a warm welcome, respect, and acknowledgment of the individuality of the country of this dialect. Some even respond back by saying people in this country love Kareem when he speaks their dialect. This means this practice of Kareem is received as a message of love.

Overall in the show, linguistic differences are reduced in favor of what seems like a sense of celebration of Arabic and Arab diversity. Arabism embraces the show while informants express their Arabness through their national dialect and feeling of belonging to their Arab country. As shown in the examples of section 5.1, informants address each other using the distinctive features of their dialect, in a clear expression of their national identity. However, they avoid expression of incomprehensibility of another dialect, giving the impression that all features used in the communication belong to one repertoire of Arabic language. All these distinctive features and national differences presented in the data index a wider meaning of Arabness. The boundaries of Arabness is widening in this show. If Nydell (2012) above defines Arabs to be in an Arab country and speaks the Arabic language, in this show, Arabness is widened to embrace Arabs living in foreign countries, speak a dialect of Arabic, understand other Arabic dialects, and other practices that are to be discussed in the PhD study.

What embraces the informants is the idea of Arabness and not MSA. MSA as seen in the examples of section 5.2 still maintains a role shared by Arabs together; but this shared role is not to facilitate cross-country speaking communication in a globalized pan-Arab setting. The humor that surrounds MSA in the examples alludes to Arabism, yes. Common history, common culture, common language and the other ideas that constitute Arabism are still present, cherished I would say. Arabism seems to come as a white sphere surrounding and supporting the whole production and success of this show. But, yet, in this white sphere there are clear distinctive colors of national identities, all belong in the sphere because they express their Arabness as defined and accepted in this setting. The research and analysis are still going. More analysis will help understand how communication is taking place, and the indexicalities of the use/no-use of some features to identity and ideology.

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NOTES

1. In the PhD study, a detailed description of the distinctive linguistic features of the varieties in the data is compiled from Versteegh (1997), Holes (1995), and *Encyclopedia of Arabic language and linguistics* (2006).
2. Transliteration system used: ISO 233-2, 1993 provided by AIDA. I added symbol *ā* for the emphatic long vowel, symbol *ā* for the high rise imala, symbol *ē* for the low imala, and symbol *e* for /ə/.

ABSTRACTS

This paper presents the preliminary results of a PhD dissertation that investigates the linguistic features accessible to and employed by Arabs in their cross-country communication in a pan-Arab globalized TV setting, relating the indexicalities of these features to identity and ideology. The framework that guides the study is polylingualism in superdiverse communities. The scope of this paper focuses on the use of features of national dialects, the interlocutors' dialects, and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The results show that Arabs dominantly use distinctive features of their national dialects. Using features from MSA or the interlocutor's dialect, in most cases, is not to ensure clarity of communication. The use of these features serves functions such as creating a funny atmosphere and embracing everybody into the big sphere of Arabism and Arabness within. Results also show that in a globalized TV setting, Arabs tend to avoid getting into circumstances of incomprehensibility and project a sense of celebration of their superdiversity within an Arab world that is perceived as one.

INDEX

Keywords: Pan-Arabism, Arabness, inter-dialectal communication, Arabic varieties, superdiversity, polylingualism, identity

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