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# Code Choice and Stance Taking by Two Mahragānāt Performers: A Case of Social Identity Construction in Egyptian Public Discourse

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# Code Choice and Stance Taking by Two *Mahragānāt* Performers: A Case of Social Identity Construction in Egyptian Public Discourse

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By

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# Code Choice and Stance Taking of Two *Mahragānāt* Performers: A Case of Social Identity Construction in Egyptian Discourse

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*If the decoding of power relations depended on full access to the more or less clandestine discourse of subordinate groups, students of power - both historical and contemporary - would face an impasse. We are saved from throwing up our hands in frustration by the fact that the hidden transcript is typically expressed openly - albeit in disguised form. I suggest, along these lines, how we might interpret the rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theater of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct. (Scott, 1990, p. Xii-Xiii)*

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## Abstract

*Mahragānāt* [festivals] is a relatively new genre of Egyptian street music that broadly represents working-class values and culture. Performers are aware of their unprivileged origins and feature the concerns and interests of Egyptian slums in their songs. Their vocals are linguistically fixated on local urban realities of the working class and often express loyalty to singers' neighborhoods. This qualitative study explores code choice in selected songs of two *mahragānāt* artists, namely Muhammad Ramadan and Ahmad Ali, and its relation to social class. Both performers overtly promulgate their unprivileged urban origin and employ their lyrics to reframe and negotiate their position in society through challenging social distribution of power and dominant language ideologies deeply rooted in Egyptian media. Further, the study seeks to know how they manipulate language to construct their social identity in the media and challenge the working-class stereotype. To that end, online and television interviews are analyzed to identify the performers' linguistic repertoire and range of linguistic performance. The study adopts stance-taking theory and indexicality as a theoretical framework for examining language form and content. A close qualitative examination of the *mahragānāt* sample, considering its spreading popularity among the Egyptian youth, demonstrates a possible undergoing change of language ideologies at large in Egyptian media as vernaculars gain more space, power, and prestige.


***Keywords:*** *Mahragānāt*; Egypt; Stance; Code choice; Language attitude; Language ideology; Indexicality; Identity; Power; Performance; Style.

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## List of Abbreviations

**AAVE:** African American Vernacular English

**AA:** Alexandrian Arabic

**CA:** Cairene Arabic

**CC:** Code-choice

**CS:** Code-switching

**DIY:** Do-it-yourself

**ECA:** Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

**ESA:** Educated Spoken Arabic - *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn*

**H:** High, highly valued

**L:** Low, lowly valued

**MENA:** the Middle East and North Africa

**MSA:** Modern Standard Arabic

**SA:** *Saʿīdī* Arabic - An Egyptian southern stigmatized variety of Arabic.

## Transliteration and Transcription System

The linguistic data in this study is represented in Arabic script and the Roman alphabet following the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration convention for Arabic texts. Since the data is mainly spoken, quotations from television shows and lyrics are transcribed according to their phonetic realization while names and nicknames are transliterated according to the conventions of MSA to facilitate the identification of artists and their works. The following chart gives the Roman alphabet equivalents for Arabic.

**Table 0. 1** *Arabic Consonant Symbols*

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ء | ʾ | د | *d* | ط | *ṭ* | م | *m* |
| ب | *b* | ذ | *dh* | ظ | *ẓ* | ن | *n* |
| ت | *t* | ر | *r* | ع | ʿ | هـ | *h*[1] |
| ث | *th* | ز | *z* | غ | *gh* | و | *w* |
| ج | *g* | س | *s* | ف | *f* | ي | *y* |
| چ | *j* | ش | *sh* | ق | *q* | ة | *a*[2] |
| ح | *ḥ* | ص | *ṣ* | ك | *k* | الـ | *al*[3] |
| خ | *kh* | ض | *ḍ* | ل | *l* | | |

*Note.* [1] When /h/ is not final. [2] In construct state: at. [3] For the article, al- and -l-.

**Table 0. 2** *Arabic Vowel Symbols*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Long* | ا or ى | *ā* | *Doubled* | ـِيّ | *iyy* (final form ī) |
| | و | *ū* | | ـُوّ | *uww* (final form ū) |
| | ي | *ī* | | | |
| *Short* | ـَ | *a* | *Diphthongs* | ـَو | *au* or *aw* |
| | ـُ | *u* | | ـَي | *ai* or *ay* |
| | ـِ | *i* | | | |

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1. Research Background and Context

Language is more than a structured system of symbols and signs. It also has a social dimension where utterances are evaluated and valued according to "the value ascribed to […] speaker" (Preece, 2016, p. xxii). As language users are members of communities and social institutions with social categories and affiliations, their value can be understood through a community's social and cultural practices, particularly while negotiating one's value in the context of shifting power dynamics (Preece, 2016). Thus, language can be used as a tool to display and construct social roles and aspects of identity.

Over the last few decades, linguistic research into identity has witnessed an explosion of interest with identity becoming a key construct in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Omoniyi & White, 2006). The study of language and identity considers aspects of language use and its relationship to the ideas and values of language users in different socio-cultural situations and contexts (Duranti, 2005; Voelkel, 2021). Precisely, it investigates using language to signal identities, social groups, and ideologies (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Identity is "the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identification and affiliation resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others" (Bauman, 2000, p. 1). It is characterized by being dynamic which means that the process of identity construction is emerging (Bassiouney, 2014; Omoniyi & White, 2006). Speakers constantly reconstruct their identity and negotiate their positions to other society members according to different contexts. Further, the linguistic practices in which one engages are not the same for everyone. Social constructs such as class, ethnicity, race, religion, gender,

age, occupation, locality, sexuality, and nationality affect how individuals shape their relationship with society (Gumperz, 1982; Omoniyi & White, 2006; Rickford, 1986). A change in language while actively negotiating one's relationship with "larger social constructs" such as class or ethnicity, which represent power structures within a society, can signify a different dimension of identity (Antrim, 2021; Bucholtz, 2003; Mendoza-Denton, 2002; Myers-Scotten, 1993). Because of its complex and fluid nature, there still remain questions unanswered despite the sociolinguistic efforts to study identity.

Language use and metapragmatic actions can reflect a speaker's self-perception and reveal identity creation and development (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In addition, the way others perceive a speaker is also equally important in identity formation. That is, language use can reflect society's perception of a person or a certain group. For example, classifying someone as a member of a particular social group indicates social identity, as does the individual identification of oneself as a member of a social group. According to context, identity shifts to stress self-concept or respond to others' perceptions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). Therefore, it is considered "an emergent construction" contingent on the situation and context and reflected in the linguistic practices and the way speakers position themselves in relation to others (Bauman, 2000, p. 1).

Based on that, social identity can be defined as an "individual's knowledge of himself as an individual in relationship to others" in terms of social group membership (Rembo, 2004, p. 33-34). That includes the demographic profile of the social groups to which one belongs with their "associated value connotations and emotional significance" (Turner, 1999, p. 8). Here, Turner (1999) refers to social meanings associated with social groups and, in turn, with the salient codes used by these groups. For that, a code can serve as an identification label for its speakers that other society members can recognize and distinguish. It is noteworthy that code is

employed as a neutral term in the current study to denote a certain language, dialect, variety, style, or register. Often, individual, and social dimensions of identity emerge and overlap in public discourse contexts (Bassiouney, 2014). Therefore, the study will not differentiate between personal identity, which is an individual's "own subjective feeling" of who one is, and social identity as it is not the point in question (Goffman, 1990, p. 129).

In public discourse, the emergence of identity is accomplished through making "situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identification and affiliation resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others" (Bauman, 2000, p. 1). A repertoire is a set of "a culturally sensitive complex of genres, styles, registers, with lots of hybrid forms" at an individual's disposal (Blommaert, 2007, p. 115). According to context, speakers choose codes from their repertoire to display aspects of their identity to others. In that, language users are aware of social meanings associated with different codes and using a specific code can be a stance taken toward social groups speaking it. That does not deny that code choice (CC) can be non-marked, subconscious, and habitual as in everyday linguistic practices. Also, it can be deliberate and performed as in public discourse. In Egyptian public discourse, the use of language functions as "a classification category" and "a resource in stance-taking" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 44). That is, outgroup members utilize codes to categorize others and in-group members use it as a resource to present identity to others.

Discourse, in general, can be oral or written. It is "ways of constituting knowledge" about "social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations" in a society (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). Weedon (1987), in his interpretation of Foucault's definition of discourse, describes discourses as "means for producing meaning" that, in turn, reflects the "unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life" of the audience which they try to socially influence (Weedon,1987, p. 108).

Thus, society plays an essential role in creating and understanding discourses. Society members interpret their worlds according to the social and moral order of their societies (Bassiouney, 2014). Being a socio-cultural product of society, public discourse is loaded with shared social and ideological concepts and stereotypes and has the power to sustain or change social realities by reproducing certain aspects of reality and neglecting others (Coupland, 2007). Therefore, it is considered as forms of power closely related to strategies of domination and resistance.

Overall, public discourse can refer to political discourse, scholarly discourse, institutional discourse, or media discourse (Bassiouney, 2014; Van Dijk, 2008). Bassiouney (2014) contends that media discourse is the cornerstone of public discourse. In late modern societies, media discourse is no longer restricted to institutionalized mainstream media like the press, cinema, publishing broadcasting, and all organizations and entities involved in their cultural products. There are new forms of media contributing to media discourse that have little or no censorship. These are termed 'new media' (Bassiouney, 2014; Lister et al, 2003). New media is digital, interactive, virtual, and not confined to formal institutions or state authorities (Lister et al, 2003). Eickelman and Anderson (2003) add to that being discursive, performative, and participative. That is, the kind of discourse produced by new media is of interactional nature, usually between a producer and a consumer in order to entertain the audience and create a real connection with them. Thus, performers manipulate language to reflect “an array of social identities” depending for that on “the cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge” they presupposedly share with their audience in order to amuse their audience (Androutsopoulos, 2007, p. 215).

Institutionalized mainstream media, on the other hand, has the power to manipulate language in order to reproduce and distribute “shared belief systems and ideologies” and “control access to them” by selecting certain codes to display and excluding others (Bassiouney, 2014, p.

45). Overall, standard codes and urban dialects are more favored by the media while street language, vernaculars, and non-urban varieties are often avoided. Access to Egyptian mainstream media is governed by rarely challenged language ideologies (Bassiouney, 2018a, 2018b). Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Cairene Arabic (CA) are the codes often used in the official media while vernaculars are excluded and stigmatized (Bassiouney, 2018a). Such discourse control is a form of power closely related to the notions of ideology and power (Van Dijk, 2008).

Ideology, in general, is "a shared belief system that is normalized by historical, political, and social realities and is directly and indirectly reflected in public discourse" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 48). Language ideology is "beliefs about language and language use" circulated by users in a specific community as rationalization of perceived language structure and proper use that eventually influence language practices (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 99). Organizations and enterprises controlling the media use it as means of ideological reproduction and distribution (Van Dijk, 2008). Generally, ideology distributors can be the state, the mainstream media, a religious institution, or an educational system and all run by the ruling class.

In Egypt, music production used to be confined to mainstream media and highly institutionalized. Although private companies have been actively working in the Egyptian market since the 90s, their content is mostly state censored; hence, "risk-averse" (Frishkopf, 2010, p. 17). Even with the private sector taking over the market in the late 90s, music content still replicated language ideologies of the official media except for cultural content as in folklore songs. It was not until the internet flourished in Egypt that the market slightly changed allowing independent music to spread and gain popularity. But while the independent or alternative underground scene is undeniably expanding, it remains largely marginalized compared to its Western counterpart (Frishkopf, 2010).

### 1.2. *Mahragānāt*: the Music of the Streets

*Mahragānāt*, an independent music production that has widely and rapidly spread in the aftermath of 2010, is one of the unofficial music productions that has stirred many debates in the last decade for violating language ideologies by singing in working-class vernaculars (Kitzler, 2021a; Kitzler 2021b; Naji, 2021). Therefore, the music has no room in the official broadcast (Naji, 2021). Rather, the songs are produced and distributed via digital media platforms. Such platforms enable their users to create and consume content and "spontaneously […] express opinions" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 25). I argue here that two performers of *mahragānāt*, namely Muhammad Ramadan and Ahmad Ali, use the music, as a vehicle of the powerless and the marginalized, to express their social identity and indirectly critique social power structures reflected in the language ideologies of mainstream media.

*Mahragānāt* is a relatively new genre of Egyptian music that mainstream media has banned in an attempt to prevent Egyptians from consuming it for its taboo content and low-class linguistic forms (Kitzler, 2021a; Naji, 2021). Nonetheless, it has hugely grown popular both online and live. The music first appeared around 2006, a few years before the beginning of the Arab Spring. Wedding DJs in Cairo slums who were influenced by rap, hip hop, grime, and reggaeton music, mixed Egyptian *shaʿbī* [belonging to the people] music with electronic dance beats to eventually develop a new genre of music called *mahragānāt* (Kitzler, 2021a; Naji, 2021; Zuhur, 2018).

The music first emerged in the cramped streets of the low-income community of Salam City in northern Cairo and later spread to other urban areas (Naji, 2021). Its composers mixed synthetic beats with Eastern *ṭabla* [drum] and auto-tuned singers' voices while the singers mainly performed in a 'vulgar' Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) using youth jargon and street

slang (Golia, 2015; Kitzler, 2021a; Naji, 2021; Schretzmaier, 2017). In no time, the queasy electronic loops, deliberately composed to create a festive atmosphere for wedding celebrations in Cairo's densely populated slums, became very popular among Egyptian youth from different social classes (Golia, 2015, El-Nabawi, 2014; Kitzler, 2021a).

The musical genre is academically approached from media, cultural, and ethnographic perspectives; however, it has received less attention linguistically. One of the few sociolinguistic studies that have tackled *mahragānāt* is El-Falaky (2015) who investigates the portrayal of women in two songs in relation to gender and social class. Adopting Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse analysis theory as a theoretical framework, she qualitatively analyzes the song lyrics for gender representation of males and females. Her findings claim that *mahragānāt* fosters a gendered social identity that exalts masculinity over femininity. Nevertheless, social identity is not identified as one of the main social variables in the study. Rather, it is only used to denote the low-class humble origins of the music and its performers. Additionally, the findings, which are built on a limited pool of data, are overgeneralized through associating negative indexes of misogyny with the entire genre and in turn with Cairene lower social classes since *mahragānāt* is their cultural product.

Indeed, a performed content can reflect, or contest prevailing language ideologies and social stereotypes and it can also express language attitudes and accumulate stances (Coupland, 2007; Omoniyi & White, 2006). That includes song lyrics because they are performed and of non-spontaneous nature. Song lyrics undergo editing and revising processes before being staged (Bassiouney, 2014). Being 'performed' presupposes that the linguistic choices made in the lyrics are intentional. Thus, performers evoke associations between language and meaningful social

groupings to signal identity. According to context, a code may have different social connotations. In that way, language is used as a resource (Bassiouney, 2014).

Before delving into the research problem, it is necessary to sketch out in greater detail the social context of *mahragānāt* emergence and the official attitude toward the genre along with the reasons behind it. Therefore, the linguistic situation in Egypt and dominant language ideologies reiterated in the media are outlined in the following sections.

### *1.2.1. The Social Context of Mahragānāt*

The musical genre developed rapidly over the past two decades. The first wave of *mahragānāt* started in 2005 and was characterized by a musical style that mixed electronic music with oriental rhythms (Naji, 2021). In that phase, music distribution was limited to YouTube. Bands were regarded "the voice of the poor and their neighborhoods" (Naji, 2021, p. 46). After the Egyptian revolution in 2011, the lyrics reflected the country's political turmoil by producing political *mahragānāt* like *ʿanā bābā ya-lā* [I'm your daddy, boy] performed by Fifty, Sadat, and DJ Figo (2012). Still, *mahragānāt* were heavily criticized for being performed in a working-class variety of ECA (Kitzler, 2021a).

Naji (2021) dates for the emergence of the second wave with the introduction and spread of commercial *mahragānāt* in the movies of Egyptian actor, Muhammad Ramadan. Ramadan, the most prominent figure of that wave, was supported by the Egyptian movie industry and partly by the state. Commercial *mahragānāt* boosted the genre's popularity. It was not long before the third wave began with the Egyptian rapper Ahmad Ali, known as Wegz, and the music composer, Molotof, seizing the scene and producing music that mixed trap, hip hop, and *mūlid* [Egyptian religious music] with *mahragān* (Naji, 2021).

Initially, the genre's popularity was ignored by Egyptian official media. There was no airplay neither on the radio nor on television and absolutely no reference to the music that took over the streets (Naji, 2021). Instead, it went viral via the internet through digital platforms like YouTube and Soundcloud. As the genre grew in popularity after the flux the country went through in 2012, a major debate started to escalate accompanied by violent attacks from mainstream mass media and officialdom (Kitzler, 2021a; Kitzler, 2021b; Naji, 2021). Criticism deemed the music and its lyrics, in content and form, as vulgar, obscene, and destructive to Egyptian values and identity (Kitzler, 2021a). The situation escalated until the performers were officially banned from performing live concerts in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the genre from gaining more popularity (Kitzler, 2021a; Naji, 2021). But these measures did not stop Egyptians from consuming the music. For a better understanding of the grounds for these fierce attacks, an outline of the linguistic situation in Egypt is needed. The following section introduces literature on the different varieties used in Egypt and briefly touches upon official language ideologies.

### *1.2.2. The Linguistic Situation in Egypt*

Egypt has a complex language environment with many codes in function. Although the country's official language is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), its linguistic reality reflects a diglossic community. A diglossic community is a one where “in addition to the different dialects, two varieties exist side by side, each with a different function” (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 2). In the first seminal work to describe the diglossic situation in Egypt, Ferguson (1959) describes a variation between a high (H) standard variety and a low (L) informal variety used for daily communication. The H variety is MSA while the L variety changes from one country/region to another (Bassiouney, 2014). For example, Egyptian Colloquial Arabic varieties (ECA) is the spoken code in Egypt while Arabic Lebanese is the language used in Lebanon for everyday

communication. Likewise, Gulf Arabic is spoken in Gulf countries and Moroccan Arabic is used in Morocco.

The H and L varieties have different lexical, morphological, and structural features and serve different social functions (Ferguson, 1959). He argues that the H variety is used in formal contexts like religious sermons, lectures, political speeches, news broadcasts, and newspaper editorials while the L colloquial varieties are appropriate only for informal everyday situations, folk literature, and drama television series. The H variety being the formal variety is considered the standard and prestigious code (Suleiman, 2008).

Ferguson's model was criticized for not accounting for situations where both varieties functionally overlap and eventually was found inadequate to exhaustively reflect the dynamic linguistic system in Egypt (Badawi, 1973; Bassiouney, 2009, 2018). Alternatively, Badawi (1973) proposed a polyglossic continuum model of variation building upon education and social class as two main factors affecting the linguistic situation in Egypt. In his continuum model, he introduced five socio-educational levels of intermediate varieties of Arabic in Egypt, ordered hierarchically from *fuṣḥa* [classic Arabic] to *ʿāmmiyyat al-ʾummiyyīn* [vernacular of the illiterate] at the end of the continuum with an overlap between the H and L varieties formally and functionally in *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn* [colloquial of the intellectuals] which is a case of a diglossic codeswitching between MSA and ECA.

Badawi (2012) observes the sociolinguistic change over the span of 40 years that has affected some of the levels with regard to their functions and domain of usage. One of the major changes he observes is the intrusion of the spoken colloquial with various degrees in supposedly formal written contexts like the press which has previously been held for MSA exclusively. Further, Taha (2020) contends that on the level of the spoken language, the colloquial variety has

to a great extent taken over new contexts and functions that used to lend themselves to MSA like religious sermons and advertisements. One interpretation she gives for that is related to audience design according to which a speaker may switch up and down the levels so as to accommodate interlocutors. She identifies the audience design, the context, and the settings as other factors at play in addition to the social variables like the level of education upon which Badawi's model rests. Additionally, she spotlights the need to examine new digital channels such as Facebook and Twitter and their possible effect on the linguistic reality in Egypt as reflected in Badawi's levels while stressing the rise of other varieties in the aural media during the last two decades.

To further complicate the linguistic situation in Egypt, foreign codes in addition to Arabic have their own domains of usage and social purposes. The use of foreign languages in Egypt is a matter of social class and education. Haeri (1997) argues that Egyptians from higher socio-economic backgrounds attend private foreign language schools because they are the access to the labor market as they guarantee good employment at private national and international firms for their graduates. In that educational setting, English, German, or French is the spoken language. Consequently, upper-class speakers are multilingual or bilingual in at least one Western language in addition to an Egyptian vernacular. Another finding of Haeri's (1997) confirms that upper-class speakers usually perform poorly in MSA. As for speakers from lower social classes, they learn MSA in state-affiliated schools and therefore, show more proficiency in MSA. Thus, English is considered a class marker and a status indicator in Egypt.

Despite being the H standard code in the models of Ferguson (1959) and Badawi (2012), *fuṣḥa* is not necessarily the elite code and it is not the only prestigious variety in Egypt. Haeri (1997) stresses that English functions as the elite code while ECA is the code of solidarity. She suggests a hierarchy of repertoires with the prestigious varieties, English, Cairene Arabic (CA),

and MSA, at the top of it. Consistent with Haeri's findings, Bassiouney (2014) contends that there is a prestigious variety among colloquial dialects in each Arab country. She identifies Cairene Arabic (CA) as the prestigious code in Egypt among non-Cairenes. For the purpose of this study, the classifications of Badawi (1973) and Haeri (1997) are adopted.

The complex linguistic situation described affects the linguistic practices in Egyptian public discourse, particularly in the media. Egyptian media is considered one of the most crucial ideological apparatuses for maintaining an official language ideology that communicates an in-group identity (Bassiouney, 2014). Consequently, solidarity codes like CA are favored by the media. However, language ideologies rarely consider individual differences. Rather, they only posit general associations about the language for society. Usually, linguistic choices reflect social norms and common ideologies. But language attitudes, which are indirect evaluative reactions toward one's own variety or varieties of the others, can also react to an ideology in rejection of a stereotype (Walters, 2006). Language choices deviating from the norm can threaten the status of the powerful codes and give rise to others.

### *1.2.3. Language Ideology and Media Landscape in Egypt*

Language ideologies adopted by the official media in Egypt favor the use of "educated or formal spoken Arabic" in formal situations (Taha, 2020, p. 4). Indeed, research shows that MSA and *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn* [colloquial of the intellectuals] are the official codes in Egyptian media (Myers-Scotton, 2010; Schaub, 2000). But Taha (2020) observes a change in the linguistic styles preferred by the media over the last two decades where the use of MSA for formal situations is entirely replaced by *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn*. Taha's findings align with earlier research predicting the commonness of code-switching (CS) between educated varieties of local dialects and MSA in the media, particularly the spoken media (Myers-Scotton, 2010).

Additionally, Bassiouney (2018b) contends that CA has become the standard official language of Egyptian public and private media being the country's standard and most powerful code of solidarity. Other codes, particularly urban low registers, and non-urban dialects, are often stereotyped, ridiculed, and stigmatized in media discourse (Bassiouney, 2018a, 2018b). Thus, performance in these codes in the media, beyond movies and soap operas, is uncommon and mostly avoided except for few cases where performers have the power to challenge the well-established and dominant language ideologies (Bassiouney, 2018a, 2018b). Bassiouney (2018b) investigates a case of deliberately performing in a stigmatized southern Egyptian dialect in poetry readings to challenge the stereotyping of southern dialects in Egyptian public discourse.

Within the Egyptian musical scene, Spady et al. (2006) examine Egyptian *shaʿbī* music as a case of performing in a low-class register. They compare the music that originated in the 1970s with hip hop music finding many similarities. Like hip hop, *shaʿbī* is the cultural product of the working class. Also, the lyrics are performed in street language to critique socioeconomic problems. They refer to Shaʿban Abdil-Rihim as the most prominent figure of the genre whose music has been ignored by Egyptian broadcasting companies for being ‘ridiculous’ and ‘humble’. Instead, the artist became popular by performing at weddings and in private concerts. However, the study does not provide a deep sociolinguistic analysis of his songs and language variation in them, nor do they go deep into the performer’s linguistic repertoire. Thus, there is no way to know if his use of low register is an intentional and performed style or not.

Overall, Bassiouney (2018c) contends that cases of code choice in the media can be better interpreted through indexicality. Indexicality is the semiotic relationship between linguistic forms and social meaning (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003). An index is a linguistic feature like a pronoun, or a phonological feature associated with different social meanings.

Based on context, language users choose to use a specific code to claim its indexes. Therefore, code choice is a resource in the stance-taking process that can reflect language ideology and attitudes and, in turn, identity (Bassiouney, 2014; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Bassiouney (2018a, 2018b) utilizes indexicality as an alternative approach to analyze code choice in Egyptian media. As mentioned before, she investigates cases where a non-standard southern dialect is used to challenge the stereotypes associated with it. In that, she argues that performers manipulate language to open new spaces for vernaculars. Following Bassiouney (2018c), indexicality (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003) and stance taking theory (Du Bois, 2007) are utilized as a theoretical framework of reference in this work. In the following section, more elaboration on the indexical theory of style and the stance-taking theory is given.

### 1.3. Indexicality and Stance Taking

Being members of a diglossic community, Egyptians have at least one of the following codes in their linguistic repertoire: MSA, CA, and/or English (Haeri, 1994). Bassiouney (2018c) contends that understanding cases of code choice is better examined through indexicality and social indexes of codes. Language users, motivated by the situation and context, choose to display, or withhold the ideologically loaded codes at their disposal. Indexicality is multilayered consisting of three orders of indexes closely related to the concepts of performance and metalinguistic discourse (Bucholtz, 2009; Coupland, 2007; Silverstein, 2003). A conscious and intentional display of a code is performing that code. Code performance signifies a performer's stance toward the code in use and local communities speaking it.

Pivotal to code performance is metalinguistic discourse or "talk about talk" surrounding a specific code (Collins, 2011, p. 409). For a sound interpretation of performance, metalinguistic discourse is required for access to social meanings associated with performed styles. While first-

order indexes are the outcome of habits and actual practices of individuals, second-order indexes are performed and intentional (Bassiouney, 2014; Bassiouney, 2018c). Thus, they are considered a "product of ideologies and attitudes" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 108). Habitual indexes are not salient, intentional, nor performed. Once they are noticeable, they become second-order indexes. As for third order indexes, they are the most creative being the outcome of an ideological move in which new meanings are assigned to linguistic variables and linked to a specific identity that their conscious performance signals that identity (Eckert, 2008; Johnstone, 2010).

Pertinent to that are code choice (CC) and code switching (CS) which are strategies of stance-taking and markers of identity. CS is "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). CC is a conscious decision to use certain code in an utterance, given the context (Genesee, 1982). CC may be unexpected and go noticed by others. It may affect the addressee's code choice as speakers are accommodated positively or negatively. It is a general phenomenon that can be realized in CS. However, the distinction is not employed in this study. It uses the two terms interchangeably as differentiating between them is out of its scope as CC and CS may account for switching between different languages, dialects, and registers.

Bokamba (1988) stipulates that CS consists of two strategies: CS proper and code mixing. In that, CS is considered a cover term for code mixing. He defines code mixing as "the embedding of various linguistic units from one language into another" within the same utterance (p.24). A linguistic unit is an affix, a lexical item, or a phrase from one linguistic system used into another. Code mixing can be unconscious. Since the nature of data in this study is performative in the sense that they are preplanned, deliberate, and conscious, the thesis does not

tackle subconscious code mixing. CC represented in CS is examined in the lyrics as a stance-taking strategy signaling identity.

### 1.4. Statement of the Research Problem

Although there is a growing body of linguistic scholarship on identity construction in Egyptian media discourse (Bassiouney, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2018a, 2018b), little has been done to investigate the discursive practices of identity in Egyptian music, particularly in *mahragānāt*. So far, sociolinguistic research on the topic is very limited. To my knowledge, there is only two studies on the topic. One of them is the study of Falaki (2015) who examines *mahragānāt* songs in terms of the sexualized portrayal of women. However, she focuses only on negative indexes of the music and overgeneralizes the study findings to the entire genre. On the other hand, Kitzler (2021b) conducts an empirical study on the linguistic practices in 55 *Shaʿbī* and *mahragānāt* songs produced between 2011 and 2017, as well as the metapragmatic discourse surrounding *mahragānāt* in mainstream media. She also interviews the performers for their take on the social rejection of the music and establishes social associations of the *shaʿbī* stereotype. The analysis focuses mainly on language content in an attempt to understand the reasons behind the unfavorable connotations of *mahragānāt* in public discourse. Also, it tackles language form with a focus on the use of slang which is described as a youth register. She concludes that media criticism of *mahragānāt* can be attributed to the use of taboo words and the low-class origins of the music and its performers. However, although she refers to social class as a main variable, she does not go deeper into the linguistic practices of lower-class features in her *mahragānāt* data.

Moreover, sociolinguistic scholarship on social identity construction through Egyptian music in the aftermath of 2010 revolution and in the new media is not vast. What are available falls under ethnographic, popular culture, or ethnomusicological research with some studies

referring to *mahragānāt* as the product of localization conventions of hip hop in Egypt (Zuhur, 2018). Therefore, more research on the linguistic performance of social identity in *mahragānāt* is needed. To fill the gap in research, the study examines code choice in a corpus of *mahragānāt* songs performed by two performers representing the second and third waves of the music. I argue that they manipulate language to challenge social power structures and dominant language ideologies favored and protected by mainstream media. On a larger scale, I argue that *mahragānāt* is attaining the power of redefining social realities by indexing positive and covertly prestigious associations and social meanings to working-class codes.

For that end, indexicality (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003) and stance-taking theory (Du Bois, 2007) are utilized to examine CC by the two performers. Language content, which is the message and themes of the lyrics, is investigated for better interpretation of the linguistic form or stylistic variation in CC. The focus of the study is social identity as a perception of self, based on membership in social groups. It includes social features like social class and locality and overlaps with other social variables like ethnicity and gender. As established, social features are assigned from others outside the group since usually outsiders have a set of expectations from other social groups. I also argue that by using non-standard codes in *mahragānāt*, its performers are opening "diverse new vernacular spaces" (Coupland, 2011).

**1.5. Research Questions**

Using stance taking and indexicality as a theoretical framework to examine social identity construction in *mahragānāt*, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the linguistic repertoires of the two *mahragānāt* performers, Muḥammad Ramadan, and Ahmad Ali (Wegz)?

(2) How do the two performers use language in media discourse to reflect their identity?

a. How do they select patterns of language use in the song lyrics to index the social identity they wish to present in the media?
b. What are the stances taken by the two performers?

## 1.6. Delimitations

This is a case study that focuses only on two performers representing the second and third waves of *mahragānāt*. Both performers come from different economically marginalized urban areas in Cairo and Alexandria, respectively *al-Munīb*, and *al-Wardiyān*. The analysis refers only to these two poor neighborhoods which share close socio-economic characteristics but demonstrate distinctive linguistic variations. Therefore, the study focuses on two variables: social class and locality with reference to the influence of language attitude and ideology on code choice and linguistic practice in the data.

The purpose of the study is strictly exploratory, and no endeavor is made to generalize the findings to a larger population. It only scratches the surface of linguistic practices in *mahragānāt*. Thus, the results of social identity representation cannot be generalized to the entire genre and is not intended. Moreover, the study will not cover the perceptions of the Egyptian viewers regarding the music content and the linguistic practices utilized in it.

## 1.7. Definitions of Constructs

### *1.7.1. Theoretical definitions of constructs*

**Dialogicality:** a speaker's engagement "with the words of those who have spoken before" whether in the same speech exchange or in "a prior text" before the current speech event (Du Bois, 2007, p. 140)

**Code-switching (CS):** a communicative strategy where "two different grammatical systems or subsystems" are juxtaposed "within the same speech exchange of passages of speech" (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59).

**Code choice (CC):** a conscious decision of unexpectedly using certain code in an utterance, given the sociolinguistic and conversational context (Genesee, 1982). It could go noticed by interlocutors and may affect their code choice in return as they accommodate the speakers positively or negatively.

**Identity:** is "an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identification and affiliation resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others" (Bauman, 2000, p. 1).

**Indexicality:** is a semiotic connection between linguistic forms and social meanings (Silverstein, 2003).

**Language ideology:** is "beliefs about language and language use" circulated by users in a specific community as rationalization of perceived language structure and use, that eventually influence language practices (Van Dijk, 2008; Bassiouney, 2014).

**Language attitude:** is one's evaluative reactions to different language varieties. They are individual "psychological states related in complex ways to larger abstract language ideologies" (Walters, 2006, p. 651).

**Linguistic Repertoire:** is an individual's set of "a culturally sensitive ordered complex of genres, styles, registers, with lots of hybrid forms, and occurring in a wide variety of ways" (Blommaert, 2007, p. 115).

**Performance:** is a register used by a speaker where a code is objectified and displayed in relation to other forms of speaking (Coupland, 2007). Performance speech is "highly self-conscious" in which speakers focus on the linguistic characteristics of a code while "demonstrating a speech variety to others" (Schilling-Estes, 1998, p. 53).

**Power:** is "a privileged access to valued social resources, such as wealth, job, status, or indeed, a preferential access to public discourse and communication" (Van Dijk, 1996, p. 85).

**Style**: is "ways of speaking that are indexically linked to social groups, times and places in dialects" (Coupland, 2007, p. 9). It also resides in the way speakers utilize their resources of codes to make meaning.

**Social identity:** is "a person's definition of self in terms of some social group membership with the associated value connotations and emotional significance" (Turner, 1999, p. 8).

**Social power**: is an indirect "control of one group over other groups and their members. Traditionally, control is defined as control over the actions of others" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 9). It is the result of the relationship between social groups and classes as manifested in interactions to preserve the enforcer's gains and interests (van Dijk, 2008).

**Stance:** is "the mediating path between linguistic forms and social identities" and the contextual "cue" that "informs interlocutors on the nature of the role that the speaker aims to project in relation to the form and content of [….] utterance" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 56).

### *1.7.2. Operational definitions of constructs*

**Code:** a neutral term used to denote a language, or a variety of language, a dialect, a register, or a style. There are seven codes identified in the study, and the word code refers to any of them. They include MSA, CA, AA, SA, English, Italian, and a style of CA.

**Code choice:** when the singers insert stylistic features from sub-varieties, vernaculars, and dialects, other than the standard Cairene Arabic, in their lyrics, or when they use words or conduct full statements in English without a compelling context.

**Language attitude:** the general beliefs of the performers that affect their spoken utterances and govern their actions throughout their performance.

**Social class:** is an elusive and controversial term that changes from one society to another and involves social mobility. For the purpose of this study, social class is defined as a division of society based on hierarchal social categories that are closely tied to locality or regionality and education, and in turn, to access to codes. The study is based on three broad categories: upper, middle, and working (lower) class. Upper class is belonging to non-*shaʿbī* privileged neighborhoods signaled by having access to elite codes like English and other foreign codes as established by Haeri (1997) while working class is self-identifying as belonging to *shaʿbī* marginalized neighborhoods signaled by using Badawi's (2012) *ʿāmmiyyat al-ʾummiyyīn* [vernacular of the illiterate]. Anything in between what is upper and what is working/low classes can be described as middle class.

# Chapter 2 - Literature Review

## 2.1. Overview

The chapter is devoted to the presentation of the literature on *mahragānāt*, language ideologies and attitudes in Egyptian media, and the theoretical framework of this study which relies on stance theory (Du Bois, 2007) and indexicality concept (Collins, 2011; Eckert, 2008; Johnstone, 2010; Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003). Owing to the interdisciplinary scope of the study, literature from cultural, ethnographic, and sociolinguistic research on *mahragānāt* is introduced. The chapter starts with presenting the nature of media discourse in modern societies focusing on the context of *mahragānāt* in Egypt and on using media discourse to challenge social power hierarchies and stereotypes.

## 2.2. *Mahragānāt* in the New Media

Public discourse, particularly in the media, creates discursive spaces where identity, culture, ideology, and characteristics of individuals and certain social groups can be ennobled. The products of mass media like films, television programs, soap operas, and popular music shape people's identity by promoting selective "specific components of identity while ignoring others" and discursively constructing and controlling access to linguistic resources (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 37; Van Dijk, 1996). That is, mainstream media socially distributes general associations about language by establishing models for appropriate language, behavior, and attitudes. In doing so, it does not take into account individual differences and reinforce stereotypes. Hence, language can be viewed as a resource which is distributed unequally according to the social networks of individuals and the discursive spaces available to them.

New forms of media, including social media, provide a less restricted space for indirectly expressing individual attitudes and even contesting dominant ideologies since their access is less

restricted to unprivileged groups. In Egypt, after the 2011 revolution - a monumental event in the history of modern Egypt catalyzed by calls on Facebook for mobilization - social media popularity among youth as an alternative source of news has grown greatly attracting more audiences than ever from mainstream media. After more than 10 years, social media continues to play a central role in Egyptian society. Data shows that Egyptians are heavy consumers of social media particularly YouTube and Facebook (Alexa, n.d.). There is an exponential growth in the number of users of social media with the majority of them from youth. Salem (2017) contends that the largest age group of consumers is 18-24 years of age, followed by 25-34 years of age.

Taking advantage of the less ideologically restrained social media, *mahragānāt* has gone viral in Egypt away from the official media grip. But despite growing popular, the music is fiercely attacked by mainstream media for accusations of using taboo and profanity content and singing in a low-class youth register of ECA (Kitzler, 2021a; Kitzler, 2021b). The attack may reflect the marginalization of lower classes and their cultural products in mainstream media and the struggle of working-class youth for visibility and legitimation. Out of denying working-lass musical styles like *shaʿbī* and *mahragānāt* the access to the official market for being classified as *fann hābiṭ* [low-level unsophisticated art form], *mahragānāt* creators bypass the censorship and ban by resorting to noninstitutional, informal, and cheap modes of production and distribution like the internet and performing at weddings and private parties (Kitzler, 2021a; Kitzler, 2021b; Naji, 2021).

*Mahragānāt* is the cultural product of a social class that is usually excluded from official music production institutions and denied access to the country's authorized discursive spaces (Kitzler, 2021a; Kitzler, 2021b; Naji, 2021; Sprengel, 2019). Critics blame it on the ‘offensive’ lyrics performed in low-class vernaculars and street jargon by working-class male youth (Kitzler,

2021a; Kitzler, 2021b; Sprengel, 2019). Vernaculars are not habitually used in formal means of cultural production in Egypt except for soap operas and movies which often stereotype and stigmatize them. Therefore, the exclusion can be attributed to state media preference of the linguistic styles of upper-class citizens as exemplary of the ideal lifestyle and also for purposes of creating communal solidarity among Egyptians (Bassiouney, 2014; Fahmy, 2011).

### 2.3. Power, Ideology, and Performance: Challenging the Stereotype

Central to any discussion of power in the media is the concept of ideology. Van Dijk (1996) in his seminal work on the relationship between power and discourse defines power as "a privileged access to valued social resources, such as wealth, job, status, or indeed, a preferential access to public discourse and communication" (Van Dijk, 1996, p. 85). That is, access to public discourse and linguistic resources is established as a form of power through which influential groups can dominate others and maintain their privileged status quo. Along the same lines, social power is defined in terms of the "control" of one dominant group over the actions of other groups and their members (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 9). Social power shapes the relationship between different groups and social classes with the aim of guaranteeing the dominant group or the ideology enforcer's interests through discourse control which is closely tied to the notion of ideology.

Performance, on the other hand, is a "verbal art" that displays social styles with social connotations through consciously demonstrating to others the linguistic characteristics of a code as contrasted to other forms of speaking (Bauman and Briggs, 1990, p. 60; Schilling-Estes, 1998). Performance focuses on the study of linguistic styles in relation to ideology and context. That is, it sees language as a medium for addressing an audience with the purpose of shaping social constructs and reconstructing social realities. Music as a performed genre has the social

power in itself to shape social relations. That is, it is a means through which people express themselves and shape and maintain group consciousness which contributes to one's sense of social identity and acts as a label of group membership (Bassiouney, 2014; Lonsdale, 2021). The power of music cannot be overlooked as in practice it is one of the most powerful mediums for its very unrecognized and disguised form which flies “under the radar” (Frishkopf, 2010, p. 68).

Music is a staged performance with planned and edited content in which the construction of identity is deliberate and conscious (Androutsopoulos, 2007). Bassiouney (2014) contends that linguistic resources employed in performed genres are influenced by ideologies and attitudes and not only by linguistic realities. Music performers can affirm identity and agency by manipulating language to take a stance, reflect an attitude, or reinforce/challenge an established ideology only through the lyrics of downloadable songs.

Fahmy (2011) contends that language ideology adopted by the formal music industry in Egypt focuses almost exclusively on the use of Cairene Arabic (CA). Songs are produced in a middle-class Cairene Arabic for public consumption which fully supports the establishment of the code as the standard Egyptian dialect (Fahmy, 2011). Being the standard dialect entails that CA speakers are socially powerful. Van Dijk (2008) stresses that the value of a code depends on its social and economic power. In Egypt, being the standard code gives more power to CA over other local varieties. Therefore, the groups that speak the powerful code are the dominant groups in society with the authority to exercise control over the linguistic actions of others through influencing their language ideologies and attitudes. In addition, these groups can control access to other varieties by marginalizing them or making them available through the media and the educational system. Since media production in Egypt is extremely centralized in Cairo (Fahmy, 2011), CA is the most powerful and prestigious code resulting in an unequal distribution of other

local codes which are often ridiculed and portrayed as inferior and less attractive as compared to the solidarity code (Bassiouney, 2018a). Consequently, code choice can be used as a resource in stance-taking in public discourse as it is indeed a strong marker of identity in the Egyptian context. To sum up, Egyptian media maintains the social status quo of CA by dominating the construction of language ideologies surrounding it and other codes through media discourse.

Having reviewed the well-established language ideologies in Egyptian media, the fierce rejection of *mahragānāt* in mainstream media may be seen as discourse dominance in a try to 'control' of access to linguistic resources and cease the iteration of parallel linguistic ideologies giving power and covert prestige of non-standard codes. The wide and rapid spread of the music normalizes working-class subcultures and varieties which is indeed the most profound concern of the Egyptian cultural elite (Kitzler, 2021a; Pratt, 2020). After all, music, in particular, as a medium has the potential to grow as a counterforce giving *mahragānāt* the power to "define social reality" and impose alternative "visions of the world" (Gal, 1995, p. 178).

In Egyptian media discourse, few cases have attempted to challenge language ideologies and stereotypes through CC and index a local and regional identity. One of these cases is that of a poet from southern Egypt who performs in a range of varieties including a local southern stigmatized variety associated with ignorance. Bassiouney (2018b) uses indexicality (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 2003) and stance theory (Du Bois, 2007) to analyze code choice in the poet's poems and talk shows. She concludes that through CS and accumulation of stances the poet assigns value to his local dialect and renegotiates its status in relation to other standard dialects, namely CA and MSA. Doing so, he asserts his local identity and constructs his public persona.

In another study, Bassiouney (2018a) examines metalinguistic discourses of a stigmatized Upper Egyptian code to establish the way through which social associations of the variety are

established in Egyptian media. Also, she examines cases where Upper Egyptian performers engage with the stereotype associated with their dialect to stress positive characteristics of Upper Egyptians through displaying the code. Adopting stance theory and indexicality, she analyzes a corpus of soap operas, films, written and performed poetry, talk shows, postcards, and songs in SA over 50 years. She argues that the media permanently posits negative indexes of Upper Egypt and of speakers of the region's dialects while resistance to the stereotype comes from few southern performers with access to mainstream media who manipulate their linguistic repertoire to reflect a positive local identity.

With regard to *mahragānāt*, the debate which it has stirred in the last few years over its content and language form and the social background of performers continues to escalate while the music grows increasingly popular to the extent that many of the best hits in Egypt in the last ten years come from the genre. Still, the new art form has received so little scholarly attention from a sociolinguistic perspective in addition to some academic recognition from media, cultural and ethnographic research. In the following, interdisciplinary scholarship is reviewed for academic documentation of the genre features including a description of the language form utilized in the songs and its social associations. It also posits the music within the bigger frame of Egypt's music scene.

### 2.4. *Mahragānāt* in Ethnographic Research

In Egypt, there are three genres of urban marginalized music: *shaʿbī,* a localized old school of rap, and *mahragānāt* (Grippo, 2007; Kitzler, 2021a, 2021b; Williams, 2009). While the last has no place in the airplay of mainstream media, it is ubiquitous in digital media and social reality as in the streets, on public transportation, and at weddings (Kitzler, 2021; Sprengel, 2019; Swedenburg, 2012). In an ethnomusicological study on *mahragānāt*, Sprengel (2019) describes

the genre as urban working-class 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) music that emerged in Egypt in 2011 and spread in low-income neighborhoods. Over three years of observing the emergence of DIY musicians in the aftermath of Egypt's 2011 revolution, she has recorded the opinions of street-concert organizers and underground musicians who are outsiders to the *mahragānāt* culture. While they describe the genre as authentic and full of positive energy, they criticize it for not being serious enough as compared to other forms of classic and "sophisticated music" which consumption "makes you smarter" according to one of the interviewees (p. 67). Such description establishes *mahragānāt* as a bad taste, inferior, and low-quality musical art favored by teenagers, and definitely not for cultured people. Criticizers also fear a potential of the genre to "perpetuate violence, sexual harassment," and a "working-class masculinity" linking the linguistic form of the music to negative indexes (Sprengel, 2019, p. 68).

In contrast, Pratt (2020) and Benchouia (2015) argue that *mahragān* is actually a form of resistance to political, socioeconomic, and linguistic marginalization of working-class youth. Although the lyrics describes everyday concerns of the working class, they also indirectly defy prevailing language ideologies by creating "an autonomous sphere in which the dominant cultural meanings underpinning hierarchies of power may be disrupted" (Pratt, 2020, p. 534). To elaborate, the songs being a cultural product of working-class marginalized youth express lower class concerns and, in that, they open new discursive spaces to question social and cultural meanings and stereotypes established by dominant ideologies and associated with the working-class. In that way, they indirectly challenge social hierarchies and ideologies.

Interestingly, other studies link *mahragān* with hip hop arguing that the music indeed shares some similarities with hip hop and rap (Benchouia, 2015; ElNabawi, 2014; Kitzler, 2021; Naji, 2021; Sprengel, 2020; Zuhur, 2018). That categorization is especially important since hip

hop, which originally emerged in African American communities to express the struggle against racism and economic disparity, is considered a vehicle for youth all over the world to express protest and resistance by combining elements of hip hop with local music, language, and social contexts (Mitchell, 2001). Combining features of hip-hop in *mahragān* strongly indicates a shared sense of marginalization as the artists indirectly relate to the African American history of oppression and disenfranchisement through rapping, the most representative feature of the music. In the making of localized rap, local artists usually incorporate local elements like local musical styles and language forms associated with certain sentiments to construct and reinforce authentic local identities as they resist ideology and power (Kahf, 2007; Pennycook, 2007; Williams, 2009). Similar steps are adopted in *mahragānāt* in which hip-hop main elements like rapping, dissing, and deejaying can be traced. It is noteworthy that in at least two of these studies, *mahragānāt* artists identified themselves as performers of a localized subgenre of hip hop (Benchouia, 2015; Kitzler, 2021b)

Before the emergence of *mahragānāt* in its established form in 2011, young Egyptian marginalized performers resorted to *shaʿbī* music and an old-school of rap to express their feelings of political resentment and economic frustrations (Kahf, 2007; Williams, 2009). For being a global symbol of youth protest and resistance, hip hop is a suitable vehicle for youth to express their marginalization without having the vocal and aesthetic requirements necessary for singing as compared to *shaʿbī* which requires specific vocal abilities and expanded vocal ranges. This study starts from the assumption that *mahragānāt* is a creative localized form of hip hop in Egypt. Such an assumption helps in yielding better interpretation of the data which demonstrates features of hip hop and rap. Also, it takes into account the artists' self-categorization. In the following section, scholarship on the localization of hip hop globally and in Egypt is reviewed.

### *2.4.1. Localization of Hip Hop and Rap in Egypt*

There is a huge bulk of literature on the localization of rap and hip hop worldwide and in the Middle East, particularly in North Africa and Palestine (see Kahf, 2007). As far as Egyptian rap scene is concerned, there is a growing body of literature on the conventions of localization of hip hop and rap in Egypt (Williams, 2009). Still, there is no literature examining *mahragānāt* as a developed subgenre of hip hop and a means for youth to express social identity and resist mainstream language ideologies. The available ethnographic literature solidifies the music as purely Egyptian and interprets the artists' affiliation with hip hop as a desire for international recognition (Benchouia, 2015).

Indeed, singing rap is a vehicle for the spread of local subcultures (Williams, 2009). It has been put forward that adopting a hip-hop culture outside the United States is already local because it comes from indigenous communities and is extended to socio-economic situations where local artists seek to express resistance and/or stress 'blackness' (Pennycook & Mitchell, 2009). Williams (2009) contends that the localization of hip hop is "a development of a global racial identity" manifested in "local-to-local relationships" reinforcing the claim to authenticity (p. 4).

In her approach to examining the process of hip-hop localization in Egypt, Williams (2009) identifies four elements of hip-hop culture that are utilized by local versions of hip hop. They are rapping, deejaying, creating graffiti art, and breakdancing. For example, there are several studies accumulated on the appropriateness of hip hop in Europe to express frustration with local issues and traditional forms of expression (Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003). In the MENA region, Palestinian, Moroccan, and Tunisian rappers mix western and eastern music with political lyrics to reflect their economic, political, and social struggling (Ben Moussa, 2019;

Kahf, 2007). Palestinian rappers utilize Palestinian Arabic urban dialects as well as Hebrew and English in their lyrics to express local issues pertinent to the frustration of their political situation (Kahf, 2007). Moroccan rappers incorporate *darija* [Moroccan Arabic], which is a refined middle Moroccan Arabic used by educated people in official social contexts, formal literary Arabic used in the media and official settings, with occasional insertion of French and English words to negotiate individual and collective identity and express cultural, social, and economic frustrations of Moroccan youth (Ben Moussa, 2019).

Williams (2009) is one seminal work on singing marginalization in Egypt through hip hop. Adopting Kahf's framework (2007) and Davies and Bentahila's framework (2008), she explores the localization process of Egyptian hip hop by examining the use and function of code-switching in the musical style of four Egyptian bands. Local themes in the song lyrics about nationalism, pan-Arabism, and connective nationality are investigated to better understand the context of code selection by performers and identity construction in the songs. Except for one group, she has found that all groups have localized their musical production in terms of content and language in order to construct a local authentic Egyptian hip-hop identity. Only one group uses English frequently as a language of resistance against Western domination. One interpretation of that finding is that the use of English phrases makes the lyrics comprehensible to the targeted audience from upper-class youth and English-speaking communities. Finally, she concludes that three bands use the musical genre as means to resist established language ideologies, disseminate local traditions, and stress a local Egyptian hip-hop identity.

When it comes to *mahragān* as a subgenre of hip hop, as well as other forms of hip hop in Egypt post the Arab spring, there is no literature yet addressing these gaps in research from a linguistic perspective. *Mahragān*, unlike earlier waves of rap in Egypt, mixes Eastern beats and

pure Egyptian musical styles with elements of hip-hop in vernaculars (Naji, 2021). By doing so, the artists lay claim to authenticity and legitimacy of linguistic form.

To address one of the many lacunas in research, code choice by two *mahragānāt* performers is examined in relation to identity formation and language attitudes toward dominant language ideologies in media discourse. To that end, stance-taking theory and indexicality are adopted in order to interpret the relationship between performers' identities and the codes they use, the stance they take as they express themselves, and the reasons behind doing so. The following section sets the study theoretical framework by introducing in detail the key concept of indexicality and stance theory, as well as social identity which is the main construct in the study.

## 2.5. Theoretical Framework

### *2.5.1. Social Identity*

Hip hop is considered a "strong indexer of regional affiliation" through representing local identities and establishing in-group solidarity with local communities of origin (Cramer & Hallett, 2010). In that sense, it contributes to the construction of social identity. Social identity is "a person's definition of self in terms of some social group membership with the associated value connotations and emotional significance" (Turner, 1999, p. 8). People constitute different identities according to different situations, context, and audience. In doing so, they depend not only on their self-perception but also on the way others with whom they interact view them, and accordingly they choose from the linguistic resources to which they have access and construct their social identity.

Notably, social identity is manifested when threatened by outsiders so that one can maintain self-esteem through valued affiliation with a social group (Edwards, 2009). By using particular words that are associated with a specific region, an individual establishes membership

and solidarity with the social group in that region and excludes those who do not belong to it. Thus, social identity is closely related to the expression of locality (Cramer & Hallett, 2010). The locality is indexed by using linguistic features specific to a region and also by reference to local foods, town names, and other lexical items known to the members of the group. Further, locality intersects with social class, gender, and age and may also include ethnicity.

This is of relevance to the current study since it sheds light on a key term in identity construction by two *mahragānāt* artists who are influenced by hip hop and construct their local identities not only in language content but also through access to variation. As Bassiouney (2014) contends, language use in Egyptian public discourse functions as a "classification category" where access to language is access to a resource, and access to resources is a marker of identity. In that sense, code choice is a direct reflector of identity as it can signal one's positing of oneself in relation to others whether as a member of the group or an outsider. To elaborate, if a person speaks ECA, she/he is classified as Egyptian. Subclassifications are also dependent on which variety of ECA is used and whether speakers switch between them.

One seminal work on social class is that of Eckert (1989) in which she examines the language of high school teenagers from a suburban part of Detroit. She distinguishes between two distinct social groups the middle-class jocks and the working-class burnouts. While the jocks have been strongly connected to the social networks of their school community, the burnouts' practice communities have focused on their neighborhoods as they were anti-school. The study shows variation between the two groups that is observed in the use of non-standard negation by the burnouts which is totally different from the variants their parents employ. The study concludes that social class stratification is not the outcome of lack of education or income, but rather of local dynamics rooted in language ideologies and practices that reflect class (p. 92).

Through her empirical study, Eckert (1989) marks a new wave of variationist studies that emphasizes individual agency and social meanings of linguistic forms. That is, language users choose to display certain variables attached to specific indexes to express their stance toward an a social group.

### *2.5.2. Stance Theory*

Based on the idea of positioning in which language users take "subject positions" or assign positions to others, the stance-taking theory is introduced (Du Bois, 2007). Bassiouney (2014) elaborates that stance is the connection between linguistic forms and social identities, or a contextual cue that denotes to addressees the positioning which a speaker's aims to project through the form and content of his or her utterance. By studying language forms like grammar, lexis, and phonology used by an individual, her/his stance can be better understood (Bucholtz & Hall 2010, p. 22). It is noteworthy that the meaning of linguistic forms does not reside in social categories like gender, age, and region, but rather in the way people construct their identities through taking stances and creating alignments (Jaff, 2009). That is, through linguistic forms and language content, stance is in/directly indexed or taken.

Stance then, as Du Bois (2007) contends, is an evaluation of a stance object according to which an individual positions oneself and dis/aligns with their interlocutors. In that sense, stance-taking is a process. The process involves three acts: evaluation, positioning, and dis/alignment. That is, a stance taker evaluates a stance object whether people or categories and assigns a value or a quality to it. Then, she/he positions self or others on a scale of affective value which is one's feelings towards something, or on a scale of epistemic value which is one's knowledge about something. Usually, the self and others are positioned as particular kinds of people, almost stereotypes. According to the degree to which one's subjective view agrees or disagrees with

others, a dis/aligning with people occurs. An accumulation of stances builds up into forming an identity.

Nonetheless, stance theory is criticized for being subject to subjective and concentric analysis (Irvine, 2009). To avoid its methodological pitfalls, empirical evidence from ethnographic studies on the cultural associations of a code and a comprehensive understanding of a person's linguistic repertoire are essential for assessing linguistic performance. For that purpose, ethnographic research on the vernacular used in *mahragānāt* is introduced in the second section of this chapter. In addition, indexicality orders are utilized to better interpretation of CC.

Kiesling (2018) examines a performed local dialect in relation to class and gender by adopting stance theory as a theoretical framework. He explores the parody of working-class Pittsburghese in a YouTube comedy show through analyzing the interactional patterns used by the characters and the way it reflects their perceived Pittsburghese. Additionally, paralinguistic resources in the data like context, body language, and gestures are investigated. He finds that the most taken stance by the characters is actually of disalignment even when the context overtly denotes solidarity. He interprets that in the light of in-group interactions in which local disalignment is typical.

### *2.5.3. Indexicality*

This work draws on the indexicality concept and its three orders to explore CC in media discourse (Collins, 2011; Eckert, 2008; Johnstone, 2010; Silverstein, 2003). Indexicality is a semiotic association between linguistic features and social meanings (Collins, 2011; Eckert, 2008; Johnstone, 2010; Silverstein, 2003). Within the concept of indexicality, language use is thought of as "an iconic sign" or a symbol that has layers of conventional meaning according to the context (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 58). For example, the English spoken by an upper-middle class

person in Cairo may not be perceived as an elite code in London or New York. Bassiouney (2014, 2018c) postulates that approaching stance as reflected through variation requires an understanding of identity formation at multiple indexical levels. That, in turn, mandates a knowledge of an agent's linguistic repertoire and of code associations in a community. A linguistic sign is indexical given that it denotes social or conventional meaning to which it is usually linked. Under these circumstances, indexical signs can display identity.

Indexicality contends that identity formation is multilayered or ordered (Silverstein, 2003). He identifies three orders of indexicality. First-order indexes are linguistic forms associated with "a socio-demographic identity or semantic function" that are linguistically observed by outsiders (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 59). In that, they are "not noticeable, not intentional, and not performed" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 60). First-order indexes function as a social marker of group membership.

Once a linguistic form is noticeable, it is considered second-order indexes. Second-order indexes are assigned social meaning based on shared ideological representations (Johnstone et al, 2006). That is, they usually represent stereotypes (Eckert, 2008). That makes the use of second-order indexes intentional and creative (Silverstein, 2003). To avoid the subjectivity pitfall of stance theory and indexicality, metalinguistic discourse or talk about language is necessary in understanding second-order indexes or stereotypical representations in a community (Silverstein, 2003). Third-order indexes, on the other hand, are characterized by being even more deliberate, performative, and ideological as a linguistic form which is a symbol of a specific identity is consciously and deliberately performed in a creative way that involves an ideological move in which new values are assigned (Eckert, 2008; Johnstone, 2010). Metapragmatic discourse help in clarifying second-order indexes of a code. These indexes can be also obtained from ethnographic

and sociolinguistic research (Bassiouney, 2014). As for code indexes in Egypt, the social associations of the codes under investigation in this study are set in order in the fourth chapter. Social meanings of these local codes are obtained from sociolinguistic research. Metalinguistic discourse and associations of low-class CA are adopted from Badawi (1973), Royal (1985), and Kitzler (2021b). As for social association and metalinguistic discourse on SA, they are obtained from Bassiouney (2018a, 2018b) and Miller (2005).With regard to working-class AA, its social associations are adopted from Bassiouney (2014) while its metalinguistic discourse in Wegz' interview with CNL is analyzed in the fourth chapter.

This study deals with language as a repertoire that is "a culturally sensitive ordered complex of genres, styles, registers, with lots of hybrid forms, and occurring in a wide variety of ways" (Blommaert, 2007, p. 115). It starts from the assumption that in public discourse performers select from their repertoire to imply social variables that indirectly reflect identity and construct their public persona. In that sense, the focus is on indexes of local styles and regional dialects. Local codes can have various indexes and every index can be utilized differently by different speakers of different social classes to take specific stances according to context. For example, CS to a low-class style of CA can be used as a mechanism of disalignment with addressees or to display a social meaning associated with the code.

Auer (2011) examines the use of variation to index identity. He contends that CS is used as a tool to reflect group membership in semiotic constellations such as local as opposed to regional, urban as contrasted to rural, and national as compared to indigenous. He examines the language used by immigrants to Europe and America to find that the national language is neutral to the groups of immigrants as minority languages are actually the codes signaling social

identity. He concludes that such situations create an identity conflict for immigrants in terms of national identity as they cannot be monolingual, nor can they lose their first language identity.

In the same vein of semiotic constellations, Beal (2009) examines the performance of local accent and regional dialect in the songs of the British indie band, Arctic Monkeys. A corpus of songs is qualitatively analyzed using indexicality and performance style as a theoretical framework for exploring the display of northern British English and specifically Sheffield accent by the singers. She finds that the band uses a regional dialect and local accent to index authenticity. Further, she interprets the results within a macro-social ideological framework through which she concludes that the locality and authenticity indexes signal an independence from the corporate machine that gives more power, influence, and prestige to the use of standard American English even by British bands.

**2.6. Conclusion**

The ideas presented in this chapter forms the context for the present study. I hypothesize that Egyptian *mahragānāt*, a street art, negotiate social identity in the media by rejecting the stereotype of low-social class artists. Although there is a moderate bulk of ethnographic studies on the musical style, this subject has not attracted much attention in sociolinguistics so far. This work is an attempt to fill in that gap in research. Code choice and stance taking are investigated in *mahragān* lyrics to better understand social identity construction in terms of ethnicity, locality, and class. To that end, stance framework proposed by Du Bois (2007) and indexicality as introduced by Silverstein (2003) and developed by Eckert (2008), Johnstone (2010), and Collins (2011) are utilized.

# Chapter 3 - Methodology

## 3.1. Introduction

The current study is a linguistic analysis of *mahragānāt* songs performed by Muhammad Ramadan and Ahmad Ali (Wegz) between 2014 and 2021 in addition to interviews with the performers within the same time span. It employs a qualitative discourse analysis of song lyrics based on stance taking theory and indexicality concept in an attempt to dismantle social identity construction of the two aforementioned artists in Egyptian media discourse as reflected in their code choice and stance taking. A qualitative approach is preferred in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the data and to be able to account for individual nuances. The chapter introduces research design, analysis tools employed to address the research questions, and sample selection.

## 3.2. Research Design

This study is analytical and exploratory in nature. A qualitative design is employed to identify the codes to which the performers have access through analyzing television and online interviews to ascertain their linguistic repertoire and the range of their linguistic performance. Then, CC in song lyrics is analyzed and interpreted through indexicality and stance theory. For better interpretation of CC, the study following Bassiouney (2018a) and Bassiouney (2018b) as exemplary studies uses stance taking and indexicality as a theoretical framework in which context is accounted for through the indexicality concept. Consequently, this work deals with language form and content as complementary to each other within the same framework.

## 3.3. Analysis Techniques

Bassiouney (2014) proposes a comprehensive analytic toolkit of strategies derived from different discourse analysis theories as techniques and mechanisms for analysis of identity

construction. These strategies fall into two categories: discursive resources and structural resources. They are listed in the following table below adopted from Bassiouney (2014).

**Table 3. 1** *Discursive and Structural Resources*

| *Discursive Resources* | *Structural Resources* |
|---|---|
| 1. Identification categories like ethnicity, locality, and shared old experiences<br>2. Van Leeuwen's (1996) five categories: functionalism, classification, relational identification, physical identification, generalization<br>3. nature of statements (Gee, 2010)<br>4. presuppositions<br>5. metaphors, metonymy, and synecdoche<br>6. intertextuality and dialogicality | 1. Grammatical patterns like nominalization, verbless sentences<br>2. pronouns (Silverstein, 1976)<br>3. tense and aspect<br>4. demonstratives, deixis, quantification, and negation<br>5. conditional sentences<br>6. mood and modality<br>7. phonological, structural, lexical variation. |

She also contends that CS and CC are linguistic resources that can fall under any category. CS and CC can display phonological, structural, or lexical variation. Thus, they can denote structural resources. Also, they can index identification categories such as locality and shared old experiences which is a discursive resource. In both cases, CS and CC are key resources in the song lyrics. Additionally, out of the different analytical tools, identification categories, dialogicality and, pronouns are the most instrumental in the analysis. Du Bois (2007) stresses that stance and dialogicality are intertwined, with stance relying heavily on dialogicality. Dialogicality is a speaker's engagement "with the words of those who have spoken before" whether in the same speech exchange or in "a prior text" before the current speech event (Du

Bois, 2007, p. 140). It is noteworthy to mention that dialogicality corresponds one of hip hop and rap features which is dissing in which an artist attacks other competing performers to show off his/her verbal skills and respond to their dissing which, in turn, involves an ongoing outside dialog in the rap scene community or even in the society at large. Without the comprehensive dialogic or contextual picture, stance cannot be fully understood. Grammatical patterns are evident in the sample as well; however, they are not covered due to the time limitations of this study.

### 3.4. Procedures of Data Selection

The selected data covers a span of nine years from 2014 to 2022. Four television interviews and eight songs of Muhammad Ramadan are examined. In addition, three online and television interviews and seven songs of Ahmad Ali are analyzed. Because *mahragānāt* are exclusively distributed through online platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and Deezer, sample significance is determined according to its appeal to the audience. Therefore, the number of views is used to denote sample popularity in Egyptian media discourse.

#### *3.4.1. Sample Selection*

Ramadan's *ʾinta gadaʿ* [you are a trustworthy man] (2020), Versace baby (2019), and Number One (2018) have hit 35,828,439 views, 27,580,760 views and 142,160,745 views, respectively. The performer is chosen for analysis because he is the most prominent figure in the second wave of commercial *mahragānāt* (Naji, 2021). Moreover, four interviews with Ramadan are analyzed to identify his linguistic repertoire and the range of his linguistic performance. The interviews were recorded between 2016, 2018, and 2021. The first was conducted with Amr Adib, an Egyptian TV host, and aired on television. The interview upload hit 741,472 views on YouTube. Remarkably, the second interview conducted by Osama Kamal is also aired on

television for two and half hours hit 1,857,947 views on YouTube. The third interview with co-actor and host Amir  Karara on the private TV network ON E hit 23,204 views on YouTube while the fourth interview was aired on SBC channel and posted to YouTube receiving 3,810,115 views only on YouTube. After examining Ramadan's linguistic repertoire, the content and form of the lyrics are analyzed for his stance taking and construction of his social identity in media discourse.

As for Ali, code choice in seven songs that demonstrate musical features of *mahragānāt* are analyzed. They are: *ʾiḥnā khaṭar* [we are dangerous] *(2021), dūrak gāyy* [your turn is next] (2020), *laʾṭa* [trending] (2019), *bis-salāma* [Goodbye] (2020), *tuggār ḥarām* (2020) [illicit traders] (2019), and *ḍāribhā ṭabanga* [I blasted all my sorrows] (2019). The tracks have respectively hit 174,014 views, 90,398,426 views, 10,793,624 views, 7,102,295 views, 1,911,624 views and 407,488 views on YouTube. Further, three online and TV interviews with the rapper between 2020 and 2022 are analyzed for his linguistic repertoire. Overall, the study examines seven interviews and 5 songs. The songs selected are classified as *mahragānāt* or showing features of them like electronic autotunes, eastern *ṭabla*, and local rhythms.

**Table 3.2** *Corpus of Songs Analyzed*

| *Artist* | *Albums/ Singles* | *Number of Songs* |
|---|---|---|
| Muhammad Ramadan | *yallā bīnā* (2021)<br>Versace Baby (2021)<br>*ʾinta gadaʿ* (2020)<br>Mafia (2019)<br>Number one (2018) | 8 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *miyya misā yā brins* (2018) | |
| | *ʿashānik* (2014) | |
| | *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī* (2014) | |
| Ahmad Ali (Wegz**)** | *ʾiḥnā khaṭar (2021)* | |
| | *dūrak gāyy* (2020) | 7 |
| | *bis-salāma* (2020) | |
| | *tuggār ḥarām* (2020) | |
| | *ʿAlī bābā* (2020) | |
| | *laʾṭa* (2019) | |
| | *ḍāribhā ṭabanga* (2019) | |

### *3.4.2. Artists' Profiles*

Ramadan is a Cairene actor and *mahragānāt* performer. He has access to many social networks as his father is a *Ṣaʿīdī* migrant to Cairo and his mother comes from the Delta (DMC, 2018). The actor grew up in *al-Munīb* which is a *shaʿbī* neighborhood in the outskirts of Great Cairo and one of the urban gatherings of *Ṣaʿīdī* migrants in Cairo. Ramadan started signing *mahragānāt* in his movies before 2014. Once many of his movies' theme songs became the top hits in Egypt, he started to produce his own solo *mahragānāt* tracks. It is noteworthy that Ramadan has written the lyrics of his song *yallā bīnā* (2021). While the other songs have been written by other *mahragānāt* artists except *ʿashānik* (2014) and *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī* (2014) whose composers are anonymous, it is unclear if Ramadan has a say in the lyrics and themes of his songs or not. At the moment of writing these lines, he is a mainstream star in Egypt who has

been featured on television shows, soap operas, movies, and magazines; therefore, access to him to get answers on the source of lyrics is not possible unfortunately

The second performer is rapper Ahmad Ali whose stage name is Wegz. It is noteworthy that Wegz is a hip hop artist who writes the lyrics of his own songs and mixes *mahragān* with other forms like rap, trap, hip hop and *shaʿbī*. While *ʾiḥnā khaṭar (2021*), *Laʾṭa* (2019, *ḍāribhā ṭabanga* (2019), and *dūrak gāyy* (2020) are classified as *mahragānāt* because they carry features of *shaʿbī* and *mahragān* music, *bis-salāma* (2020), and *tuggār ḥarām* (2020) are rather a mix of trap and *mahragān*. Wegz comes from Alexandria, a cosmopolitan city located in the Egyptian north coast. The artist is significant because he represents the third wave of *mahragānāt* which is a mix of *mahragān* music and trap.

# Chapter 4 - Data Analysis and Results

## 4.1. Overview

This chapter analyzes language use in the data set in order to answer the research questions and subquestions. Addressing the first question, an analytical approach is adopted to examine the linguistic repertoires of the selected performers. Knowing the performers' linguistic repertoire and their range of linguistic performance is essential for a non-subjective interpretation of data. Therefore, seven interviews are examined to identify the codes to which the two artists have access. In addition, a thematic analysis is employed for better interpretation of code choice which is sensitive to context.

The second question examines code choice in the lyrics. Using an analytical approach, the question is answered by investigating dialogicality or dissing in rap language and code choice in the corpus of lyrics to understand stances taken by the performers. For better understanding of stance, indexicality is utilized. Second-order indexes of urban working-class varieties are established based on Kitzler's (2021b) investigation of metalinguistic discourse on language use in *mahragānāt* and Badawi (1973). In the following, the linguistic repertoires of the artists are outlined.

## 4.2. Performance and Linguistic repertoire

As discussed in the second chapter, linguistic performance is a register used by speakers in which a code is objectified and displayed in relation to other forms of speaking (Schilling-Estes, 1998). When speakers deliberately focus on the linguistic features of a variety while they are highly self-conscious, they are in the act of objectifying and displaying that variety. In public discourse, performers select from their repertoire to imply social variables that, in turn, indicate an aspect of their identity (Bassiouney, 2014). Linguistic repertoire is an individual's set of

"culturally sensitive ordered complex of genres, styles, registers, with lots of hybrid forms" (Blommaert, 2007, p. 115). Identifying an individual's linguistic repertoire is key in knowing the range of linguistic performance. Nonetheless, performance can depend on virtual repertoires that are not a part of a speaker's pre-existing repertoire. Virtual repertoires are imaginative stylistic creations of "sociolinguistic usage associated with others" (Coupland, 2007, p. 84).

Coupland (2007) distinguishes between two kinds of performance: everyday performance and staged performance. While everyday conversational performance is spontaneous and mundane triggered by an everyday situation, staged performance is preplanned and scheduled in a specific setting for entertaining an audience. This thesis tackles staged performance which involves social expectations in which performers, who are familiar with existing repertoire of cultural texts in a community, explicitly focus on social stereotypes and assign them value to recontextualize them for critical reflection of the self and society (Coupland, 2007). In the following, speech repertoires of the performers are investigated through examining interviews in which they talk about themselves. A thematic analysis of the talks is provided to examine the contextual function of using specific codes.

### *4.2.1. The Linguistic Repertoire of Muhammad Ramadan*

The examined data from four interviews conducted with Amr Adib (2016), Osama Kamal (2018), Amir Karara (2021), and Hisham Abdulrahman al-Huwaysh (2020) shows that the performer has access to a variety of codes like ESA, CA, and SA. In the interviews, the actor refrains from using foreign codes like English and mainly depends on ESA and CA. The careful selection of codes indicates that Ramadan is aware of how his constructed persona in the media is likely to be perceived by the audience. He is cognizant of his targeted audience demographics and selects the codes that identifies him as one of them, an educated Arab and Egyptian. In the

interview on *Kul Yum* [every day] show with Adib aired on the private Egyptian TV network ON, Ramadan stresses his pride in being Egyptian. He replies in CA to Adib's commendation of the actor's talent then switches to educated Standard Arabic (ESA) or *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn* showing a mixed phonological feature of MSA and ECA to emphasize that the audience have great faith in his acting abilities. In the utterances, MSA lexical words are used as in the demonstrative pronoun *hadhā* compared to CA *dā*. However, the /dh/ sound in the pronouns is replaced by CA /z/ in the MSA words. So, instead of saying *hadhā* [this] in MSA, he uses *hazā*. Also, MSA negation structure using *lā* is utilized compared to the CA negation structure *ma-sh*. Nonetheless, CA negation system is still employed in the following utterances.

" أنا مؤمن بحاجة من دراستي للجمهور […] أنا بأنتمي لهذا الشعب العظيم وفخور بإن في شهادة ميلادي وفي بطاقتي كلمة مصري، ولكن إحنا شعب لا يؤمن إلا باليقين. إحنا شعب ما بيشتريش كلام."

*ʾAnā muʾmin biḥāga min dirāstī li-l-gumhūr* […], *ʾanā ba-ntamī li-hazā ash-shaʿb il-ʿazīm wa fakhūr bi-ʾinn fī shahādit mīlādī wi-fī biṭāʾtī kilmit maṣrī wa lakin ʾiḥnā shaʿb lā yuʾmin ʾillā bi-l-yaqīn. ʾiḥnā shaʿb ma-b-yishtrīsh kalam.*

[From my study of the audience, I believe in something […] I belong to these great people and I'm proud that the word Egyptian is on my birth certificate and national ID, but we are a nation that only believes in certainty. We are a nation that cannot be fooled by words].

The following table shows Ramadan's code choice in the interviews according to the topic and context. The table categorization is adopted from Bassiouney (2018b).

**Table 4. 1** *Code Choice and Stance Taking by Ramadan in Interviews According to Topic*

| *Host* | *Aligns with* | *Disaligns with* | *Topic* | *Code* | *(In) direct addressee* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adib | educated artists | upper and upper middle class | career | ESA | critics |
| Adib | blackness | upper and upper middle class | career | CA | audience |
| Kamal | working class | upper and upper middle class | criticism | ESA | critics |
| Kamal | blackness, *Ṣaʿīdī* Egyptians | upper and upper middle class | origins | CA | audience |
| Karara | working class | upper and upper middle class | origins | working-class CA | audience |
| Karara | educated artists | upper and upper middle class | criticism | ESA | critics |

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It is noteworthy that Ramadan has demonstrated access to other codes like English and a southern Egyptian stigmatized variety known as *Ṣaʿīdī* [upper Egyptian] Arabic (SA). The actor uses SA only in movies and soap operas for playing roles of young men from upper Egypt. At

least two of Ramadan's shows, that of *ʾIbn ḥalāl* [a legitimate son or a decent man] (2014) and *Nisr al-Ṣaʿīd* [the eagle of upper Egypt] (2018), are partly performed in SA. As for English, the performer is found to use very limited English sentences occasionally in live performances of *mahragānāt*. A short video from the actor's live performance in Dubai (2021) shows him walking on stage with his daughter while talking in English to the child.

> "My girl, baby, I love you. We are African. We are number one. Say it. [...] Yeah, Africa! Let's go."

Overall, data shows that Ramadan can perform in a wide range of varieties. These are CA, working-class style of CA and SA in addition to English.

#### 4.2.1.1. Examples from the Interviews' Corpus

In his interview with Adib (2016), Ramadan validates his talent and success by describing the hardships he encountered during his relatively short career. When Adib insinuates in CA that the actor achieved success by only playing roles of Southern Egyptian characters and the marginalized from the working class, implying that the actor cannot play other roles, Ramadan responds by an MSA saying adopted from a classic poetry line to express his intention to play other roles from other social classes aiming at different audience categories.

" لن يفوزُ بلذةٍ إلا كلِ مغامرٍ."

*lan yafūzu bi-lazatin ʾillā kulli mughāmirrin.*

[Every adventurer wins pleasure].

The utterance reflects limited mastery of MSA in which case endings are observed but they are not accurate. For example, future-tense verb *yafūz* does not take the /u/ case ending. Rather, it should take the /a/ case ending instead which indicates the accurate tense of the verb. One interpretation is that Ramadan is trying to align with educated artists by trying to employ some

features of ESA in response to the stigma embedded in the host's words that an actor from the working class can only perform roles representing the poor neighborhoods to which he belongs indicating that slums' residents are plain, inferior, and uneducated. Thus, the reply in MSA unsuccessfully observes Arabic case endings to reflect that the speaker is educated, cultured and definitely not an inept actor with limited talent. By trying to make MSA features salient, the artist indirectly challenges the stereotype of ignorance associated with the working class and provokes MSA associations of education and legitimacy to stress his professional and social identity.

In an excerpt from the performer's interview with Kamal, Ramadan resorts again to ESA to imply legitimacy and educational background. Although the dominant code in the interview is CA, the actor shifts to ESA to assert his educational background. He stresses being a graduate of a long-standing high school in his interviews with Kamal (2018) and Karara (2021). By doing so, he tries to align himself with other educated intellectuals and celebrities who graduated from the same school and takes a stance toward his professional identity as a well-educated celebrity. He uses MSA lexical items such as *bāḥisan ʿan* [looking for], and *ʾikhtirāq* [penetrating] where some MSA syntactic features are salient like the case ending in *bāḥisan*. However, in the excerpt the actor does not produce the salient phonological features of ESA as /θ/ and / ð/ in the MSA lexical item *bāḥithan* and *hazā* as compared to CA /s/ and /z/. Rather, the only phonological variable observed in the utterances is the quality of the /q/ sound as in *ʾikhtirā**q***, *marmū**q**a*, and *ya**q**īn*. That is, he mainly depends on the use of lexical items like demonstrative pronouns that are peculiar to MSA to reflect an educational background and try to align with educated artists.

"بدأت السعي في طريق التمثيل باحثًا عن اختراق هذا العالم [...] في السعيدية الثانوية العسكرية. مدرسة تاريخ [....] وفخر وشرف ليا عظيم إن أنا يعني خريج هذه المدرسة العظيمة اللي تخرج منها شخصيات مرموقة جدًا ورؤساء وزرا كتير جدًا."

*badaʾt is-saʿyy fī ṭarīʾ it-tamsīl bāḥisan ʿan ʾikhtirāq hazā al-ʿālam* […] *fī is-saʿīdiyya as-sānawiyya al-ʿaskariyya. madrasa tarīkh* […] *wa fakhr wa sharaf liyya ʿazīmʾinn ʾanā yaʿnī khirrīg hazihi al-madrasa al-ʿazīma illī takharrag minha shakhṣiyyāt marmūqa giddan wa ruʾasāʾ wuzarā kitīr giddan.*

[I began my pursuit in the acting career seeking to penetrate that world […] in *Saʿīdiyya* Military High School. A school with a history [….] and I am so proud and honored to be a graduate of that great school from which many celebrities and prime ministers graduated].

After introducing the historic school in a mix of CA and ESA, the host asks the actor about the number of students in his classroom. So, Ramadan switches completely to CA to reminisce about the experience of being a student of *madrasat as-shaʿb* [school of the people] which has lost its prestige over the years and has become another public school. He uses CA to describe the overcrowded classrooms where students with 'weak personalities' would stay standing all year long as they could not find a vacant seat, an experience with which many Egyptians from the low-middle and working classes can relate.

"السعيدية طبعا مدرسة شبه حاجات كتير اتغيرت في البلد. يعني هي مدرسة الأول كانت مدرسة باشاوات وطبعا مع مرور الزمن بقت مدرسة الشعب [...] أنا فصلي كان فيه ١١٤ [....] في ثانوي [...] وكان فصلي كنت في سنة ٣١/١. يعني فيه ٣١ فصل [...] كل فصل فيه ١١٤، ١٢٠، ١٠٤. يعني أنا فاكر الفصل بتاعي اللي شخصيته ضعيفة ماكانش بيقعد طول السنة."

*is-saʿīdiyya ṭabʿan madrasa shabah ḥāgāt kitīr ʾitghayyarit fi-l-balad. yaʿnī hiyya madrasa il-ʾawwal kānit madrasit bāshāwāt wi ṭabʿan maʿa murūr iz-zaman baʿat madrasit ʾish-shaʿb* […] *ʾanā faṣlī kān fīh miyya wa-ʾarbaʿtāshar* […] *fī sānawī* […] *wi kān faṣlī kunt fī sana ʾūlā wāḥid wi talātīn. yaʿnī fīh waḥid wī talātīn faṣl* […] *kul faṣl fīh miyya wa ʾarbaʿtāshar, miyya wi ʿishrīn, miyya wi-ʾarbaʿa. yaʿnī ʾanā fākir il-faṣl bitāʿī illī shakhṣiyyitu ḍaʿīfa ma-kānsh bi-yuʿud ṭūl is-sana.*

[*al-Saʿīdiyya*, of course, is a school that changed like many other things in the country. I mean, it was a school for Pashas in the beginning that, indeed, over the course of time has become a public school […] there were 114 students in my class […] in high school […] I was in class 1/31 in my first year. It means there were 31 classrooms […] each classroom had 114, 120 or 104 students. I mean, I remember, in my classroom, those who had a weak personality did not find a seat all year.]

The speaker selects from codes at his disposal according to the topic. CA is used when there is a reference to Egypt and Egyptians or *ash-shaʿb* [the people] stressing the actor's social identity as belonging to the masses. It is noteworthy that the word *shaʿb* in CA indicates a social meaning that its MSA equivalent does not imply. In MSA, *shaʿb* refers to the people of a specific country whereas in CA *ash-shaʿb* refers to the masses belonging to the middle and working classes. The adjective *shaʿbī* indicates lower middle and low classes (Kitzler, 2021b). People who live in *shaʿbī* areas do not belong to the old money owners.

Overall, Ramadan never uses English in mainstream media although there is evidence that he has access to the foreign code. One interpretation is that he is aware of how Egyptian fans from the middle and low social classes perceive him. Nonetheless, the actor chooses to try to speak in a category of formal ESA or Badawi's *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn* that is associated with

educated speakers in television interviews. By doing so, he focuses on discourse in order to appeal to the legitimacy and authority indexes associated with ESA and project a specific identity on himself as an educated celebrity. In that, criticism of Ramadan's low-class roles and *mahragānāt* lyrics which are frequently described as shallow, violent, and provocative for making references to drugs is addressed through framing himself as an educated artist. It is noteworthy though that the dominant code in the interviews and even in the excerpts that demonstrate some MSA features is CA.

### *4.2.2. The Linguistic Repertoire of Wegz*

The examined data from three interviews of Wegz with Hassan Ahmad Dennaoui known as Big Hass (2022), Issʿad Yunis (2020), and CNL Music (2019) shows that Wegz has access to four codes: CA, Alexandrian Arabic (AA), ESA, and English. Only one of the interviews, with Yunis, is aired on private television network DMC while the others are released to YouTube. The table lists the performer's repertoire according to topic while data is interpreted according to code function.

**Table 4. 2** *Code Choice and Stance taking by Wegz in the Interviews According to Topic*

| *Host* | *Aligns with* | *Disaligns with* | *Topic* | *Code* | *(In) direct addressee* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yunis | Alexandrians, Cairenes | non-urban regions | self-identification (Demographics) | CA | audience |
| Yunis | hip-hop artists | categorization | self-identification (profession) | CA | criticizers, audience |
| Hass | rappers | *mahragānāt* | Egyptian type beat | English | Egyptian & Arab rappers |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hass | blackness, working class | _ | Wegz' song 'Huslta' | English, CA | rappers & rap fans |
| Hass | Arabness | _ | message to rap fans | CA | Arab rap audience |
| CNL | Alexandrians, Working-class | _ | ambition | ESA, AA | audience |

#### 4.2.2.1. Examples from the Interview Corpus

The artist mainly uses CA across all his interviews. In the interview with Yunis (2020), Wegz identifies himself in CA as a young Alexandrian. He replies to Younis' classic question "*Wegz, ʾinta mīn?"* [who are you?] by expressing a regional pride in being from Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt after Cairo.

"أنا اسمي أحمد علي. عندي ٢٢ سنة. مولود في إسكندرية [...]. صراحةً أنا بحب البلد اللي أنا منها."

*ʾanā ʾismī Ahmad Ali. ʿandī ʾitnīn wi ʿishrīn sana. mawlūd fī-ʾiskindiriyya* […]. *ṣarāḥatan ʾanā baḥib il-balad illīʾanā minhā.*

[My name is Ahmad Ali. I'm 22-year-old. I was born in Alexandria […]. Honestly, I love the city I came from].

Wegz' local identity is manifested before his professional one. His self-identification focuses on his demographics (age and locality), then on his profession as a performer. The hip hop artist refuses to categorize himself as a rapper or a *mahragānāt* singer. Instead, he describes his music as experimental that includes different genres including *mahragān*.

"اللي أنا بأعمله مش هأقدر أصنّفه في حاجة. يعني بأحاول على قد ما أقدر أحط نفسي في حتة إن أنا هأختبر كل أنواع المزيكا اللي بأحاول أعملها. ممكن أمشي في مليون سكة. ممكن ألحن بمليون طريقة. ما حستش إن أنا ممكن أحط نفسي داخل أي خانة."

*illī ʾanā baʿmilū mish ha-ʾdar ʾaṣannafū fi-ḥāga. yaʿnī baḥāwil ʿalā ʿad ma-ʾaʾdar ʾaḥuṭ nafsī fi-ḥitit ʾinn ʾanā hakhtibir kul ʾanwāʿ il-mazzīka illī baḥāwil aʿmilha. mumkin ʾamshī fi-milyūn sikka. mumkin ʾalaḥan bi-milyūn tarīʾa. ma-ḥassitsh ʾinn ʾanā mumkin ʾaḥut nafsī dākhil ʾayy khāna.*

[I cannot categorize what I am doing as something specific. I mean, I am trying as much as I can to experiment with all kinds of music I'm trying to make. I can walk a million paths and compose in a million different ways. I did not feel that I could put a specific label on myself].

The artist switches to English only in his online interview with the Saudi Arabian blogger, Big Hass, in his YouTube show, Buckle UP (2022). The blogger starts the interview by asking Wegz, "*ʾiskindiriyya, mādhā taʿnī ʾiskindiriyya li-Wegz*?" [Alexandria, what does Alexandria mean to Wegz?]. The question is phrased in MSA with lexical items from the formal code as in the interrogative *mādhā* and the verb *taʿnī* instead of colloquial equivalents of ECA *līh* or *ʾīsh* in Saudi colloquial Arabic. Wegz responds in ECA by stressing that Alexandria is his hometown and making direct reference to particular experiences and landscapes shared with other Alexandrians like the Mediterranean Sea.

"البلد اللي كبرت فيها يعني. قانون السواحل – فاهم قصدي! أنا كشخص بصراحة كبرت حوالين البحر وحبيت البحر، وبس. كانت الحاجة اللي تخليك يعني تطلع creativity."

*il-balad illī kibirt fīha yaʿnī. qānūn is-sawāḥil – fāhim ʾaṣdī? ʾanā ka-shakhṣ bi-ṣarāḥa kibirt ḥawālīn il-baḥr wi-ḥabīt il-baḥr wi bas. kānit il-ḥāga illī tkhallīk yaʿnī tiṭallaʿ* creativity.

[I mean it is the city where I grew up, the law of coasts – you know what I mean! I personally grew up next to the sea and I loved it. It was the thing that would increase one's creativity."

In the following questions, the host uses phonological features of gulf colloquial Arabic in which MSA /q/ sound is replaced with gulf /g/ sound in *qabl* while maintaining the use of MSA interrogatives like *hal*. He asks the performer, "*gabl il-hip hop wi-baʿd il-hip hop, hall ʾil-fann iktashafak walla ʾinta iktashaft il-fann*?" [before hip hop and after hip hop, did performing arts find you or did you find them?]. Wegz switches between CA and English only when there is a reference to rap and hip hop or to blackness as an integral theme of global hip hop culture.

"لأ أنا، I would say، الفن اكتشفني عشان أنا طول حياتي ما كنتش أعرف إن أنا هأطلع بأغني يعني - فاهم قصدي! [...] أو ماكنتش حاسب حسبة إللي هو كمان أربع سنين من ما بدأت هأبقى معاك في دبي بنكروز بعربية – فاهم قصدي.

Yeah, I didn't think it's gonna go that way. You know what I'm talking about? [….] بس هو أصلًا مش بس عشاني – فاهم قصدي. هو الـ scene عندنا في مصر مرة واحدة انفجر. ومرة واحدة بقى كل حد بقى بيسمع هيب هوب، ومرة واحدة بقى أوكي هو دوت الجديد. لو ما بتسمعش هيب هوب يبقى أنت كده الـ off.

You have to عشان you have to stay cool; you know!"

*lāʾ, ʾanā,* I would say, *il-fann iktashafnī ʿashān ʾanā ṭūl ḥayatī ma-kuntish ʾaʿrafʾinn ʾanā ha-ṭlaʿ baghannī yaʿnī – fāhim ʿaṣdī*? […] *aw ma-kuntish ḥasib ḥisbit illī huwwa kamān ʾarbaʿ sinīn min ma-badaʾt ha-bʾa maʿāk fī dubay bi-nikrūz bi-ʿarabiyya – fāhim ʾaṣdī*? Yeah, I didn't think it's goanna go that way. You know what I'm talking about?

[….] *bas huwwa ʾaṣlan mish bas ʿashānī – fāhim ʾaṣdī*? *huwwa il-sīn ʿandinā fi-maṣr marra waḥda ʾinfagar, wi-marra waḥda baʾa kul ḥad bi-yismaʿ hip hop wi-marra waḥda bʾa* okay. *huwwa dawwat il-gidīd. law ma-b-tismaʿsh hip hop yibʾā ʾinta kida illī* off. You have to *ʿashān* you have to stay cool; you know!

[No, I, I would say the art discovered me because early in my life I did not know I would become a singer - you know what I mean! [….] Or I was not prepared for, after four years of my kickoff, to be here in Dubai cruising in a car with you – you know what I mean? Yeah, I did not think it is goanna go that way. You know what I am talking about? [….] But it did not start because of me – you know what I mean? The scene in Egypt suddenly exploded. Suddenly everyone started to consume hip hop and suddenly that was okay. It became the new norm. If you do not hear hip hop, then you are not trendy. You have to because you have to stay cool; you know.

As for AA, the use of the code is limited in the sample. AA is only resorted to in the interview with CNL as the performer asserts to his addressee that his ambition is limitless.

"أنا وأنت كإنسان طموحاتنا الترقي فقط. زي ما قلتلك. يعني أنا قلتها قبل كدا في حاجة: إللي معاه جِنِي عايز عشرة وأول ما العشرة تحضر في جيبه نفسه في مِيّة"

*ʾanā wi-ʾinta ka-ʾinsān ṭumūḥātnā it-taraqī faqaṭ. zay ma-ʾultilak. yaʿnī ʾanā ʾultahā ʾabl kidā fi-ḥāga illī maʿāh ginī ʿāyiz ʿashara, wi-ʾawwil ma-l-ʿashra tiḥḍar fi-gībū nifsu fi-miyya.*

[You and I, as human beings, our prospects are upward mobility only. As I told you, I mentioned that before in an occasion, whoever has a pound wants a ten and once he secures a ten in his pocket, he wants a hundred].

ESA is evident in the two lexical items *at-taraqī* and *faqaṭ*. In the excerpt, MSA *faqaṭ* is used instead of ECA *bas*. However, the quality of the /q/ sound is weak and it may be perceived as weak /q/. On the contrary, the quality of the /q/ sound in *al-taraqī* is maintained compared to ECA *tara'ī* in which the voiceless uvular plosive /q/ is changed to a glottal stop. On the other hand, AA lexical and phonological features are present in the last sentence in *ginī*, a word that is only used in Alexandria as compared to CA *ginīh*.

### 4.3. Lyrics Analysis: Code Choice, Dialogicality, and Indexicality

Code choice and dialogicality are two discursive strategies employed in stance taking which, in turn, project identity in public discourse. Stance taking process is closely related to dialogicality as indicated in the second chapter of this thesis. In turn, dialogicality is intertwined with dissing, a main rap features observed in the lyrics. For better understanding of CC and the process of stance taking, indexicality is also utilized. The section is divided into two main subsections addressing the following themes: code choice in relation to dialogicality, and code choice in relation to indexicality.

#### *4.3.1. Code Performance in Relation to Dialogicality*

This section examines the use of code choice and dialogicality in the corpus of songs to index specific social variables. As established in the previous section, dialogicality is a resource in the stance-taking process, specifically in positioning (Du Bois, 2007). It is noteworthy that the two *mahragān* performers engage with prevalent dialogues concerning themselves, their music, and their social background in the media to reflect a distinct identity through recontextualizing negative indexes of their local varieties and assigning them positive ones. In that, dialogicality focuses on structured ideologies in a community and perceptions of group outsiders. As Bassiouney (2018a) posits it, performers engage with cross-textual talk in the media about

people belonging to certain areas or specific groups during the process of stance-taking in order to signal a distinct and positive identity. Without dialogicality, understanding the lyrics is not possible for the lay audience.

#### 4.3.1.1. Code Choice by Muhammad Ramadan

Ramadan performs in a variety of codes including two varieties of ECA, English, and Italian. It is worth noting that the songs are predominantly in CA to make them accessible to Arabic-speaking and Egyptian audience. The ECA varieties of ECA utilized in the lyrics are *Ṣaʿīdī* Arabic (SA), and a working-class style of CA. Both codes are stigmatized in Egyptian public discourse. SA is stigmatized and ridiculed for being socially associated with ignorance and violence (Bassiouney, 2018a, 2018b). As for working-class CA, it is stigmatized for being associated with low status, "vulgar" and "offensive" language, hypersexuality and virility, violence, and drugs (Kitzler, 2021b, p. 42). Marked phonological variables distinguishing SA from CA are MSA /q/ sound and /dʒ/ or /j/ sounds realized in CA as /ʾ/ and /g/ respectively, and in SA as /g/ and /j/ respectively (Woidich, 1994). Moreover, both varieties differ on the lexical level where, for example, the CA word *wiḥish* [bad] is realized as *ʿifish* in SA. As for working-class CA, marked phonological variables include strong pharyngealization, hypercorrection, and low pitch as contrasted to middle and weak pharyngealization and hyper-foreignism of the high middle and upper social classes (Badawi, 2012; Youssef, 2006, 2013).

##### *4.3.1.1.1. SA Examples from the Lyrics' Corpus.*

Ramadan's first *mahragān*, *ʿashānik* [because of you], is the theme song of his movie *wāḥid ṣaʿīdī* [an upper Egyptian] (2014) in which Ramadan plays the leading role of a young, educated black man from Upper Egypt called *Faliḥ* [successful]. The *mahragān* is performed in SA and CA. However, Ramadan performs in a mix of SA and CA while co-performers, Hassan

Shakush and al-ʿIsaba [the gang], perform only in CA. It is worth mentioning that *ʿashānik* is the first *mahragān* ever to be performed in SA. Egyptian songs in the southern dialect are few and mostly folklore songs, classic songs adopted from Egyptian folklore, or theme songs produced especially for television soap operas.

The song begins with the choral repeating the phrase, *yā būy* [Oh father], a distinctive exclamation expression unique to SA. Ramadan addresses his opponents by calling them 'fake' and declaring a new era of innovation using SA. The SA phonological feature of /j/, realized in CA as /g/, is made salient in the adjective *jidīd* [new], the noun *jaww* [air], and the verb *ʾirjaʿ* [go back]. On the lexical level, the performer utilizes SA words like *ʿiyārīn* [two bullets], and *ʿarka* [a fight]. Both are realized in CA as *ruṣāṣtīn* and *khināʿa*. In the following, excerpts from the songs are transcribed to the left while the English translation is given to the right. Words in SA are in bold.

هو دا الجديد يا بلد التقليد  This is innovation, country of fakes

*huwwa dā il-**jidīd**, yā balad il-taʾlīd*

The SA dialect is also evident in language content as it is in language form. In subsequent lines, Ramadan evokes shared experiences to which the *Ṣaʿīdī* can relate like the normalized use of weapons in the Egyptian south and wearing Egyptian traditional clothes like *kalsūn* [long underwear pants made of cotton for men]. By flaunting his skills in using different types of weapons, he deliberately triggers the stereotype of violence and aggression associated with SA in order to index a masculine, tough, and authentic *Ṣaʿīdī* identity. Still, he morally justifies his show of power in the context of retaliating against *nās mish sālka* [sly people] or villains.

| | |
|---|---|
| أضرب عيارين في العركة. أضرب على ناس مش سالكة. | I fire off twice during the fight. I shoot shady people |
| *ʾaḍrab ʿ**iyārīn** fī il-ʿ**arka**. ʾaḍrab ʿalā nās mish sālka* | |
| أضرب بالآلي في الجو. ارجع ما هو جالك العو. | I fire my automatic firearm in the air. Back off, the boogeyman has come for you |
| *ʾaḍrab bi-l-ʾālī fī il-**jaww,** ʾ**irja**ʿ ma-hū gālak il-ʿaww* | |
| أضرب فى الوش رَصاصة بتلات أسلحة قناصة | I shoot a bullet in the face with three sniper rifles. |
| *ʾaḍrab fī il-wish raṣāṣa bi-talāt ʾasliḥa qannāṣa* | |

Miller (2005), who investigates accommodation strategies among Upper Egyptian migrants to Giza, contends that SA is stereotyped for being associated with ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and poverty. Therefore, migrants from Upper Egypt have to acquire CA to avoid discrimination because of the stigma associated with SA. Acquisition is, however, slow for the first generation that demonstrates mixed features of CA and SA in their speech.

In the song lyrics, it is notable that the MSA /q/ sound is maintained in the word *qannāṣa* and the CA /g/ sound is also kept in the word *gālak* rather than the SA /j/ sound. Although CA often changes the MSA uvular stop /q/ to a glottal stop reflex, there are some exceptions where MSA pronunciation is maintained in CA words as in *al-Qāhira* [Cairo], *Qurʿān* [the Quran], and likewise in *qannāṣa* (Watson, 2002). Thus, the word *qannāṣa* follows the tradition of CA. Similarly, the verb *gālak* [came to you] keeps the CA pronunciation where /g/ is maintained and not replaced by SA /j/ sound. One interpretation is that Ramadan mixes SA with CA to perform

the local persona of a first generation *Ṣaʿīdī* migrant to Cairo while, at the same time, evoking the positive indexes of toughness and bravery associated with SA.

Co-performers use CA to respond to Ramadan's verses supporting his deeds of bravery and display of power and recognizing the authenticity of his southern persona through using identification categories like calling him *Ṣaʿīdī*. Through language content, they assign positive gendered connotations – in the Egyptian context - of virility and chivalry to Upper Egyptians as evident in the adverbial phrase, *bi-rigūla* [literally, in a manly manner], which is an evaluative stance toward Ramadan's acts being brave, heroic, and decisive. They also assert their readiness to join and support the *Ṣaʿīdī* in his deadly endeavors which implies that his actions carry a sense of righteousness. Consequently, aggression is recontextualized to become an act of heroism and retribution from criminals who deserve punishment.

| | |
|---|---|
| اضرب بسلاح فتاك. كلنا هنسد معاك. | Fire off with a lethal weapon. We are all |
| *ʾiḍrab bi-silāḥ fattāk. Kullinā ha-nsid mʿāk* | watching your back. |
| اضرب يا صعيدي برجولة. خلصت في الجولة الأولى. | *Ṣʿīdī,* hit like a man. The fight ended from |
| *ʾiḍrab yā Ṣʿīdī bi-rigūla. khilişit fī il-gawla il-ʾūlā.* | the first round. |

Ramadan utilizes the stigmatized SA to perform the local identity of a brave young man from the Egyptian South who may sound silly but definitely not timid. The two *mahragānāt* of *ʿashānik* (2014) and *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī* (2014) stress positive traits of the *Ṣaʿīdī* persona being strong, brave, and chivalrous and solely using one's power to serve justice. Further, *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī* (2014) establishes, in a mix of SA and CA, novel and creative indexes for the post-revolution *Ṣaʿīdī* who is still tough and attached to roots and traditions but keeps up with modernity.

| | |
|---|---|
| صعيدي لابس كلسون وفي ايده الكاس والآيفون<br>*Ṣaʿīdī lābis kalsūn wi fī ʾīdu il-kās wi-l-iPhone* | *Ṣaʿīdī* wearing *Kalsūn* holding a wine glass and an iPhone. |
| واللي يقول دا ابن فرعون وإللى يقول دا عم الكون<br>*wi illī yiʾūl dā ibn farʿūn wi illī yiʾūl dā ʿam il-kūn* | Some say he is son of a pharaoh while others say he is the greatest of all. |
| قلب الأسد قلب الفار أنا صعيدي ومش بهزار<br>*ʾalb il-ʾasad ʾalb il-fār, ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī wi mish bi-hizār.* | A lion heart or a rat heart, I'm *Ṣaʿīdī* and I'm not bluffing. |

In the lyrics, Ramadan aligns with people from *Ṣaʿīd* taking a stance toward his complex social identity in response to rumors questioning his origins and denying his claim to be Cairene by birth because of his dark skin color. These rumors are also reflected in his interview with Osama Kamal interview (2018) in which the host asks an unusual question about the origins of Ramadan's father to which the actor responds by giving full history of the family stressing his Cairene birth to a migrant black man from Qena whose family origins may go back to Sudan and a white woman from the Egyptian Delta. Thus, the performer uses *mahragān* as a medium to respond to an outside text circulated in Egyptian community and media about him by positioning himself as an authentic *Ṣaʿīdī* whose father is *Ṣaʿīdī* too.

| | |
|---|---|
| اللي ما نزلش الصعيد محتاج سوفت وير جديد واللي أبوه صعيدي ما يخافش.<br>*illī ma-nizilsh is-Ṣaʿīd miḥtāg sūft wīr gadīd wi illī ʾabūh Ṣaʿīdī ma-ykhāfish* | Those who did not go to Upper Egypt before need to update their knowledge and whose father is *Ṣaʿīdī* does not know fear. |

Overall, performing a *mahragān* in a stigmatized variety is unusual and creative. By making SA phonological and lexical features salient in the lyrics, the performer takes a sociolinguistic stance toward his local identity as an authentic Cairene black man with Upper Egyptian roots. Moreover, Ramadan manipulates the stereotype to challenge stigmatization in the media of SA dialects by recontextualizing SA negative indexes of backwardness and violence in positive contexts. In that, the stereotype is deliberately displayed in resistance to local racial norms. Further, using SA reflects an authentic local identity and acknowledges his *Ṣaʿīdī* roots.

#### *4.3.1.1.2. Examples of Working-class CA from the Lyrics' Corpus.*

In addition to SA, the actor also performs in an urban working-class style of CA. Phonologically, working-class CA may hypercorrect the /f/ sound in loanwords according to the educational level as a key factor in the process. Influenced by foreign languages, the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ is maintained in CA although its use is restricted to loanwords as in the lexical item, *vīllā* [villa] (Watson, 2002). Youssef (2006) contends that the sound /v/ in CA can go unrecognized by uneducated speakers who realize it as a voiceless /f/. Likewise, educated speakers with little or no access to foreign languages may overcorrect an original /f/ sound in loanwords to its voiced counterpart /v/ to avoid being perceived as uneducated. Cairenes with limited access to foreign languages usually belong to lower social classes. In the corpus of lyrics, Ramadan hypercorrects the /f/ sound in the introductory stanza of his song, Mafia (2019). The /f/ sound is deliberately replaced in the loanword *māfyā* with /v/ to be realized as *māvyā* for the purpose of performing a low-life gangster persona.

Strong pharyngealization is another phonological feature closely related to Cairo's lower social classes compared to weak pharyngealization of upper middle and upper classes (Badawi,

1973; Haeri, 1997; Royal, 1985). Pharyngealization is “a secondary articulation which involves the backing of the tongue towards the pharynx” (Bassiouney, 2009, p. 160) while strong pharyngealization is “placing pharyngealized consonants” in Arabic “further back” in the mouth (Royal, 1985, pp. 166). In an empirical study on gendered pharyngealization patterns in CA, Royal (1985) posits that younger generations of Cairene low-class males conventionally display a high degree of extra-backing pharyngealized consonants. She contends that the feature is triggered by the addressee and context rather than the speaker’s gender. That is, low-class men would refute from producing deeper pharyngealized sounds when speaking with women, for example. Haeri (1997) investigates the same feature in ten different speech communities with the same conclusion considering the social gender variable. She finds that pharyngealization is a variation that stratifies social classes in Cairo as both genders from the upper and middle classes have weak or no pharyngealization. Further, Royal (1985), Haeri (1997), and Badawi (2012) agree that strong pharyngealization has a social gendered meaning in itself attached to being tough and manly when employed by men and unfeminine when utilized by women.

Traditionally, MSA has four pharyngealized coronal consonants known as emphatics: /s̩/ (voiceless alveolar fricative), /d̩/ (voiced alveolar stop), /t̩/ (voiceless alveolar stop), and /z̩/ (voiced interdental fricative). The production of emphatic consonants in Arabic involves a primary articulation at the dental or alveolar region and a secondary articulation by constricting the pharynx (McCarthy 1994). In addition to the four pharyngealized coronals of MSA, CA has four additional emphatic sounds. They are /b̩/, /m̩/, /r̩/, and /l̩/ (Watson, 2002; Woidich, 2006). The four sounds are secondary emphatics that may vary according to social and gender variables (Youssef, 2013). In addition, Youssef (2013) also identifies /f̩/, /x̩/, /k̩/ as emphatic sounds in CA. Overall, pharyngealizing emphatic consonants can affect neighboring sounds by spreading

the emphatic feature to them through assimilation. Youssef (2013) investigates emphatic spread in CA and concludes that the emphatic effect can spread to the entire word structure and not only to neighboring vowels and segments. In this thesis, pharyngealization of the following emphatics /ṣ/, /ḍ/, /ṭ/, /ẓ/, /ḅ/, /ṃ/, /ṛ/, /ḷ/, /ḟ/ and /ḳ/ is examined in the data.

Evidence of strong pharyngealization is found in three *mahragānāt* of Ramadan. In *miyya misā yā brins* (2018), Ramadan demonstrates strong pharyngealization and emphatic spread to non-emphatic consonants surrounding the consonant as demonstrated in the following examples. Emphatic spread to neighboring vowels is highlighted in bold while emphatic vowels are marked in capital letters.

مسا مسا مسا عالرجالة  Greetings to the men

*misā misā ʿar-riggāla*

شد صاحبك يلا تعالى  Bring your friend, come on

*shid **ṣAḥḅAḳ yAḷḶĀ** tʿālā*

أنا سرعتي ولا ألف حصان  My speed is like that of 1000 horses

*ʾanā **ṣUṛ ʿiṭī** walā ʾalf **ḥiṣĀn***

Emphatic spread is triggered in *ṣAḥḅAḳ* [your friend] and *ḥiṣĀn* [horse] by the coronal emphatic consonant /ṣ/ which results in a spread of the emphasis domain forward in the first word and bidirectionally in the second one, respectively. However, the factors causing the emphatic spread in the mentioned words do not apply to *yAḷḶĀ* [come on] and *ṣUṛʿiṭī* [my speed]. First, the word *yAḷḶĀ* does not include any emphatic sounds. Youssef (2013) contends that in the absence of the /ṭ/, /ḍ/, /ṣ/, /ẓ/, /ṛ/ emphatics a surface emphatic effect occurs only in words with a back low vowel /a/ which is the case with *yAḷḶĀ* where the pharyngealized vowel spreads the

emphasis forward. Similarly, the word *ṣUṛʿiṭī* does not contain any emphatic sounds. Rather, the /r/ sound is pharyngealized to the non-coronal secondary emphatic /ṛ/ which, in turn, triggers an emphatic spread forward causing the replacement of /s/ with its emphatic equivalents /ṣ/ and affecting the vowel quality. It is noteworthy that the production of secondary emphatics is optional. That is, the use of secondary emphatics is determined by the speaker depending on their gender, social class, addressee, and context. As a result, using extra pharyngealization in the given sample is deliberate to denote masculinity, toughness, and belonging to lower social classes.

The working class style is also evident in the language content as it is in language form. In *miyya misā yā brins*, the theme song of *al-Dīzil* movie (2018), Ramadan performs the character of a young man called Badr al-Dizil from *al-Kītkāt*, a poor *shaʿbī* neighborhood in Cairo. The main character, al-Dizil, is a repentant thug and doppelganger of the famous actor, Muḥammad Ramadan. In the movie, al-Dizil seeks revenge from the murderers of his best friend and sister. However, language content of the movie's teaser song does not reflect the persona of the protagonist or his dilemma. Rather, it tells the story of Ramadan as a *mahragānāt* performer and responds to criticism of *mahragān* as music genre representing the working-class culture.

| | |
|---|---|
| إحنا إللي احتاروا في غنانا؛ فاختاروا يغنوا معانا | It's us whose melodies confused them, |
| *ʾiḥnā illī **iḥṭĀṛu** fī ghunānā,* | So they chose to sing with us. |
| ***FĀ-khṭĀṛu** yighannū mʿānā* | |
| فهمونا حبونا بأمانة؛ فانسجموا وعاشوا ويانا | They sincerely understood and loved us, |
| *Fihimūnā ḥabūnā bi-ʾamāna,* | So, they got along and enjoyed with us |
| *Fa-nsagamū wi ʿāshū wayyānā* | |

| | |
|---|---|
| رفعوا إيديهم من الفرحة زي الموج أبو دوامة | They put their hands in the air, |
| ***ṛĀḍfaʿū*** *ʾidīhum mi-l-**ḍ**Aṛḥ**A** zayy il-mūg ʾabū dawwāma* | like waves with a whirlpool |

Further to that, emphasis spread is also observed in Ramadan's song Number One (2018). Although the lexical items of the repetitive stanza *nambaṛ wann* are borrowed from English, they show strong pharyngealization where the domain of emphatic spread is backward in *NA*ṃḅ*A*ṛ and bidirectional in *WĀn*. The English vowel /ə/ in English /wən/ is pharyngealized to a low back /a/. Likewise, the non-emphatic /r/ in English /nəmbər/ is pharyngealized causing the emphasis domain to spread backward.

#### *4.3.1.1.3. Examples of Foreign Codes from the Lyrics' Corpus.*

Analysis of the song corpus shows that Ramadan utilizes two foreign codes in two songs: Versace Baby (2021) and *yallā bīnā* (2021). The performer switches between English and CA in Versace Baby (2021) and between Italian and CA in *yallā bīnā* (2021). Although English is used in Number One (2018) as well, its use is limited to few lexical items where the phonological features of English are not retained. Instead, the words are integrated into the phonological and structural system of the dominant CA code. Therefore, these items are not considered a case of CS but rather as one of borrowing.

Versace Baby (2021) was first introduced in a live performance in Saudi Arabia in 2019 before its official release in 2021 to YouTube. Its main theme is the Ramadan's lavish lifestyle. Coupland (2007) and Machin and Van Leeuwen (2005) stipulate that in late modernity speakers can claim to belong to social groupings like social class through the physical expressions of lifestyle. Lifestyle refers to dressing, hairstyle, ornamentation, or possessions. Ramadan repeatedly mentions his possessions and way of dressing in the song lyrics. He flaunts his wealth

by making repeated references to his favorite luxurious fashion trademark Versace from which he buys all his clothes and shows off his skill in driving an ‘Apache’ chopper and spending money recklessly. Further, he identifies himself as a ‘megastar’ and a ‘VIP’ who never uses his ID being well-known. He is very famous and important to the degree that he does not go through security checks in airports like ordinary people and the size of his wealth is so huge that it amazes his bank employees.

| | |
|---|---|
| بيبي، أنا ميجا ستار؛ بعوم عكس التيار. | Baby, I’m a megastar, |
| **Baby**, *ʾanā* **Mega Sta**r; *ba-ʿūm ʿaks it-tayyār*. | I swim against the tide. |

**Spend money, make it rain**

**Work out till we feel the pain**

**Then we Party, we don't care**

**Every day, re-do the same**

Ramadan employs English, an elite code in Egypt as established in the first chapter, to reflect a wealthy lifestyle and aligns to the upper social class when it comes to possession and physical manifestation of wealth. Here, code choice can be better approached through the concept of style introduced by Coupland (2007). Style is “ways of speaking” where “speakers use the resource of language variation to make meaning” (Coupland, 2007, p. I). According to context and interlocuters, speakers convey different social meaning and identities through social styles. Style, in this sense, accounts for ‘intra-individual’ stylistic variation. Coupland (2007) stipulates that performing identities requires an awareness of how the relevant socially constructed personas are likely to be perceived by others. That is, a performer is highly aware of audience’s perceptions of social groups and classes and manipulates resources of different styles

to display a specific persona with the aim of changing a perception or recontextualizing an identity.

In the lyrics, English is deliberately manipulated to reflect the physical manifestations of the upper-class capital. That is, the performer uses the social 'style' of the upper-class group to indicate group membership through possessions. That interpretation can be only deemed valid as far as the class embodiment of fortune, lifestyle and social status are concerned. While Ramadan describes in English a daily routine of working out, spending endless money, and partying, he contradicts that in CA as he justifies his accumulation of wealth through nonstop hard work and diligence.

| | |
|---|---|
| قلبي أبيض، باسبوري أسود، مش بأتفتش في المطار. | My heart is kind, my passport is black. |
| *ʾalbī ʾabyaḍ, bāsbūrī ʾiswid, mish ba-tfatish fi-l-maṭār* | I don't get security checked in airports. |
| في البنك بيسألوني: من أين لك هذا؟ | In the bank, they wonder: where did you |
| *fī il-bank bi-yisʾalūnī: min ʾayna laka hazā*? | get that from? |
| ما بأردش عليهم، غلاسة بغلاسة. | I don't reply. |
| *ma-ba-ruddish ʿalīhum ghalāsa bi-ghalāsa* | Rudeness is met by rudeness. |
| في السما بأخمّس بالأباتشي. | In the sky, I spin with an Apache. |
| *fī is-samā ba-khammis bi-l-ʾabātshī* | |
| القمة مكاني مش هأمشي | The top is my place. I'm not leaving. |
| *ʾil-qimma makānī mish ha-mshī.* | |

| | |
|---|---|
| شغل شغل، ما بأنامشي. كل هدومي فيرزاتشي | Working more and more, I don't sleep. |
| *shughl, shughl ma-ba-nāmshī. kul hidūmī* Versace | I get all my clothes from Versace. |
| فرعون وساب حضارة تعيش بعديه سنين. | A pharaoh leaving behind a long-standing |
| *fir'ūn wi-sāb ḥaḍāra t'īsh ba'dīh sīnīn.* | civilization. |
| دا مجرد واحد في المية، لسه الطريق طويل. | That's only a start. |
| *dā mugarraḍ wāḥid fī il-miyya, lissa iṭ-ṭarī' ṭawīl.* | My path is still stretching ahead. |

The language content and *mahragān* style with its *sha'bī* rhythms denote working-class values. Language content stresses lower class values of diligence and straightforwardness with the possession of wealth justified by sleepless nights of hard work. On the other hand, the use of English is restricted only to the theme of wealth and upper-class lifestyle.

The song is mainly an invitation to dance. Local lexical items from Egyptian lower-class culture like *ḥāyy* [hail; literally alive: a word used in Sufi dance rituals and Egyptian religious festivals like *mawlid*] and *zār* [exorcism ritual] are employed to invite the audience to indulge in a fast-moving dance.

| | |
|---|---|
| لو عتمة نوروها | If it's dark, light it on. |
| *law 'atma nawwarūha* | |
| لو ناشفة هنطروها | If it's hard, we will make it softer. |
| *law nāshfa ha-nṭarūha* | |
| هنقلبها زار. | We will turn it into an exorcism ritual. |

*ha-niʾlibha zār.*

In order to better understand the stance taken in this song, knowing the context of the song is needed. The song comes after the syndicate of Egyptian actors has waived its decision to ban Ramadan in Egypt due to accusations of normalizing with Israelis while attending a party in Dubai. In the song, the performer celebrates the syndicate decision by inviting his fans to dance with him on *shaʿbī* rhythms as he shows off being an unstoppable powerful man.

يلا بينا نهز كتافنا. حيّ! Let's shake our shoulders. Hail!

*yallā bīnā nihiz kitāfnā, ḥayy*!

هنمشي الكون على كيفنا. حيّ We will run the world our way. Hail!

*ha-nmashshī il-kūn ʿalā kīfnā, ḥayy!*

ماحدش هيكتفنا، هنقلبها زار. حيّ No one can tie us down.

*ma-ḥaddish ha-ykattifnā ha-niʾlibha zār, ḥayy*!

In addition to English, Italian is utilized in *yallā bīnā* (2021) to refer to upper-class culture-specific goods such as books and sophisticated music. The singer refers to a video that went viral on the internet of the football player, Cristiano Ronaldo, playing classical music, specifically 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Despite playing sophisticated music, Ramadan ironically stresses that the player is eventually a consumer of street music and a big fan of the American singer, Jennifer Lopez (J-LO), who adopts a hip-hop style in singing the *dinero* [money] track. It can be interpreted that Ramadan associates the code with Western classic music as representative of a cultivated art form often consumed by the elite. For that purpose, a distinctive phonological feature of Italian like the back /o/ vowel which is a sign of

masculinity is utilized in *Piano* and *Italiano*. The lexical item, *Italiano*, is used to describe the way the football player plays on the Piano and associates Italian with high-class art.

| | |
|---|---|
| على البيانو، كريستيانو، قاعد بيعزف بالطريقة الإيطاليانو | On the Piano, Cristiano, is playing in the Italian way. |
| *ʿalā il-piano*, Cristiano *ʾāʿid bi-yʿzif bi-l-ṭarīʾa il-Italiano.* | |
| J-Lo وشايف view عامل | He has a view seeing J-Lo |
| *ʿāmil* view *wi-shāyyif* J-Lo | |
| هيّ وخالد بيغنوا لدينيرو | She is singing with Khaled to *Dinero* [Money] |
| *hiyya wi* Khalid *bi-yghannū li-dinero* | |

Although the player claims to enjoy upper-class cultural goods like the Piano and classical music, he is actually a fan of hip hop who enjoys watching Jennifer Lopez rapping. Through this portrayal of the player as a symbol of the upper class, Ramadan mocks him and indirectly accuses him of being a pretender. That is, audience from the upper class who claim to prefer classical music and often criticize Ramadan for singing *mahragānāt* eventually appreciate non-Egyptian hip hop and enjoy it. Then, along the Italian lyrics, the artist uses identification categories like *numero uno, mafioso,* and *il sultano* to stress that he is the most popular Egyptian artist.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Andiamo andiamo, noi balliamo* | Come on; let's go; we dance |
| *Amiamo amiamo, noi cantiamo* | We love; we love; we sing |
| *Sono egiziano, sono solo numero uno* | I'm Egyptian; I'm the only number one |
| *Sono un mafioso, sono il sultano* | I'm mafia; I'm the sultan |

Ramadan uses his access to codes as a linguistic resource to adopt a position that indexes his social identity. Access to resources is access to community and identity (Bassiouney, 2009). The analysis of CC according to topic in the lyrics shows that the performer switches to foreign codes only to indicate access to the upper-class lifestyle and communities in that specific context. Still, he upholds to working-class culture and values as manifested through the language content of the lyrics. Another interpretation could be that the artist is aligning with upper social class to demonstrate power and prestige. However, these interpretations cannot be confirmed and considered valid without access to metapragmatic discourse on the use of foreign languages in Ramadan's songs which is unfortunately not available.

#### 4.3.1.2. Code Choice by Wegz

Analysis shows that there are three main linguistic codes utilized by Wegz in the corpus of lyrics: CA, Alexandrian Arabic (AA), and English. It is worth noting that while CA and AA are two dominant urban dialects of Egyptian Arabic, it is uncommon to sing in a regional dialect in Egypt except in folklore songs and very few exceptions (Bassiouney, 2009). This is because local dialects are not accessible to all Egyptians. Therefore, CA is the predominant linguistic code in the lyrics given that it is the most intelligible variety to Egyptians and Arabic speakers. Since the songs are addressed to the masses of Egyptians, it makes sense to use CA abundantly. Further, other codes are utilized in relation to dialogicality. The performer switches between CA and AA showing morphological and lexical variation in response to an outside dialogue. In doing so, he reflects a local identity that cherishes local values and culture.

##### *4.3.1.2.1. AA Examples from the Lyrics' Corpus.*

The Egyptian colloquial variety of Alexandria (AA) is utilized in the song lyrics. Salient phonological, morphological, and lexical characteristics of AA are employed to denote locality.

A morphological feature of AA is suffixing first-person plural verbs with the subject plural pronoun /u:/ as opposed to CA in which the /u:/ sound is totally omitted (Bassiouney, 2014). The following are examples of the feature adopted from Bassiouney (2014, p. 196).

| **Verbs** | **Alexandrian** | **Cairene** |
|---|---|---|
| To wash | *nighsil**ū**kū* | *nighsilku* |
| To say | *niʾūl**ū*** | *niʾūl* |

In *dūrak Gāyy* (2020), *bis-salāma* (2020), *tuggār ḥarām* (2020), and *laʾṭa* (2019), the artist frequently uses this distinctive morphological variable from AA. The following are examples listed according to the song.

**Table 4. 3** *Examples of AA from the Lyrics' Corpus*

| *Song* | *AA* | *CA* | *Translation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *laʾṭa* | ***n**istaʿbaṭ**ū*** | ***n**istaʿbaṭ* | To play fool |
| *laʾṭa* | ***n**ikammar**ū*** | ***n**ikammar* | To hide something |
| *laʾṭa* | ***n**ishammar**ū*** | ***n**ishammar* | To roll up a sleeve |
| *laʾṭa* | ***n**istaʿraḍ**ū*** | ***n**istaʿraḍ* | To show off |
| *laʾṭa* | ***n**imaṣlaḥ**ū*** | ***n** ʿmil maṣlaḥa* | To do business |
| *bis-salāma* | ***n**imashsh**ū**ha* | ***n**imashsh**ī**ha* | To make something happen in a certain way |
| *bis-salāma* | *ma-b-**n**ihrab**ū**sh* | *ma-b-**n**ihrabsh* | Not to run away |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *bis-salāma* | ***n**itraffaʿ**ū*** | ***n**itraffaʿ* | To forcibly put one's arms in the air |
| *tuggār ḥarām* | *ha**n**limm**ū*** | *ha**n**lim* | To collect |

Moreover, lexical variables from AA such as *mistīka* [a gum] which is realized in CA as *libāna* are employed in *dūrak gāyy* (2020), and *ʿAli bābā* (2020) to denote the performer's regional belonging to Alexandria and specifically to *al-Wardiyān*. The artist employs physical identification which is "identification by virtue of physical descriptions" to refer to opponents and supporters by their regional affiliation as belonging to Alexandrian *Shaʿbī* neighborhoods of *al-Wardiyān, al-Finṭās*, and *al-Mitrās* instead of using their names. Some of the used AA lexical items are listed below according to song.

| **Songs** | **Alexandrian** | **Translation** |
|---|---|---|
| *dūrak gāyy* | *buffa* | gang/group |
| *dūrak gāyy* | *wirdangiyya* | From *Wirdiyān* |
| *dūrak gāyy* | *mitrāsgiyya* | From *Mitrās* |
| *ʿAli bābā* | *il-naḥū* | male genitalia |

The lexical variables do not only presuppose that the artist is Alexandrian but also indexes a local persona that reflects his working-class neighborhood, *al-Wardiyān*, through the use of words and phrases like *Wardingiyya* and *ward ʿalīnā wi ʿallī bāʿnā* [literally flowers to us and the one who sold us out] that are only accessible to people from *al-Wardiyān*. Further, he uses an Alexandrian street slang that is only accessible to young men from Alexandria as in *il-naḥū* and other words that are considered profanity and obscene language. In that, Wegz also

stresses his value system associated with gendered lower-class Alexandrian communities through variation as well as reference to local themes.

***4.3.1.2.2. English Examples from the Lyrics' Corpus.***

Wegz uses English in many trap tracks like Hustla (2020); however, it is worth noting that in the selected pool of *mahragānāt* data, the use of English is very limited. In *tuggār ḥarām* (2020), he expresses his indifference to giving or receiving several slaps on the face by using an English sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| **I'm so fresh** راحات على الوش من غير ما أعرق | Taking many slaps on the face without |
| *rāḥāt ʿal-wish min ghīr ma-ʿraʾ*, I'm so fresh | sweating. I'm so fresh |

Moreover, in *dūrak Gāyy* (2020) he uses the English word 'damn' and the onomatopoeia 'skrrt' at the end of the rhymed verses. That can be interpreted through hip hop and rap convention in which onomatopoeia is used frequently, particularly by trap artists.

| | |
|---|---|
| (**damn**) شمال أفارقة الحركة بركة | North Africans; moving is a bless (damn) |
| *shamāl ʾafārqa il-ḥaraka baraka* | |
| (**skrrt**) وشك دواسة أدوس تكركر | Your face is like a gas pedal. I push, you |
| *wishshak dawwāsa ʾadūs tikarkar (skrrt)* | skrrt (skrrt) |

Additionally, in *laʾṭa* (2019), he employs English in two sentences to denote blackness.

Nigga, I'm savage Tarazan.

| | |
|---|---|
| I make moves زي الـ Big boys | I make moves like big boys. |
| I make moves *zāyy il*-big boys | |

Overall, the use of English in the lyrics presupposes that the artist is a rapper and indexes a musical identity by observing the inclusion of hip hop conventions in the verses.

#### 4.3.1.3. Dialogicality and Stance Taking

##### *4.3.1.3.1. Dialogicality in Ramadan's Tracks.*

Like code choice, dialogicality is a dominant resource in the corpus. Ramadan's track, *ʾinta gadaʿ* [you are a trustworthy man] (2020), has been released after the decision of Hany Shaker, the president of Egyptian Musicians' Union and a former classic pop singer, to ban *mahragānāt* in Egypt which, in turn, has been followed by violent attacks from mainstream media, public figures, and upper-class criticizers on the genre and the performers. Ramadan directly addresses his audience from the working class to credit them for being the sole driving force behind his success and achievements. The performer identifies with his audience as he stresses that he belongs to them. As a proof of belonging to the masses, the video clip shows Ramadan surrounded by regular Egyptian fans in a number of *shaʿbī* neighborhoods including Downtown Cairo. Later, Ramadan identifies these landmarks in his TV interview with Karara (2021) as places in which he used to hang out with his friends before becoming a movie star. In that, the performer regionally identifies with working-class communities to stress social background and indicate communal solidarity.

| | |
|---|---|
| حبي ليكو مبدأ. | My love for all of you is a code I led. |
| *ḥubbī līkū mabdaʾ* | |
| نجاحي بيكو صدّق. | My success was believed with you. |
| *nagāḥī bīkū saddaʾ* | |
| إنتوا ليّا وأنا ليكوا | You are mine and I belong to you. |

*ʾintū līyya wa ʾanā līkū.*

طب يلّا بينا نبدأ Let's go ahead.

*tabb yallā bīnā nibdaʾ*

The *mahragān* also utilizes intertextuality as a resource in stance-taking. Intertextuality is using another discourse into the current one (Bassiouney, 2014). In that, it relies on shared knowledge of other discourses in a community. In the song, the line "*ʾanā gadaʿ*" is taken from Islam al-ʾAbyaḍ's *mahragān, ʾanā gadaʿ* (2018), which garnered more than 57,982,474 views only on YouTube. Ramadan repeats the line in response to a prior context while a co-performer confirms his claim in the following line.

أيوا جدع، أنا جدع Yeah, a patron. I am a patron.

*ʾaywa gadaʿ. ʾanā gadaʿ*

أنت جدع You are a patron.

*ʾinta gadaʿ*

Originally, al-ʾAbyaḍ praises himself in his *mahragān* for having the ideal values and qualities of an average working-class Cairene man or in his words for being *ʾibn ḥalāl* [literally, a legitimate son]. The concept of *ʾibn ḥalāl* indicates maintaining positive low-class Egyptian values of being kind and respectful to the traditions. Typically, *ʾibn ḥalāl*, according to the lyrics, is someone who is like a godfather or big brother to everyone. He is trustworthy, humble, friendly, helpful, honest, brave, loved by the others, and a man of his word who never turns his back on a friend. The following is a list of some of the traits mentioned in *ʾanā gadaʿ* song.

مجنون رسمي بس ابن حلال Officially crazy but has a kind heart

*magnūn rasmī bas ʾibn ḥalāl*

وفي الأصول، بأمشي معدول — And by the traditions, I walk upright

*wi fī il-ʾuṣūl ba-mshī maʿdūl*

ما بعيشي الدور وبتاع أفعال — I do not show off and I speak through my actions

*ma-ba-ʿīshshī id-dūr wi btāʿ ʾafʿāl*

By referring to al-ʾAbyaḍ's track, Ramadan adopts the same values. In that, he aligns with Islam al-ʾAbyaḍ and takes an affective stance towards working class values and traditions. The performer stresses through language content his good traits. That is done through language content in which words denoting chivalry, virility, loyalty, and reliability are used.

أنا واخد الشهامة مبدأي — Chivalry is my principle.

*ʾanā wākhid ish-shahāma mabdaʾī.*

دور على الرجولة هتلاقي. — Looking for virility, you will find a bro.

*dawwar ʿar-rigūla hatlāʾī.*

العيب في العقول. — It is all in the mindsets.

*il-ʿīb fī il-ʿiʾūl.*

مش ماشيين بالأصول. — No one follows the traditions.

*mish māshyyīn bi il-ʾuṣūl.*

مش هتلاقي حد هنا بوفائي. — You will never find a match for my loyalty.

*mish ha-tlāʾī ḥad hinā bi-wafāʾī*

أنا قادر لما أقول. — I am capable when I give my word.

*ʾanā ʾādir lammā ʾaʾūl.*

أنا فاعل مش مفعول. I am a doer, not a do away.

*ʾanā fāʿil mish mafʿūl.*

أنا عمدة ليكو أنا وفي. I am your patron. I am loyal to you.

*ʾanā ʿumda līkū ʾanā wafī*

أنا جني لما شافني قام جري. I am a *jinni*. Once he saw me, he ran away.

*ʾanā ginnī lammā shāfnī ʾām girī.*

قالوا عني جدع ومش بأفتري. They said about me I am a patron, and I never slur.

*ʾālū ʿannī gadaʿ wi mish ba-ftirī.*

Stance is dependent on context and targeted audience. Therefore, Ramadan uses lexical items from the value system of the working class as in *shahāma, rigūla, ʾuṣūl*, *gadaʿ, wafī, ʿumda,* and *mish ba-ftirī* in an attempt to reach wide Egyptian audience from low and low middle classes, particularly from marginalized *shaʿbī* areas. At the same time, he indirectly addresses the Union president, Hany Shaker challenging his alleged authority as opposed to that of the masses.

It is noteworthy that Shaker who frequently attacks the genre on the grounds that it is "based on promiscuous and immoral lyrics, which is completely prohibited" has defended his ban decision by stating: "we want real art […] this type of genre does not represent Egypt." (Egyptian Streets, Feb. 2020). In that, he presupposes an epistemic stance of the kind of art that can or cannot represent Egypt and disaligns himself and 'real' Egyptians with working-class *mahragānāt* performers.

In response, Ramadan identifies himself as *gadaʿ* denoting the traits of the 'real' authentic Egyptian from the working class who, in addition to being brave and chivalrous,

respects traditions and is respected by others. Then, he addresses his audience stressing that they empower him by their endless support.

أنا بيكو فارض السيطرة With you, I force my rule.

*ʾanā bīkū fāriḍ is-sayṭara.*

جمهوري في ضهري مجزرة And my audience has got my back like

*gumhūrī fī ḍahrī magzara* butchers.

Moreover, he uses another identification category where he compares himself to ʿAntarah ibn Shaddād al-ʿAbsiy, a pre-Islamic Arab knight and poet famous for his poetry, remarkable personal and physical qualities, and courage in battles. Because of his dark complexion, ʿAntarah faced discrimination from his own people who treated him as a slave despite being born to a noble father. Later, he gained recognition and respect for being a mighty warrior and was emancipated. Since identification categories are used in constructing identity by denoting social variables such as "ethnicity, locality, and character traits" (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 76), reference to ʿAntarah can be seen as an attempt to indirectly indicate, in addition to talent and strength, skin color. In that, the performer displays an ethnic identity.

أنا في البلد دي عنترة I am this country's hero.

*ʾanā fī il-balad dī ʿAntara.*

أنا حملة بالأصول I am a campaign of traditions.

*ʾana ḥamla bi-l-ʾuṣūl.*

ربك مديني القبول My vibe is blessed by being cool

*rabbak middīnī il-ʾubūl*

Profound in the culture of the streets, loyalty and chivalry are not shared by Ramadan's opponent, Hany Shaker, whom he identifies in terms of an opposing other. The performer attributes his success to the audience who supported a dark-skinned talented man against the discriminatory and racist selection criteria of the Egyptian media industry which prefers light skinned artists until he became a super star.

| | |
|---|---|
| طب من إمتى كان فيه حد همني؟ | When did I ever care about anyone? |
| *ṭab min ʾimta kān fī ḥad hamminī?* | |
| مين فيكو مد إيده شدني؟ | Which of you reached out and held me to |
| *mīn fīku mad ʾidu shaddinī?* | saty? |
| لو بعتو إحنا عادي نشتري | If you are selling, we would buy it easily. |
| *law biʿtū ʾiḥnā ʿādī nishtirī.* | |
| خليهم كلهم يبعدوا عنك وشهم | Have them all turn their faces away from |
| *khallīhum kulluhum yibʿidū ʿannak wishshuhum* | you. |
| قبّل عليهم قولهم | Get closer and tell them. |
| *ʾabbil ʿalīhum ʾulluhum* | |
| هتلاقي كله عليك يقول: أنت جدع. | You will find them all saying about you: |
| *ha-tlāʾī kullu ʿalīk yiʾūl ʾinta gadaʿ* | You are a patron. |

Likewise, Ramadan responds to criticism usually coming from the elite, critics, and officialdom in his tracks: Versace Baby (2021), *yallā bīnā* (2021), Mafia (2019), Number One (2018), and *miyya misā yā brins* (2018). Dialogicality is most clearly utilized in Number One.

The song is released in response to mainstream media criticism of his songs and soap operas. The video clip starts with Ramadan sitting on a couch and listening to fierce mainstream media attacks of him. In an interview with TV host, Hisham al-Huwaysh (2020), on the Saudi SBC channel, Ramadan stated that Number One (2020) was a message to Egyptian mainstream media who ranked one of his shows third although it was the most popular according to Google. CA and a low-class style of CA are deliberately utilized in the track to address opponents and insult them.

| | |
|---|---|
| أنا في الساحة واقف لوحدي | I am standing here ruling this field. |
| *ʾanā fī is-sāḥa wāʿif liwaḥdī* | |
| نامبر وان وإنتوا عارفين | I am number 1. It is written on stone. |
| *NĀmḄAṛ WĀnn wi ʾintu ʿārfīn* | |
| لو كنتوا لمة ولا بيهمنا | Even if you are many, we would not care |
| *law ḳUntu lamma walā bi-yhimminā* | less. |
| هنسيطر ونغير الواقع | We will rule the Biz and change up reality. |
| *ha-nsayṭar wi-nghayyar il-wāqiʿ* | |

Dialogicality is also employed in Mafia (2018) where Ramadan replies to prevalent dialogues criticizing his arrogance and public manifestation of wealth in addition to dissing the Egyptian actor-singer, Bushra, who released a song called *Kobra* (2018) to diss Ramadan accusing him of being arrogant, childish, and a low-life bully. The lyrics structure of the song comes in the form of taking a turn in an ongoing outside dialogue in which Ramadan uses identification categories to refer to himself and address the people who attack him. He identifies

himself as Mafia saying: "*ʾanā mafyā*" [I am a gangster] and belittles his opponents by using derogatory terms like *ya-bnī* [son] to address them.

التواضع في الحياة فعلًا مبدأنا — Being humble is our principle in life.

*ʾil-tawāduʿ fī il-ḥaya fiʿlan mabdaʾnā*

اسأل علينا يا ابني لو مش مصدقنا — You can ask about us if you are cynical.

*ʾisʾal ʿalīnā ya-bnī law mish misaddaʾnā*

جبناها من تحت الصفر بسرعة بدأنا — We started fast from below the bottom.

*gibnāhā min taḥt is-sifr bi-surʿa badaʾnā*

ولا مرة افترينا على حد واتجرأنا — And yet never have we been hateful or heartless.

*walā marra iftarīnā ʿalā ḥadd wi-itgarraʾnā*

In the following table, stances taken by Ramadan in the selected songs are analyzed according to context. The table categorization is adopted from Bassiouney (2018b).

**Table 4. 4** *Code Choice and Stance-Taking in Ramadan's Songs According to Context*

| *Song* | *Direct addressee* | *Aligns with* | *Disaligns with* | *Topic* | *Code* | *Indirect addressee* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***ʾinta gadaʿ*** | working-class | working-class, blackness | upper class | working-class values | CA | Critics (Hany Shaker) |
| **Versace** | audience | upper-class lifestyle | working-class lifestyle | lifestyle | English | upper class criticizers |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Versace** | audience | working-class values | upper-class value | wealth | CA | upper class criticizers |
| **Number One** | Mainstream media | working-class values, upper-class lifestyle | upper-class values | success in career | CA | opponents (other actors) |
| **Mafia** | Opponents | working-class culture | upper class | gangster persona | working-class style of CA | Egyptian actress, Bushra |
| ***yallā bīnā*** | audience | classic music | upper class | mocking upper class | Italian | opponents |
| ***yallā bīnā*** | audience | working-class cultural products | Upper class | Working-class cultural products | CA | upper class criticizers |

***4.3.1.3.2. Dialogicality in Wegz' Tracks.***

In addition to the conscious choice of code, dialogicality is also a predominant resource in the lyrics of Wegz. His most-watched performance *dūrak gāyy* (2020) which hit 90 million

views only on YouTube depends mainly on dialogicality. The track is believed to be a diss of Egyptian performer-actor, Muhammad Ramadan, who allegedly performed an energy drink advertisement that is an intellectual property of Wegz (Yehia, 2020). Dissing is hip-hop tradition that depends on inferences drawn from context and shared knowledge to build meaning. Artists from hip hop background draw on 'dissing' for insulting other artists competing with them in the market and showing off their verbal skills. For understanding insults and references, knowledge of the two artists' background and history of tracks are needed.

The first line in the track is a threatening phrase "*dūrak gāay*" [your turn is next] and it can be interpreted as a response to a distant dialogue between the performer and Ramadan. Wegz positions himself as the only 'authentic' rapper. In that, he dis-aligns with Ramadan who is referred to as an outsider to the group of hip hop performers in Egypt. Ramadan is not only described as less gifted but also is excluded from the Egyptian rap scene. By alienating Ramadan from *mahragānāt* and rap communities of practice in Egypt, Wegz aligns himself completely with Egyptian rappers and hip-hop artists. He uses jargon from hip hop and rap register like 'diss' and 'beef' to distance himself further from Ramadan. In rap jargon, a rap beef refers to rap verses through which rappers show their verbal skills when they have a feud and diss or call out each other. He disses Ramadan by describing his ability to rap through *mahragānāt* as *laḥma nayya* [raw beef] which denotes being old and artistically immature and unskillful.

| | |
|---|---|
| مش نفس اللون ما نتساويش | We are not doing the same kind of art. |
| *mish nafs il-lūn ma-nitsāwīsh* | We are not equal. |
| يا لحمة نية ما تستويش | Your beef is raw and old. |
| *ya laḥma nayya ma-tistiwīsh* | |

Wegz makes an intra-textual reference to Ramadan's track *bābā* [father] (2019) in his first verse questioning his alleged authority in the Egyptian music scene by saying: "*law ʾintā bābā tabʾanā mīn*?" [if you are the godfather, then who am I?]. In that, Wegz questions the actor's verbal skills and makes a reference to a previous track of his called *ʿAlī bābā* (2020) in which he also disses Ramadan along with other artists. By *qāʾid* Mafia [a Mafia leader], Wegz refers to Ramadan's track, Mafia (2019), mocking the performer for repeatedly claiming to be an intellectual phenomena in his interviews by calling him "*wārith* Kafka" [Franz Kafka successor] which contradicts adopting a low-life gangster persona in his songs. Further, reference is made to Ramadan's Number One (2018) when Wegz says: "*min ghīr ma-ʾatmarran yā-bā ʾawwal gumhūriyya*" [without practicing, I rank the first in Egypt] denoting that the actor needs rehearsal to perform well while Wegz is gifted by nature. In the following verses, he continues to undermine Ramadan's art using hip-hop jargon as 'beef' and 'trap' and mixes that with street language which is only accessible to working-class Alexandrians as in *ghazāla* [a kind of pocketknives] and *il-shaʾiyya* [a kind of pocketknives].

| | |
|---|---|
| آه يا غزالتي يا سهرانة مش صيدتي السكرانات. | Oh, my watchful pocketknife, did you not |
| *ʾāh yā ghazāltī yā sahrāna mish ṣidtī il-sakrānāt.* | hunt down my opponents? |

Dialogicality is employed in many of Wegz' tracks; however, there is no room to go through all the dialogues in this thesis due to accessibility and time limitations. One distant dialogue that is particularly significant since it reflects the use of AA and the repetitive locality references in the artist's track is the one with the Cairene music producer, Molotof, who attacks Alexandrian artists on Twitter denoting that Alexandrians like Wegz are sly and disloyal

deceivers. Further, the producer disses the rapper by ridiculing Alexandrians' pride in local food like *kibdaʾiskandarānī* [beef liver] (Rap Scene, 2020).

إحنا لو جينا نحط إسكندرية في مقارنة مع القاهرة إسكندرية هتزعل جامد! #مدينة_غدارة.

*ʾiḥnā law gīnā nuḥuṭ ʾIskindiriyya fī muqārna maʿa al-Qāhira ʾIskindiriyya ha-tizʿal gāmid! #madīna_ghaddāra*

[If we set a comparison between Alexandria and Cairo, Alexandria will be very sad. #prefidious_city]

Wegz responds to the stereotypical tweet through Twitter as well by stressing the high status of Alexandria in the media and calling it *ʿāṣimat al-fann* [the capital of arts]. He describes those who belittles the city as narrow-minded and jealous and goes further to identify himself as the voice of Alexandrians (Rap Scene, 2020).

فيه ناس بتعتمد عليّ أتكلم لهم ولو متكلمتلهومش صوتهم مبيبانش. عشان الرؤية توضح إسكندرية عاصمة الفن.

*fīh nās bi-taʿtamid ʿalayya ʾatkalimluhum wi law ma-tkalimtilhūmsh ṣūṭhum ma-bi-ybānsh. ʿashān al-ruʾya tiwḍaḥ ʾiskindiriyya ʿāṣimat al-fann.*

[There are people who depend on me to be their voice and if I do not express them, nobody will. To be clear enough, Alexandria is the capital of art].

Through this dialogue, the display of AA in *laʾṭa* track can be better understood. Wegz shows off his verbal and artistic skills through the demonstration of his access to working-class AA. Through the language content, he stresses being the best in the Egyptian music scene.

إحنا الأول في اللعبة We rank first in this game.

*ʾiḥnā il-ʾawwal fī il-liʿba.*

However, the use of pronouns here is a bit ambiguous. The plural inclusive pronoun *ʾiḥā* [we] could be a refence to the artist himself since the plural pronoun is used to refer to the singular first-person in working class AA. Further, there is a possibility that the pronoun actually denotes Alexandrian artists in the scene. The only way to find out what the artist is referring to is to interview him, which was not accessible as he is now one of the most popular artists in Egypt.

### *4.3.2. Code Performance, Indexicality, and Stance-Taking*

So far, no studies have adopted stance theory and indexicality to examine code choice in *mahragānāt* songs and its relationship to identity construction in the public discourse. This work is the first to employ the indexical theory of style which correlates stance, style, and identity in examining excerpts from the music genre (Jaff, 2009). Linguistic codes are ideologically linked to broad social meanings associated with a "social type" or a stereotype (Silverstein, 2003, p. 220). Speakers and writers utilize language variation and proper use of salient linguistic forms to highlight social variables and project a style of identity (Coupland, 2007; Gill, 2014). By doing so, they align with a person, a group, or a social action and, in that, they take a stance toward that action or person/group's values and culture as contrasted to other locally available and often competing styles.

The concept of indexicality with its three orders and their role in yielding better interpretation of cases of CC have been introduced in the second chapter of the thesis. While first-order indexes are habitual and unintentional indications of membership in a group, second and third-order indexes are rather conscious, noticeable, and performative (Bassiouney, 2014; Johnstone et al, 2006). Second-order indexes are stereotypes or ideological representations of

others. Therefore, they may be consciously used to express an attitude. They can be obtained from sociolinguistic research or metalinguistic discourse through which language users explicitly reflect on a style or a code (Bassiouney, 2014; Silverstein, 2003). Second and third-order indexes are the focus of this section. For metapragmatic discourse of working-class CA utilized in *mahragānāt*, they are obtained from Kitzler (2021b) in which she examines media discourse on *mahragānāt* focusing on the content and linguistic form of the music, Royal (1985), and Badawi (2012). As for metapragmatic stereotype of SA, it is obtained from Miller (2005), Bassiouney (2018a) whereas that of AA is gained from Bassiouney (2014).

Before delving into analyzing the data through indexicality, it is important to note that *mahragānāt* as a localized genre of hip hop shares some of its language practices such as dissing, boasting, and identification and representation. Dissing as defined before in the third chapter of this thesis is a rap tradition where artists verbally attack opponents and other artists (Williams, 2009). Through dissing artists can outperform opponents by showing verbal skills. In turn, verbal skills are essential for group boasting and for authenticating social and regional identification for marginality display. The more properly artists use local varieties, the more authentic they are perceived. Since Ramadan and Wegz come from different demographic backgrounds, the following subsections are divided according to the artist.

#### 4.3.2.1. Indexicality, and Stance Taking by Muhammad Ramadan.

Overall, data shows that Ramadan significantly switches between SA and working-class CA in his songs. Both codes represent a "social type" or a stereotype in Egypt (Silverstein, 2003, p. 220). In response to the escalation of attacks on *mahragānāt,* the performer addresses criticizers who attack him for performing the marginalized working class musical style in his movies through *miyya misā yā brins* (2018). In the lyrics, he makes phonological features of

working-class CA like low pitch and strong pharyngealization salient. In doing so, he uses the social style as an identity marker indicating membership in the Cairene working class.

Consistent with that, Badawi (2012) contends that *ʿāmmiyyat al-ʾummiyyīn* [vernacular of the illiterate], which he identifies as a variety utilized by low and working class Cairenes who are typically perceived as uneducated, employs emphatic sounds such as /ṣ/, /ṭ/, /ḍ/, and /ẓ/ mainly by males as a social identity marker that distinguishes them from upper-class men.

"ويبلغ شعورهم الواعي بأهمية صفة التفخيم في التفريق بينهم وبين الطبقات الراقية التي لا يكنون لها كثيرًا من الاحترام."

*wa yablugh shuʿūruhum al-wāʿī bi-ʾahamiyyat ṣifat al-tafkhīm fī al-tafrīq baynahum wa bayna al-tabaqāt al-rāqiyya allatī lā yakinūn lahā kathīran mina al-ʾiḥtirām.*

[Their awareness of emphaticness importance in distinguishing themselves from the upper classes, for whom they do not have much respect] (p.127).

Strikingly, Badawi (2012) describes the choice to utilize the working-class variant as conscious and deliberate for signaling membership in the working class. That is, the feature functions as an in-group social index of contempt for higher social classes.

" التفخيم عندهم وسيلة لإظهار احتقارهم واستهزائهم بتلك الطبقات وأبنائها."

*al-tafkhīm ʿindahum wasīla liʾẓhār iḥtiqārihim wa istihzāʾihim bi-tilka al-ṭabaqāt wa ʾabnāʿiha.*

[Emphaticness is a means through which they express their disdain and ridicule of these classes and those who belong to them] (p. 127).

Being conscious and intentional, the performed style becomes a second-order index of in-group solidarity. In the data, the use of first-person inclusive plural pronouns, *ʾiḥnā* and *nā*, for self-reference and third-person exclusive plural subject pronoun /*ū*/ as in *fihim**ū**nā* for reference to outsiders reinforce the solidarity index in the track. Through employing the discursive strategy of

using inclusive and exclusive pronouns, the performer differentiates between two groups: working class artists and opposing others. By referring to himself as a member of *mahragānāt* artists, Ramadan aligns with the social group represented by the music genre.

إحنا إللي احتاروا في غنانا  It is us whose melodies confused them.

*ʾiḥnā illī iḥtāṛū fī ghunānā*

فاختاروا يغنوا معانا  So, they chose to sing with us.

*fa-khṭāṛū yighannū mʿānā*

Second-order indexes depend mainly on explicit ideologies circulated in a society and implicit individual attitudes toward them (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 349). As indicated in section 1.2.3 of the first chapter, Egyptian media discourse censors, stigmatizes, and ridicules the use of urban lower-class styles and non-urban dialects. So, the use of working class varieties is uncommon in mainstream media since it does not correspond to the standard traditionally used in media contexts. By using implicit indexical forms associated with the working class in official media, Ramadan creatively challenges the stereotype and projects a stance toward *mahragānāt* artists and working-class masculinity.

Second-order indexes are subject to metapragmatic discourse though. Metapragmatic discourse is a conscious talk about variation or ways of speaking in a community (Bassiouney, 2014). It can be used by language users to create social meaning. Talks about language can identify aspects of the stereotype linked to a style and hence yield a better interpretation of a CC. For the metapragmatic stereotype of *mahragānāt* style and its indexes, the study of Kitzler (2021b) on the use of youth slang in *mahragānāt* and metapragmatic discourse surrounding the genre is adopted. In addition to investigating the language content and form of 55 *shaʿbī* and *mahragān* songs between 2011 and 2016, she examines metalinguistic discourse in which the

linguistic medium of the music is overtly discussed. Kitzler (2021b) contends that the two genres are underrepresented and devaluated in mainstream media for being associated with lower social classes as manifested in the content and linguistic form of the lyrics which are often frowned upon by upper classes for being perceived as vulgar, inferior, and cheap entertainment that poses a threat to youth morals and Egyptian values and identity. Consequently, Cairene working-class speech is stigmatized in the media for being associated with negative indexes like being the code of the crowds of the illiterate, undereducated, and unemployed masses particularly from youth, backward traditions, vulgarity of speaking and dressing styles, and criminality and immersion in illicit use of drugs and alcohol.

Therefore, using *mahragān* in mainstream media as a vehicle to indulge in verbal battles between classes over the stereotype of Cairene low-class language, values, and culture is uncommon and creative. In doing that, the performer establishes higher third-order indexes of the low-class CA style to challenge the stereotype by surprisingly acknowledging aspects of the stigma related to criminality in Mafia track (2019). That is, he builds a counter-narrative to that of the elite and flips the stigma to actually boast for the group.

| | |
|---|---|
| ولو عالعافية ورايا مافيا مافيا مافيا | And if we got to flex power, |
| *wi law ʿal-ʿāfiya warāyā Mafia, Mafia, Mafia.* | I got Mafia, Mafia, Mafia behind me |
| بس مالناش في الأذية ذية ذية | We are just not into harmin', harmin', |
| *bas ma-lnāsh fī il-ʾaziyya ziyya* | harming. |

On the lexical level, stressing working-class values is most evident in in the track of *ʾinta gadaʿ* [you are a trustworthy man] (2020) where Ramadan uses the addressing term *gadaʿ*, to boast positive traits of working-class members. The ECA word denotes a group of characteristics

including being tough, fearless, noble, supportive, and often a young man with integrity. In addition, the possession of more attributes of the working-class value system is stressed through the use of nouns and adjectives denoting positive masculine traits like *shahāma* [chivalry], *rigūla* [power and virility], and *wafī* [loyal]. By doing so, he makes an ideological move through which he assigns positive indexes - in the Egyptian context – to working-class Cairenes and takes a stance toward lower classes indexing an authentic strong local identity.

Moreover, the performer shows a far more complex social identity by performing in a stigmatized southern dialect in Egyptian public discourse. SA is often stigmatized and ridiculed for being associated with narrow-mindedness, violence, poverty, backward traditions, and lack of intelligence (Miller, 2005; Bassiouney, 2018a). At the first glance, the code index membership in the group of Upper Egyptians. However, Miller (2005) examines linguistic change and accommodation strategies between upper Egyptian migrants to Great Cairo based her own observations in addition to field research conducted between 1994 and 1995. Her research focuses on migrants from the cities of Qena and Sohag to Giza, in particular. She contends that the stigma associated with SA forces *Ṣaʿīdī* migrants to use CA in their interactions in order to avoid discrimination. Nonetheless, the accommodation process takes place slowly due to several extralinguistic reasons leading the first generation of migrants to use a mix of CA and SA in their speech.

Being a second generation of *Ṣaʿīdī* migrants to Great Cairo, the performer seems aware of the linguistic reality and practices of *Ṣaʿīdī* communities in Cairo, which many Cairenes may lack, for being a member of one of them himself as he stated in his interview with Kamal (2018). From these data, it can be concluded that the selected code index membership in the group of *Ṣaʿīdī* migrants to Great Cairo. Therefore, Ramadan, as indicated in section 4.3.1.1.1 of this

chapter, mixes salient phonological and lexical features of SA with CA to perform the linguistic style of a *Ṣaʿīdī* migrant in two of his tracks: *ʿashānik* (2014) and *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī* (2014). The actor makes statements in SA in *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī* acknowledging being an Upper Egyptian descendant by using first person pronoun *ʾanā* [I].

| | |
|---|---|
| أنا صعيدي. | I am *Ṣaʿīdī.* |
| *ʿanā Ṣaʿīdī* | |
| علي الطلاق صعيدي. | I swear I am *Ṣaʿīdī* . |
| *ʿalayya iṭ-ṭalāg Ṣʿīdī.* | |
| وإللي أبوه صعيدي ما يخافش. | And the one whose father is *Ṣaʿīdī* does not |
| *wi illī ʾabū Ṣʿīdī ma-ykhāfish* | know fear. |

The *Ṣaʿīdī* metapragmatic stereotype is challenged in both tracks provoking second-order indexes of the stigmatized code where Ramadan takes a stance of solidarity with the group. While the stereotype of underdeveloped *Saʿīd* [Upper Egypt] is questioned, other aspects of SA stereotype are strikingly challenged by actually acknowledging the stigma related to toughness, violence, and cultural traditions. By doing that, a counter narrative to the one propagated by the media is established in order to flip the stigma to boast for the group's authenticity and cultural traditions. The performer questions through the lyrics the Cairene derogatory stereotype by taking an epistemic stance in which he tells the audience what an authentic modern *Ṣaʿīdī* truly is and questions other narratives based on their lack of accurate knowledge on *Saʿīd* as they have never visited Upper Egypt before.

| | |
|---|---|
| إللي ما نزلش الصعيد محتاج سوفت وير جديد. | If you have never visited Upper Egypt, you |
| *illī ma-nzilsh iṣ-ṣaʿīd miḥtāg sūft wīr gadīd* | need to update your knowledge |

| | |
|---|---|
| ساعة الجد وساعة النار هتهزر هتشوف جزار | When things get serious if you are not |
| *sāʿit il-gadd wi sāʿit il-nār ha-thazzar ha-tshūf gazzār* | taking it seriously, you will see a slaughterer. |
| صعيدي لابس كلسون وفي ايده الكاس والآيفون | *Ṣaʿīdī* wearing *Kalsūn* holding a wine glass |
| *Ṣaʿīdī lābis kalsūn wi fī ʾīdu il-kās wi il-iPhone* | and an iPhone. |
| قلب الأسد قلب الفار أنا صعيدي ومش بهزار | A lionheart or a rat's heart, I'm *Ṣaʿīdī* and |
| *ʾalb il-ʾasad ʾalb il-fār ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī wi mish bi-hizār.* | I'm not bluffing. |
| أنا صعيدي ومش فطوطة واسأل عني عبده موتة | I'm *Ṣaʿīdī*, not a joke and ask *ʿAbdū Mūta* |
| *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī wi mish faṭūṭa wi isʾal ʿannī ʿAbdū Mūta*. | about me. |
| أنا صعيدي ومش تايواني واسأل عني الواد ألماني | I'm *Ṣaʿīdī*, not a fake and ask *ʾAlmānī* |
| *ʾanā Ṣaʿīdī wi mish tāywānī wi isʾal ʿannī il-wād ʾAlmānī.* | about me. |

The performer's manipulation of stigmatized codes through the *mahragān* musical form is creative, unusual, and unprecedented, not to mention being quite uncommon to sing in the SA dialect in Egypt's mainstream media.

| | |
|---|---|
| هو دا الجديد يا بلد التقليد | That is innovation, country of fakes |
| *huwwa dā il-jidīd yā balad il-taʾlīd* | |

Third-order indexes are provoked to make an ideological move where Ramadan projects a modern authentic *Ṣaʿīdī* identity. That is, he manipulates the stereotype to position himself as strong and authentic *Ṣaʿīdī* compared to the sly and sissy Cairenes while consciously indexing new value of modernity to SA.

Overall, from the data analysis it can be concluded that Muhammad Ramadan projects a complex social identity with a degree of overlap between multiple in-groups of which he is a member. First, he has access to the *Ṣaʿīdī* in-group being second generation of *Ṣaʿīdī* migrants who was raised as kid in *al-Munīb*, one of *Ṣaʿīdī* migrant communities in Giza. Also, he is a member of the working-class Cairene youth being born and raised within the outskirts of Great Cairo. In his tracks, he manages to reflect such a complex social identity and even creatively manipulates the stereotypes in order to assign new positive associations to SA and the low-class style of CA.

#### 4.3.2.2. Indexicality, and Stance-Taking by Wegz.

As indicated in sections 4.3.1.2.1 and 4.3.1.3.2 of this chapter, Wegz uses salient variants on the phonological and lexical levels of the Alexandrian dialect (AA) in order to display an authentic Alexandrian identity. In *dūrak Gāyy* (2020), references to Alexandrian marginalized *Shaʿbī* neighborhoods are frequently made for regional identification. Here, the AA code denotes membership in the group on the surface level. Mention of local specific places like *Wardiyān* [a working-class neighborhood in Alexandria], and *Mitrās* [a working-class neighborhood to the west of *Wardiyān*] and lexical items like *buffa* [group] as opposed to CA *shilla* are only known and intelligible to Alexandrians, particularly from the working class. Hence, they are employed to index a local specific identity. Only an Alexandrian who shares the same community and culture can understand the multiple references in the verses to places and cultural inferences.

The code is also utilized in *laʾṭa* track (2019) where the artist addresses his enemies and opponents and acknowledges their artistic skills stressing that Alexandrian performers are the most gifted. In addition to *Mitrās* and *Wardiyān*, he refers to other marginalized neighborhoods in Alexandria as in *fanṭāziyya* [dwellers of *Finṭās*, an Alexandrian working-class neighborhood].

| | |
|---|---|
| مش هتساعنا، الدنيا مش هتساعنا. | It will not take us all. There is no room in this |
| *mish ha-tsaʿnā id-dunyā mish ha-tsaʿnā.* | world for all of us. |
| خمسة علينا وعلى أعدائنا | How gifted we and our enemies are! Touch |
| *khamsa ʿalīnā wi ʿalā ʾaʿdāʾnā* | wood. |
| كسبوا وحطيناهم في دماغنا | They won and made us their enemies. |
| *kisibu wi ḥaṭṭīnāhum fī dimāghna* | |
| فنطازية ملوك المعنى | Fantazians are the masters of meaning. |
| *Fanṭāziyya milūk il-maʿnā* | |
| متراسجية ملوك المغني | Mitrasgians are the masters of singing. |
| *Mitrāsgiyya milūk il-maghnā* | |
| ورد علينا وعلى إللي باعنا | Flowers to us and to the one who betrayed us. |
| *ward ʿalīnā wi ʿallī bāʿnā* | |

According to the artist in his interview with CNL (2019), sentences like "*ward yā ʾanā"* [literally, I am flowers] and "*ward ʿalīnā wi ʿallī bāʿnā*" [literally, flowers to us and the one who sold us out] are only meaningful to people from *Wardiyān* who share the same local community and history; therefore, they can understand the artist's regional identification in the verses. That

is, Wegz indexes a local specific identity, not only of a generic Alexandrian one but specifically an identity of a working-class Alexandrian from the working class.

Moreover, a salient morphological feature of AA is demonstrated in the track where the subject prefix *ni-* and the second and third-person plural suffix *-ū* are used with first-person plural verbs as in ***n**ishrab**u*** [we drink] as contrasted to CA ***n**ishrab* where the /u/ sound is omitted. The performer boasts of being the most skillful artist in the Egyptian rap scene and attacks other rappers for trying to provoke him into a dissing feud hoping to get a piece of his success.

| | |
|---|---|
| إحنا الأول في اللعبة. | We are the most popular in the music scene. |
| *ʾiḥnā il-ʾawwal fī il-liʿba* | |
| استنونا نقب، وفي رجولنا بيتشعبطوا. | They watched as we hit the record and now, |
| *istannūnā niʿib wi fī rigūlnā bi-ytshaʿbaṭu* | they want a piece of our success. |
| بنكمروا ونستعبطوا | We hide and ignore them by playing fool |
| *bi-**n**kammar**ū** wi **n**istaʿbaṭ**u*** | |
| بنشمروا ونستعرضوا | We roll up our sleeves and show off our skills |
| *bi-**n**shammar**ū** wi **n**istaʿrad**ū*** | |
| ولاد البحر بنكمبروا وبنسقطوا | Sons of the sea, we lay them down and make |
| *wilād il-baḥr bi-**n**kambar**ū** wi bi-**n**saʿaṭ**ū*** | them fail |

It is noteworthy that the morphological feature is associated with local working-class Alexandrians like fishermen as portrayed in Egyptian movies (Bassiouney, 2014, p. 196). Additionally, the performer self-identifies as a member of *wilād il-baḥr* [sons of the sea] group.

Reference to the sea is another identity marker where an Alexandrian landmark is highlighted as compared to landlocked Cairo. Thus, employing an AA low-class style entails authenticity and toughness and presupposes a close network with the working-class community in Alexandria. That finding aligns with the one drawn from the mention of local places associated with the Alexandrian *shaʿbī* neighborhoods and the use of local phrases denoting regional identification.

In order to further consolidate that finding, second-order indexes of the code is examined. Therefore, it is essential to obtain the social meaning associated with the code first. Bassiouney (2014) contends that AA socially implies being tough and smart enough not to be easily fooled by others, particularly "outsiders" (p. 194). Indeed, Wegz indexes an authentic low-class local identity of a young Alexandrian who cannot be deceived easily by outsiders seeking to get fame fast through dissing him. Here, second-order indexes of AA are provoked to imply an authentic tough low-class Alexandrian identity as compared to sissy opponents whom Wegz refers to as *shabāb bi-khalfiyyāt zahriyya* [guys with pink butts]. That is, new social meanings are assigned to low-class AA denoting superiority, mastery of one's craft and skills, and ferocity.

Through the deliberate performance of the style, Wegz indexes a low-class locality and takes a stance toward marginalized Alexandrian communities. In the CNL interview (2019), the artist indulges in a metalinguistic discourse where he discusses code choice in his tracks. He stresses coming from a marginalized *shaʿbī* neighborhood and refers to the multiple social problems faced by the area's dwellers. Performing in a local style is explained as a try to intentionally draw attention to the neighborhood and seek solutions to its social problems.

الورديان حقيقي من أقدم المناطق الشعبية هنا في إسكندرية [....]. فيه ناس هنا عايزة تعمل حاجة وفيه ناس عايزة تكريت حاجة. أي نوع من أنواع الضغط ممكن يساعد الإنسان [...] إنه يطلع حاجة فهنا فيه ضغوطات كتيرة. بالنسبة لي عايز أخلي الناس كلها عارفة عن المنطقة عشان نحاول نحل بقى مشكلات المنطقة.

*il-Wardiyān ḥaʾīʾī min ʾaʾdam il-manāṭiʾ ish-shaʿbiyya hinā fī ʾiskindiriyya* [….] *fīh nās hinā ʿāyza tiʿmil ḥāga wi fīh nās ʿayza tikaryyit ḥāga. ʾayy nūʿ min iḍ-ḍaght mumkin yisāʿid il-ʾinsān* […] *ʾinnu yiṭallaʿ ḥāga fa hinā fīh ḍughūṭāt kitīra. bi-l-nisbalī ʿāyiz ʾakhallī il-nās kullaha ʿārfa ʿan il-manṭiʾa ʿashān niḥāwil niḥil baʾa mushkilāt il-manṭiʾa.*

[*al-Wardiyān* is indeed one of the oldest *shaʿbī* neighborhoods here in Alexandria [….] There are people here who want to change and want to create something. Any kind of pressure can help a person create something and they are many here. For me, I want everyone to know about the neighborhood so that we can solve some of its problems.]

The artist uses *mahragān* as a vehicle to associate his local code with the social meaning of toughness which is already ideologically structured in public discourse and marginality. Singing a *mahragān* in an AA low-class style is creative as it is unusual to perform a *mahragān* in a local dialect other than low-class CA. By doing so, Wegz expresses solidarity with other Alexandrian dwellers of *shaʿbī* neighborhoods.

**4.4. Conclusion**

Overall, the data shows that Ramadan and Wegz perform in a wide range of varieties. While Ramadan performs in CA, a low-class style of CA and SA in addition to English and Italian, Wegz performs mainly in AA, CA, and English. It is noteworthy that the use of foreign codes is very limited despite the hip hop and rap features utilized in the *mahragānāt*. Thus, it can be concluded that both artists seek to project an authentic local working-class identity. For that end, salient features of CA and AA working-class styles are made salient in the corpus of data.

Locally, urban lower-class codes are often described as *shaʿbī*. The word *shaʿbī* in ECA denotes backwardness, chaos, and rudeness (Kitzler, 2021b). Consequently, the negative indexes of the adjective are also linked to linguistic styles of urban low-income and often overcrowded

neighborhoods and their cultural products like *mahragānāt*. In order to challenge the negative indexes, the performers create situations and contexts to give rise to new sociolinguistic dynamics and shift power relations through positively displaying the stereotype. In that, the stereotype is used as a mechanism for demonstration of power and for stressing positive characteristics of the working class like authenticity, positive energy, diligence, kindness, chivalry, and respect of traditions. Further, it can be said that changing power dynamics is mainly achieved through manipulating the covert power of informal working-class varieties to enforce their speech pattern among speakers interested in acquiring covert power and prestige as means to show in-group solidarity more than having social status. In doing so, the performers reclaim a space for lower-class vernaculars that mainstream media has denied them for so long.

# Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion and interpretation of the results presented in the fourth chapter with reference to the proposed research questions. The results are discussed in light of the research studies introduced in the introduction and the literature review. Two research questions were posed in this study, the answers to which explained the range of two *mahragānāt* performers' linguistic repertoires, the codes they utilize in their lyrics, and the relationship between code selection and users' stance which was further examined through indexicality. First, the performers' linguistic choices and stances taken are discussed in relation to dominant language ideologies and attitudes in Egyptian media. In the following sections, the implications of the findings are addressed, and recommendations are made for sociolinguistic scholarship on *mahragānāt* as means for social identity construction in the public discourse among others. Finally, the limitations of the current study are discussed with the intention of being undertaken in future research.

## 5.2. Discussion of the Results

In this section, the results pertaining to code choice, second-order indexes of different codes, and the stance taken by the performers are discussed. Therefore, the section is divided into two subsections addressing the following themes: stance, and the performance of marginality and social identity in the public discourse and the covert power of stigmatized dialects in giving rise to vernaculars.

### *5.2.1. Stance, Social Identity, and Marginality*

The study explored the performance of dialects and social styles in relation to class and locality in the context of *mahragānāt* music. It aimed to examine two cases of linguistic choices

in relation to social identity construction in Egyptian public discourse. Therefore, it started from the assumption that CC is not only a matter of demographics but is also a deliberate performance of identity. That is, variation is not only the natural result of social variables but also the outcome of an ideological and stylistic process with some degree of consciousness on the performers' part as to the consequences of attending creatively to a specific style over another. In that process, metalinguistic discourse is essential in giving insight into language ideology conflicts in society.

It is evident from the data that the two performers have access to a wide variety of codes and styles including English and other foreign codes. Attaining many varieties at one's disposal suggests that the linguistic repertoire of language users is increasing significantly and changing according to the context, particularly in response to a stereotype. Responding to a stigma or a stereotype, in turn, calls for the use of local codes and styles for addressing the local audience. In the first case, actor-performer Muhammad Ramadan appeals to the masculinity and toughness of working-class CA or what Badawi (2012) describes as *ʿāmmiyyat al-ʾummiyyīn* and stigmatized SA to position himself as tough and authentic low-class Cairene with *Ṣaʿīdī* roots. The display of the social style comes in response to the hostile criticism of Ramadan by opponents from the upper classes to which the artist reacts by taking a stance toward low-class Cairenes.

Thus, he projects a complex local and social identity and positions himself as a tough, low-class, and black Cairene man with Upper Egyptian roots. He manipulates the second-order violence index of SA to his favor in order to boast of the group and demonstrate strength. Proceeding from that position which assumes covert prestige and power, he questions the backwardness, inferiority, and criminality stereotype associated with SA through taking an epistemic stance as the 'real' Upper Egyptian who knows the reality of *Ṣaʿīd* well. Ramadan is a well-known Egyptian movie star with access to public discursive spaces to which very few

working-class and southern Egyptians have access. He uses that access to reassign new positive associations of modernity and social values of goodness and honesty to SA and a low-class register of CA. In doing so, he renegotiates the two codes' status in the power hierarchy of Egyptian varieties in which CA is the dominant and legitimate code, SA is retrograde and distant, and low-class CA is marginalized and educationally and socially inferior. Through the accumulation of stances in his songs, the actor recontextualizes his complex social and local identity as a low-class *Ṣaʿīdī* migrant to Cairo in the media.

As for performer Ahmad Ali or Wegz, he also resorts to the authenticity and toughness of his local variety to index masculinity, locality, and marginalization. When other rappers and opponents diss him, he utilizes salient phonological, morphological, and lexical features of working-class AA to diss them back. During that, he evokes AA positive association of being street-smart and not naive to address other artists who seek fame through him. Displaying a different regional identity through *mahragānāt* is unusual as the lyrics are usually performed in working-class CA being the cultural product of Cairene marginalized neighborhoods. The only artist who signals a regional dialect through *mahragān* other than Wegz is Ramadan. From that, it can be suggested that *mahragānāt* has become a symbol of connected marginality, authenticity, legitimacy, and resistance in Egypt. Both performers use the music as a vehicle to challenge the stereotype and take a stance toward their local and social identity in resistance to dominant language ideologies that exhale CA and MSA over vernaculars. The significance of the sample in yielding such results and implications is attributed to the huge number of views of the songs of the two artists which have exceeded 200,000,000 views on a single track as in Mafia (2019) that, in turn, reflects the unprecedented popularity of singing in vernacular, particularly among youth.

### *5.2.2. Performance and Covert Power*

Following the introduction and the literature review in which an overview of the linguistic situation in Egypt is given as well as official language ideologies and attitudes toward different language varieties, it is affirmed that CA is the code of solidarity and the media's preferred variety along with *ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn*. Thus, deviations from that norm are considered a threat to the status of powerful CA and MSA as they may give rise to other non-standard varieties.

As Coupland (2011) contends, performance "opens up diverse new vernacular spaces" in which artists can recontextualize identities and social networks (p. 598). Indeed, *mahragānāt* provides an alternative powerful discursive space in which working-class youth struggling for visibility and legitimation can perform in their local varieties and vernaculars and force their own vision of modernity, prestige, and status. In that, the music forms a threat to the powerful codes as working-class artists are attaining the power to redefine social realities and ascribe positive indexes and covert power to local non-standard linguistic forms. And so on, the performers challenge social power structures represented in dominant language ideologies.

Central to any discussion of power is the concept of 'covert prestige' (Trudgill, 1972). Testing the data through indexicality demonstrates a possible attractiveness of informal non-standard vernaculars like SA, working-class CA, and working-class AA for resting upon a perceived social connotation of masculinity, power, directness, and tough-mindedness linked to these forms. That sort of covert prestige and status recommends itself more to males for the purpose of showing masculinity, sincerity, and solidarity among groups of males. These observations align with Trudgill (1972) definition of covert prestige and the fact that *mahragānāt*

is mostly performed by males supports that assumption. However, more future research on language attitudes is recommended to support that assumption.

### 5.3. Implications and Conclusion

This study has presented two cases showing that the use of non-standard local and regional varieties is significantly increasing in Egyptian media. However, the display of vernaculars is not related to ridiculing the linguistic form of specific groups but rather to projecting authentic local and social identities. One conclusion of a practical nature that can be drawn from that is related to a possible undergoing change in language ideologies in Egyptian media as vernaculars gain more space, power, and prestige. Coupland (2014) contends that language ideological change is a study of sociolinguistic change in progress as it is considered an observation of a change in linguistic uses within a macro-social matrix. That finding does not align with Badawi (1973) who predicts the fading out of *ʿāmmiyyat al-ʾummiyyīn* or working-class style over time as it comes in contact with other prestigious varieties of higher social classes through the open access to education and the media. The study describes a linguistic situation in the 70s Egypt in which *ʿāmmiyyat al-ʾummiyyīn* is excluded from public discourse for being a spoken 'illiterate' code to the extent that Badawi uses a radio comedy show to examine features of the social style due to lack of authentic data on working-class styles in media discourse. Compared to the ideological situation described in this study, it can be suggested that there may be a change in progress with regard to the language ideological practices in Egyptian media and public discourse. That finding aligns with Taha (2020) in which she observes a significant change in the domains of MSA as the formal code recedes and larger components of the colloquial occupy its domains in media discourse. Additionally, the findings conform with that of Bassiouney (2018a, 2018b) who contends that vernaculars are obtaining more power in

Egyptian public discourse. Still, that implication requires extensive and comprehensive qualitative linguistic data to supplement it.

The current study explores a wide use of vernaculars in spoken media. Linguistically speaking, *mahragānāt* being very dynamic in Egyptian society presents different variants of Egyptian colloquial Arabic and youth jargon. Therefore, it is a perfect source of rich authentic material of cultural representations and language that can be utilized by teachers of Arabic, material developers, curriculum designers, and teachers of the Egyptian dialect to be introduced to their learners of Arabic. The music is particularly helpful to advanced levels of Arabic aiming for pragmatic competence for being rich in cultural implications. Further, it can be incorporated into dialect curriculums as it offers a comprehensive objective picture of Egyptian colloquial and the linguistic reality from which learners can draw their own impressions about the language.

### 5.4. Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is that there is no way to fully examine the linguistic repertoire of the performers without having a direct interview with them. For being mainstream superstars at the time of writing this study, unfortunately, the artists are inaccessible. So, only television and YouTube interviews with them are examined. Further, the thesis considered only social class as a variable. Future research can approach the topic from the perspective of gender, age, nationality, socioeconomic class, or gendered social class. Additionally, the corpus of data collected for the purpose of this study is enough to meet its goals; therefore, it is difficult to make generalizations based on it.

### 5.5. Suggestions for Future Research

In the course of this study, some areas were identified as fertile for more future research. One of these areas is conducting the same study with a more comprehensive corpus of

*mahragānāt*. Also, the music can be linguistically approached as a localized form of hip hop and rap in Egypt in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. A gap in research is the scarcity of ethnographic and variationist research on Alexandrian Arabic and the social styles of Cairene Arabic. A more thorough study should be able to yield better results once sociolinguistic research addressing this aspect becomes available.

According to Trudgill (1972), informal non-standard varieties may be ascribed covert prestige among males for showing solidarity and masculinity. However, attitudinal research on variation in Egypt is very limited and mainly focuses on a binary of ECA as contrasted to MSA with the only matched-guise study in that respect addressing CA as contrasted to rural and southern colloquial dialects (Eltouhamy, 2015). There are indications in the data that the youth register of both low-class AA and low-class CA are ascribed covert prestige; however, attitudinal research on lower-class varieties is needed to support that claim.

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