

Discourse markers of elaboration in Maghrebi and Egyptian dialects: a socio-pragmatic perspective

Abdelaadim Bidaoui

Ball state University, USA

ملخص

كانت علامات الخطاب دائما تعتبر عناصر لا تساهم في المعنى الحقيقي- المشروط للتعبير، كما كانت تعتبر غير ذات أهمية لمحتواه النحوي والدلالي. وعلى عكس اللغويين الذين وجدوا دراسة علامات الخطاب غير ذات أهمية، هناك عدد من الباحثين أولوا اهتماما بدراسة هذه العبارات. باستخدام إطار نظري يسمى "الإرتباط" "Relevance Theoretic framework" (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 1995; Blakemore, 1987)، تفترض هذه المقالة أن علامات الخطاب تشير إلى الاستدلالات التداولية التي يتم تنفيذها من قبل المخاطب. على وجه التحديد، أعتقد أن مفهوم المعنى الإجرائي (Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Blakemore, 2002) المقدم من طرف نظرية "الإرتباط"، والذي يعتبر بمثابة مجموعة من التعليمات التي توجه المرحلة الاستنتاجية من تفسير الكلام، ينبغي أن يكون في صلب تفسير علامات الخطاب. تستند هذه المقالة على البيانات التي تم جمعها خلال لقاءات حوارية مباشرة. المشاركون في الدراسة هم مجموعة من العرب الذين يقطنون في الولايات المتحدة ويمثلون ثلاث لهجات عربية: المغربية، الجزائرية، والمصرية. أظهرت النتائج على أن التوضيح كمتغير تداولي (Schneider and Barron, 2008; Terkourafi, 2011) يتحقق من خلال متغيرات تداولية مختلفة. يتشكل تحقيق علامات الخطاب التوضيحية حسب الجنسية ونوع اللقاءات الحوارية والخيارات الفردية. على المستوى النظري، فإن النتائج تبرز الحاجة لدراسة التنوع اللغوي ليس فقط من حيث ارتباط السلوك اللغوي بفئات اجتماعية واسعة ولكن أيضا في ضوء الخيارات الاجتماعية والنفسية التي يدلي بها الفرد (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985). بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسهم هذه النتائج، في ضوء معطيات جديدة، في فهمنا لوضع الازدواجية اللغوية العربية.

Abstract

Discourse Markers (DMs) have traditionally been viewed as elements which do not contribute to the truth-conditional meaning of an utterance or to its syntactic and semantic make-up. Contrary to those linguists who found the study of DMs marginal, other researchers have been interested in the study of these expressions. Using a Relevance Theoretic framework (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 1995; Blakemore, 1987), this paper posits that DMs signal pragmatic inferences that are performed by the addressee. Specifically, I argue that the notion of procedural meaning, a set of instructions which guides the inferential phase of utterance interpretation, offered by Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Blakemore, 2002) should be at the core of the interpretation of DMs. This paper is based on data collected during face-to-face interactions. The participants in the main study are members of an Arabic diasporic community in the U.S. and represent three dialects of Arabic: Moroccan, Algerian, and Egyptian dialect. The results show how the meaning of elaboration as a pragmatic variable (Schneider and Barron, 2008; Terkourafi, 2011) is realized by means of different pragmatic variants. The realization of elaboration DMs is shaped by nationality, type of interaction, and individual choices. At the theoretical level, the findings highlight the need to study variation not only in terms of the correlation of the linguistic behavior with broad social categories but also in light of socio-psychological choices made by the individual (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

Key words:

Discourse markers, socio-pragmatic variation, procedural meaning, "Acts of Identity"

1. Introduction¹

The goal of this paper is to ascertain how the meaning of elaboration is expressed in language use of participants representing three varieties of Arabic: Moroccan, Algerian, and Egyptian. It is important to note that elaboration as defined by Owens & Rockwood (2008) involves three basic sub-categories: “what is elaborated after *yaʕni* delivers more specific information than what was said, it generalizes from what was said, or introduces information of the same status, as for instance in a paraphrase.” Based on the sociolinguistic landscape in the Arab world in general and in the countries mentioned above in particular which is characterized by a heterogeneous linguistic situation, it is hypothesized that the participants taking part in the study may resort to different variants to express the meanings of elaboration. The choice of one variant over another is hypothesized to be shaped by social factors, i.e. nationality and type of interaction, as well as by individual choices (Le Page and Tabouret- Keller, 1985).

Variation in language use has been an interesting linguistic inquiry since it was first launched by Labov in his Martha’s Vineyard study (Labov, 1963). The semantic and truth-conditional equivalence as a precondition for identifying linguistic variants as proposed by Labov (1966, 1972) limited the scope of the study of variation to areas of phonetics/morphology. Instead of using semantic equivalence, this paper argues that variants of a pragmatic variable share the same procedural meaning “defined as a set of instructions guiding the inferential phase of utterance interpretation” (Terkourafi, 2011:343). In line with Terkourafi (2011), this paper considers linguistic variants to be “equivalent if they can be used interchangeably in order to achieve similar perlocutionary effects in discourse” (2011:355). Terkourafi’s understanding of functional equivalence in terms of perlocutionary effects signals a shift of focus from the representational use of language to the argumentative use of language (2011:366).

In this paper, DMs are the locomotives of the meaning of elaboration. Previous work on DMs focused more on what DMs are not and disregarded what they are. Dealing with DMs in this way is likely to engender a “risk of creating a ragbag class of leftovers” (Lewis, 2006:44). This paper posits that the dominant discussion should not be about showing that DMs do not express propositional content, do not contribute to truth-conditional meaning, or are outside syntax, but should be about their significance to research in linguistics. Contrary to linguists who

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Terkourafi, Dr. Benmamoun, Dr. Fagyal, and Dr. Escobar for their support and enormous help with this work. I am also in debt to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback and genuine guidance. To all these scholars, I say thank very much indeed.

downplayed the importance of DMs, Grice (1989) considered DMs such as *therefore* to carry a conventional implicature as they allow “a speaker to indicate though not to say that a certain consequence holds” (Grice, 1967,1989:121). Building on the Gricean view and working with Relevance Theory (RT) framework (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 1995; Blakemore, 1987), this paper argues that DMs signal pragmatic inferences that are performed by the addressee. That is, DMs are better understood as triggers of inferential processes that serve to shape the cognitive environment of the listener. In line with RT, this paper seeks to look at DMs in terms of their pragmatic meaning.

RT provides a cognitive account for the understanding and interpretation of utterances. This model considers utterances to be “acts of ostensive communication” that serve to modify the communicators’ mutual cognitive environment. Utterances are considered inputs to inferential processes that constrain the hearer’s interpretation of utterances. In line with Terkourafi (2011), this paper argues that the notion of procedural meaning offered by RT (Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Blakemore, 2002) should be used as a theoretical tool to account for the use of pragmatic variants. Specifically, I argue that the notion of procedural meaning should be at the core of the interpretation of DMs.

This paper provides a socio-pragmatic account for the study of variation in the use of DMs of elaboration in spoken Arabic and seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the pragmatic variants realizing the meaning of elaboration?
- 2) What type of meaning (conceptual/procedural) do DMs in spoken Arabic encode?
- 3) How do social and socio-psychological factors (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985) shape the choice of variants?
- 4) How does the study of DMs in spoken Arabic contribute to the field of sociolinguistics and pragmatics?

2. Background

2.1. Discourse markers and Relevance Theory

This paper examines the use of DMs from a relevance theoretic perspective and highlights the contribution of linguistic expressions to the process of inference. DMs in this paper are considered elements that encode procedural meaning. This view is shared by many linguists such as Blakemore (1987, 2002), Andersen (1998), Ler (2006), and Schourup (2011). Blakemore

(1987) argued that linguistic terms, in general, encode either conceptual information or procedural information which serves to constrain the inferential processing of utterances. The same view is shared by Andersen (1998) who examined the use of *like* in a corpus of conversations between London teenagers. Anderson showed that *like* performs many functions, among which suggesting an alternative or marking reported speech. Yet, the core meaning of *like* is to signal a loose use of language. Within RT, Andersen argues that *like* guides the reader to the inference of a loose interpretation of an utterance. Hence, *like* is viewed as a procedural marker.

Another example of how RT accounts for the use of DMs was provided by Ler (2006). Ler examined the DMs *lah* and *meh* in Singaporean English. In line with RT, Ler argued that DMs have a procedural meaning and can be used to indicate functions such as turn-taking, stance, and propositional attitude. For Ler, DMs encode cognitive information that guides the hearer to understand an utterance based on inference and context. What is interesting about Ler's study is providing a socio-pragmatic account. In addition to marking procedural meaning, *Lah* was argued to mark informal style and to be used for different functions such as intimacy or persuasion. As to *meh*, it is used to question presupposition or express surprise. The relevance approach was also advocated by Schourup (2011) who considers comprehension to be relevance-based. The DM *now* for Schourup contributes to relevance as it prompts the reader to have access to a new context and to signal a move from neutral description to an evaluative opinion. It also reduces the effort required to process the utterance inferentially by facilitating the derivation of contextual effects. The analysis of DMs in this paper shares the relevance perspective discussed above.

2.2. Discourse markers in Arabic: previous analyses

This study builds on previous work on DMs and calls for a discussion of these elements from a socio-pragmatic perspective. For a good understanding of Arabic DMs, it is worthwhile to stop at how Arab linguists studied them. Al-Batal (1990) examined DMs, or connectives as he preferred to call them, from a semantic perspective. The significance of Al-Batal's (1990) study lies in his call for a study of connectives beyond the syntactic properties. Contrary to Halliday and Hasan (1976), who used the term "conjunctions" to refer to DMs, Al-Batal used the word "connectives" to allow for the term to cover not only conjunctions but also adverbials and prepositional phrases. The change of term might also be meant to allow for a study of DMs not only on the basis of grammatical class but also in terms of functions. Al-Batal's study focused on

the different levels at which DMs function, such as the phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph and discourse. *Wa-* and *fa-*, for instance, were found to occur at levels higher than the clause. The author posited that connectives are used by the writer as “text-building elements” that signal to the reader how different parts in a text are linked. The main functions of connectives vary from one connective to another. *Wa*, for instance, signals a continuous flow, *fa* signals drawing a conclusion, while the absence of a connective signals a shift from one topic to another.

While Al- Batal’s study was based on written data, this paper uses spoken data. A move from a focus on the occurrence of Arabic DMs in written texts to their occurrence in spoken texts started recently. Based on data from conversations in colloquial Cairene Arabic, Ghobrial (1993) studied three DMs, *yaʕni* (=I mean), *tayyib* (=well), and *inta-ʕaaref* (=y’know). The study focused on showing the functions of DMs. Ghobrial argued that DMs are used to indicate conformity with Grice’s Cooperative Principle. Hence, he viewed them as means of streamlining the process of communication. *Yaʕni* satisfies the maxim of quality, *tayyib* satisfies the maxim of manner and *inta-ʕaaref* satisfies both relevance and manner. As to the functions of these DMs, Ghobrial showed that *tayyib* signals introduction of a new topic (1993, p. 135), resuming the conversation after interruption or showing a contrastive point of view. *Tayyib* is also used to indicate the speaker’s acknowledgment of prior speech. *Inta-ʕaaref*, on the other hand, is used to signal shared knowledge between the speaker and hearer. As to *yaʕni*, it is used by the speaker to show his/her understanding of the requirements of the conversation and his or her assessment of the prior speaker’s contribution. Moreover, Ghobrial noted that the common function among the above mentioned DMs is their use to signal politeness and mitigation.

The meaning of elaboration studied in this paper was the main focus in Owens & Rockwood (2008). Owens & Rockwood were reluctant to provide a polysemous approach to the study of *yaʕni* as it is problematic and instead they offered an approach based on which *yaʕni* has a core meaning of elaboration. The authors argued that *yaʕni* is used to guide the listener to relate the propositional content of an utterance to another one. Hence, *yaʕni* connects two utterances which are semantically comparable in a context where B complements A. Among the functions of *yaʕni* is its use as a politeness marker in a context where it is used as a way of acknowledging what has been said before proceeding to disagree with it (i.e. a concession marker) (2008:108). Building on Owens & Rockwood (2008), this paper posits that elaboration DMs carry procedural meaning and signal acts of identity (Le Page and Tabouret Keller, 1985).

2.3. The Sociolinguistic theoretical model

On the assumption that the DMs that are the topic of this paper share the procedural meaning of elaboration, this paper uses the notion of Acts of Identity proposed by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) to account for the social motivation that drives speakers to choose one DM over another. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller model provides a sociolinguistic account for variation in language use. According to this model, variation is considered the rule rather than the exception in any linguistic behavior (1985:247). Le Page and Tabouret-Keller examined the linguistic behavior of children of West India immigrants residing in Britain as well as some groups from Malaysia and Singapore. They noted that the long period of colonial history in these communities gave rise to the need to create a “new identity with new social patterns and structures” (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985:5). The creation of a new identity is achieved by the choices in linguistic behavior a speaker makes. These choices are considered by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) to constitute Acts of Identity. That is, the linguistic behavior is not random but is loaded with social meanings. Thus, if linguistic items are used by an individual it is “because they are felt to have social as well as semantic meaning in terms of the way in which each individual wishes to project his/her own universe and to invite others to share it”. That is, linguistic decisions are made depending on how an individual wants to project himself or herself, and on the desire and ability to identify with a given group (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

As argued by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, language should be seen as “a concept we form as individuals, and to the extent to which, and the manner in which, we project our concepts on to those around us and establish networks of shared suppositions determines the nature of the groups in our society and their mode of operation” (1985:247). That is, language choices are related to the way we project ourselves and to the social networks one would like to establish. This view also reveals that we should not have ready evaluations about language as the opinion that connects language use directly to fixed social variables² such as socioeconomic class, gender, and ethnicity.

²Labov (1966) study is an example of the direct correlation between linguistic behavior and social categories.

3. The study

3.1. Participants

The Participants in the study are native speakers of Arabic who live in the Midwest of the US. A total of 24 male participants from three Arabic speaking countries Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt took part in the study. The Moroccan and Algerian participants represent what is referred to as Maghrebi variety, while the Egyptian participants represent the Egyptian variety. These varieties were chosen because they are likely to exhibit the kind of variability of interest in this paper. As explained by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985:5), the long period of colonial history gives rise to the need to create a “new identity with new social patterns and structures”. The authors have also indicated that the colonial past is always a driving force leading to linguistic heterogeneous situations. The Maghrebi dialects are known for their heterogeneous linguistic situation and are characterized by variation in language use as described in many articles (Bentahila and Davies, 1983; Belazi et al., 1994).

The age of the participants ranges between 25 and 45 for the Moroccan participants, between 31 and 58 for the Algerian participants, and between 28 and 44 for the Egyptian participants. In what follows, the Moroccan participants will be referred to as M, the Algerian as A, and the Egyptian as E. The participants who studied in the US are listed from 1 to 4, while those who did not study in the US are listed from 5 to 8 for all the three nationalities.

3.2. Methodology

The data used for the study was elicited through two tasks: informal multi-party conversations and structured interviews. In total, 12 informal multi-party conversation sessions were recorded. The interactions included in the informal multi-party conversation are divided into two types: same nationality and mixed nationality. A total of 8 mixed nationality interactions, and 4 same nationality interactions were collected. The duration of each interaction was 30 minutes. In addition, 21 sessions of structured interviews were collected. The duration of each interaction in structured interviews was 20 minutes.

The first task is informal multi-party conversation during which participants engage in spontaneous conversation. The same participant took part in more than one interaction to create more likelihood of variation in the choices of any single participant. Due to the hierarchical

relationship between the varieties of the Maghreb and those of the Mashreq³ (Hachimi 2013) the chances of variation. As argued by Weinreich (1953:73), variation in language is triggered by the environment and speech situation. This means that linguistic choices made when participants are involved in a given interaction may not be maintained when they take part in a different interaction under a different environment and situation. Many linguists have shown that people may change their style or language use depending on their interlocutors. In the same line of thought, Coupland (1984) argued that variation in language use is used as a means of accommodation. In other words, the speech of a person serves to adjust with the speech of others.

The second task was structured interviews. In a one-on-one setting, participants were asked questions about their childhood, education, hobbies, and life experiences. In this task, the participants interacted with the investigator, a native speaker of Moroccan Arabic. The Moroccan participants in structured interviews interacted with the investigator who shares the same nationality, while the Algerian and Egyptian participants were involved in a mixed nationality interaction. Due to the hierarchical relationship between the varieties of the Maghreb and those of the Mashreq (Hachimi, 2013), this methodology which is based on multiple types of interactions is likely to engender variation in the use of DMs.

Before taking part in the study, participants were asked to give their consent. They were then asked to complete a written questionnaire seeking information about their age, educational level, and native language. The questionnaire also requested information about daily use of Arabic and English, first year of exposure to foreign languages, and length of stay in the US. The background questionnaire aimed to provide a sociolinguistic profile for the participants in this study. This information is going to help in the interpretation of the linguistic choices participants made.

4. Results: A pragmatic Account

The results for both the informal multi-party conversation and structured interviews show that speakers use different DMs to express the meaning of elaboration. The DMs used to express the procedural meaning of elaboration are six: two Arabic-origin, endoglossic, DMs and four

³ The Maghreb varieties are represented here by Moroccan and Algerian Arabic, while the Mashreq variety is represented by Egyptian Arabic.

foreign-origin, exoglossic, DMs. The endoglossic variants are *yaʕni*⁴ and *zəʕma*, while the exoglossic variants are: *çaveut dire*, *c'est-à-dire*, *je veux dire*, and *I mean*. The frequency of the elaboration DMs in my data is presented in table (1).

Table 1: Results of the overall frequency of elaboration DMs

Variants	Total	
	Count	Percentage
yaʕni /yəʕni	352	88%
zəʕma	41	10.25%
C'est a dire	3	0.75%
je veut dire	2	0.50%
ça veut dire	1	0.25%
I mean	1	0.25%

As table 1 shows, the DMs used to express the procedural meaning of elaboration vary in their frequency. The most frequent variant for elaboration is *yaʕni* which is used by the Egyptian, Algerian, and Moroccan participants. *Yaʕni* is derived from the Standard Arabic verb *ʕana* ‘to mean’, *ʕtana* ‘take care’, and *maʕna* ‘meaning’ (Rieschild, 2011:318-319).

Cases where *yaʕni* occurred sentence-finally, a context that is not captured by Fraser’s (2006) criteria for DMs, were excluded. According to Fraser (2006:191):

For a sequence of discourse segments S1-S2, each of which encodes a complete message, a lexical expression of LE functions as a discourse marker if, when it occurs in S2-initial position (S1-LE+S2), LE signals that a semantic relationship holds between S2 and S1.

All examples that met this criterion and express elaboration were included in the data. Here is an example of the use of *yaʕni* taken from a mixed nationality interaction which includes three Algerian participants and the investigator.

(1) Context: A1 who is from the East of Algeria is talking about the West of Algeria:

- 1 *ʔanaʒazajribsʕahma-ruht-ʃl-yarb*
I Algerian but neg .went.1sm.neg the-west
“I am an Algerian but I have never been to the West.”
- 2 *l-yarbasʕlan manəʕrəff*
The-west in fact neg know.1s.neg
“In fact, I do not know anything about the West.”

⁴It is important to mention that *yaʕni* is used by the Moroccan participants but is realized as *yəʕni*. What is happening is that the vowel /a/ is substituted by a schwa which is a common feature for Moroccan Arabic.

- 3 **Yaʕni**, *flʕadatw-taqalidmaʕikifkif*
 DM in-tradition.p and-costume.pnegsame same
 “I mean, in terms of habits and traditions it is not the same.”
- 4 *lyarbnʕufumyrabiʔaktar*
 The-west see.1ms Moroccan more
 “I consider the West of Algeria as part of Morocco.”

In Relevance Theory, the expression that creates the most cognitive effects for the least cognitive effort is the most relevant (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:158). In this sense, the DM *yaʕni* in line 3 yields most cognitive effects when understood as an expression serving elaboration and it yields these for the least effort. This makes it the most relevant expression the communicator could have used to convey his intended meaning.

Example (2) is another instance of *yaʕni* taken from an Egyptian participant in a mixed nationality interaction:

(2) Context: E4 is talking about the political experience of the previous Egyptian president Husni Mubarak.

- 1 *Mubarak kanzakifi hitat ʔinuʕamalʕantahikhuquqnaslakin*
 Mubarak be.past3ms smart in thing that working violate.3ms rights people but
muwafarluhum bilkad li ma jxaluhumʕjaʕmilusawratgijaʕdʕidu
 provide.3msto-them barely that neg make.3mp do.3mp revolution starving against.him
 “Mubarak was smart in that though he was violating people’s rights, he provided them with the minimum for their needs so as to prevent them from revolting against him.”
- 2 **Yaʕni**, *kanmimaʕihakizabi hitinahuwabjatganabtamaman ʔininaas*
 DM be.past.3ms walk.it that so that.heavoid.3smexactly that people
titharakdʕidu
 move.3ms against.him

“I mean, this is how he dealt with the situation to avoid that people revolt against him.”

Line 1 in example (2) states that “Mubarak was violating his own people’s rights and at the same time he provided them with the basics for their needs”. Line 2 states that “acting in the way described in line 1 gave Mubarak some guarantee that no uprising will take place”. The role of the pragmatic variant *yaʕni* is to guide the listener to construe line 2 as an elaboration of line 1 (explaining in what sense Mubarak was “smart” and making his actions appear to be part of a

plan; Mubarak was aware that the situation was not good and he provided his people with the minimum for their needs in order to prevent them from revolting against him). In this case, the utterance in line 2 gives rise to the following explicatures:

(3) Basic Level Explicature⁵:

“Providing the people of Egypt with the minimum for their needs is how Mubarak dealt with the situation to avoid that the people revolt against him.”

(4) Higher Level Explicature:⁶

“I am clarifying that providing the people of Egypt with the minimum for their needs is how Mubarak dealt with the situation to avoid that the people revolt against him.”

In terms of a distinction between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional meaning, the DM *yaʕni* in line 2 of example (2) does not contribute to the truth-conditional content of the utterance. Consider example (2) repeated in (5) after omitting the DM *yaʕni*:

(5)

1 Mubarak was smart in that though he was violating people’s rights, he provided them with the minimum for their needs so as to prevent them from revolting against him.

2 This is how he dealt with the situation to avoid that people revolt against him.

As we can observe, the truth-conditional meaning of (5) is exactly the same as the truth-conditional meaning of example (2). The claim that *yaʕni* does not affect the truth conditions of an utterance implies that it has a pragmatic rather than a semantic meaning. What the DM *yaʕni* is adding to the utterance hosting it is helping the listener construe the utterance in line 2 as an elaboration of the utterance in line 1 without affecting the truth-conditional meaning of the utterance in line 2. This shows that the use of DMs like *yaʕni* serves to help the listener understand how utterances in discourse relate to each other without encoding “constituents that enter into the representational mode of the utterance” (Carston, 2002:162). In this sense, the DM *yaʕni* encodes procedural but not conceptual meaning.

*Yəʕni*⁷ was also used by the Moroccan participants. To illustrate how the DM *yəʕni* is used, consider the following example:

(6) Context: M5 is talking about his experience in the US and how it differs from life in Morocco.

⁵The meanings of the indexical “this” and “he” is fixed in the Basic Level Explicature.

⁶Following RT, elaboration is understood as giving rise to a higher level explicature.

⁷*Yaʕni* was pronounced with a schwa as *yəʕni*. This type of vowel reduction is typical of Moroccan Arabic.

- 1 *mirikanʕal matnankunuresponsible*
 US teach.past1mp be.1mp responsible
 “The US has taught us how to be responsible.”
- 2 *ʔayħazatdirhabuħdək*
 any thingdo.it by-yourself
 “You have to do everything by yourself.”
- 3 **Yəʕni**, *maʕibħal li kuna f-lblad*
 DM neg like that be.past1mp in-country
 “I mean, not as we were in our home country.”

The speaker in line 1 states that life in the US has taught him to be responsible and adds in utterance 2 that in the US you have to rely on yourself. In line 3, he states that this was not the way he was used to when he was in Morocco. The role of *yəʕni* is to help the listener construe of line 3 as an elaboration of line 1 and 2. The examples listed above show that *yəʕni* serves the meaning of elaboration for all the three nationalities investigated.

In addition to the DM *yəʕni*, the other endoglossic form which is used for elaboration is the DM *zəʕma*. This form is derived from the verb *zaʕama* “to claim”, “say”, and “lie”. Besides its use as an elaboration DM, *zəʕma* maybe be used to serve the same meaning expressed by “so to speak” (Bentahila and Davies, 1983). Instances where *zəʕma* means “supposedly, sort of” were disregarded because they occurred sentence finally, a context that is not captured by Fraser’s (2006) criteria, and also because they do not serve the meaning of elaboration.

Zəʕma was used as an elaboration DM by the Moroccan and Algerian participants but not by the Egyptian participants. This suggests that this DM is typical to the Maghrebi dialects. Here is an example of *zəʕma* used by A5 in a mixed nationality interaction:

(7) Context: A5 is explaining a word in Algerian Arabic to the investigator in mixed nationality interaction:

- 1 (A) *ʔaʕnuka-təʕniqarnit*
 what present-mean octopus
 “What does the word qarnit mean?”
- 2 (B) *qarnit smart*
 octopus smart
 “Octopus means smart”

- 3 (C) **Zəʕma**, *wahəd qafəz*
 DM one smart
 “I mean a smart person.”

I would like to note that though Moroccan Arabic and Algerian Arabic are mutually intelligible, each dialect may contain words that are used differently. In example (7), the word *qarnit* was not clear to the investigator (A) who asked for elaboration in line 1. Elaboration was provided by A5, in line 2. Knowing that his explanation may not be obvious to the listener, the speaker added the DM *zəʕma* to make the meaning of elaboration explicit, that is, to highlight that by *qarnit* he meant “a smart person”. If we take example (7) and substitute *zəʕma* by *yaʕni*, there will not be any change in the higher level explicature in line 3. Consider the putative example in (8):

- (8)
- 1 (A) *ʔafnuka-təʕniqarnit*
 what present-mean octopus
 “What does the word *qarnit* mean?”
- 2 (B) *qarnit* smart
 octopus smart
 “Octopus means smart”
- 3 (C) **Yaʕni**, *wahəd qafz*
 DM one smart
 “I mean, a smart person.”

Zəʕma in example (7) and *yaʕni* in example (8) express the same procedural meaning of elaboration. In this case, the choice between the two DMs is due to the nationalities of the speaker and addressee, and the fact that they are both speakers of Magherbi varieties; i.e. it can be explained as an Act of Identity expressed by A5 which lays claim to and highlights their common linguistic background. I will elaborate more on the social factors shaping the choice of DMs in section (5).

The meaning of elaboration is also expressed by the use of three French DMs, *ça veut dire*, *c'est-à-dire*, *je veux dire*, and by the English DM, *I mean*. The French DMs of elaboration are used only by the Algerian participants. Here is an example of an exoglossic DM, *c'est-à-dire*, from a mixed nationality interview.

(9) Context: An Algerian participant (A5) is talking about a city in the south of Algeria.

1 *bafar ʔananarʕafnasha u ruħt-lha u qʕatfiha*

Bashar I know.1s people.it and went.1s -to.it and stayed.1s in.it

“Bashar, I know its people and I went and stayed there.

2 **C'est-à-dire**, I know it

“I mean, I know it.”

3 *ʕamri ma smaʕthad l-hadra*

never neg hear.1s this the-talk

“I never heard these things.”

Line 2 in example (9) gives rise to the following explicatures:

(10)

1 Basic Level Explicature: “The speaker knows the city of Bashar.”

2 Higher Level Explicature (DM+the code-switch into English): “The speaker is clarifying that (since he stayed in Bashar and knows its people) he knows the city of Bashar in a special way (personally/ first hand).”

In order to get to the explicature communicated in (10) the hearer has to follow the comprehension procedure which lies in reference resolution which leads to construe “it” as referring to the city of Bashar.

From the results presented above, it seems that the participants opted for different DMs to express the meaning of elaboration. Whether a speaker opted for *yaʕni*, *zəʕma*, *ça veut dire* or any other elaboration DM, the goal is to express the procedural meaning of elaboration. However, the choice of a given DM over another is motivated by social factors, to which we turn next.

5. Results: A Sociolinguistic Account

In this section, I engage the social categories that account for variation in the use of elaboration DMs. The focus is on two social categories: nationality and type of interaction. Table (2) shows the effect of nationality on the choice of DMs:

Table 2: Results of elaboration DMs broken down by nationality

Variants	Algerian		Egyptian		Moroccan		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
yaʕni /yæʕni	55	71.42%	157	100.00%	140	84.84%	352	88.00%
zəʕma	16	20.77%	0		25	15.15%	41	10.25%
C'est a dire	3	3.89%	0		0		3	0.75%
Je veux dire	2	2.59%	0		0		2	0.50%
ça veut dire	1	1.29%	0		0		1	0.25%
I mean	0		1	0.93%	0		1	0.25%

The table shows that the Algerian participants used more diverse DMs for elaboration than any other group. The most frequent elaboration DM is *yaʕni*, which is used by the three nationalities. What characterizes the Algerian participants is their use of two endoglossic variants: *yaʕni* and *zəʕma* and four exoglossic variants *ça veut dire*, *c'est-à-dire*, *je veux dire*, and *I mean*. Here is an example from structured interviews:

(11) Context: A4 is discussing the difference in access to knowledge between US and Algeria.

- 1 *nas li rahumhna ils savent utiliser l'information*
people that see.them here they know.3p use.inf the information
“People who live here know how to use knowledge.”
- 2 **Je veux dire, ils savent utiliser** the means
DM they know.3p use.inf the means
“I mean, they know how to use the means.”

The speaker starts line 1 in example (11) with Algerian Arabic and then switches to French. In line 2, the speaker opts for the French DM, *Je veux dire*, followed by a sentence beginning in French and ending in English. A4 used an exoglossic variant which may serve not only to guide the inferential process of the listener to interpret what is coming as elaboration but it also performs an Act of Identity on behalf of the speaker (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985). The use of an exoglossic DM serves the need to be identified with a certain group and project an identity, in this case the Algerian and Maghrebi identity. In the context of (11), A4 used *je veux dire* to project his identity and at the same time to be identified with the investigator who is from a country known for its French heritage, Morocco.

The Algerian participants also used *yaʕni* to express elaboration. The specificity of the linguistic behavior for the Algerian participants does not stem only from their choice of DMs, but also from their choice of the switch after and before the DM. In example (12), A4 used *yaʕni* to express the meaning of elaboration followed by French.

(12) Context: A4 is talking with the investigator about the role of education

- 1 *mənnahijat ʔanaktatʕalamħwajəʒʒdad...*
 from side that.youlearn.2ms things new
 “In terms of learning new things...”
- 2 **Yaʕni, tuapprends**
 DM you learn.2s
 “I mean, you learn.”

Knowing that *yaʕni* is a shared DM among speakers in the Arab world, the speaker used it to project another identity which is wider than the Algerian and Maghrebi identity. It seems that the use of *yaʕni* signals membership to the Arab world.

In addition to the DMs discussed above, elaboration for the Algerian participants was also expressed by a dialectal DM as shown in the following example from a same nationality interaction:

(13) Context: A3 talks about the Eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk who want to become an independent nation.

- 1 (A) *humakanujastanawʕhadsoi-disant*
 they were.3mp wait.3mp in.this sort of speech
 “They were waiting for this, sort of speech.”
- 2 (B) **Zəʕma, drukafarħu**
 DM now cherish
 “I mean, now they are happy.”
- 3 (C) **Zəʕma, daw l-istiqlalmən ʔukranija**
 DM took.3mp the-independence from Ukrania
 “I mean, they have become independent from Ukraine.”

In lines 2 and 3 in example (13), the DM *zəʕma* is used to guide the listener to construe what is coming as an elaboration of what was previously said. The pragmatic variant *zəʕma* (=I mean) in line 3 takes scope over more than one utterance. What comes in line 3 clarifies and

further elaborates what was said in line 1 and 2. The social meaning expressed by the DM *zəʃma* is part of the second higher level explicature. The corresponding higher level explicatures that result from utterance (13) are shown in (14):

(14):

- 1 Basic Level Explicature of line 3: The Eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk gained independence from Ukraine.⁸
- 2 First Higher Level Explicature: I am clarifying that the Eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk gained independence from Ukraine.
- 3 Second Higher Level Explicature: I am clarifying that the Eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk gained independence from Ukraine by using a dialectal variant that I know both you and I understand.

The first higher level explicature in (14.2) spells out the contribution of *zəʃma* to the meaning of the utterance via its procedural meaning, whereas the second higher level explicature in (14.3) represents its contribution to the interactional import of the utterance via its social indexing meaning. RT can capture this multiple layering of meanings as it explains how DMs can express multiple higher level explicatures, but the same basic level explicature. In a context where all participants are from the Maghreb, *zəʃma* is used to show alignment with other participants. In addition to expressing the meaning of elaboration, the dialectal choice is meant to emphasize their commonalities and establish friendliness and familiarity.

Unlike the Algerian participants, the Moroccan participants used only endoglossic DMs to serve the meaning of elaboration. While *yəʃni* targets both Moroccan and non-Moroccan participants, *zəʃma* is exclusively used among Moroccan participants. Here is an example of *zəʃma*:

(15) Context: Speaker M1 talks about the difficulty of studying language variation.

- 1 *taqdartdirməljundjalbaht Pu ma-tlqaʃhadik* variation
cando.2ms million of research and neg-find.2ms-neg that variation
“You can run million studies and end up not finding any variation.
- 2 **Zəʃma**, to what extent is this subject to science
DM “I mean, to what extent is this subject to science.”

⁸The Basic Level Explicature is achieved after resolving the indexical meaning of “they” as “The Eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk.”

The dialectal DM is used by M1 to call on the Moroccan identity and decrease the degree of formality and potential controversy that may be raised by the topic and the use of English. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller categorized the vernacular as “a positive force” that “may be used in direct conflict with the standardized norms, utilized as a symbol by speakers to carry powerful social meanings so resistant to external pressures” (1985:246). This account justifies the use of a dialectal form as an Act of Identity. Though the speaker opted for English to explain his evaluation of research in linguistics, he preferred to use a dialect DM as a projection of a self that resist foreign influence.

The results of the Egyptian participants are characterized mainly by the use of a single elaboration DM, *yaʕni*. Here is an example from mixed nationality interactions.

(16) Context: E1 is talking about how students who study at foreign universities in Egypt are not competent in Arabic.

- 1 *Pil-agjal li btigimuʔaxaran fi kalimaat hiya mush ʕarfa-ha bil-ʕarabi*
The-generations that come recently in words she not know-it with-Arabic
“The generations of students that come recently do not understand some words in Arabic.”
- 2 **Yaʕni**, *ʔanakuntbadarris fi lgamʕalʔamirikija*
DM I be.past.1s teach in university American
“I mean, I was teaching at the American university.”
- 3 *fi ʕijalkitir min gamiʕatʔagnabija*
in kids many from universities foreign
“There were many students who came from foreign universities.”
- 4 *ma jaʕraf-ʔkilmamaʕna-ha ʔihbil-ʕarabi*
not know.3ms-neg word meaning-it what with-Arabic
“He does not know the meaning of a given word in Arabic.”

Contrary to the Moroccan and Algerian participants, the Egyptian participants used *yaʕni* to target non-Egyptian participants as well as Egyptian participants.

The other social variable that affected the choice of variants is type of interaction. Recall that the data for this study included two types of interaction: informal multi-party conversations, and structured one-on-one interviews. Consider table (3) for the results of type of interaction:

Table 3: Results of the effect of type of interaction on the frequency of elaboration DMs

	Algerian			Egyptian			Moroccan		
	Mixed	Same	Struct.	Mixed	Same	Struct.	Mixed	Same	Struct.
Variants	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
<i>yaʕni</i> / <i>yəʕni</i>	24	2	29	51	23	83	53	14	73
<i>zəʕma</i>	3	11	2					1	24
C'est a dire			3						
ça veut dire		1							
Je veux dire			2						
I mean						1			

For the Algerian participants, the choice of elaboration DMs correlates with type of interaction. While the dialectal DM, *zəʕma*, was reserved for same nationality interactions, *yaʕni* was mainly used in mixed nationality interactions, and structured interviews. The Algerian speakers opted for *yaʕni* when speaking to non-Algerians as it is part of a shared linguistic repertoire among the three nationalities. This is expected as the conversation between participants from two different Arab countries is a situation that requires the use of a variant that is mutually intelligible to all speakers. The dialectal variant, *zəʕma*, on the other hand, is highly used in same nationality interactions and less so in the other types of interactions. The Algerian participants used *zəʕma* as it is a local form and part of a shared linguistic code among Algerian participants.

The exoglossic elaboration DMs were used in structured interviews, except one that was used in same nationality interactions. None of the exoglossic DMs was used in mixed nationality interactions. It would not be surprising to see the French DMs used in structured interviews as these interactions were with the investigator who is from Morocco. The Algerian speakers know that Morocco shares the same colonial past with Algeria and know that French is likely to be understood by the investigator. This renders French in general and the French DMs in particular part of a shared linguistic code between the Algerian speakers and the investigator.

The absence of use of the exoglossic DMs in mixed nationality interactions that include Egyptian participants may be explained by the fact that French DMs are not part of a shared code between the Algerian participants and the Egyptian participants. According to Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, topic, audience, and setting are crucial to the shaping of an utterance and “the individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the

groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified” (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985:181).

If we move to the Moroccan participants, we notice that mixed nationality interactions and structured interviews featured the highest use of *yəʕni*. For the Moroccan participants, structured interviews involve same nationality participants since the investigator is also from Morocco. The question then is why there were far more occurrences of *yəʕni*, the pan-Arabic form, in structured interviews compared to the other interactions. It seems that as *yəʕni* has undergone a phonetic reduction from a vowel to a schwa (a common feature in Moroccan Arabic) it has kept both its function as a shared DM to target non-Moroccan speakers, but has also acquired a local function to target Moroccan participants. Being a shared pan-Arabic DM entails that *yəʕni* also has some sort of formality attached to it. This may justify the high use of *yəʕni* in structured interviews compared to same nationality informal conversations. This is because the setting of a one-on-one interview may give the impression that speakers have to be formal. Yet, if we compare the status of *yəʕni* for Algerian participants compared to *yəʕni* for the Moroccan participants, we can still see that their status is different. Based on its frequency, it seems that *yəʕni* for the Algerian participants targets mainly non-local participants, while *yəʕni* for the Moroccan participants targets both local and non-local participants.

Structured interviews (as shown in table 3) also featured the highest use of the dialectal DM for the Moroccan participants. The high occurrence of *zəʕma* in structured interviews but not in mixed nationality interactions indicates that it targets only Moroccan participants and that it has a local function. This aligns with the findings for the Algerian participants. The DM *zəʕma* is chosen to serve elaboration as it represents a shared code among Moroccan participants.

The results of type of interaction are different for the Egyptian participants. Contrary to Moroccan and Algerian participants, the Egyptian participants used only one endoglossic DM for elaboration, *yəʕni*. It seems that, as far as the eight participants are concerned, there is no local or dialectal variant as was the case with the Algerian and Moroccan participants. This may imply that *yəʕni* may be used as a shared variant to target non-Egyptian speakers but also as a local variant to target Egyptian speakers. To express elaboration, *yəʕni* is the only endoglossic option the Egyptian participants have. The only exception is one instance of the use of the exoglossic elaboration DM, *I mean*, in structured interviews. The fact that *I mean* was used only in structured interviews means that it targets non-Egyptian speakers. The reason why the Egyptian

participant used an English variant but not a French one as was the case for the Algerian participants lies in the fact that French is not part of the shared code between the Egyptian participants and non-Egyptian participants. Here is the example of *I mean*:

(17) Context: E6 is talking about his visits to touristic cities in Egypt.

- 1 *nass^huhabiʔaʕdin f-lyarda 'a w-faram*
people friends.my stay.3mp in-Al Ghada'aand-Sharam
"My friends are staying at Al Gharda'a and Sharam."
- 2 *kanubijataʕlubijataʕala ʔuʔʕudmaʕana ʔusbuʕ*
was.3mp call.3mpwith.me come stay with.us week
"They used to call me to stay with them for a period of time."
- 3 **I mean** *ʔinana ma-kunt-f bas^hriffuluskitira*
DM that.I neg-was.1s-neg spendmoney a lot
"I mean, I did have to spend a lot of money."

E6 used the English DM to project an identity of someone who is knowledgeable, educated, and familiar with the academic environment of American Universities. The choice of *I mean* as an Act of Identity by the speaker could help him identify with the investigator and his role as a member of an English-speaking University.

Although the social categories of nationality and type of interaction can help us account for some of the variability in the choice of DMs, they do not explain all of the choices the participants made. This means that one should not rely just on big social categories to account for variation. This is due to the fact that the linguistic behavior of participants within the same nationality may be different as can be clearly seen from the choices some participants made. While most of the Moroccan participants used the shared DM in structured interviews, M2 used the dialectal DM, *zəʕma*. M2 who has lived for 7 years in the US since he arrived when he was 18 years old is totally immersed in the American culture. He is also fluent in French as he grew up in the capital of Morocco, Rabat, in a rich neighborhood where French is valorized and practiced in different domains. In spite of all what has been said, M2 deliberately decided to project himself as someone who is proud of his Moroccan identity by using only the dialectal variant of elaboration. The case of M2 shows that the ability to speak a given foreign language does not predict an exoglossic *choice* of linguistic behavior. As a matter of fact, the linguistic choices performed by M2 have nothing to do with his inability to speak English or French but rather are

Acts of Identity. The idea that the use of a DM is a matter of choice rather than an inability to use an exoglossic DM is reinforced by an example from M1:

(18) Context: (M1) talking about doing research in linguistics

- 1 *Waf*would you make of that piece of research *fihaza*- hija ...*(pause)
What something that she...
“What would you make of that piece of research something that is ...” (pause)
- 2 **Yəfni**, theory driven *wala fihaza*- (pause)
DM or something that
“I mean, theory driven or something that is ...” (pause)
- 3 **Zəfma**, more applied.
“I mean, more applied.”

From the conversation in (18), it shows that M1 has a good mastery of English as most of his utterances are in English, yet the three DMs used in this example are endoglossic. This is very interesting as it shows that DMs are the best means to show how speakers project their identity. In other words, a speaker may be using a given code, English in the case of example (18), but he/she may switch to a different code when it comes to the choice of DMs. Example (18) also shows that the choice is not due to internal factors, but rather reveals a choice the speaker makes to serve as the way he wanted to project himself. While the use of English may give the impression that the speaker wants to project an identity of someone fond of Western culture, the use of endoglossic DMs projects the speaker as someone who is proud of his Moroccan and Arab identity. The vehicle for the latter is the use of *yəʃni*, while the vehicle for the former is the use of *zəʃma*.

5. Concluding remarks and Conclusions

This study builds on prior scholarly work on DMs and provides new perspectives. This paper aligns with Ghobrial's (1993) analysis of DMs with regard the claim that many DMs can share the same function. However, my analysis of DMs differs from that of Ghobrial. Instead of arguing that DMs reflect the speaker's assessment of the prior contribution of another speaker, this paper argues that DMs guide the listener's processing of a coming utterance. Both positions are not necessarily contradictory, but can be considered complementary, building on the former to facilitate the latter. The relevance perspective which was made explicit in this paper may be

parallel with the way Al-Batal (1990) describes connectives. This is most clearly seen in Al-Batal's statement that the function of connectives is to "render processing of a text more economical by overtly signaling to the reader the underlying semantic relationship. This saves the reader the effort of trying to figure out what kind of relationship holds among different members in a text." (p. 254). There are two parallels here in the way Al-Batal and RT approach the analysis of DMs: first, they both refer to processing, which indicates a focus on the cognitive aspect, and second, "overtly signaling an idea in a way that saves the effort for the reader" is another way of saying "making an act ostensive." Although Al-Batal did not overtly claim to provide a cognitive analysis of DMs, his view can be still considered a cognitive one given the way he described DMs.

While this paper shares some similarities with Al-Batal (1990) and Ghobrial (1993), it differs from Owens & Rockwood (2008) in two main points. While Owen & Rockwood focus on a single DM as a means of signaling one core meaning of elaboration, the current paper examines more than one DM that serves to vehicle the core meaning of elaboration. Hence, elaboration in this paper is expressed by means of different pragmatic variants. The other difference lies in the approach used to study elaboration. Owens and Rockwood consider that *yaʕni* is used to signal that "a semantic unit of comparable status will follow" (2008:111). This view is similar to the coherence-based account advocated by Aijmer(1988). Unlike Owens & Rockwood (2008), the use of *yaʕni* in the current study serves as a means of encoding the procedural meaning of guiding the inferential process of the listener to the meaning of elaboration. That is, this paper argues in favor of the relevance-based approach.

The relevance perspective taken in this paper supports prior views made by Blakemore (1987, 2002), Andersen (1998), Ler (2006), and Schourup (2011). In line with these linguists, this paper highlights the importance of the study of DMs for the area of pragmatics. The common ground between these linguists and this paper is the fact that the distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning should be at the core of utterance interpretation in general and the interpretation of DMs in particular. Another common thread is offering a relevance approach where comprehension should be relevance-based rather than coherence-based. The relevance approach makes more sense as it does justice to the pragmatic meanings of DMs and does not consider them to be merely a type of 'discourse glue' (Fraser, 1990, p. 385) that connects utterances.

Unlike most studies conducted on DMs which ignored the social motivations behind the use of DMs, the analysis of Arabic DMs expressing elaboration in this paper highlights the social perspective. Terkourafi's proposal of a socially motivated procedural meaning to account for the pragmatic variants has enabled the analysis of DMs in this paper from both a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective. Instead of using semantic equivalence as a shared element among the variants (Labov, 1966,1972), this paper supports the proposal that procedural meaning, elaboration in this context, can substitute semantic equivalence in the study of pragmatic variation (Terkourafi, 2011). On this view, "linguistic variants are considered equivalent if they can be used interchangeably in order to achieve similar perlocutionary effects in discourse" (Terkourafi, 2011:355). This substitution renders the extension of variation from phonetics/morphology to pragmatic variation unproblematic.

The results of this study show the impact of social factors on the choices of variants. In this study, both nationality and type of interaction seem to shape the use of DMs. In terms of nationality, the results indicate that the Algerian participants used both endoglossic and exoglossic DMs to express the meaning of elaboration. Though the Moroccan and Algerian participants represent the Maghrebi variety, the two groups behaved differently. The clear distinction between these two groups is the absence of the use of French DMs by the Moroccan participants. Knowing that speakers from Morocco are also known for their use of French (Bentahila and Davies, 1983), it was predicted that both the Moroccan and Algerian participants may use French DMs. This implies that the ability to speak a language does not guarantee that it should surface in one's linguistic behavior. The Egyptian participants also behaved differently from the Moroccan and Algerian participants. While participants representing the Maghrebi varieties used both the shared and the dialectal DM, the Egyptian participants used only the shared DM, *yaʕni*.

Type of interaction was also an important factor shaping the choice of variants. This was clearly observed among the Algerian participants who used the exoglossic DMs only in same nationality and mixed nationality interactions that involve Moroccan participants but not in interactions that include Egyptian participants. The importance of type of interaction also lies in the high use of the shared DM, *yaʕni*, in structured interviews for both the Algerian and Moroccan participants. As a shared form, *yaʕni* is a favored choice in a formal setting compared to the informal interactions.

On a final note, it is important to signal that the study of DMs of elaboration highlights the need to study variation not only in the light of the correlation of the linguistic behavior with broad social categories but also in light of psychological choices made by either the individual or the group. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) theoretical model predicts that if linguistic items are selected by an individual it is "because they are felt to have social as well as semantic meaning in terms of the way in which each individual wishes to project his/her own universe and to invite others to share it". This model captures how psychological factors should be included in the study of the linguistic behavior in general and variation in particular. Thus the linguistic behavior is seen as an Act of Identity which lies in the need to "behave according to the behavioral patterns of groups we find it desirable to identify with" (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985:182). The advantage of this theoretical model, as discussed in (Rickford 2011), is that "it focuses attention on the social forces and socio-psychological factors that motivate sociolinguistic variation, more so than any other variationist framework, e.g. Labovian quantitative sociolinguistics (with the exception of Labov's (1963) study of Martha's Vineyard)" (2011:254). Although Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's theoretical model shows some similarities with "Accommodation Theory", these two models are different. While the latter focuses on interactive linguistic behavior and on accommodation taking place with the goal to converge or diverge with the interlocutors, the former is about "the way people perceive of other groups, whether in intermediate contact or not and the way they clothe those perceptions with linguistic behavior" (1985:2). The sociolinguistic account provided by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller provides the background for the understanding of the sociolinguistic aspect of variation in this paper.

References

- Aijmer, K. (1988). Now may we have a word on this: the use of now as a discourse particle. *Corpus linguistics: hard and soft. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi.*
- Al-Batal, M. (1990). Connectives as cohesive elements in a modern expository Arabic Text. In *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics: Papers from the Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics. Volume II: Salt Lake City, Utah 1988.* John Benjamins Publishing.
- Andersen, G. (1998). The pragmatic marker like from a relevance-theoretic perspective. *Pragmatics and Beyond New Series*, 147-170.

- Belazi, H. M., Rubin, E. J., & Toribio, A. J. (1994). Code switching and X-bar theory: The functional head constraint. *Linguistic inquiry*, 221-237.
- Bentahila, A., & Davies, E. E. (1983). The syntax of Arabic-French code-switching. *Lingua*, 59(4), 301-330.
- Blakemore, D. (1987). *Semantic constraints on relevance*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- (2002). *Relevance and linguistic meaning: The semantics and pragmatics of discourse markers* (Vol. 99). Cambridge University Press.
- Carston, R. (2002). Linguistic meaning, communicated meaning and cognitive pragmatics. *Mind & Language*, 17(1-2), 127-148.
- Coupland, N. (1984). Accommodation at work: Some phonological data and their implications. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1984(46), 49-70.
- Fraser, B. (2006). Towards a theory of discourse markers. *Approaches to discourse particles*, 1, 189-204.
- Ghobrial, A. N. (1993). "Discourse markers in Colloquial Cairene Arabic: A pragmatic perspective". PhD Dissertation. Boston University.
- Grice, H.P. (1967). *Logic and conversation*. William James Lectures. Reprinted in H.P. Grice (1989), *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-143.
- Hachimi, A. (2013). The Maghreb-Mashreq language ideology and the politics of identity in a globalized Arab world. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 17(3), 269-296.
- Halliday, M. A., & Hasan, R. (1976). Cohesion in. *English*, Longman, London.
- Labov, W. (1966). The linguistic variable as a structural unit. *Washington Linguistics Review*. 3.4-22. Available through the ERIC System, ED 010 871: 1969.
- Contraction, deletion, and inherent variability of the English copula. *Language*, 45, 715-62.
- (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns* (No. 4). University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Le Page, R. B., & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). Acts of identity: Creole-based approaches to ethnicity and language. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*.
- Ler, S. L. V. (2006). A relevance-theoretic approach to discourse particles in Singapore English. *Approaches to discourse particles*, 149-166.

- Lewis, D. M. (2006). Discourse markers in English: a discourse-pragmatic view. *Approaches to discourse particles*, 43-60.
- Owens, J., & Rockwood, T. (2008). Yaʿni: What it (really) means. *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics*, 21, 83-111.
- Rickford, J. R. (2011). Le Page's theoretical and applied legacy in sociolinguistics and creole studies. *Variation in the Caribbean: From creole continua to individual agency*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Rieschild, V. (2011). Arabic yaʿni: Issues of semantic, pragmatic, and indexical translation equivalence. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 8(3), 315-346. & *Communication*, 23(3), 193-229.
- Schneider, K. P., & Barron, A. (2008). Where pragmatics and dialectology meet: Introducing variational pragmatics. *Pragmatics and Beyond New Series*, 178, 1.
- Schourup, L. (2011). The discourse marker now: A relevance-theoretic approach. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(8), 2110-2129.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1986) *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Terkourafi, M. (2011). The pragmatic variable: Toward a procedural interpretation. *Language in Society*, 40(03), 343-372.
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in contact. Findings and problems*. Publications of the Linguistic Circle of New York, 1.