

# THE DISCOURSE OF ARABIC ADVERTISING: PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS<sup>1</sup>

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EXETER

This article explores the discourse of commercial consumer advertising in the written and visual media of Egypt. After setting advertisements in the context of genres and schemas, it focuses mainly on the relationship between language and cultural representation within the discourse of advertising. The paper places special emphasis on the role of intertextuality within the advertising framework. It also assesses the effectiveness of using different language levels in a given advertisement or commercial, and looks at the deployment of rhetorical devices to reinforce the advertising message.

“An ad is not a tangible or stable entity; it is the dynamic synthesis of many components, and comes into being through them”.<sup>2</sup>

## *1. Introduction*

The copywriter who is responsible for commercial consumer advertisements must make a number of conscious decisions to enhance the selling potential of a product: for instance, the presentation of image; the most efficient use of time when advertising through the spoken media, or space when advertising in the written press; and, of course, the most effective use of language. Every individual is a consumer at some point in his or her life, so it is no surprise that in a competitive product market, advertising techniques are

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For our interpretation of the term “discourse”, we follow Fairclough (1991:63) who regards language use as a “form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflex of situational variables”. In other words, discourse is not only a mode of representation but also a mode of action, “one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other”.

<sup>2</sup> Cook 1992:3.

often fundamental to the success of a product. At the forefront of these techniques is the “memorability” factor (Leech 1966:29). How many of us who were exposed to British television advertising in the 1970’s, for instance, can still recall the famous “Beanz Meanz Heinz” *endline* (ibid.:59)<sup>3</sup> for the “Heinz” Baked Beans advertisement.

In addition to a general interest in the language and techniques of commercial advertising,<sup>4</sup> there were two principal reasons which inspired the present writer to examine more closely the discourse of Arabic in commercial advertisements. Firstly, some time ago I discovered a kitchen apron in a local store. Printed on this apron was an advertisement in Arabic for a brand of corn oil containing the following noun phrase:

*zayt dhura ṣāfi.*                      “pure corn oil”

Although the advertisement was in a mainly “standard” form of written Arabic, this particular phrase seemed to contain a mixture of standard and dialect forms; in other words one would normally have expected the word “pure” to read *ṣāfi(in)* in this context.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, during my teaching career I have consistently found advertisements to be an effective teaching medium. Owing to their conciseness, they often contain an abundance of recurring grammatical structures which frequently trouble the learner of Arabic at all levels. Examples of these are:

i) the *tamyīz* “specification” construction, used mainly as a comparative or superlative. It often occurs in car advertisements, for instance, to emphasize that a make of car is “the most comfortable and the most luxurious” (*al-akthar rāḥatan wa l-akthar fakhāmatan*) of its kind.

ii) the *iḍāfa ghayr ḥaḳīqiyya* “the unreal (or ‘adjectival’) *iḍāfa*”. This

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<sup>3</sup> Leech labels the main slogan at the end of a television commercial an “endline”, and the slogan at the end of a press advertisement a “signature line”.

<sup>4</sup> This paper will only concern itself with what Leech has called “commercial consumer advertising” (1966:25). Thus it will not consider trade or classified advertisements, for instance.

<sup>5</sup> Much more could be said on this point alone. For instance, is it more appropriate to talk here of dialectal interference or solecisms? The same could be said for the word *tasāli* as part of the following noun cluster from a brief advertisement for “Miki” magazines: *thaqāfa* “culture”, *tasāli* “entertainment”, *ḍaḥakāt* “laughs” (ND:15/5/94), or a slightly different example involving the use of the imperative mood: *ikhtār . . . bi kullī thiqa* “choose . . . with complete confidence” (O:6/9/94), where the verb appears to have been written according to vernacular phonology, i.e., with the retention of the long vowel.

structure is very common in Arabic advertisements, often emphasizing the “quickness” of a product, such as *sarīc al-dhawabān* “dissolves quickly” (“Coast” dried milk, **U**:19/10/94), or the “ease” of something, such as *sahl al-ṣiyāna* “easy to maintain” (“Miraco” air-conditioning machines, **H**:21/5/94) or *sahl al-istiḥmāl* “easy to use” (“Laysīd” lice-remover, **H**:30/4/94). According to Dyer (1982:150), adjectival compounds “give uniqueness, vigour and impact to the advertising message”.<sup>6</sup>

iii) the *mā . . . min* structure. A class of students once responded very enthusiastically to a translation of the famous Rothmans tobacco slogan written on the side of an ashtray which was passed around the classroom:

*ajwad mā yumkin shirāʿuhu min tibgh*  
 “the best tobacco money can buy”

The students’ level of interest was probably increased by their familiarity with the original English version, but the Arabic slogan served as an excellent model for the *mā . . . min* structure by creating its own “memorability” factor.

Advertisements are an important component of the anthropological element in teaching the target culture.<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, a number of tasks that a teacher can set students using advertisements as a focus. For instance, video recordings of television commercials function as a very useful form of “audio-motor units”, providing a role-play stimulus for students. On the other hand, written advertisements may be manipulated in various ways: for example, the teacher removes the picture accompanying an advertisement and asks the students to guess the product by reading the attendant caption. With some assistance and practice this may lead to the students’ writing a short caption for a picture, or even constructing their own advertisements.

More recently, I have begun to focus in the classroom on the rich cultural aspects of advertisements.<sup>8</sup> Language and culture are, of necessity, inextricably linked, and this nexus is particularly apparent in the world of advertising. If one accepts Cook’s view (1993:1) that “discourse analysis views lan-

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<sup>6</sup> In Leech’s view (1966:107) compounds such as fine-spun and powder-light are “instances of what is perhaps more than anything else a hallmark of advertising English: the adjective compound”.

<sup>7</sup> As opposed to the history of civilization component (Valette 1986:179) which has until recently perhaps been overemphasized at the expense of the sociological (anthropological) element.

<sup>8</sup> Suleiman (1993:78–79 esp.) gives a useful assessment of the value of advertising as one of several means of teaching culture in the classroom.

guage and context holistically”, it is easy to appreciate the importance of assessing contextual features, such as paralinguistic and intertextuality, within the framework of advertising. In Cook’s view, an analysis of advertisements that concentrates exclusively on the use of language in persuading the consumer to buy disregards their diversity and “the points of contact they have with other discourse types, such as political propaganda, songs, poems, and jokes” (1993:6). These “intertextual” elements seem to play an important role in the world of advertising generally, and we shall see later that Arabic advertising is no exception to this.

With the foregoing remarks in mind, one of the main objectives of this paper will be to assess the effectiveness of language use in a selection of Arabic commercial advertisements, and its relationship to the situational context, by examining some of these extra-linguistic elements outlined by Cook (1993:1–2).

## *2. Source material*

My current research into Arabic advertising has so far revealed many interesting features about the Arab copywriter’s use of discourse. This research has concentrated principally on Egyptian advertisements from two main sources: the written medium of the press and magazines, and television commercials. Although certain linguistic features and phonological schemes, such as rhyme, are common to both these media, they also offer different rewards for the linguist. Television commercials, in addition to their unique paralinguistic features, also contain a higher proportion of “block” or “disjunctive” language (Leech 1963:256), owing in all probability to time restrictions. All television commercials used in this study ran for a maximum of fifteen or thirty seconds.

Since these investigations have so far been only preliminary, based on a corpus of approximately one hundred and fifty newspaper and magazine advertisements and television commercials, material from countries other than Egypt has been excluded. Although my future research in this area may well include advertisements containing regional dialectal material from other Arab countries, it is worth noting at this stage that television commercials from Egypt seem to reflect the linguistic versatility of the Cairene dialect, which lends itself well to some of the characteristics of advertising language, such as rhyme, rhythm and a degree of unorthodox use of the language. It has been noticeable in the present writer’s observations of commercials on satellite television, for example, that the frequent use of a “Modern Standard” Arabic in preference to a dialect, or a mixture of these registers, has not lead us to the same hypotheses or conclusions. As we shall see later, it is

often the mixing of registers within one advertisement, particularly in television commercials, that creates an especially interesting linguistic environment.

### 3. *Advertisements as “style”, “register” or “genre”*

The language of advertising is “loaded”, so it is not difficult to justify why one should study the discourse of advertisements. Most people with an interest in advertising would agree that its language often contrasts in style and grammar with conventional discursive usage. However, it is important to stress that although the language of advertisements displays an individual style in much the same way as other forms of “minimal texts” (Wallace 1987:29), which we may call “environmental print” (ibid.:24)—for instance, street signs or notices on public transport—it should not be viewed as an aberrant form of other varieties of the language (Leech 1963:257). It is true that the dependence of advertisements on the use of “disjunctive” grammar, for example, as in newspaper headlines (ibid.:256), is one of the distinguishing features of advertising style, but we would agree with Leech (ibid.:257) that “since the characteristics of a style are only meaningful by reference to the language to which it belongs, the act of isolation should be accompanied by an act of synthesis”. In other words, it would be inappropriate to analyze the language of advertisements as part of a separate grammar, although as a genre it does display some unique characteristics.

In order to consider advertising as a genre, we should consider its sociocultural aspects. Wallace (1987:30) assesses genres as “social events”. She concludes that the term genre has more recently been extended to incorporate “the whole range of culturally recognizable types of language activity”, which includes advertisements. Swales (1990:53) describes genres as “communicative events which are socioculturally recognizable”. This view reflects the more recent emphasis in genre analysis on social purpose, which sets genre apart from the notion of “register”. One may correctly talk of advertising as a register, but according to many this categorization fails to acknowledge the vital sociocultural components, of which one of the most prominent is “culturally recognizable language” (Wallace 1987:32), that is, language from which one can immediately identify a given text as an advertisement. This ability depends on our possessing what are known as “schemas”.

#### 3.1. *“Schemas” and advertising*

“Schemas”, or “schemata” as they are sometimes called (ibid.:33), allow us to identify immediately the type of text we are dealing with. In Widdowson’s view (1983:34), they are “cognitive constructs which allow for the or-

ganization of information in long-term memory”. Thus we are able to relate the general (and specific) type of language used in a given discourse, such as advertisements, to a general schematic framework. We can relate this to the Arabic situation by saying that when we see the endline *Dāz yaghsil akthar bayādan* “Daz washes whiter” (for “Daz” washing powder), our schematic knowledge confirms that we are dealing here with the language of advertising, since in conventional discourse the comparative form should be linked to a following noun phrase, which is absent here. In this particular example we may ask: Daz washes whiter than what?

Of equal interest with regard to schematic knowledge is the (socio-cultural) aspect of behaviour in the target culture. In other words, we should not just be able to identify and interpret certain facts about the information conveyed in an advertising discourse, but we should also “be aware of a range of different attitudes to them, even if we do not personally share those attitudes” (Wallace 1987:37–38). As an example of this we may cite the Egyptian television commercial for a brand of tea called al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Arūsa “(the) bride”, in which there is neither a dialogue nor a voice-over presentation. The scene is one of a young woman dressed in white representing purity, that is, of the tea. Whereas in a Muslim culture the impact of a bride dressed in white connotes absolute purity, this connotation has been partially lost in many Western cultures as a result of contemporary social values. In this commercial, the following caption which finally unfolds on the screen lends further credence to the view that the meanings we derive from texts are “largely socially determined” (ibid.:38):

*yaşil ilā haythu lā yaşil ayy shāy ākhar*  
 “it reaches the parts other teas cannot reach”

By elevating the quality of this brand of tea above all other brands, one is left in little doubt about the importance of tea in (in this case) Egyptian society. Of equal interest to the present writer, however, is that the copywriter appears to have borrowed a slogan which is used in British advertising to promote a well-known brand of alcoholic lager beer, although one would not expect the Egyptian viewer to make this connection.<sup>9</sup> The success of this slogan in promoting the brand of lager beer in Britain has probably per-

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<sup>9</sup> Thankfully, the present writer did not find too many examples of the type of advertisement noted by Holes (1995:275 n.30) in which the script has clearly undergone a literal translation from English into Arabic. Holes notes the following caption from a commercial for Yardley’s “Lace”, a women’s perfume: *lā shāy yuṣbiḥu l-mar’a mithil “Lace”* “Nothing becomes a woman like ‘Lace’”.

sueded the copywriter of its potential to promote a widely-consumed commodity in Egyptian society.

The advertising technique employed in this example leads us to think immediately of the concept of intertextuality which was introduced earlier. Intertextuality has been described neatly as “texts [which] are recognised in terms of their dependence on other relevant texts” (Hatim and Mason 1990:120). Essentially it amounts to “the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture” (ibid.:131, quoting Coward and Ellis). Therefore, one reason for the success of an advertisement or commercial may well be the underlying relationship between its presentation and a literary association familiar to the target audience.

In summary, the context of situation, that is, the social situation in which a statement occurs, is a vital element in our interpretation of the message of advertisements. The addressee must “draw on different levels of contextual knowledge to interpret them” (Wallace 1987:29). Indeed, advertisements are one of the most prominent “culture-specific” (ibid.:17) forms of discourse.<sup>10</sup> But it is not only the situational context of a statement that determines its form, and the way it is interpreted, as Foucault has shown.<sup>11</sup> The verbal context, that is, the position of a given statement in relation to other statements which precede and follow it, is also a fundamental consideration in this regard. In the words of Fairclough (1992:47–48), “one must take a step back to the discursive formation and the articulation of discursive formations in orders of discourse to explicate the context-text-meaning relationship”. This relationship will be borne in mind in the next section of this paper which deals with language levels and rhetorical categories in Arabic advertising.

#### *4. Analysis of the discourse of Arabic advertising*

It is true that the success of an advertisement depends, in no small part, on

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<sup>10</sup> Take, for example, one of the older British Telecom advertisements with the caption: “Your dinner is in the dog”. This was the message left by the irate wife whose husband was late home from work, presumably not for the first time. The message being conveyed here would normally only be understood in cultures where: (a) the expression “Your dinner is in the oven” is easily recognisable as a “culture-specific” expression, and (b) dogs are kept as pets, and are often given food scraps, or even more. The connotation in this advertisement, of course, is that the husband really is “in the dog-house”!

<sup>11</sup> See Fairclough 1992:47, quoting from Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

the linguistic dexterity of the copywriter. But the preceding discussion has attempted to show that there are a number of interrelated discursive elements at play within every advertisement. The above-mentioned relationship between the situational and verbal contexts within Arabic advertising will play a significant role in the following analysis. The first issue to be discussed in this section is code-switching, or code-mixing.

#### *4.1. Code-switching/code-mixing*

During the past decade or more, a substantial amount of research has been carried out into code-switching in Arabic.<sup>12</sup> Recent research in the field of sociolinguistics has often included the category of code-mixing as a separate variety of switching within diglossic languages, although this distinction has not been without controversy. Crystal's definition of code-mixing, for instance, is a little indeterminate. In his view it amounts to the transferring of linguistic elements from one language into another (1994:59). Hudson's hypothesis (1996:53) is of more relevance, perhaps, to some of the cases to be discussed below. He suggests that code-mixing takes place where there is no change in the situation (unlike code-switching). Furthermore, he notes that mixing seems to "symbolise a somewhat ambiguous situation for which neither language on its own would be quite right. To get the right effect the speakers balance the two languages against each other as a kind of linguistic cocktail" (ibid.:53).

Holmes (1993:48–50) prefers the term "metaphorical switching" to code-mixing because the latter may be interpreted as a sign of incompetence on the part of the speaker. In Holmes' view metaphorical switching occurs, for instance, when a speaker wishes to upgrade his or her level of speech to demonstrate a higher standard of education or linguistic ability. In other words, this may apply to speech situations in which "each of the codes represents a set of social meanings" (ibid.:49). This interpretation seems to be particularly relevant to the Arabic advertising situation, as we shall see shortly. Another concept worth considering within the context of some of the examples taken from Arabic advertising is that of "referentially-motivated" switching (ibid.:45). This takes place because the speaker is striving for accuracy between the two languages, or levels, as the case may be. On the evidence found in this study, the sudden switch to a foreign expression, for instance, may be the most effective means of conveying the connotative intent of a particular advertisement.

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<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Eid (1982; 1983; 1987; 1988 and 1991) or Abu-Melhim (1991).

Overall we prefer the term “code-mixing” (or metaphorical switching) for the purposes of this study. It must be borne in mind, of course, that the majority of examples entail a mixing of levels within the Arabic continuum, not a switching of languages amongst, say, bilingual speakers. The contextual, and perhaps socially, motivated reasons for mixing, however, lead us to prefer this term over code-switching which, in Eid’s view (1988:54), occurs at specific syntactic “focal points”. What follows is a categorisation of the wide range of mixed levels used in Arabic advertising which have been identified as part of this study.

#### 4.1.1. General patterns for code-mixing in advertisements.

There are a number of identifiable patterns of language-level mixing in Arabic advertisements. Most of these occur in television commercials, although a limited number have been found in written advertisements. The categories are as follows:

i) Where Standard Arabic (SA) is used throughout the advertisement, but the final slogan is delivered in either Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA), or a hybrid version of the two registers. This may occur in either television or written media. This category applies particularly to commercials advertising products of a scientific nature, as in the commercial for “Filopur” water filters. In this television commercial a formal level of Arabic is used to talk about the product, as the following excerpt shows:

*idhā ra<sup>ʾ</sup>ayta mā yulawwith al-miyāh taḥta miḡhar fa lan tashrab al-miyāh bidūn filūbūr*

“if you saw the pollution in water under a microscope you would not drink water without Filopur”

A voice-over then gives information about the product at the end of the commercial in a mainly ECA register, but with the retention of a couple of SA features:

*al-ān iṣṭuwāna bi talatīn ginēh . . . tina<sup>ʾ</sup>ī suttumūt litr ya<sup>c</sup>nī litr mayyit ish-shurb in-naqiyya bi khamas <sup>ʾ</sup>urūsh*

“a cylinder now costs thirty pounds . . . it purifies six hundred litres, and you get a litre of pure drinking water for five piastres”

Whilst it is perhaps not surprising that scientific advertisements are presented in the SA mode, we may note Dyer’s point (1982:146) that copywriters often favour the employment of scientific-sounding terms because they are likely to impress the audience: an example of this is “laboratory tests show”. The same could probably be said for Arabic advertisements, since

the formality of SA enables the copywriter to create the same effect.<sup>13</sup> The advantage of using mainly ECA, however, in the final voice-over is that it relates directly to what perhaps concerns people most: cost and value for money.

The next example from this category perhaps reflects a switch of registers for a different reason. In this commercial for Eva skin cream, the main body copy is in SA (including the preservation of SA relative pronouns, for instance), but the endline is delivered in ECA:

Voice-over: *mā<sup>c</sup>a ʿāʾilati sbūtlis īvā* (SA) “with the family of Eva  
‘Spotless’ (creams)”  
Group of consumers: *mā fish mushkila* (ECA) “there is no problem”

One of the possible reasons for the switching of registers here is that *mā fish mushkila* has become one of the most popular expressions in ECA, perpetuated perhaps by the large numbers of foreigners who learn the expression almost before anything else.<sup>14</sup> It is quite common for an Egyptian to say this expression in a light-hearted fashion when confronted with a foreigner attempting to learn his or her dialect. An additional effect is achieved in this advertisement because the expression is said by a group of consumers, not by just one person.

Although examples of this type in written advertisements are relatively few, the following endline for a product called “Zayt al-Ḥulba”, which aids milk production in breast-feeding mothers, demonstrates that it may also occur in press advertisements. After a brief description in SA of the benefits of this product, the script changes to ECA:

*balāsh tidawwarī . . . wi qūmī raḍḍa<sup>c</sup>ī*  
“no need to look any further . . . go and breast feed” (H:30/4/94)

ii) Where the emphasis is on SA but the advertisement is interspersed with ECA (written advertisements only). An example of this is the advertisement for “Baby Admiral” diapers (Figure 1). Although the emphasis in the text is SA, exemplified by the use of the SA passive forms *tustakhdam*

<sup>13</sup> I have also found that some advertisements for domestic products, such as washing powders, occur in a form of Standard Arabic outside the Egyptian environment, such as on satellite television channels, even though the same product may be advertised in Egypt in the colloquial form.

<sup>14</sup> As evidence that the Egyptians themselves now take a somewhat humorous view of this expression, one can purchase T-shirts in Egypt with the words *mā fish mushkila* “No problem!” printed across the front.

“it is used” and *tubā<sup>c</sup>* “it is sold”, there is significant usage of ECA. The reader is apparently drawn into the world of “baby reality” by the use in the text of the colloquial word *ḥufāḍāt* “diapers”, as opposed to the possible, but admittedly unlikely, SA *ḥifāzāt*. (Wehr 1980:180). It could be argued that after switching from the formal preamble on these diapers to an everyday situation through colloquial usage, the copywriter capitalises by making a further important comment in the same register:

*maysarrabsh walā nuḡtit mayya* “(it) does not leak a drop of water”

This represents a rare occurrence of negation in the colloquial form in written texts. Later in this advertisement we also find the ECA *ma<sup>c</sup>a bībī admīrāl tiwaffārī* . . . “with Baby Admiral you save . . .”.<sup>15</sup>

iii) The opposite to (ii) above (television commercials only), that is, where the main register is ECA, but where a switch to SA occurs in order to give more information about the product. A good illustration of this can be found in the commercial for “Cuddlies” diapers (see Appendix 1):

*kudlīz biyitkawwin min saba<sup>c</sup> ṭabaqāt likay yu<sup>ʿ</sup>akkid rāḥit wi gafāf ṭiflik*  
“Cuddlies have seven layers to ensure that your child remains comfortable and dry”

The reinstatement of the *qāf* in *ṭabaqāt* after it had been pronounced earlier as *hamza*, and the use of the conjunction *likay*, which would never occur in ordinary vernacular speech, suggests an intentional raising of the level of speech. In addition to these features, the copywriter has also selected the SA vowel for the verb *yu<sup>ʿ</sup>akkid*. However, the voice-over reverts to ECA for the final part of the commercial. It is quite conceivable in this instance, of course, that the use of ECA reflects the intuitive choice of register by the native speaker as she introduces the product. The switch to SA could easily be accounted for by the fact that the presenter is now reading the more detailed elements of the body copy. In this case one would expect an adherence to SA phonology and syntax.

A further example of this category can be found in a different advertisement for “Eva” skin cream in which the commentator, using exclusively SA, describes the positive effect on the skin of proteins contained in the cream. In the body copy of the commercial many of the relevant case-endings are preserved, as in, for example: . . . *li taghdiyatihā wa taṭriyatihā* “in order to

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<sup>15</sup> There is also another possible interpretation of the type of language used in this advertisement; for this, see below p. 16ff.

nourish it and keep it soft”.<sup>16</sup> Having described the product in this manner the commentator reverts to mainly ECA as he addresses the female consumer directly:

*ista‘milīh yōmiyyan . . .*

“use it daily . . .

*anbūba kull(i) talat iyyām wa shūfī n-natīga*

one tube every three days and see the results”

iv) Where the commercial is conducted in ECA, including interviews with consumers, and the voice-overs are in ECA, but the final piece of information about the product is given in SA. An example of this can be found in the commercial for “Ariel” washing powder, where the commentator adds the following:

*iriyāl al-mutawassīṭ fī thalāthat aḥgām mukhtalifa*

“medium-sized Ariel comes in three different sizes”<sup>17</sup>

Of particular interest in this example is that the commentator has switched from the colloquial register to SA, and even maintains the SA pronunciation for the numeral (three) which is very unusual in commercials, as we shall see later. A likely explanation for this is that the copywriter wishes to create “attention value” by the sudden change in the language level. Leech defines “attention value” as follows: “One way of provoking the consumer’s attention and curiosity is to present him with something surprising and unexpected, and this can be done as well by the unorthodox use of language as by any other means . . . perhaps a ‘wrong spelling’, or a grammatical solecism” (1966:27).

(v) Where there is clear evidence of some retention of *i‘rāb* (case-endings), a type of advertisement unique to television commercials. This

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<sup>16</sup> See also below, category (v): c.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout this article I am taking the Egyptian rendering of the *jīm* as *gīm* to be a regular feature of an educated Egyptian’s pronunciation of SA. Therefore it does not follow that any script or dialogue bearing the *gīm* necessarily constitutes an example of ECA. Parkinson has demonstrated (1991:54ff.) in his “Listening Matched Guise Experiment” that the majority of subjects who listened to the reading aloud of a newspaper editorial did not consider it to be anything other than SA (or “modern *fuṣḥā*” to use Parkinson’s term) even when the *jīm* was read throughout as *gīm*. To this category we might add the variant pronunciation of *qāf* as a “sun” letter in, for instance, a television commercial for “Taft” hairspray: *ar-riḥla muttagiha ilā q-qāhira* “the journey is heading for Cairo”.

may occur in at least three different contexts:

(a) In a formal presentation of a product in which the whole commercial is presented in SA, as in the one for “Taft” hairspray :

*al-shamsu sāṭi<sup>c</sup> . . . ḥimāyatun kāmila*

“the sun is shining . . . complete protection (for your hair)”

(b) Where the language of the television commercial is strictly ECA but there are occurrences of *i<sup>c</sup>rāb*, either for the purposes of rhythm or rhyme. An instance of the former occurs in the commercial for “Snacky” chocolate:

*hittatun minnuh bi khamastāshar <sup>2</sup>irsh(i) bass*

“only fifteen piastres per bar”

An interesting example of rhyme occurs in a television commercial for *fūl mudammis* beans:

*anā kayyīf fūl an’ I ain’t foolin’ . . .*

“I’m a connoisseur of *fūl*, believe me . . .

*anā kayyīf fūl mish ma<sup>c</sup>ūlin*

I’m a connoisseur of unbelievable *fūl*”

The employment of *tanwīn* in its proper grammatical context as part of the qualifying adjective of the word *fūl* in the genitive/oblique case is remarkable here, especially given the predominant use of ECA in the commercial.<sup>18</sup>

(c) See category (iii) above, that is, the advertisement for Eva skin cream.

(vi) Where there is importation of foreign words or phrases. Dyer (1982: 140) remarks that the functionS of the language of advertisements is not restricted to that of a sign system, but that it can be a sign in itself: in other words, some advertisements rely more on the style of the language than the actual content. Thus it could be argued that in the commercial for “Nestlé” yoghurt, for instance, the use of English (admittedly in this case to create a rhyme) further underlines the “European” nature of the product:

*zabādī nestlēh bi ṭ-ṭa<sup>c</sup>m il-lazīz . . . If you please!!*

“Nestlé yoghurt with the delicious flavour . . . if you please”

The deployment of English in the *fūl* beans commercial mentioned above is significant because it facilitates a play on the words *fūl* and *foolin’*. At the

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<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon immediately brings to mind types of colloquial (Bedouin) poetry which have retained some vestiges of *tanwīn*. If this similarity should prove to be more than coincidental it underlines once again the importance of intertextuality in advertising discourse.



On the basis of these and similar examples it appears that the choice of register is determined to a degree by the type of product. A further illustration of this can be found in a commercial for “Milkyland” milk which is presented exclusively in ECA. The endline (as well as the “super”) reads:

*asās li awlādik . . . wa hummā biyikbarū*  
 “a basis for your children . . . as they grow up”

All the commercials in this category are for non-technical products which are used or consumed on a daily basis. The use of the vernacular language is not surprising, therefore, since the promotional aim would be to reach as wide an audience as possible. One may also observe how the copywriter in example (ii: a) above has contrived a rhyming and rhythm pattern to match the morphological pattern of the verb. This is particularly appropriate because it creates a sound that would appeal to children at whom the advertisement is presumably aimed.

#### 4.1.2. The Case for Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA)

The “Baby Admiral” advertisement and the “Cuddlies” commercial cited earlier (see also Appendix 1 and Figure 3) seem to pose a new problem. In some cases, sections of television commercials appear to be a direct representation of the written information on a product: for instance, of what appears on its label, or a formal, verbal promotion of its superiority, as in the television advertisement for “Qisma” shampoo (Appendix 2) which is based on a dialogue in ECA between two women. At the request of the interested consumer, the lady who has tested the product announces the following:

*min khilāl dirāsāt mustafīda istamarrit sanawāt ʿadīda tawaṣṣal*  
*khubarāʾ it-tagmīl ilā shāmbū ʾisma al-gadīd*  
 “as a result of studies lasting a number of years beautification experts  
 have produced the new shampoo from ‘Qisma’”

In general this piece of discourse is devoid of any colloquial syntactic features, although it displays some ECA phonological traits such as the ECA “i” suffix vowel in *istamarrit*, and the “i” vowel of the definite article. However, it contains an example of word order which undoubtedly belongs to SA, that is, the verb in the singular preceding its (plural) subject: *tawaṣṣal khubarāʾ it-tagmīl . . .*; and in the choice of vocabulary it suggests an elevated form of spoken Arabic. Also worthy of note in this connection is that later in the commercial the same speaker says the following:

*yagʿal ish-shaʿr dhū barīq* “makes the hair shine”

There is clearly an attempt here to continue the description of the product in a more formal Arabic. The result, however, is an interesting one. The use of the “possessive” *dhū* in the *rafʿ* case is incorrect here according to the rules of SA, which would require it to be in the *naṣb* case, namely, *dhā*. Given that the *dhāl* phoneme is pronounced as a *dhāl*, we may assume that a SA rendition was intended. However, if the word had been pronounced *zū* according to ECA phonology—and it should be noted that this word would only be used by educated speakers in any case—then the grammatical case of the word would have been unimportant. This suggests that the conflict of registers in the mind of the copywriter has produced a hybrid, and in this case, incorrect, form.

The language of the “Baby Admiral” advertisement is similar to that of an audio presentation of the type that would appear in television commercials; the “block” language used here is evidence of this. However, an even more significant point is that these two advertisements display features of both ECA and SA that suggest, or reflect, the existence of a hybrid form of language which is certainly not unique to the advertising situation: that of an Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA).<sup>20</sup>

In Mitchell’s view (1986:11), “educated Arabic conversation constantly oscillates between written and written-vernacular hybridization within the scope of a sentence, phrase, or even word”. He adds that “ESA is not to be seen as one of a series of separate varieties . . . but rather as created and maintained by the constant interplay of written and vernacular Arabic”. The argument for the existence of an ESA in a written advertisement can only be valid, of course, if we agree that its language constitutes an accurate, written record of what could theoretically be a spoken scenario. Consider the following example from the Baby Admiral advertisement:

*al-‘ālam kulluhu yattajihu ilā l-qūṭn*  
 “the whole world is turning to cotton”

This example represents SA in that the vocabulary does not display any colloquial features, but the syntax could conceivably belong to ECA, particularly through the use of the emphatic *kull*. In other words, it could be

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<sup>20</sup> In addition to the many articles that deal with Educated Spoken Arabic, such as Blanc (1960), el-Hassan (1977), Mitchell (1978, 1980 and 1986), (and, of course, his large [Leeds University] corpus of unpublished material on ESA), and Meiseles (1980), we now have the first published monograph on the subject: T. F. Mitchell’s and Shahir El-Hassan’s *Modality, Mood and Aspect in Spoken Arabic*, Library of Arabic Linguistics, Monograph No. 11, London: Kegan Paul International, 1995.

read as *al-<sup>c</sup>ālam kulluh yattagih . . .* Moreover, even the examples *tiwaffarī* and *maysarrabsh* noted above would seem to fit the category of ESA, since neither displays the widely-used Egyptian colloquial non-past proclitic *bi-*.<sup>21</sup> Further evidence to support this argument can be found in Badawi (1973). According to his classification, the language of this advertisement would probably represent the colloquial language of the highly educated person, *‘āmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn*. In Badawi’s view, this register represents “the spoken counterpart of the written *fushā al-<sup>c</sup>aṣr*” (Hinds/Badawi 1986:ix), which is particularly relevant to our argument here.

Another example that conforms to the theory of ESA being proposed here occurs in a commercial for “Kodak Gold” camera films. After a song in ECA, the voice-over presents the following:

*film kūdāk gūld yu<sup>c</sup>ṭika arwa<sup>c</sup> alwān al-<sup>c</sup>ālam . . . ṣawwar bi aflām  
kūdāk gūld fa in kānit ḥilwa tib<sup>’</sup>ā kūdāk*

“Kodak Gold film gives you the most wonderful colours in the world. Take pictures with Kodak Gold and, if they turn out well, they must be Kodak”.

Although a switching of codes from SA to ECA would seem to occur at the beginning of the sentence *fa in kānit . . .*, the presence of the *fatha* as the stem vowel in *ṣawwar* (as opposed to the SA *ṣawwir*) suggests a vernacular infiltration at an earlier point.<sup>22</sup> The choice of the verb *yu<sup>c</sup>ṭi* in preference to the ECA *yiddī*, and the elative *arwa<sup>c</sup>* as opposed to *aḥlā* or *agmal*, for example, gives a formal credence to the nature of the product. The overall impression, therefore, is one of an admixture of ECA and SA which could be indicative of an ESA.

The following summary outlines some of the main patterns and categories identified in the foregoing discussion on language levels and code-mixing. In general it was found that:

(i) *In television commercials*

(a) ECA is favoured for dialogue between consumers, as one might expect.

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<sup>21</sup> This is not to say, however, that the presence of the proclitic *bi-* disqualifies a verb from being an example of ESA. See Mitchell and El-Hassan 1995:93–94, for example.

<sup>22</sup> It should not be forgotten that here (and elsewhere) we are discussing an originally scripted rather than spontaneously spoken piece of discourse, since the advertisements were, after all, originally *written* by the copywriter.

(b) SA, including SA phonology and syntax, is preferred for narrative advertisements of a scientific nature.

(c) ECA is often employed in voice-overs, particularly, although not exclusively, for everyday consumables or domestic products used in the home, such as washing powders. ECA is also used in “family” and domestic situations, particularly in advertisements for children’s products.

(d) SA (or ESA) often occurs during the course of a commercial, whether in a voice-over or as part of a scene involving consumers, to give key factual information about the product, either as though it were being read from the label or as a direct account of how the product was produced.

*(ii) In written advertisements*

(a) some of the patterns identified above also apply to written advertisements. The use of the vernacular in print is becoming more widespread, and it is often employed to create the same connotative effect as in television commercials.

(b) SA is, however, still the exclusive register of “prestige” advertisements.

*4.1.3. Phonological “mixing”*

Egyptian colloquial Arabic displays a number of phonological differences from SA which are sometimes represented in advertising language, particularly on television. We have already seen that the *jīm*, for example, is always pronounced as *gīm*, even when the register is SA. The graphemic representation of this consonant, however, presents no problem. It remains the same according to either pronunciation. The same level of simplicity does not obtain with some of the other consonants which require a different colloquial pronunciation.

The consonant *qāf* retains its SA spelling in “supers” in television commercials even when it is pronounced as a *hamza*. The word *qirsh* “piastre”, for instance, is usually pronounced according to the ECA phonological scheme, that is, <sup>ʾ</sup>*irsh*, although it appears in the “super” as *qirsh*. Another example of this can be found in the “Rabso” washing powder commercial with the following endline:

*il-mashūq (pronounced mashūʾ) il-mutamakkin*  
“the capable washing powder”.

Other consonants pronounced differently in SA and ECA, however, may appear according to either scheme. In a commercial for Ariel washing powder the *zāʾ* of the word *naẓāfa* “cleanliness” appears on the screen as a *ḍād*

in accordance with the ECA pronunciation of that word (*naḍāfa*). However, in a commercial for “Persil” washing powder the SA caption *qimmat al-naḍāfa* “the ultimate in cleanliness” appears as a “super” but is read according to the ECA scheme, possibly because the whole commercial is presented in that register. Whilst this might not present a problem for the Egyptian consumer, it does underline the dilemma facing the copywriter.

One of the best illustrations of this phenomenon I have encountered so far occurs in a commercial for “Anchor Cheese” with the following endline (and “super”):

*kull(i) ghidhā l-laban aṭ-ṭabīṭ* “all the nourishment of natural milk”

Of particular interest here is that the commentator pronounces the word for “nourishment” as *gh’zā*, thereby intending an ECA representation. However, the consonant *dhāl*—which often becomes *zayn* in ECA—is retained in the spelling, but the *hamza* of the SA word, viz., *ghidhā’*, is omitted. What appears on the screen, therefore, is a hybrid version which is neither a correct orthographic version of the SA word, nor a true phonemic representation of its ECA variant.

#### 4.1.4. Lexical “mixing”

To date I have found very little evidence of code-mixing at the level of individual lexemes. However, the examples I have located so far are of some interest.

First, with regard to the adverbial “only” there is a propensity in television advertisements delivered in ECA for the use of *bass*, as in the commercial for “Snacky” chocolate wafers, for instance:

*khamastāshar ʿirsh(i) bass* “only fifteen piastres”

However, the more standard *faqat* also occurs in advertisements presented in pure ECA, such as the one for “Snack” chocolate bars:

*khamsa wi ʿishrīn ʿirsh(i) faqat* “only twenty-five piastres”

These two examples appeared consecutively during one commercial slot, and it is interesting that a different adverb should have been used in each, although two very similar products were being advertised in almost identical language. A possible explanation for the use of the more formal *faqat* is that it actually appears on the screen with the number, whereas *bass* does not, although we have already seen that ECA now appears regularly in script on the television screen and in the written media. It was pointed out earlier, however, that the inclusion of a more formal word during a commercial in

ECA may increase the “attention value”.

A close scrutiny of a television advertisement for “Bic” pens also suggests an intentional employment of a SA word in the course of a “catchy” song about the product in ECA. On this occasion the copywriter has selected the word *rafi*<sup>c</sup> “fine” to describe the nib of the pen because the context requires a word to rhyme with *mawāḍi*<sup>c</sup> “subjects”. In accordance with the register of the commercial, one would have expected the ECA variant *rufayya*<sup>c</sup>, which is in fact used a few seconds later in contrast to *tikhīn* “thick” (also to describe the nib of the pen). Underlining this situation further, the following caption appears on the screen: *sinn rufayya*<sup>c</sup> . . . *sinn tikhīn* “fine nib . . . (or) thick nib”. Of course, the word *rufayya*<sup>c</sup> could also be read here as *rafi*<sup>c</sup>. It is only through its juxtaposition with *tikhīn* and the commentator’s voice-over, therefore, that we know ECA is intended.

The “conflict” between ECA and SA is perhaps best represented in the television advertisement for “Philips” washing machines. The female presenter talks about the product exclusively in an ECA register, while various captions appear on the screen in SA indicating many of the machine’s facilities. The SA *ḍamān khamas sanawāt* “guaranteed for five years” appears on the screen, as the presenter simultaneously says *ḍamān khamas sinīn*. In ECA, *sinīn* is the more common plural for *sana*.

##### 5. Idioms

During the course of this study it has been observed that idioms always occur in the vernacular form in all types of advertisements. It is worth examining briefly the effect achieved by this choice of register.

In advertisements, idioms probably occur in ECA in order to establish familiarity with the consumer. A useful example of this can be found in a commercial for “Philips” washing machines in which the idiomatic caption *shughl(i) ‘alā mayya bayḍā* “honest work” (Hinds/Badawi 1986:842) flashes intermittently on the screen, and is repeated aloud by a cartoon character. The important point about this choice is not only that it creates a marked contrast with the SA register in which the commercial is presented, but also that the word *mayya* “water”, and, in particular, its qualifying adjective *bayḍā* “white”, reflect the level of cleanliness which one can expect for one’s laundry when using this appliance. Moreover, the image of water is especially appropriate for promoting an appliance of this type.

Advertisements of the written media are not the exclusive domain of SA. As we saw previously, the copywriter will select a colloquial expression where appropriate. In addition to the earlier examples, we may consider the following two words which make up an advertisement for a brand of tea

called “Gawhara”, and which would probably have an immediate effect on Egyptian consumers:

*ḥittit sukkara* lit: “one piece of sugar” (H:30/4/94)

By selecting the colloquial word *ḥitta* for “piece” in preference to, say, the SA equivalent *qitʿa*, the copywriter immediately enters the daily world of the consumer. But the expression *ḥittit sukkara* has further significance since it also bears the idiomatic meaning “how lovely”. On a cultural level the expression is similarly loaded, because the average consumption of sugar in tea is very high. This equation, therefore, suggests that tea in the Middle Eastern culture is almost synonymous with sugar. From this brief, but subtle, advertisement, the consumer may conclude that this brand of tea requires just one piece of sugar to bring out the full flavour.

ECA may also be used in written advertisements to create a rhyme,<sup>23</sup> which again occasions an immediate impact on the consumer, especially when the ECA element is idiomatic. An example of this may be found in an advertisement for a brand of palm oil called “al-Nakhletein”, where the word *nakhlatēn* “two palm trees” is followed immediately by:

*al-ḥubb fī aklitēn* “you’ll love it immediately” (H:30/4/94)

#### 6. “Disjunctive” language

Leech maintains (1966:93) that disjunctive grammar (or “block language”) comprises minor and non-finite clauses which do not require a “finite predicator” (i.e., a verb). Perhaps the most significant difference between these clauses in disjunctive and discursive language is that in the latter they are dependent, whereas in the former they function independently. Single nominal groups of words or single adverbial groups may, according to Leech, be grammatically independent. He adds that “either of these groups may in turn consist of a single word. In other words, there is no limit to the simplicity of a grammatical unit”.

The major difference between the English language which Leech was describing and Arabic, of course, is that in the latter a verb is not essential to form a grammatically complete sentence. Whilst a two part sentence such as “for you this summer. . . a golden tan” is an independent minor clause in English, the following example taken from a press advertisement for “Sparkle” shampoo is a not uncommon illustration of a major independent clause in Arabic:

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<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of rhyme and other phonological schemes see below, p. 24ff.

*ilayki shāmbū sbārki al-jadīd*                      “for you . . . new Sparkle sham-  
poo” (H 28/5/94)

Notwithstanding this important difference between the two languages, there is no doubt that disjunctive language is also a prominent feature of Arabic advertising. More examples of this will be seen later in the section on parallelism.

### 7. *Rhetorical devices*

Leech (1966:175) selects rhyme, alliteration and parallelism as “special patterns of regularity” in advertising language. This section will examine the occurrence of a number of rhetorical devices in Arabic advertising, in particular those of rhyme and rhythm. It seems especially appropriate to discuss these “schemes” (ibid.:186)<sup>24</sup> with regard to Arabic, since the language boasts such a rich tradition of oratory dating back to pre-Islamic times. As we shall see shortly, Arab advertising copywriters often use to full advantage the strict morphological forms of words in their language.

#### 7.1 *Parallelism*

Parallelisms, or “formal schemes” (ibid.:190), appear to be as much a characteristic of Arabic advertising as they are of English. In Leech’s view (ibid.:146), parallelism is one of the devices of “co-ordination at group rank” level which he considers to be “an especially cohesive factor in advertising language”,<sup>25</sup> particularly in disjunctive language situations where “the group tends to be the largest unit to play a significant role in communication”. The main effect of this device would seem to be a reinforcement of the qualities of a product in an almost mnemonic fashion through a repetition of linguistic patterns.

There are many examples of parallelism to be found in Arabic television commercials and press advertisements. As in English, this device is normally assisted by lay-out. Examples of parallelism in Arabic are exemplified by the following phrases taken from the advertisement for “Sparkle” shampoo:

*li l-sha<sup>c</sup>r al-duhnī*                                      “for oily hair”  
*li l-sha<sup>c</sup>r al-jāff*                                        “for dry hair”

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<sup>24</sup> Leech (1966:186–87) defines a “scheme” in this context as “a correspondence or partial identity (over and above the degree of identity inherent in language structure) between equivalent pieces of text in proximity”.

<sup>25</sup> The three main types of co-ordination are: linking, parataxis, and apposition (ibid.:146).

*li l-sha<sup>c</sup>r al-<sup>c</sup>ādī* “for normal hair”

A similar example was found in a press advertisement for “Toyota” vehicles. The technique is enhanced by the printing of the adjective *iqtiṣādiyya* “economical” in larger, boldface type:

<i>iqtiṣādiyya ḥīna tashtarīhā</i>	“economical when you buy it”
<i>iqtiṣādiyya ḥīna tastakhdīmuhā</i>	“economical when you use it”
<i>iqtiṣādiyya ḥīna tabī<sup>c</sup>uhā</i>	“economical when you sell it”

(O 24/2/95)

Parallelism may take a number of forms. Consider, for instance, the following example taken from an advertisement for a hair removing appliance called “Feminin”:

*jawda lā tuqāran . . . si<sup>c</sup>r lā yunāfas*  
 “incomparable quality . . . unbeatable price” (H 30/4/94)

In this example, the parallel effect is created less by repetition of a key attribute of the product than by rhythm and parallelism of the two passive verbs and the negative particle *lā*.

The following example of parallelism is taken from a television commercial for “Milkyland” yoghurt:

<i>miyya fī l-miyya ḥa<sup>ṣ</sup>ṭī</i>	“one hundred percent real”
<i>miyya fī l-miyya ṭabī<sup>c</sup>ī</i>	“one hundred percent natural”
<i>miyya fī l-miyya ṭāzīg</i>	“one hundred percent fresh”

The placing of two adjectives in succession with similar forms, (*ḥa<sup>ṣ</sup>ṭī* and *ṭabī<sup>c</sup>ī*), is important for the continuity of rhythm and rhyme. Moreover, what can only be appreciated from listening to the voice-over is the rhythmic effect created by the precise staccato reading of each line.

The above examples are not only distinctive in their formal parallelism, but also because they display a parataxis which is uncommon in discursive Arabic. Parataxis in the advertising situation is not restricted to nouns and adjectives, but can also be found with verbs, as in this advertisement for “Lipton” tea:

*yuḥan . . . yuqta<sup>c</sup> . . . yulaff . . .*  
 “(it is) ground . . . cut . . . wrapped . . .” (H 30/4/94)

## 7.2. Rhyme and rhythm

When assessing rhyme and rhythm in Arabic advertising, two possible associations immediately come to mind. First, the rhyming effect in many

advertisements is created by a combination of long vowel plus consonant at the end of each line, or each half of a two part slogan. This reminds us of some types of folk poetry, such as the vernacular poetry of Arabia known as *nabaṭī*, where a rhyming pattern occurs at the end of each hemistich. One of many such examples can be seen in a press advertisement for “Braun” food processors:

*kull al-taqḍīr fī jawdat al-taḥḍīr*

“[your guests’] appreciation comes entirely from the quality of preparation” (H 30/4/94)

Of particular interest here is not just the rhyme created by the long “i” vowel plus *rāʾ* in the final syllables of *taqḍīr* and *taḥḍīr*, but also the assonance occasioned by the morphological symmetry of the verbal nouns. It was noted above that Arabic lends itself well to this type of scheme.

A second technique used by the copywriters is based on rhyming and rhythmic prose techniques (*sajʿ*) of the classical and neo-classical periods. In advertising we find examples such as two morphologically similar words occurring in close contiguity. An example of this can be found in the following press advertisement for “Si-Si” shampoo:

*min al-ʿināya li l-ḥimāya* “from care to protection” (H 30/4/94)

The example displays assonance and rhyme based on the *fiʿāla* pattern, which is shared by many verbal nouns of defective third consonant verbs.

Many examples of this kind can be found in both television commercials and press advertisements. Here is the signature line for the advertisement for “GMC” water heaters:

*takāmul al-ijāda . . . aʿtānā l-riyāda*

“total excellence has made us pioneers” (ND 1/5/94)<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Although these examples are good illustrations of traditional consonant rhyme schemes, it is worth pointing out that rhyme and rhythm patterns are often enhanced by the common occurrence of the feminine noun and adjective marker which reads as *-a(h)* in pausal form; for instance, the noun *ʿināya* “care” mentioned above, or the adjective *ʿamaliyya* “practical”. In a comparison of Italian and English, Fraser notes (1970:61–62) that the former is better equipped to form rhyming patterns because it contains a greater number of words with open vocalic endings. Although we would not wish to draw any direct comparison between Arabic and Italian, there is no doubt that this feminine vocalic ending in Arabic gives the copywriter great scope to create rhyme schemes.

Another interesting example is taken from the commercial for a brand of butter called “Shahiyya”:

*shahiyya zibda t̄āza . . . miyya miyya*  
 “Shahiyya is one hundred percent fresh butter  
*zibda shahiyya . . . iz-zibda illī hiyya*  
 Shahiyya butter is the real thing”

Worthy of note here is that had the word *miyya* been pronounced in its SA form, namely, *miʿa*, it would not have been possible to create a perfect rhyme with the SA feminine singular free-standing pronoun *hiya*. However, the ECA variant *hiyya* rhymes perfectly with *miyya*. In this connection, there are other occasions when the choice of ECA as the register for an advertisement may well have been influenced by the ensuing rhyme. It is clear that an effective rhyme can be an important promotional device for a product. Consider, for instance, the following commercial for “Gawhara” tea:

*shāy shāy shāy . . . shūf taʿmuh gamīl izzāy*  
 “tea, tea, tea . . . see how wonderful it tastes”

An important aspect of this example is that very few appropriate words in SA would rhyme with the word *shāy*, but the expression *izzāy* provides the copywriter with a solution since it not only rhymes perfectly with *shāy*, but it also fits neatly here in its normal post-posed syntactic position.

Another popular rhyme scheme is based on the adjectival form *faʿīl* (or sometimes *fiʿīl* in ECA). For instance, the slogan (and “super”) for a commercial for “Eva” skin cream tells the user that they can experience the following:

*iḥsās gamīl baʿd(i) yōm ṭawīl*      “a beautiful feeling after a long day”

A further interesting example of this form occurs in the commercial for “Rabso” washing powder. The female presenter begins by introducing two male characters, one of whom has his clothes washed in “Rabso”, and the other in an unmentioned brand of washing powder. The latter is introduced as:

*abū khalīl . . . hammuh tiʿīl*      “Abū Khalīl . . . is very concerned”

It is quite conceivable that the character’s name, or even the notion of using such characters, was created around the expression *hammuh tiʿīl*, which immediately imposes a negative impression of the “other” (unmentioned) brand of powder.

There are, of course, other morphological patterns which are put to good

effect by the copywriter. The promotional success of a press advertisement for “Uno” electrical equipment rests mainly on the following introductory slogan:

*al-ḍamān al-shāmil wa l-amān al-kāmil*  
 “total guarantee and complete safety” (H 28/5/94)

In this example, the participles (or adjectives) *shāmil* and *kāmil* are closely related in meaning, as are the nouns *ḍamān* and *amān*. But more than this, these two pairs of nouns and adjectives are both examples of *jinās* “paronomasia” in Arabic, or to be more precise, *jinās nāqiṣ* “incomplete paronomasia”. These two pairs are examples of *jinās lafẓī*, in which the *jinās* components, that is, *ḍamān* and *amān*, and *shāmil* and *kāmil*, contain the same number of consonants, and identical vowels.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the nouns *ḍamān* and *amān* occur in this way in a number of advertisements for domestic appliances.

The category of *jinās lafẓī* shares some characteristics with that of “pararhyme” identified by Leech (1969:89). In his view, pararhyme is one of the six main syllable sound patterns in which the initial and final consonants of two rhyming words are identical. In *jinās lafẓī* any two consonants may be identical, so the following example of pararhyme taken from the endline (and “super”) of the commercial for “Milkāna” cheese would also have been an example of *jinās lafẓī*, but for the difference in one vowel:

*gibna milkāna . . . bi ṭ-ṭāqa malyāna*  
 “Milkāna cheese is full of energy”

The pararhyme in this example is created by the words *milkāna* and *malyāna*. It is interesting to note that rhyme and assonance is only possible here by means of a change in word order. Although the inversion is not syntactically incorrect, the resultant word order is less common and would normally only occur for emphasis.

An example of a technique often used in *sajʿ* literature, in which two partially synonymous and similar sounding nouns are placed in close proximity, can be found in an advertisement for “Olympic Electric” ice-tanks:

*khayr rafīq wa ṣadīq li kulli afrād al-usra*  
 “the best friend and companion for all members of the family”  
 (H 28/5/94)

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<sup>27</sup> Isbir/Junaydī 1981:746. The category of *jinās lafẓī* is one of the many examples of *badīʿ* “verbal artifices” employed in various genres of Arabic literature, but particularly in prose writing.

A further illustration of this appears in a magazine advertisement for “GAOOV” television and video equipment:

*ammā l-ṣūra fa hiya fī ghāyat al-naqā’ wa l-ṣafā’*  
 “the picture is of the utmost clarity” (M 5/12/94)

In most cases a product’s name is not derived from an identifiable root in the Arabic language. However, a copywriter’s ability to create rhyming schemes does not seem to be impaired by this fact. An example of this is the brand of cheese called “Milkāna” mentioned above. Consider also the following slogan from the television commercial for “Laysīd” lice-remover, for example:

*laysīd bi t-ta’kīd huwwa l-mufīd* “Laysīd for sure is the one to use”  
 (H 28/5/94)

In this example the copywriter employs rhyme for maximum mnemonic effect, selecting nouns and participles bearing the ending *-īd*. Another product with a name that lends itself well to rhyme is a multi-purpose cleaning liquid called “Līzā”. There are two separate commercials for this product with the following respective endlines:

*līzā . . . yikhallī kull(i) ḥāga lazīza*  
 “Līzā . . . makes everything really nice”

or:

*līzā . . . mufāga’ātuh lazīza*  
 “Līzā . . . it brings lovely surprises”

In cases such as these, is at least a part of the slogan or signature line conceived of before the brand name? If the brand name were always chosen before the slogan perhaps it would not be so easy for the copywriter to create appropriate and effective rhymes to promote the product.<sup>28</sup>

There are also examples in which the sense of the signature line, or endline, appears to have been directed by the copywriter’s efforts to create a rhyme scheme. One such instance is the commercial for “Pert Plus” shampoo, which takes the form of a dialogue in ECA between two young ladies. Here is the endline for this advertisement:

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, I have heard a commercial for the same product on satellite television, in which the linguistic register was not strictly Egyptian. Therefore, the effect created by the ECA version was partially lost: *līzā . . . yaj’al kull(i) ḥāja ladhīdha*.

*shāmbū pirt iṣ-ṣughayyar . . . yāmā biyghayyar*  
 “small size Pert shampoo . . . see how much it changes!”

The implication here, of course, is that using this brand of shampoo changes one’s hair to make it attractive. As the voice-over remarks earlier:

*li sh-shaʿr ig-gazzāb min ghēr ʿazāb*  
 “for attractive hair without any hassle”

However, there is little doubt that the meaning of the endline displays a vagueness which would be unacceptable in non-advertising language.

In addition to the use of certain regular morphological patterns in the language of advertisements, the copywriter makes frequent use of specific types of grammatical structures to convey the qualities of a product. One of these structures is the *tamyīz* “specification” mentioned earlier. Consider this cluster of such structures taken from the “GMC” ad for water heaters:

*al-aqwā adāʾan . . . al-akthar wafran*  
 “the best performer . . . the most economical  
*al-awthaq ḍamānan . . . al-aḍman amānan*  
 the most reliable . . . the safest”

There are two points to be made here. First, the wide range of adjectives in their superlative form is employed to create an effect which would not have been possible without the use of the *tamyīz* construction. Second, and perhaps more significant, is the metrical rhythm created by these structures.

Another grammatical structure which is used to good effect in Arabic advertising is the *iḍāfa ghayr ḥaqīqiyya* “unreal *iḍāfa*” (also mentioned earlier). A particularly good example of this comes from a magazine advertisement for the “Saudi British Bank”. Two-thirds of the one-page advertisement is given over to a large picture of an imposing modern building belonging to that company. Above the picture is written in large, boldface type:

*saʿūdī l-intimāʾ* “of Saudi origin”

and below it:

*wa ʿālamī l-adāʾ* “and carries out its business world-wide”  
 (M 5/11/94)

The contiguity of these two structures creates a rhyming effect based on the final *-āʾ* of the verbal nouns *intimāʾ* and *adāʾ*, and highlights the national (and therefore Arab) origin of the company on the one hand and its enor-

mous international importance on the other.<sup>29</sup>

### 7.3. Alliteration

In its strictest sense alliteration only occurs where there is repetition of the initial consonant or consonant cluster, as in this example taken from Leech (1966:187): “Built Better by Burco for you”. Leech observes, however (1969:92), that it is “the main stressed syllable of a word which generally carries the alliteration, not necessarily its initial syllable”. Only one example of conventional alliteration was found in the material used for this preliminary study, a disappointingly low number compared to, say, English advertising where alliteration is a common device. The following example is from the endline for the television commercial for “Snack” chocolate wafers:

*snāk . . . il-wayfīr ish-shaʿiyya ish-shahiyya min kādbirī*  
 “Snack . . . the naughty, tasty wafer from Cadbury”

The alliteration here is created by the initial *sh-* phonemes of the words *shaʿiyya* and *shahiyya*. Leech (ibid.:92) calls this an example of “reverse rhyme”, in which words share an initial vowel sound in addition to the sound of the initial consonant or consonant cluster.<sup>30</sup>

## 8. Syntax

There are many aspects of syntax in the language of advertising that merit a detailed study. This discussion will be restricted to a few key areas that illustrate an unorthodox use of language, but which also show that apparent anomalies within the syntax can often be attributed to a deliberate choice of one linguistic register in preference to another.

### 8.1. Elatives (comparatives and superlatives)

As one might expect, the use of the superlative is extremely common in advertising language. Some examples of this have already been given (above p.2), so this category need not detain us here. Of more interest within the elative category is the employment of the comparative.

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<sup>29</sup> The use of the “unreal *idāfa*” in advertising may well be worth a study of its own, since the number and range of this type of compound construction appear to be ever expanding. To what extent some of the examples would be acceptable in SA prose is one interesting point. Does any restriction exist on the type of collocational relationships between noun and adjective in these constructions? Cf. a magazine advertisement for Corona cigars: *sahlat al-ḥifz bi l-jayb* “easily stored in the pocket” (ND 8/5/94).

<sup>30</sup> Of course, there is more than just reverse rhyme involved here if one takes into account the rhyme with *-ya* or *-iyya*.

Given the restrictions imposed on the copywriter when comparing his or her product to similar ones,<sup>31</sup> it is not surprising that comparatives in advertising are normally unqualified. We can say, therefore, that their use is indeterminate. Leech (1966:161) remarks that “comparative adjectives are vague—almost, one might say, to the point of meaninglessness—without a standard of comparison”. Geis (1982:90ff.), however, maintains that constructions containing the unqualified comparative are “elliptical”. Several examples of indefinite comparatives were found in the material used for this study.

Consider, for instance, the ambiguity in the following endline taken from a television commercial for “Kodak” camera films:

*maʿa kūdāk anta aḥlā*            “you are more beautiful with Kodak”

Does one appear more beautiful in a picture developed from “Kodak” films than from other similar brands, or is one more beautiful in “Kodak” films than one is in reality? Of course, although the potential for ambiguity is real, the sender would assume that only the former interpretation would occur to the consumer. The “Daz” washing powder commercial mentioned earlier is similarly vague:

*Dāz yaḡhsil akthar bayāḍan*            “Daz washes whiter”

Does “Daz” wash whiter than competing brands, or whiter than earlier products produced by the same manufacturer, or is it considered to be more effective than washing clothes with plain water, which might not be such an unlikely activity amongst poorer people in the Middle East?<sup>32</sup>

The following example is one of the best illustrations of the cultural ambiguity that may accompany the use of the unqualified comparative. In a press advertisement for the “Whopper” meat burger we find the following:

*aṭyab liʾannahū mashwī*            “more delicious because it is grilled”  
(O 20/1/94)

This example raises a number of issues. First, we cannot assume that the

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<sup>31</sup> Copywriters are not permitted to claim that their product is of a higher quality than another named product.

<sup>32</sup> It will by now be apparent to readers familiar with British advertising that many of the slogans already presented in this study bear a strong resemblance to their British counterparts. In such cases as the “Daz” slogan, we have a direct translation from the English. What is interesting is that the Arabic language displays the same potential to be used in an unorthodox manner.

copywriter's intention is the same as it might be in a similar advertisement in a more cholesterol-conscious western culture, namely, that grilled meat is healthier than, say, fried meat, although this cannot be ruled out. Second, does the advertisement suggest that the "Whopper" burger is better than other burgers because it is grilled? Or could it be that the status of the burger has been elevated here to that of a more expensive meat, such as *kabāb*, which is a favourite dish of people throughout the Arab-speaking world, and which is normally grilled?

### 8.2. *The adverbial faqaṭ*

It was suggested earlier (p. 20) that the distribution of either the SA *faqaṭ* or ECA *bass* to render the adverb "only, just" is not necessarily determined, in television commercials at least, by the register in which the advertisement is presented. In press advertisements, no examples of *bass* were found, but several occurrences of *faqaṭ* raised a significant point of word order. According to El-Hassan (1977:125), "the word / faqaṭ / has no invariable position in Classical Arabic"; in other words it may occur directly after the subject or following the predicate. El-Hassan does not deal with its occurrence in the initial position in a sentence.

In the material used in this present study the adverbial *faqaṭ* often occurred in the initial position. Take the following, for instance:

*faqaṭ akhshāb ṭabīʿiyya*  
 "only natural wood" (H 28/5/95)

*al-iqtisād al-ḥaqīqī . . . faqaṭ min sayyāratika tūyūtā*  
 "real economy . . . only from your Toyota car" (O 24/2/95)

*faqaṭ tūyūtā waḥdahā taḥtafīzu bi jawdatihā*  
 "only Toyota alone maintains its quality . . ." (O 24/2/95)

There are two plausible explanations for this unconventional word order. El-Hassan (ibid.:124) quotes examples given by Blanc in his speech survey of *faqaṭ* occurring in initial position where one might have expected the colloquial *bass*. This suggests that the position of *faqaṭ* in the above examples could well have been determined by the copywriter's own style of language, in particular by his own dialect. The other possible influence on the word order here, of course, is a western language such as English, of which the last two examples at least could be a direct translation.

In either case it is interesting that such examples should occur in written Arabic, although one should not be surprised at the adverbial *faqaṭ* appearing in sentence-initial position in the spoken medium, as we have just



Another means of avoiding a conditional clause in Arabic advertising is to use a nominal clause, as the following example taken from a television commercial promoting a Post Office savings scheme demonstrates:

*it-tawfīr bi maktab il-barīd*      “if you save with the Post Office  
*filūsak maḍmūna wi tzīd*      your money is guaranteed and grows”

The advantage of selecting a noun in the first line in preference to a conditional particle and a verb is that it creates a parallel effect with the word *filūs*, and maintains a rhythm to complement the rhyme of the final syllables of each line.

The occurrence of conditional-type sentences with conditional particles in Arabic advertising is not uncommon. In a previous article, however, the present writer suggested that the conventional rules pertaining to the use of conditional particles are either frequently ignored in modern written Arabic (Gully 1993: 48–50), or have become subject to a highly flexible writer’s licence. There is further evidence to support this view in the language of advertising, particularly with regard to the particles *aynamā* and *mahmā*.

#### 8.4.1. *aynamā* “wherever”

According to the conventional rules of grammar, conditional particles should be followed by a verb in either the past tense or the jussive mood. However, during the course of this study a number of examples were found which contravene this rule.

The particle *aynamā* “wherever” is probably the most common conditional particle in advertisements. It is often used in contexts which demonstrate that the consumer can enjoy a product “wherever” he or she happens to be. Although examples were found in which the particle was followed by a verb in the past tense, for instance, *aynamā kunta* “wherever you are”, it is more common for it to be followed by a non-past tense of the verb “to be”, which in itself is a more recent development of SA. In this example taken from a commercial for “Vitrac” jam, there is a similar “violation” of the conventional rule that in conditional sentences, a result clause which commences with an imperative verb should begin with the particle *fa*:

*aynamā takūn tamatta<sup>c</sup> bi vītrāk*  
 “wherever you are, [you can] enjoy Vitrac”

On the other hand, if the intended register of this line is ECA then the syntax is not unusual. The same obtains for the following press advertisement for “Lipton” tea which contains only the following caption:

*shāy libtūn . . . al-awwal aynamā takūn*

“Lipton tea . . . the first wherever you are” (H 30/4/94)

In this example it is clear that the present tense of the verb, *takūn*, has been chosen to create a rhyme with the brand name *Libtūn*, but the reader is still unable to ascertain with certainty the intended register of this short advertisement.

#### 8.4.2. mahmā

A similar situation exists with the conditional particle *mahmā*. The following example is taken from a commercial for “Fairy” washing-up liquid:

<i>mahmā d-duhūn taqwā</i>	“however resistant the grease,
<i>fērī ‘alayhā aqwā</i>	Fairy is (always) stronger”

In this commercial the main text is in ECA. For the endline above, however, the copywriter appears to have selected a hybrid form of ECA syntax with SA morphology and phonology. As a rule, the occurrence of the verb in the first line after its subject would be unacceptable in SA in clauses containing the conditional particle *mahmā*. Additionally, the conventional rules of SA require the verb following the particle to be in either the past tense or jussive mood. It would have been very difficult, however, to create a rhyme through the use of paronomasia without inverting the syntax. Perhaps the ECA context of the commercial makes this infringement of the conventional rules of syntax more acceptable.

#### 9. Numerals

Blanc (1960:107) found that in the material collected for his study of style variations in (educated) spoken Arabic all numerals remained in their colloquial form. On the other hand, El-Hassan (1977:124) offers evidence from his corpus of Educated Spoken Arabic that the classical Arabic features of numerals are sometimes retained.<sup>34</sup> In general we have found that numerals occur in commercials in the vernacular form, and in either a SA or vernacular form in written advertisements.

In the magazine advertisement for “Coast” dried milk (Figure 2) the expression “seventeen nutritional elements” is mentioned on three separate occasions. On the basis of what we have found concerning the way in which

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<sup>34</sup> According to Meiseles’ classification (1980:129) the numerals listed by El-Hassan belong to the category of “Oral Literary Arabic” rather than ESA. Meiseles bases his argument on the fact that one of the most distinguishing features of OLA is its tendency to restore *i‘rāb* vowels as well as the “(syntactically) functionless *ḥarakāt awākhir al-kalim*”.

numbers are dealt with in Arabic advertising generally, it is reasonable to argue that the grammar related to each occurrence of this phrase is determined by a different motive in each case. In the main text the numeral is given its full Classical—and Standard—Arabic status (with nunation of the *naṣb* case on the noun from numbers eleven to ninety-nine):

*man minnā lā yatamannā sab<sup>ʿ</sup>ata ʿashara ʿunṣuran ghidhāʾiyyan  
asāsiyyan fī mashrūb wāḥid*

“would any of us not like to have seventeen essential nutritional elements in one drink?”

There is nothing surprising about this conformity to standard usage, since this is a straightforward narrative text highlighting the qualities of the brand of milk in question. It was suggested earlier that texts (or verbal presentations) of this type typically occur in SA. However, we find later in this advertisement that the grammar of the same phrase in the signature line displays colloquial traits:<sup>35</sup>

*ḥalīb kūst . . . sab<sup>ʿ</sup>ata ʿashara ʿunṣur ghidhāʾī li l-ajsām . . . wa l-ʿiẓām*  
“Coast Milk . . . seventeen nutritional elements for the body . . . and bones”

This accords with some of our earlier findings which demonstrate that many press advertisements maintain the “presentation” style of television commercials; in fact, this is one example which could conceivably have been taken from television. In this type of scenario the signature line is often delivered in a more vernacular register. As for the inset picture, this is probably the scene that the viewer would see during the narration of the main text. Again there is evidence that numerals appearing as “supers” do not normally follow conventional grammatical rules.<sup>36</sup> The following examples will support this notion.

In the television commercials for “Snack” chocolate bars and “Snacky” chocolate wafers, a price for each product flashes intermittently on the screen. For the chocolate bars the price is *khamṣa wi ʿishrīn ʾirsh* “twenty

<sup>35</sup> It is impossible to ascertain the register of the number itself because it is given in Arabic numerals, not words.

<sup>36</sup> The *naṣb* case on *ʿunṣuran ghidhāʾiyyan asāsiyyan* in the main text could be owing to its grammatical status as a direct object of the verb, but this would not account for the omission of the *naṣb* nunation in the other two examples. One would expect the noun following this number to be in the *naṣb* case in written Arabic whatever the context.

five piastres”, while for the wafers it is *khamastāshar ʿirsh* “fifteen piastres”. In neither commercial is the noun *ʿirsh* given its full grammatical status (the *naṣb* case ending with nunation). The explanation for this is simply that both commercials are narrated in ECA. However, it is interesting that this phenomenon appears in a “super”, and is not just spoken. One possible, but unlikely, explanation for this could lie once more in Leech’s theory of “attention value”.

Further evidence that colloquial Arabic takes precedence over SA in the representation of numerals in advertising can be found in the press advertisement for “Miraco” air-conditioning systems. A large boldface headline announcing the two main types of systems offered by this company is followed immediately by:

*ladaynā l-ithnayn* “we have got them both” (ND 8/5/94)

According to the conventional rules of SA, the noun for “two” should read here as *al-ithnān*, in the *rafʿ* case.

Another example of the use of ECA numerals in an exclusively SA narrative occurs in a television advertisement for “Farco” Royal Jelly. The commentator announces the available potencies of the product by saying:

*bi tarkīz miyya aw miyyatēn*  
“(available in) concentrations of one hundred or two hundred”

or the following:

*bi tarkīzin ʿālin . . . suttumiyya*  
“in high concentration (of) six hundred”

#### *10. Further cultural elements in the discourse of Arabic advertising*

This paper has already made frequent reference to Arab culture as it is reflected in the discourse of Arabic advertising. In this final section, more attention will be given to the relationship between language (the verbal context) and culture (the situational context), as reflected in the materials I have used.

A useful starting point for this discussion is Suleiman’s article (1993), in which he examined the benefits of teaching culture to non-native speakers of Arabic through a number of different media. In the section on advertisements (ibid.:78–79) he points out how they often reflect “shifts in the political climate” within a country. To illustrate this he gives an example from a Saudi newspaper advertising a brand of men’s aftershave called “U.S.A.” with the following caption: *quwwat al-ʿāṣifa* “strength of the storm”. This caption not only creates an appropriate image of the potency of the product,

but also evokes the close relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War in 1991 through a reference to the “Desert Storm” operation against Iraqi forces in Kuwait.

One of the many devices available to the copywriter is visual pun and metaphor, although it is fair to say that in the Arabic context the levels of subtlety vary a great deal. In the commercial for a brand of ghee called “Baladī”, for instance, a woman is dressed in the traditional attire of women in the countryside to correspond with the name of the product. A further example from this category is the commercial for °Arūsa tea (above p. 6). The oriental music which accompanies this commercial, and the pure, virginal connotations of the female dressed in bridal attire, represent two very culture-specific associations in the Muslim world. This type of commercial corresponds to Cook’s argument (1992:49) that “many ads create powerful and complex messages entirely—or almost entirely—through pictures and music, and are virtually language-free”. As we saw earlier, this commercial is language-free.

Another important feature of advertising discourse is paralanguage, which Cook defines (*ibid.*:1) as “meaningful behaviour accompanying language”. Whilst it is true that paralanguage is probably more immediately associated with “live” presentation because of the factors of gesture, expression, or intonation, for instance, Cook has shown that its value in written texts should not be overlooked. He adds (*ibid.*:77) that “the number of ways in which advertising exploits the paralanguage of writing is staggeringly large”. An example of this can be seen in the magazine advertisement for “Parker Duofold” pens (O19/10/94) in which an Arab of erudite appearance, wearing a headdress, is pictured sitting at a desk writing with one of these pens. Written above him in a very neat and mature hand-written script is the following:

*inna fanna l-kitāba mithl al-ta°līm . . . lā tuqaddar qīmatuhā l-ḥaqīqiyya  
illā bi l-nuḏūj*

“the art of writing is like education . . . its real value can only be appreciated with maturity”

One assumes that the reference to “maturity” is aimed principally at the experience and long-standing excellence of Parker pens, but also that the image of the Arab in headdress is intended to represent maturity through knowledge and experience. The handwriting used in this advertisement is significant because it too represents maturity, and in a culture where calligraphy has been elevated to a revered status throughout history it is sure to make a greater impact on the addressee. The choice of formal language in

this advertisement is also significant, and is underlined especially by the use of the nominalizing particle *inna*.

In the commercial for *fūl* beans produced by the company called “Ḥadāʿiq Kālifūrniyā” (above, p. 14), the switch from ECA to American English would probably only make an impression on middle-class, educated people, at whom this commercial appears to be aimed. The same applies to the use of *tanwīn* in the commercial described above. Although *fūl* beans are an essential part of the Egyptian staple diet it is most unlikely that poorer, uneducated people could afford to buy the brand of beans being advertised here. This language switch reflects, therefore, the type of consumer for whom the product is intended. Other factors in the commercial help to create the appropriate environment for the promotion of the product, such as the Westernized “cowboy” dress of the singers, and the catchy tune which is again symbolic of the West.<sup>37</sup>

The subtle incorporation of culture-specific features in advertising discourse is to be found in many Arabic advertisements. One such example is the “American Express” card advertisement with the following invitation to the consumer:

*istaʿmilhā li shirāʾ hadiyya li zawjatika . . .*

“use it to buy a present for your wife . . .” (M 30/12/94)

The consumer is then invited to use the card to purchase a toy for his child, or to invite a friend to supper. These invitations evoke the strong family ties and hospitality which are a fundamental part of Arab culture.

One of the most appealing examples of advertisements adopting the intertextual approach is the one for “Ford Ranger” pick-up trucks. The advertisement is headed by the following text in large boldface (a further example of a paralinguistic device) to attract the consumer, and to justify why he or she should buy one of these vehicles:

*alf sabab . . . wa sabab*

“one thousand . . . and one reasons”

In other words, there are “one thousand and one” reasons why one should purchase one of these pick-up trucks. By means of the apparent association with the stories of the *Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf layla wa layla*), the copywriter has borrowed a structure which has been implanted in the minds of Arabs for many centuries. This is further evidence of the “interdiscoursal” technique (Cook 1992:190), in which an advertisement “contains

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<sup>37</sup> This links well with the importance placed by Cook (1992:44ff.) on the role of music in advertising.

the voice of another discourse type, as when [it] evokes knowledge of a film or story”.<sup>38</sup> It is worth noting that this technique has also been employed to good effect by some writers of modern Arabic literature. Subjects such as mythology have been explored through reference to recurring motifs in ancient texts, and themes from the *Thousand and One Nights* have also been incorporated in modern literary prose works. In the material used for this study we have already seen how well-known literary genres such as *sajʿ* and poetry have been incorporated into advertising.

Cultural context, then, is vital for a wider appreciation of the significance of advertisements. Three further categories of context identified by Cook (*ibid.*:1–2) are situation, participants and function. An example in which these categories are fundamental to an assessment of an advertisement can be seen in very different presentations on Egyptian television of two brands of washing powder. It may initially seem unusual to set a commercial for a western brand of washing powder in the Egyptian countryside, but the scene that was chosen for the “Ariel” commercial features a long narrative by a lady from the poorer classes, with scenes of crowds of local people and clean laundry billowing in the wind. By contrast, we find a commercial for a much cheaper brand of Egyptian washing powder called “Rabso” being advertised from the comfortable home of an apparently middle-class couple, with a piano and good-quality furniture in the background. In this instance, we may presume that by switching the conventionally expected scenarios the sender is attempting to illustrate that these brands are suitable for everyone, in terms of cost in the case of the “Ariel” example, and quality in the case of the “Rabso” one.<sup>39</sup>

Another illustration of the relationship between text and context may be identified in the morphology of the verb. Since Arabic is one of those languages reflecting gender in the direct address forms, the use of imperative verbs gives a clear indication of who is being addressed by a particular advertisement. In the “American Express” advertisement, the imperative *istaʿmilhā* “use it” is directed principally at a male audience, which creates the assumption that the man is more likely to possess a credit card. Similarly, it is perhaps not surprising that an advertisement for “Power” air-

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<sup>38</sup> The counterpart of this is the “intra-discoursal” type, which contains “the voice of another example of the same discourse type, as when an ad assumes knowledge of another ad” (Cook 1992:190).

<sup>39</sup> There are surely other possible interpretations. For instance, the rural setting for the “Ariel” commercial suggests a freshness unique to the countryside which corresponds to the freshness supposedly produced by the product.

conditioning machines is directed at men, not just because of the nature of the appliance, but also because of the name of the product which has machismo connotations. On the other hand, one can see from the use of the feminine singular imperative mood of the verb that women are the principal addressees of advertisements for domestic products, such as washing powders and shampoos.

In spite of the outstanding quality of some Egyptian products and workmanship, there remains a tendency for copywriters to stress the “foreign” association with a product where appropriate. For example, in an advertisement for “Dahab” women’s clothes the main caption reads:

*dhawq faransī . . . quṭn miṣrī*                      “French taste . . . Egyptian cotton”  
(H 28/5/94)

or for “Qaṣr Bayān” curtains and furniture covers:

*‘alā aḥdath al-adhwāq wa l-mūdīlāt al-ūrubiyya wa l-amrīkiyya*  
“according to the most recent American and European tastes and designs” (H 28/5/94)

The following example for “Aracemco” sanitary-ware is also of this type:

*intāj waṭanī muṭābiq li l-muwāṣafāt al-ūrubiyya*  
“national production (made) according to European specifications”  
(H 30/4/94)

We shall end this paper by paying particular attention to one of the most interesting commercials to present itself during this study. The commercial for “Knorr” stock cubes appears to encapsulate the essential relationship between text and context which has been the focus of much of this paper. It makes use of a very specific form of intertextuality to achieve maximum effect.

In this commercial, two chickens are discussing the versatility of the product in a light-humoured fashion. They are sitting in a kitchen inventing rhyming riddles—in high-pitched cartoon type voices—playing the Egyptian game of *ʿafya*, a form of witty repartee in which one person begins a riddle by making a statement, the recipient poses the question *ishmi‘nā* “why?”, and the person who made the original statement formulates a reply which may or may not rhyme with his or her original statement, but which contains a pun.<sup>40</sup> In this commercial the key promotional effect is made, and main-

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<sup>40</sup> Hinds/Badawi (1986:712) draw an astute comparison between *ʿafya* and “knock-knock” jokes in British culture.

tained, by a constant repetition of the words *maraʿit knūr* “Knorr stock”, followed by the name of a well-known Egyptian dish whose flavour would naturally be enhanced, or not as the case may be, by the addition of “Knorr” stock. The question *ishmiʿnā* is then followed by a reply that rhymes with the name of the dish, irrespective of its nonsensical meaning. For example:

- |            |                               |                                |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Chicken 1: | <i>maraʿit knūr fi k-kōsa</i> | “Knorr Stock with<br>zucchini” |
| Chicken 2: | <i>ishmiʿnā?</i>              | “Why?”                         |
| Chicken 1: | <i>hātī yakhtī bōsa</i>       | “Give us a kiss, sister !”     |

or the following:

- |            |                                 |                                   |
|------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chicken 1: | <i>maraʿit knūr fi l-maḥshī</i> | “Knorr Stock with vine<br>leaves” |
| Chicken 2: | <i>ishmiʿnā</i>                 | “Why?”                            |
| Chicken 2: | <i>mā yinfaʿsh(i)</i>           | “That’s no good!”                 |

Perhaps the cleverest example of these exchanges is the following:

- |            |                                     |                                      |
|------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Chicken 1: | <i>maraʿit knūr fi l-mulukhiyya</i> | “Knorr Stock with<br>mulukhiyya”     |
| Chicken 2: | <i>ishmiʿnā</i>                     | “Why?”                               |
| Chicken 1: | <i>il-maraʿa il-ḥadīdiyya</i>       | “Iron Stock” (or “the Iron<br>Lady”) |

In order to understand the pun on the last line here, one must have some awareness of the political situation in Great Britain at the end of the 1980’s when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. Her reputation as the “Iron Lady” was also well-known in the Middle East.<sup>41</sup>

Of particular interest in the commercial is that it was presumably aimed at women, yet the game of *ʿafya* is normally a male pastime. In Egypt these verbal exchanges normally take place at night around the hookah pipe. It seems likely therefore, that the aim of the commercial is to achieve maximum “attention value” by making a predominantly male activity the focus of a commercial aimed at women.

### 11. Conclusion

This paper has acknowledged the importance of advertisements as a genre in their own right, and has proposed the view that the discourse of adver-

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<sup>41</sup> Given that the collection of materials from which this commercial was taken was compiled at that time, this pun would have been particularly appropriate.

tisements is often a reflection of the culture of its people. The technique of intertextuality is often fundamental to the promotional success of a commercial or advertisement. It is true that the message of an advertisement is more likely to make an impression on a consumer if it contains more “attention value”. As we have seen, there are a number of techniques available to the copywriter to achieve this. Among the most important of these techniques is intertextuality, which creates a sense of familiarity for the consumer through a literary or musical association, for instance. This technique might prove very effective in persuading him or her to purchase a product.

This study has also tempted to show that although some linguistic features are more likely to be found in the language of Arabic advertising than in other varieties of Arabic, the language of the former should not be seen as a violation of more standard forms of the language. There is much work to be done on the current state of modern Arabic itself, so it would be inappropriate to argue at this stage that advertising language is simply an aberrant form of this.

We have seen that the advertising copywriter often mixes linguistic levels, or codes, and that in many cases one can identify patterns for these switches. A specific linguistic code is often selected either for connotative or referential purposes, or to create a rhyme, for example, which might not have been possible without switching codes.

Some of the techniques employed in Arabic advertising may be compared to those of British advertising, but the fundamentally different structures of the two languages means that a direct comparison would not necessarily be the way forward.<sup>42</sup> The technique of punning at the lexical level, for instance, is more common in English advertising language. For example, the phenomenon of lexical “blending”, so common in British advertising, is scarcely to be found in Arabic. Whilst many examples such as “Schweppervescence” (for “Schweppes” fizzy drinks) occur in the former, ingenious coinings like *Fanta<sup>c</sup>ish* (for the fizzy drink “Fanta”) are rare in Arabic.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The frequent references which have been made in this paper to Geoffrey Leech’s work is more a reflection of the paucity of studies of that type on advertising language, than of an attempt to identify common ground between British and Arabic advertising.

<sup>43</sup> This example was kindly given to me by my colleague Jack Smart who saw it in the Sudan more than twenty years ago. The linguistic dexterity of the copywriter is reflected in this example in two ways. First, it incorporates the coordinating particle *fa*, which one could translate here as “so”, and the imperative verb *inta<sup>c</sup>ish*.

Much more could be said about verbal groups—for example, the use of tense and aspect in advertising—or nominal and adjectival groups (including collocations), as well as rhetorical features such as metonymy. More could also be said on the use of the imperative, such as the “direct” and “indirect” methods of addressing the consumer, and its relevance to the concept of “interpersonal” meanings within a text.<sup>44</sup> This could be carried out within the context of “interdiscursivity”, as Fairclough demonstrates (1992:114–117 esp.) in his analysis of an advertisement for Barclay’s Visa card. What is at issue in this, and similar advertisements, is the “intertextual relation between the financial information and advertising elements of the text”, namely, the conflict between the conditions of use of this card, and the means of “selling” it to the consumer. One such technique employed by the copywriter is the deliberate avoidance of authoritative language in the form of obligation. In this advertisement, the copywriter has toned down the regulatory parts of the text. In Fairclough’s view (p. 117), “this gives the sense of the two discourse types trying uneasily to coexist in the text”.

At all events, these are just a few of the areas for further research. It is only through a full appreciation of the inter-discoursal elements that the social and linguistic significance of advertisements can be brought fully to life. It is hoped that this paper provides the stimulus for more investigations into this fascinating field of study.

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which means “be invigorated”. Perhaps even more subtle is the possible play on the words *anta ta<sup>c</sup>ish* “(may) you live”, which again underlines the element of “vitality” supposedly contained in the fizzy drink.

<sup>44</sup> See Fairclough 1992:64–65, quoting Halliday’s *Language as a Social Semiotic*.

### Appendix 1

Transcript for “Cuddlies” diaper commercial

*il-bēbihāt bitfaḍḍal kudlīz . . . saba<sup>c</sup> ṭaba<sup>o</sup>āt wi astik . . .  
kudlīz biyītkawwin min saba<sup>c</sup> ṭabaqāt likay yu<sup>a</sup>akkid rāhit wi gafāf ṭiflik . . . wi  
li mazād min al-ihkām muzawwad bi astik . . .  
il-bēbihāt bitfaḍḍal kudlīz . . . saba<sup>c</sup> ṭaba<sup>o</sup>āt wi astik*

Translation

“Babies love Cuddlies . . . seven layers and a piece of elastic . . .  
Cuddlies have seven layers to ensure that your child remains comfortable and  
dry . . . and for extra strength they have a piece of elastic. . . .  
Babies love Cuddlies . . . seven layers and a piece of elastic.

### Appendix 2

Transcript for “Qisma” shampoo commercial

Consumer: *iddīnī s-sirr fī sa<sup>c</sup>ādīk dī kullahā?*  
Demonstrator: *abadan ghasalt(i) sha<sup>c</sup>rī bi shāmbū<sup>o</sup> isma l-gadīd*  
Consumer: *eh hikētuh da?*  
Demonstrator: *min khilāl dirāsāt mustafīda istamarrit sanawāt<sup>c</sup> adīda tawaṣṣal  
khubarā<sup>o</sup> it-tagmīl ilā shāmbū<sup>o</sup> isma l-gadīd*  
Consumer: *mawgūd dilwa<sup>o</sup>tī?*  
Demonstrator: *wi talat anwā<sup>c</sup> kamān . . . li sh-sha<sup>c</sup>r ig-gāff . . . li sh-sha<sup>c</sup>r id-  
duhnī wi li sh-sha<sup>c</sup>r il-<sup>c</sup>ādī . . . gawda<sup>c</sup> āliya fī t-tarkīb . . . rā<sup>o</sup>iḥa  
mutamayyiza . . . yag<sup>c</sup>al ish-sha<sup>c</sup>r dhū barīq . . . shāmbū<sup>o</sup> isma l-gidīd . . .  
huwwa illī fī khayālī*  
Consumer: *wi si<sup>c</sup>ruh<sup>c</sup> ādī*

Translation

C: “Why are you so happy?”  
D: “It’s no secret. . . . I washed my hair with new “Qisma” shampoo.”  
C: “Tell me about it.”  
D: “As a result of studies lasting a number of years beautification experts have  
produced the new shampoo from Qisma.”  
C: “Is it available now?”  
D: “[Yes], and in three sizes . . . for dry, greasy and ordinary hair. . . . it has a  
distinctive smell . . . and a high-quality composition. . . . It makes the hair  
shine. . . . Qisma shampoo is the one for me!”  
C: “And it is reasonably priced.”

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**Key to magazines and newspapers referred to in the text**

- H** = *Ḥawāʾ*  
**ND** = *Niṣf al-Dunyā*  
**U** = *al-Uṣra*  
**O** = *Jarīdat ʿUmān*  
**M** = *al-Mushāhid*  
**U** = *al-Uṣra*  
**HAY** = *al-Ḥayāt*  
**SA** = *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ* (newspaper)

All television commercials are taken from two collections of video recordings made in 1989 and 1994. The advertisements were all recorded from Egyptian television Channel Two.

العالم كله يتجه إلى القطن  
الحماية الكاملة لجلد طفلك

# Baby ADMIRAL

USA-FRANCE ✓ EGYPT

الآن .. بالأسواق لأول مرة في مصر  
حفاضات قطنية ١٠٠٪ مع غطائها الحافظ

حنان الأم وحنية القطن



بيبي ادميرال

كثير تستخدم مع	حفاضات بيبي ادميرال
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• مايريش ولا نفضة مسة</li> <li>• ألوانه ورسوماته جذابة</li> <li>• لاصق ذاتي</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• حماية كاملة لصحة طفلك</li> <li>• حفاضات قطنية لطيفة</li> <li>• درجة امتصاص عالية</li> <li>• تمنع التسليخ والحساسية</li> </ul>

الكل في واحد:  
الحفاض القطني + الكتر الخارجي

مع بيبي ادميرال توفري .. جينه

تباع حاليًا بالصيدليات ومحلات ملابس الاطفال .. والسوبر ماركت

الإدارة العامة  
ش. و. ك. م. ٨٥٨٨٨٩  
القاهرة  
ت. و. ك. م. ٥٧٤٨٧١٣

Figure 1

## زوّدي أفراد عائلتك يومياً بحاجتهم من القوّة والصحة



من مثا لا يتمنى ١٧ عنصراً غذائياً أساسياً في مشروب واحد .. إنه حليب كوست الطبيعي ١٠٠٪ وكامل الدسم فحليب كوست غني بأهم العناصر الأساسية للغذاء، كالفيتامينات، المعادن، البروتينات والكالسيوم. ويغني حقاً بما تفوق به للعائلة من صحة وقوة وكل يوم

حليب كوست ١٧ عنصر غذائي للأجسام ... والعظام

Figure 2