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# News Broadcasts between *fusḥā* and Lebanese: Language Choice as an Implicit Comment on National Identity in Lebanon

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents an analysis of the news bulletins broadcasted by South Lebanese radio station *Ṣawt al-Ġanūb* (SaJ, Voice of the South). SaJ broadcasted its news bulletins in *fusḥā* (Standard Arabic), as well as in Lebanese. This is interesting because most news bulletins tend to be broadcasted in the standard language, rather than in spoken varieties. This is definitely the case for so-called diglossic societies, such as Arabic-speaking societies, in which the linguistic metanorm for ‘serious programs’ is *fusḥā*. After presenting a brief linguistic description of a small corpus of news bulletins that were broadcasted in January 1998, this article focuses on how language (choice) functions symbolically in the extra-linguistic world. It argues that the choice to breach the metapragmatic norms, while framing the language use in the news bulletins explicitly as ‘the Lebanese language’ (*al-luġa al-lubnāniyya*) can be interpreted as an implicit comment on Lebanese national identity.

*Keywords:* identity construction; language ideology; language variability; Lebanon; nationalism.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2000, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from South Lebanon also meant the end of *Ṣawt al-Ġanūb*<sup>1</sup> (SaJ, Voice of the South). Because of

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<sup>1</sup> In the transliteration, [ǧ] will be used for the voiced affricate alveolar in *fusḥā* as well as the phoneme /ǧ/, while [j] will be used for the fricative voiced palatal in

its 'light programs', such as 'a-drūb al-hawā (On the paths of love) and the popular Arabic and Lebanese songs, this South Lebanese radio station was also listened to in surrounding Arab countries. SaJ broadcasted news bulletins, in *fushā* and Lebanese, the latter being considered by most speakers of Arabic a dialect (*lahǧa*, 'ammiyya or *dāriǧa*)<sup>2</sup>. This is interesting for several reasons. For one, in most countries news bulletins tend to be broadcasted in the standard language, rather than in spoken or colloquial varieties. This is definitely the case for so-called diglossic societies, such as Arabic-speaking societies, in which the linguistic (meta)norm for 'serious programs' is the standard language, *fushā* or the High variety, to use Ferguson's terminology (Ferguson 1959)<sup>3</sup>. In fact, in many countries the language use in news bulletins, especially when broadcasted by public channels, sets the norm for other language users. A label such as 'BBC English' illustrates this very well. The language use in sports news, interviews, and commentaries on news items recorded outside the studio is usually more diverse. Besides that, independent broadcasters tend to adhere less strictly to linguistic norms than public broadcasting services, but the newsreel usually remains the context in which the standard language is most strongly maintained. We can cautiously claim that deviations from the standard language, if any, can be situated mainly at the level of pronunciation<sup>4</sup>. The seriousness of the themes covered in a news broadcast and the fact that a news item is most often a written text that is read out aloud can be cited as the main reasons for this.

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Lebanese. Other transliteration symbols used for the Lebanese data: [e] and [ē] for the /a/ and /ā/ pronounced with *imāla* and [ɔ] for /a/ in the definite article and /i/ in the clitic preposition *li-*, as well as for epenthetic vowels. Clitics (f.i. the definite article, prepositions, personal pronouns and conjunctions) are connected to verbs, nouns, and prepositions by a hyphen. Personal names and toponyms are transliterated between brackets when they are used for the first time. Thereafter the most common notation in Latin script will be used. The transliteration of written Arabic will not take the assimilation of the definite article by sun letters into account, while transcription of oral Arabic will, as well as the assimilation of the *waṣla* by the preceding vowel. Word-initial glottal stops will not be marked unless when referring to the allophone [ʔ] for /q/.

<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of these terms and their language ideological connotations see Daniëls 2018b.

<sup>3</sup> For a critical analysis of the concept 'diglossia' and its language ideological dimensions see Daniëls 2018a.

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Sara Van Hoof for briefly exchanging views on this issue.

Also in the Arabic linguistic community<sup>5</sup>, radio and TV news reports, recorded both inside the studio as well as on-location, rarely deviate from this metapragmatic norm, namely the use of *fushā*. However, Al Batal (2002) describes an exception to this pattern in news reports broadcasted by the popular Lebanese satellite channel LBCI (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International):

LBCI news broadcasts normally begin with the anchorperson reading the headlines in F [*fushā*], followed by the local (Lebanese) news briefs, also presented by the anchorperson in F. The local news stories normally contain on-location reports detailing the local briefs. However, as soon as the camera leaves the studio to air these reports, the language also shifts from pure F to a unique “mix” of F and LC [Lebanese colloquial] which is the focus of this study. This mix is only used during the Lebanese national news, not during Arab and international news, which are presented in F, and do not always include reports from correspondents in the field. (Al Batal 2002, 93)

Al Batal (2002, 93) also notes that he has no knowledge of news broadcasts of other Arabic channels in which *fushā* is combined with other varieties of Arabic. The fact that SaJ broadcasted daily a complete bulletin in Lebanese, namely at 10am, is therefore exceptional<sup>6</sup>. Unlike Al Batal’s data, which were broadcasted in about the same period (January to June 1999 for LBCI, January 1998 for SaJ), in the ten o’clock news Lebanese was not only used for local news items recorded outside the studio, but all news items read in the studio, including Arab and international news. As we will see in more detail below, unlike what we have noted above on news broadcasts in other parts of the world, the news bulletins in Lebanese differ from *fushā* on *all* linguistic levels, not just phonologically. However, Lebanese is not used in a completely consistent way<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, SaJ framed the language use in these news-casts explicitly as Lebanese. One of the customary opening phrases was:

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term here as defined by Suleiman (2013a, 269-270), namely as a group of speakers who in certain contexts focus on adhering to the ideologically articulated norms of the standard language. A speech community, on the other hand, is defined as a group of speakers characterized by actual language use.

<sup>6</sup> However, the other newscasts I recorded at 8:30am, 11:30am, 12:30pm, 4:30pm and 5:30pm were in *fushā*.

<sup>7</sup> Al Batal (2002, 96) notices the same pattern in his LBCI data and describes it “as a new language register that is neither F (in the way it is currently defined) nor LC”. However, this can also be described as an intensive pattern of codeswitching occurring not only between discourse stretches and sentences, but also within sentences (intrasentential

“*min šawt əl-janūb ni’addim il-kun našrit abḅār əs-sē’a ‘ašara bi-l-luḡa l-libnēniye*” (‘from Voice of the South we present the 10 o’clock news in the Lebanese language’) and not in the Lebanese dialect (ə*d-dēriḡ əl-libnēni* or ə*l-labḡe l-‘ammīye l-libnēniye*)<sup>8</sup>. The significance of this lexical choice will be analyzed and connected to how language choice and its framing can be interpreted as an implicit comment on Lebanese national identity by further exploring the relation between language and nationalism, however without taking the nationalism-language nexus for granted. My point of departure is that language and nationalism are mutually constitutive, meaning that nationalism is not just erected on the basis of a language (variety), but that language (varieties) themselves are (re-)constructed during the process of national identity construction (Joseph 2004, 92-131; Suleiman 2013b, 19). In the Lebanese context this also means that Lebanese cannot be uncritically connected with Lebanese exclusivism, and neither can *fuṣḥā* be exclusively connected with pan-Arab nationalism (see f.i. Suleiman 2003, 204-219). The data will be analyzed using ‘language symbolism’ and ‘language as proxy’ as basic analytical tools (Suleiman 2013b). This allows us to consider how language choice, approached as an implicit metalinguistic comment (and not only as an instrumental choice), is put into service to tackle social and political issues that are often too sensitive to deal with directly or to underscore political orientations: “[t]he use of language as proxy enables ideology brokers to do politics through language, in the sense that talk about language becomes talk about the extra-linguistic world [...]” (*ibid.*, 4-5).

## 2. DATA COLLECTION AND THE CORPUS

In what follows I will analyze a small corpus of bulletins broadcasted by SaJ in January 1998, focusing on the language ideological and symbolic

codeswitching) and even words (word-internal codeswitching) (see also Daniëls 2018a and below).

<sup>8</sup> In the recordings I made on January 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10, the 10am news was always framed as “the news bulletin in the Lebanese language” (*našret əl-abḅār bi-l-luḡa l-libnēniye*). Curiously enough in the last three recordings on 11, 12 and 13 January, as well as 6 January, other newsreaders present the news and use the term ə*l-luḡa l-‘ammīye* (‘dialect’) and *labḡat-nā l-‘ammīye* (‘our dialect’). It is not clear if this change in terminology is the personal choice of the other newsreaders or if it is due to inconsistency.

dimensions of language choice. I randomly tape-recorded the news bulletins during a field trip in Irbid (Jordan) out of a general interest in language variability, without having specific research intentions at the time. Many years later, I started using the recordings in my sociolinguistics course as a sample of Lebanese Arabic and as a critical counterexample to Ferguson's functional division in his influential article on diglossia (Ferguson 1959, 328-329). However, for a long time, I was not fully aware of the ideological dimensions of the bulletins, as I and my Jordanian friends with whom I listened to SaJ's broadcastings did not seem to realize that this station was administered by the South Lebanese Army (SLA, *ḡayš lubnān al-ḡanūbī*). This seems to have been the case for many of its listeners outside Lebanon<sup>9</sup>. Only when I started looking further than the micro-linguistic elements in the small corpus I realized that the contextualization of the data was at least as interesting as its 'purely linguistic' features. By delving into the political background of SaJ and the ideological background and networks of the SLA, I discovered that the choice to breach the metalinguistic norms by broadcasting news in Lebanese has political and ideological dimensions that go far beyond the linguistic scope of the functional dimensions of diglossia. Due to the political sensitivity of the close relations between the SLA and Israel, information about the radio station is scant and to my best knowledge no public archives are available. Therefore, my corpus is limited to my randomly recorded tapes. The total corpus consists of 28 newsreels of varying length which were broadcasted in 1998 between January 1 and January 14. The news bulletins at 8:30am (2), 11:30am (9), 12:30pm (5), 4:30pm (1) and 5:30pm (1) were broadcasted in *fuṣḥā*, while the news bulletins at 10:00am (10) were broadcasted in Lebanese. I was able to distinguish one male voice (MB1) and three different female voices (FB1, FB2, and FB3). The news bulletins in *fuṣḥā* were alternately read by male and female newsreaders, while all the bulletins in Lebanese were read by female newsreaders. However, none of the female broadcasters was assigned exclusively to reading the 10:00am news, meaning that all female newsreaders also read bulletins in *fuṣḥā*. Due to the randomness of the recording, it is hard to reconstruct at what time of the day SaJ started broadcasting the news and when the last

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/notes/10158550171990240/> for a testimony from an Egyptian listener and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Pg\\_AmMABa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Pg_AmMABa): for the reaction of a Jordanian and a Saudi listener on the YouTube publication of the first broadcast by Sawt al-Ḡanūb.

bulletin was aired. Moreover, some of the bulletins were not completely recorded. This practical limitation is not necessarily a disadvantage, as an exhaustive statistical description of the news broadcasts by SaJ is not my purpose here, but rather a micro-analysis of a small data corpus of which the results can be extrapolated. More importantly, this paper does not focus on language structure alone, but rather on how language (choice) functions symbolically in the extra-linguistic world.

### 3. POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF SAJ: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

The SLA emerged in South Lebanon as a result of the disintegration of the Lebanese army at the beginning of the civil war in 1975 and was a proxy of the Israeli forces (IDF). From 1975 until 1978, the cooperation was secret, but after Menachim Begin became Prime Minister in 1977 it became public. With Operation Litani in 1978, the secession of the soldiers and officers who were until then still members of the Lebanese army, became final. When the founder of the SLA Major Saad Haddad (*Sa'd Haddād*) refused to turn over the army barracks to UNIFIL in 1979 the rupture became official as Haddad at the same time announced the independence of 'Free Lebanon' (*lubnān al-ḥurr*) in the zone under his control, hence the militia's initial name: Army of Free Lebanon (*ḡays lubnān al-ḥurr*) (Hamizrachi 1988). After Haddad died of cancer in 1984, Antoine Lahad (*Anṭwān Laḥad*) took over the leadership and changed the name of the militia into South Lebanese Army. The AFL/SLA de facto administered the Israeli 'security belt' or 'enclave' and their salaries and equipment were paid by Israel (Gordon 2002, 324). Locally, Palestinian militias and later Hezbollah (*ḥizb Allāb*)<sup>10</sup>, were its main

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<sup>10</sup> In the broadcasts Hezbollah is systematically referred to as "the Iranian Syrian enemy" (*al-ʿadu al-irānī as-sūrī*). This is the case on January 5 at 11:30am, January 6 at 10am, January 8 at 11:30am, and 12:30pm, January 9 at 10am, 11:30am and 12:30pm, January 11 at 10am and 12:30pm. This phrase refers to the Syrian and Iranian support, financial and otherwise, that Hezbollah received, but also frames Hezbollah as non-Lebanese outsiders who need to be fought, in contrast with Lebanese Muslims who should not be harmed. Hamizrachi (1988) and Nisan (2003) (the latter mainly referring to the Guardians of the Cedar Party) stress that the SLA did not hold anything against Muslims as such, as long as they were Lebanese. However, there was a tension between confessional inclusivism and anti-Muslim positions in the ideological network to which the SLA belonged and its political organs (Plonka 2006). Other terms that are used



opponents. When the IDF withdrew from South Lebanon in May 2000, the SLA was dismantled. Most of the militiamen and their families fled to Israel, many of them settling in other countries afterwards, while others stayed or returned to Lebanon. Many were tried and sentenced, some of them in absentia, for collaboration with Israel and human rights violations<sup>11</sup>.

SaJ started broadcasting on 3 September 1991<sup>12</sup>, two years after the signing of the Taif Agreement (*ittifāq al-tā'if*), which heralded the official end of the civil war (1975-1989). This means that the SLA did not have its own radio station during the civil war years. Hamizrachi (1988, 137) mentions that Haddad had asked Israel permission to establish a radio station as early as 1977. However, this request was dismissed because the Lebanese Forces (*al-quwwāt al-lubnāniya*)<sup>13</sup>, which also coordinated with Israel at the time, opposed to the idea arguing that this would give Haddad too strong a mouthpiece for political propaganda. In 1984 Etienne Sakr (*Ityān Ṣaqr*, also known as Abū Arz), the leader of the Guardians of the Cedar Party (*ḥizb ḥurrās al-arz*) and its militia, which was a close ally of the SLA, also wanted to build a radio station in South Lebanon. He asked Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for permission, but this request was rejected (Nisan 2003, 70). Sakr's request in 1991 to Michel Aoun (*Miṣāl 'Awn*) to finance a radio station was rejected as well (*ibid.*, 100). I did not find any information about how the change of mind came about and in which circumstances SaJ eventually started broadcasting, but it is certain that it was financed by Israel and administered by Antoine Lahad as the radio station was also informally known as 'Lahad's radio' (*iḍā'at Lahad*). However, until

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in the bulletins to refer to Hezbollah are "saboteurs" (*muḥarribīn*) and "subversive cell" (*ḥaliye tabribiye*), while their military actions are described as "criminal" (*ijrāmī*) and "terrorist" (*irḥābī*). In none of the news bulletins the name Hezbollah is used.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of the period between 1975 and 1978 by an Israeli journalist and Haddad's former liaison officer, see Hamizrachi 1988. For the SLA and human rights violations, see Gordon 2002 and Bechara 2003. For a perspective on the status of former SLA members in Israel, see Herzog 2009. For a local perspective on the political situation in South Lebanon between 1975-2000, see Beydoun 1992.

<sup>12</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Pg\\_AmMABa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5Pg_AmMABa) for the first minutes of SaJ's first broadcast.

<sup>13</sup> The Lebanese Forces was a coalition of predominantly (Maronite) Christian right-wing parties and their military arms, such as the Phalange (*al-katā'ib*), the National Liberal Party (*ḥizb al-abrār al-waṭaniyyīn*) / Tiger militia (*al-numūr*), the Marada brigades (*tayār al-marada*) and the Guardians of the Cedar Party (*ḥizb ḥurrās al-arz*).

the foundation of SaJ in 1991, the AFL/SLA had access to the facilities of Voice of Hope. This radio station was built in South Lebanon by born again Christian George Otis in 1979 in close cooperation with the IDF, in the person of Colonel Yoram Hamizrachi and his wife Beate (Haddad's liaison officer), and the SLA. Later Otis also built a short wave radio station King of Hope and a television station Star of Hope, which was later donated to the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and became Middle East Television (METV). Apart from its English language programs, which consisted of a mix of country and western music and Bible readings, Voice of Hope also broadcasted in Arabic. The local Lebanese staff of Voice of Hope included technical engineer Charbel Younis (*Šarbal Yunis*) and broadcasters Francis Rizk (*Frānsīs Rizq*), Salma Johns (*Salmā Ġons*) and Nadia (*Nādyā*, no family name mentioned), as well as Ragi Ghanoum (*Rāġī Ġanūm*) who tape-recorded interviews for Voice of Hope (Otis 1983). I did not find confirmation if SaJ used Voice of Hope's studios and equipment in Marjayoun and if its Lebanese employees also worked for SaJ. One thing is certain, there was a close connection between Otis and Haddad, who became a born again Christian as well (Otis 1984). Prior to 1991 Haddad was regularly given the floor on Voice of Hope (Diamond 1990, 18)<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE DATA

In this section I will describe the main linguistic features of the corpus. First, I will compare two fragments of two different bulletins, one in *fusiḥā* broadcasted on 8 January 1998 at 12:30pm and one in Lebanese broadcasted on 9 January 1998 at 10:00am. The bulletins deal with the same topic, namely the media policy of the Lebanese government, and more specifically its ban on the broadcasting of news and political programs on satellite channels. This, together with the fact that the bulletins have more or less the same structure, facilitates their linguistic comparison. The fragments in *fusiḥā* and Lebanese contain many analogical sentences with many shared lexical items, but with some substantial differences qua syntaxis and phonology. The following example illustrates this:

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<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTcK7UDVdqk> for a speech given in English by Haddad in 1983 on Voice of Hope.

- (1) *tawālat al-yawma l-intiqādāt al-muwaġġaha ilā l-ḥukūma ‘alā ḥalfiyat qarāri-bā ṣ-ṣādīr ams wa-l-qādī bi-man’i l-aqniya l-fidā’iyya min batti l-abbār wa-l-barāmij as-siyāsiyya* (SaJ, 8 January 1998, 12:30pm, MB1)

Today the criticisms directed towards to government concerning its decision issued yesterday which prohibits satellite channels to broadcast news and political programs continues.

- (2) *əl-inti’ādāt əl-mwajjabe lə-l-ḥukūme ‘ala halfiyet ‘arār-ā man’ əl-aqniye l-fidā’iye min batt əl-abbār wa-l-barāmij əs-siyāsiye mustamirra* (SaJ, 9 January 1998, 10:00am, FB1)

The criticisms directed towards the government regarding its decision to prohibit the satellite channels to broadcast news and political programs continues.

The first striking difference between (1) which is in *fushā* and (2) which is in Lebanese concerns the syntactic structure of the sentence. (1) is a verbal sentence with a VSO structure, while (2) is a nominal clause consisting of a topic and a nominal predicate. Another salient morpho-syntactical difference is the use of declensional endings in (1)<sup>15</sup> and the lack thereof in (2). In (2) the adverbial referring to time (*al-yawma*) in (1) is deleted, because (2) was broadcasted the next day. However, *al-yawma* is not replaced by any adverbial referring to ‘yesterday’. On the lexical level we notice the use of the verb ‘to continue’: *tawāla* in (1) and the verb *istamarra* in (2), used here in the form of an active participle. While *istamarra* is a shared item, meaning that it is used both in *fushā* and in Lebanese, *tawāla* is a lexical item that is saliently *fushā*. Note also that in (1) the preposition *ilā* is used in combination with the active participle of the verb *waġġaha* and in (2) *lə-*. In *fushā* both *ilā* and *li-* can be used when *waġġaha* means ‘to aim at’, the use of *lə-* is more frequent in Lebanese and is often used in the corpus when only *ilā* would be used in *fushā*. On the phonological level we notice differences in the pronunciation, such as *imāla*<sup>16</sup>, the pronunciation of the voiced affricate alveolar /ǧ/ as a voiced fricative palatal [j] and the voiceless occlusive uvular /q/ as a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ], as well as the deletion of the unstressed vowel in *mwajjabe*, which are the most salient phonological markers of Lebanese in (2).

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<sup>15</sup> Actually, an alteration of pause and liaison pronunciation can be observed. It would be interesting to investigate whether this is patterned and if there are any differences with other news broadcasts in *fushā*.

<sup>16</sup> Vowel fronting, mostly /ā/ pronounced as [ē] or [ī] and /a/ as [e] or [i] in combinations with front consonants (Levin 2006).

Due to lack of space, a more detailed comparison cannot be presented here, but I hope this example demonstrates the way in which I proceeded to compare the bulletins.

A close analysis of the news broadcasts reveals that, apart from how the news bulletins are framed and their broadcasting times, the language use in them can be easily recognized as respectively globally *fusḥā* or globally Lebanese. If we take a broadcasting day to be one discourse unit, the alternation between the *fusḥā* and Lebanese news bulletins can be considered codeswitches on discourse level. When we take a closer look, we observe that the language use in the *fusḥā* news broadcasts broadly adheres to *fusḥā* norms, with possibly some exceptions at the level of pronunciation. Salient *fusḥā* markers include declensional endings, internal passive verbs, VSO-sentences, as well as lexical items. However, the language use in the Lebanese news broadcasts is more complex. In addition to salient markers of Lebanese on the phonological<sup>17</sup>, morphological<sup>18</sup>, morpho-syntactic and syntactic<sup>19</sup> levels, as well as lexical items<sup>20</sup>, the broadcasts also contain many *fusḥā* items on all linguistic levels<sup>21</sup>. The occurrence of *fusḥā* items can partly be explained by the fact that *fusḥā* and non-*fusḥā* varieties of Arabic in fact do share many items on all linguistic levels. This can complicate the identification of different codes when analyzing data in terms of codeswitching (Bassiouney 2009; Daniëls 2018a, 190-193). The use of *fusḥā* items can also be explained by the fact that the discourse form (a news broadcast) tends, in line with metapragmatic norms, to attract loan words, expressions and syntactic structures from *fusḥā*, which in turn tend to attract a *fusḥā* phonology. However, some of the inconsistent combinations of Lebanese and *fusḥā* seem to be at least partially the result of improvisation. For example, some of the shared lexical items are alternatingly pronounced with a

<sup>17</sup> These include the pronunciation of /q/ as a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ], /t/ as [t] or [s], /d/ as [d] or [z], /d/ as [d] or [z] and the deletion of /ʔ/ or its pronunciation as a long vowel or [w] or [y] (in Arabic: *talyin al-hamza*).

<sup>18</sup> These include derivational passive verbs (instead of internal passive verbs), the reduction of attributive demonstratives to the clitic *ba-* (instead of *hādā* and *hādihī*), or their pronunciation as *beydā* en *heydī* when used independently.

<sup>19</sup> These include SVO-sentences and the use of modal and aspect particles to indicate tense, such as *bi-* (indicative), *am* (durative), *rāḥ* (future).

<sup>20</sup> These include *awwal imbēriḥ* ('the day before yesterday'), *šāf* ('to see'; here: 'to be of the opinion'), *bas* ('but'), *bidd* ('to want').

<sup>21</sup> These include VSO-sentences, internal passive verbs, and lexical items, most often but not always with a *fusḥā* pronunciation.

*fushḥā* phonology and a Lebanese phonology within the same bulletin. The following example illustrate this:

- (3) *ər-raʿīs salīm əl-ḥuṣṣ ʿāl innu qarār maǧlis əl-wuzarā bi-dall ʿala amrēyn*  
(SaJ 9 January 1998, 10:00am, FB1)

Prime minister Salīm al-Ḥuṣṣ said that the decision by the Ministerial Council points at two issues.

In (2), which directly precedes (3) the word for ‘decision’ is pronounced *ʿarār* (Lebanese phonology with a voiceless glottal stop [ʔ] for /q/) while it is pronounced as *qarār* (*fushḥā* phonology with a voiceless occlusive uvular [q] for /q/) in (3), without this being triggered by a semantic shift. The phonetic shift might be explained because *qarār* is combined with the formal political term *maǧlis al-wuzarāʿ* (‘Ministerial Council’), which attracts a *fushḥā* pronunciation. However, we could wonder if *manʿ al-aqniye l-fiḍāʿiye* (‘prohibiting the satellite channels’), which is a complex *iḍāfa*-construction that consists of a *mašdar* referring to the verb *manaʿa* (‘to prohibit’) and a technical compound *aqniye fiḍāʿiye* (‘satellite channels’) is all that less formal. Moreover, *al-ʿaqniye* (‘channels’), being a technical loan from *fushḥā* also retains *fushḥā* phonology [q] for /q/, while *maǧlis al-wuzarāʿ* is pronounced as *maǧlis əl-wuzarā* with [j] for /ǧ/ and the deletion of the final hamza. Throughout the Lebanese corpus *qarār* occurs 12 times with /q/ pronounced as [q] and 20 times as [ʔ]. Other peculiar combinations which combine a *fushḥā* morphological structure (internal passive) with a Lebanese pronunciation include *min al-muʿarrar* (‘it is scheduled’, internal passive participle with /q/ as [ʔ]), *yuzkar* (‘it is mentioned’, internal passive verb indicative with /d/ as [z]) and *zukur* (‘it was mentioned’, internal passive verb past tense with /d/ as [z]); combinations of internal passive verbs with Lebanese modal and aspect markers for tense, such as *rāḥ* (future tense): *rāḥ yuqarr* (‘will be ratified’), *rāḥ yuṭraḥ* (‘will be proposed’), *rāḥ yuʿqad/tuʿqad* (‘will be held’), *rāḥ tujra* (‘will be carried out’), *rāḥ tunšar* (‘will be deployed’), *bi-* (indicative): *bi-tujdar əl-iṣāra ilā* (‘it is worth to point out’), *ʿam* (durative): *ʿam tuntabak* (‘are being violated’), *ʿam turtakab* (‘are being committed’); Lebanese negation particles, *mā*: *mā ustukmil* (‘was not completed’) and the Lebanese relative pronoun *illi* and its clitic form *l-*: *illi kullifat* (‘which was commissioned with’) and *l-yuʿtabar* (‘which is considered’).

In what follows, I will further describe the salient linguistic features of the bulletins in Lebanese, by highlighting one example of each of the categories of ‘hybrid forms’ mentioned above and analyzing it in the context of the sentence in which it was uttered.

- (4) *wa-yuzkar innu n-nā'ib əs-sābiq əl-maḥbūs [...] wa-ālāf əl-mawqūfīn bi-l-iḍāfe lə-l-maṭlūbīn bi-mudakkirāt tawqīf bi-stfīdū min ha-l-'ānūn.* (SaJ, 2 January 1998, 10:00am, FB1; emphasis mine)

It is mentioned that former deputy [...] who is in prison and thousands [others] under arrest, as well as fugitives benefit from this law.

Apart from the internal passive verb *yuzkar* being pronounced with a Lebanese phonology, this sentence combines *fušḥā* and Lebanese items. The sentence starts with a verb and contains political and juridical terms, which are mostly pronounced with a *fušḥā* phonology: *nā'ib* ('former deputy', with [ʔ] and [q]), *mawqūf* ('detainee', with [q]), *maṭlūb* ('fugitive'), *mudakkirāt tawqīf* ('arrest warrants', with [q]), with the exception of *'ānūn* ('law', with [ʔ] for /q/). The expression *bi-l-iḍāfe lə-* ('in addition to') is pronounced with *imāla* and combined with the preposition *lə-* (instead of *ilā* in *fušḥā*). The tense marker *bi-* is added to the verb *yistfīdū* ('they benefit from'), which is a shared lexical item, but morphologically saliently Lebanese with the conjugational prefix *yi-*, which is assimilated by *bi-*, vowel deletion of the unstressed vowel and the conjugational suffix *-ū* (instead of *-ūna* in *fušḥā*). Finally, the clitic demonstrative *ha-* is used in combination with *əl-'ānūn* ('the law').

- (5) *wa-bi-isrā'īl rāḥ tunšar əl-yōwm quwwāt mu'azzaze min əš-šurṭa wa-ḥaras əl-ḥudūd bi-l-mudun əl-kubrā wa-l-amēkin əl-'amma l-muktazza taḥassuban li-wuqū' amaliyāt irhābiye ḥilāl əl-ayyēm əl-muqbile. wa-kānt əjbizet əl-amn talaqqat inzārāt bi-tšir lə-iḥtimāl wu'ū' -bā.* (SaJ, 11 January 1998, 10:00am, FB3)

And in Israel strengthened forces of the police and border police will be deployed today in large cities and public spaces in anticipation of terrorist actions taking place during the coming days. The Security Services received warnings that indicate the possibility of [such actions] taking place.

The sentences in (5) again have many *fušḥā* characteristics: in both sentences the verb precedes the subject, all lexical items are *fušḥā* or shared items, some of which are pronounced with *fušḥā* phonology, and we can observe the use of the accusative of purpose (*maf'ūl li-aḡli-bi*): *taḥassuban* ('in anticipation of'). Markers of Lebanese are mainly situated on the phonological level, namely vowel fronting in the pronunciation of *tā' marbūṭa*: *mu'azzaze* ('strengthened'), *irhābiye* ('terrorist'), *muqbile* ('next'), *əjbize* ('apparatuses') and /ā/: *ayyēm* ('days'), *amēkin* ('places'), pronunciation of /ǧ/ as [j]: *əjbize*, /ḍ/ as [z]: *inzārāt* ('warnings') and /q/ as [ʔ]: *wu'ū'* ('to take/taking place'), as well the deletion of

unstressed vowels: *kānt* ('they were')<sup>22</sup>, *bi-tšīr* ('they indicate'). However, in the preceding sentence /q/ in *wuqū'* is pronounced as [q]. On the syntactical level, we can observe the marker for the indicative *bi-*: *bi-tšīr*.

- (6) *wa bi-tujdar əl-išāra ilā annu sūriye wa irān bi-āriḏu bi-šidde ha-l-munāwarāt illi inta'ad-ā wazīr əl-i'lām əs-sūri muḥammad salmān wa waṣaf-ā bi-ann-ā isti'rāḏ lə-l-'uwwə wa 'awde lə-ajwā l-ḥarb əl-bārīda wa muḥēwale lə-d-daḡt 'alā sūriye.* (SaJ, 6 January 1998, 10:00am, FB2)

It is worth pointing out that Syria and Iran vehemently oppose these military maneuvers which were criticized by the Syrian minister of media Muḥammad Salām, who described them as a display of power, a return to the climate of the Cold War, and an attempt to pressurize Syria.

Apart from *fuṣḥā* markers, on the syntactic (VSO), morphological and the lexical levels (*fuṣḥā* or shared lexical items), this sentence contains a lot of salient markers of Lebanese. These are the clitic marker for the indicative *bi-*: *bi-tujdar əl-išāra* ('it is worth mentioning'), *bi-āriḏu* ('they oppose'), with the Lebanese conjugational prefix *yi-* (assimilated by *bi-*) and conjugational ending *-ū* for the 3rd person plural (instead of the 3rd person feminine dual in *fuṣḥā*), the clitic demonstrative *ha-*: *ha-l-munāwarāt* ('these maneuvers'), the relative pronoun *illi*, the pronunciation of /q/ as [ʔ]: *inta'ad* ('he criticized'), *'uwwə* ('power'), deletion of *h* in the personal pronoun 3rd p. f. sing. *-hā*: *inta'ad-ā* ('he criticized them'), *waṣaf-ā* ('he described them'), *bi-ann-ā* ('that they') and vowel fronting: *sūriye* ('Syria'), *šidde* ('vehemence'), *'awde* ('return'), *muḥēwale* ('attempt'), and the deletion of final *hamza*: *ajwā* ('climate').

- (7) *wa abdā asaf-u l-kbīr lə-kōn ha-l-ḥu'ū' am tuntahak bi-aktar min maṭraḥ bi-l-'ālam, maḥall mā fīh ḥurūb iḏṭihād wa rašwe.* (SaJ, 2 January 1998, 10:00, FB1)

He deplored very much the fact that these rights were being violated in several places in the world, places where there are wars, oppression and bribery.

Salient Lebanese markers in this sentence are the use of the grammaticalized form *fīh* ('there is/are') on the lexical level, the clitic demonstrative *ha-*: *ha-l-ḥu'ū'* ('these rights'), the deletion of *h* in the personal pronoun *-hu*: *asaf-u* ('his regret'), deletion of the unstressed vowel: *kbīr* ('large, big'), [ʔ] for /q/: *ḥu'ū'* ('rights'), [t] for /t/: *aktar* ('more') and

<sup>22</sup> In Arabic, the plural of words not referring to human beings takes feminine singular agreement.

vowel fronting: *rašwe* ('bribery') on the phonological level. These markers occur in a sentence with VSO-order in which most lexical items are *fušḥā* or shared.

- (8) *wa bi-ha-l-iṭār, min əl-muqarrar an tajtami' yōm əl-arba'a l-muqbil əl-lajne l-wizārīye illi kullifat mu'abḥaran bi-taqwīm əl-waḍ' əl-i'lāmī.*  
(SaJ, 11 January 1998, 10:00am, FB2)

In this context, it is scheduled that the Ministerial Commission that was recently commissioned with reforming the media situation will meet next Wednesday.

Salient Lebanese markers in this sentence are the clitic demonstrative *ha-*: *ha-l-iṭār* ('this context'), the relative pronoun *illi* on the morphological level and vowel fronting: *əl-lajne l-wizārīye* ('Ministerial Commission'), together with pronunciation of /ǧ/ as [j]. On the lexical level, all items are *fušḥā* or shared. Other markers of *fušḥā* are the pronunciation, with [q] for /q/ : *min əl-muqarrar* ('it was scheduled'), *əl-muqbil* ('next'), *taqwīm* ('to reform/reforming') and the time adverbial in the accusative case: *mu'abḥaran* ('recently') and the introductory observation *min əl-muqarrar* ('it was decided/scheduled').

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As the analysis of the examples demonstrates, *fušḥā* and Lebanese elements are intricately combined on all linguistic levels and in ways that are not always consistent, resulting at times in idiosyncratic combinations such as the ones described above. Al Batal (2002) observes similar combinations between Lebanese and *fušḥā* and describes them as hybrid or mixed forms, but I think they can also be approached as intrasentential and word-internal codeswitches. I hope to develop this idea in another article. A further in-depth exploration of the whole corpus in terms of codeswitching would also give us the opportunity to chart the complex dynamics between *fušḥā* and Lebanese in the news bulletins and discover eventual patterns.

## 5. LANGUAGE CHOICE: FUNCTIONAL AND SYMBOLIC DIMENSIONS

Several motivations can be forwarded to account for SaJ's choice to alternate between *fušḥā* and Lebanese. The reasons for broadcasting the news in *fušḥā* are obvious. For one, it conforms to the metapragmatic norm of news bulletins being broadcasted in the standard language. Moreo-



ver, while being an independent radio, SaJ was also listened to in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Therefore, the use of *fushā* can also be seen as a way to accommodate a wider non-Lebanese audience. What needs further explanation then is the choice to broadcast the news in Lebanese. First, it is possible to argue that the choice for Lebanese is triggered by a wish to bring the news bulletins closer to an audience that may not fully understand its content in *fushā*. That would bring the news bulletins in Lebanese in line with other discourse forms in which the metapragmatic norm that dictates the use of *fushā* is breached by codeswitching to a non-*fushā* variety, such as political speeches (Mazraani 1997; Bassiouney 2006), sermons in mosques (Bassiouney 2006, 2013), university lectures (Bassiouney 2006) etc. For example, Mazraani (1997) explains in her analysis of speeches by Gamal Abdel Nasser (*Ġamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir*) that Nasser switches to Cairene Arabic when he wants to clarify the message to an audience which is partly illiterate, but also when he wants to concretize and personalize the more abstract aspects of his message. The codeswitches to Cairene Arabic are often accompanied by switches in person deixis from the more abstract 3rd person in the *fushā* stretches to the more personal 1st and 2nd persons in the Cairene stretches, which underscore a change from distance and abstractness to more personal involvement. However, the switches function at the same time as an act of identity construction. By using *fushā*, Nasser presents himself as an intellectual, a political leader, and the president of the Egyptian state and as a main proponent of pan-Arab nationalism. By using Cairene Arabic, on the other hand, he presents himself as a ‘common Egyptian’ (*ibn al-balad*) who is close to the broad layers of the Egyptian population (Mazraani 1997, 48-98, 229-232). This means that Nasser’s register choices, as exemplified in his codeswitches between *fushā* and Egyptian Arabic, are not merely functional, but also have an identity dimension.

Likewise, Al Batal (2002) argues that there is more to the choice to use Lebanese for outside studio reporting on local news than the official explanation given by LBCI, namely that this register is closer to life and more spontaneous. He maintains that LBCI’s choice of register also needs to be framed within the Lebanese socio-political landscape and that it has a strong identity dimension. Presenting the news entirely in *fushā*, as is common in the Arabic linguistic community, would underline the Arab character of Lebanon. Presenting the news entirely in Lebanese, however, would emphasize its exclusive Lebanese character. By intricately combining *fushā* and Lebanese, depending on the type of reporting (*fushā* in the studio and for international and Arab news and

Lebanese for the on-location reporting of local Lebanese news), but also by combining *fushḥā* and Lebanese items into sometimes idiosyncratic or hybrid forms in some of the reports, a compromise is reached which reconciles the Arab and Lebanese character of Lebanon. Al Batal (2002, 112) labels this new register wittily “[a language] with a Lebanese face” (*dāt waḡh lubnānī*). This pun alludes to the well-known phrase in the Lebanese constitution of 1943: “Lebanon is a country with an Arab face” (*lubnān dū waḡh ‘arabī*), which was an attempt to reach a compromise between the advocates of an Arab national identity for Lebanon, on the one hand, and the proponents of an exclusive Lebanese national identity on the other. Al Batal connects this to how LBCI came about. The television station LBC (Lebanon Broadcasting Station) was founded in 1985 by the Lebanese Forces, which previously in 1976 founded the radio station *Ṣawt Lubnān* (Voice of Lebanon). After the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989, LBC evolved from a political mouthpiece to the most important commercial channel in Lebanon. During this period a satellite channel was added and its name was changed to LBCI. The popularity and commercial character of the channel in the 1990s, as well as its international scope, undoubtedly contributed to its attempts to implicitly reconcile the Lebanese and Arab character of Lebanon via the language and register choices in the news (Al Batal 2002, 92).

I would like to develop the identity dimension of Al Batal’s analysis further with regard to the news bulletins of SaJ. First of all, it must be noticed that there are a number of striking similarities between LBCI and SaJ news broadcasts. In both cases, the language use in some (stretches) of the news bulletins deliberately deviates from the metapragmatic standard for news coverage by using Lebanese along *fushḥā*. In both cases, the discourse stretches that can be described as ‘globally Lebanese’ are characterized by the use of mixed or hybrid forms (to use Al Batal’s terminology) or the occurrence of intra-sentential and word-internal codeswitches between *fushḥā* and Lebanese (to use mine). However, there are also a number of striking differences. LBCI is a popular satellite television channel with a broad international Arabophone audience. On the other hand, SaJ was a local free radio station that could only be received in a limited number of surrounding countries. In addition, the use of Lebanese in the LBCI news broadcasts is limited to local news items recorded outside the studio, while SaJ presented news bulletins, formally read in the studio that covered local, Arabic, and international news integrally in Lebanese, which is moreover explicitly framed as “the Lebanese language” (*əl-luḡa l-libnēniye*). This means that

SaJ takes giving ‘a Lebanese face’ to the news broadcasts (as is the case with LBCI) a step further, and quite explicitly as a matter of fact. As mentioned above, SaJ was not only administered by the SLA that was Israel’s proxy army, but was also broadcasted from Israel’s ‘security belt’ in South Lebanon. In the context of the reconciliation process after the end of the civil war, the SLA and SaJ were not only de facto, but also politically and ideologically isolated from the rest of Lebanon. While the Lebanese Forces (with whom the SLA had close connections earlier) gradually moved to the center and tried to reconcile the Lebanese and Arab dimensions of the Lebanese state, the SLA firmly rejected the Taif Agreement and retained its extreme Lebanese nationalist positions<sup>23</sup>.

## 6. LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN LEBANON

In this section, I would like to explore how the SLA deployed via SaJ language as a proxy to underpin its political position in the immediate context of post-Taif Lebanon while implicitly commenting on Lebanon’s national identity on a broader ideological level. In this capacity, political processes and national identity and language construction are interconnected and mutually reinforce each other (Joseph 2004, 124). The point of departure of my analysis is the argument that both national identity and national languages are discursively constructed and that they are intertwined in a complex process: “[national languages] are as much variables, constructs, ‘imagined communities’ as the national identities they are invoked to explain. [...] National identities and languages arise in tandem, ‘dialectally’ if you like, in a complex process that ought to be our focus of interest and study” (*ibidem*)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> See for instance the statement by Colonel Charbel Barakat (who was affiliated to the SLA and the Guardians of the Cedar Party) before the American Senate in June 2000: [https://books.google.b/books?id=t-vUArXaPv4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:PcFCwT\\$ZtkIC&hl=nl&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.b/books?id=t-vUArXaPv4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=editions:PcFCwT$ZtkIC&hl=nl&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false). Also the Guardians of the Cedar Party rejected and still rejects the Taif Agreement and cites, among other things, the national identity of Lebanon as one of the reasons for their rejection: “The Taif [*sic*] accord puts Lebanon under the mandate of the Arabs and this constitutes a fraudulence to its true identity”. See <https://www.gotc.info/index.php/en/component/content/article/115-english-categories-non-mainmenu/the-guardians-of-the-cedars-position-on-the-taef-accord/987-the-guardians-of-the-cedars-position-on-the-taef-accord?Itemid=102>.

<sup>24</sup> In his chapter “Language in National Identities” Joseph (2004, 92-131) critically discusses acclaimed works on nationalism by Elie Kedouri, Ernest Gellner, Benedict

Direct reasons for the SLA to oppose the Taif Agreement were Article 3 “Liberating Lebanon from the Israeli Occupation” and Article 4 “The Lebanese-Syrian Relations”. In combination with the restoration of the authority of the Lebanese state over all Lebanese territories, including South Lebanon, and the general disarmament of the militias as stipulated in Article 2<sup>25</sup>, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from South Lebanon as stipulated in Article 3 would mean the end of the SLA as it was directly financed by the IDF. This was indeed the case when the IDF actually withdrew on 24 May 2000. Article 4 describes the relation between Lebanon and Syria as “a special relationship that derives its strength from the roots of blood relationships, history, and joint fraternal interests”. Moreover, Article 4 touches upon the national identity of Lebanon. Its opening phrase “Lebanon, being Arab in identity and belonging is tied to all the Arab countries by true brotherly relations”, unambiguously embeds the ‘special relationship’ between Lebanon and Syria in Lebanon’s Arab identity, which is also stated as a main principle of the Taif Agreement in Article 1B: “Lebanon is Arab in identity and belonging” (*lubnān ‘arabī al-huwīyya wa al-intimā*)<sup>26</sup>. As pointed out above, the Constitution of 1943 attempted to strike a balance between the Arab and Lebanese dimensions of Lebanon’s national identity with its reference to ‘the Arab face’ of Lebanon. In this vein Article 11 articulates in relation to language that Arabic is “the national and official language of Lebanon” (*al-luġa al-‘arabiyya biya al-luġa al-waṭaniyya al-rasmiyya*). However, the Taif Agreement puts more emphasis on the Arab character of Lebanon in Article 1B, which was also added as a preamble to the Lebanese constitution (amended on 21 September 1990)<sup>27</sup>.

On a broader ideological level, by broadcasting the 10am news bulletins in Lebanese the SLA underscored its adherence to an extreme form of exclusivist Lebanese nationalism, which was influenced by Lebanist thought as formulated by the Lebanese poet and intellectual

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Anderson, Michael Billig, Eric Hobsbawm and Michael Silverstein, which I will not revisit here.

<sup>25</sup> Also the fact that the SLA’s main military opponent in South Lebanon, Hezbollah was allowed to keep its arms in its capacity as a ‘resistance force’ fighting Israel was a thorn in the eye of the SLA.

<sup>26</sup> PDF retrieved from <https://peacemaker.un.org/lebanon-taifaccords89> (English version) and [https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the\\_taif\\_agreement\\_arabic\\_version\\_.pdf](https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_arabic_version_.pdf) (Arabic version).

<sup>27</sup> PDF retrieved from <https://www.presidency.gov.lb/Arabic/LebaneseSystem/Pages/LebaneseConstitution.aspx>.

Said Akl (*Sa'īd 'Aql*)<sup>28</sup>. Intellectually inspired by ideas formulated in early Syrianist and Phoenicianist circles to which also Charles Corm, Michel Chiha, Mai and Albert Murr belonged and who were themselves inspired by the ideas of Ernest Renan and Henri Lammens, Akl claimed that there was an eternal 'Lebanese spirit' that was the essence of Lebanon. Despite its affinities with Phoenicianism and early secular non-Arab Syrianism, Akl's Lebanism differs from both in some crucial ways. For one, Akl did not consider contemporary Lebanon to be a direct continuation of Phoenicia, but rather conceived of both as being permeated by the same eternal Lebanese spirit (Salameh 2010). Before WWI Phoenicianism and Syrianism were not mutually exclusive but developed in parallel, as Phoenicianism did not imply Lebanese exclusivism and Syrianism often focused on Lebanon as its center of gravity with an autonomous status within a Greater Syrian entity. Only after WWI and the creation of the Lebanese state in 1926 did Syrianism and Phoenicianism become separate narratives, the latter underscoring Lebanon's autonomy and unique national identity (Kaufman 2014). Syrianism evolved in the works of its main ideologue Anton Saadeh to include the whole of Greater Syria and even parts of Iraq and Cyprus (Yamak 1966, 82-85). Second, and more crucial for our purposes, Phoenicianism and Syrianism crystallized around geographical territory rather than language. Language is not completely neglected in these two forms of nationalism but is considered to be of a lesser importance. Akl's Lebanism also concentrates on geographical and territorial elements in order to delimit Lebanon from the rest of the Arab world, but connects these firmly to language. Akl argues that Lebanese, albeit akin to Arabic, is not a variety of Arabic, but rather a separate Semitic language that finds its origins in Phoenician and Aramean<sup>29</sup>. Akl thus fuses territorial and linguistic elements in his articulation of Lebanese nationalism. Because Lebanism competes in its linguistic dimensions directly with Arab nationalism, which also crystallizes around language, labeling becomes a very sensitive issue. What most would call 'Lebanese dialect' (*al-labǧ'a*

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<sup>28</sup> My discussion of Akl's political and linguistic Lebanist ideas draws on Plonka (2006), Salameh (2010), Kaufman (2014) and Bawardi (2016). Suleiman (2003, 2004, 2013) briefly refers to Akl, but mainly in contrast with *fushā*-based linguistic nationalism.

<sup>29</sup> Whether this is linguistically accurate or not should not retain us here. What matters for our purposes here is rather how Akl ideologically deploys this argument in the context of language and national identity construction (Suleiman 2004, 55 and 2013b, 5, 19).

*al-‘āmmiyya al-lubnāniyye*) or a spoken variety of Arabic, is for Akl and his adherents a separate Lebanese language (*al-luġa al-lubnāniyya*)<sup>30</sup>. Unlike most other advocates of standardizing spoken varieties of Arabic, and there have been many<sup>31</sup>, Akl not only formulated his ideas theoretically but also put them into practice. It was his conviction that the standardization of Lebanese and its eventual use as the official and national language of Lebanon should take place at the grass roots rather than being implemented via language policy. Akl, who was an acclaimed symbolist poet and published his most celebrated poems in *fušḥā*, also published poetry collections, such as *Yara*, and literary journals, such as *Lebnaan*, in Lebanese. Additionally, he founded the Yara publishing house for the publication of literary works in Lebanese and established literary awards to encourage authors to write in Lebanese. Initially Akl used for his writings in Lebanese the Arabic script, but later he developed a Romanized alphabet which he considered to be a modern incarnation of the Phoenician alphabet (Salameh 2010, 143). Romanization further enhanced the rupture between Lebanese and Arabic by making it visual (*ibid.*, 234)<sup>32</sup>. Aside from the Latinization of the script, Akl’s efforts entailed changing metalanguage (“Lebanese is a language, not a dialect”), the creation of a literary corpus, and the translation of literary masterpieces into Lebanese, lexical expansion by borrowing, mainly from *fušḥā* and French, as well as the popular dissemination of these ideas and this new language via mass popular culture<sup>33</sup> (Plonka 2006). These laborious activities also exemplify that national languages don’t just ‘exist’, ready to be picked up as a basis for (linguistic) nationalism, but rather undergo a (deliberate) process of (re)shaping, molding, and

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<sup>30</sup> This argument can still be found on the official website of the Guardians of the Cedar Party: “The language of a nation is the essence of its national identity. Therefore, Lebanese is the national language of Lebanon. These Lebanese people who speak the Lebanese language today, *not dialect*, were the ones who invented the alphabet in the Phoenician era [...]”. See <https://www.gotc.info/index.php/en/component/content/article/133-english-categories-non-mainmenu/the-lebanese-language/1132-the-lebanese-language-soon?Itemid=102> (emphasis mine).

<sup>31</sup> All proposals to use and/or standardize non-*fušḥā* varieties of Arabic have led to huge and often venomous debates since at least as early as the 19th century. These proposals are generally known as *al-da‘wa ilā al-‘āmmiyya* (the call for the use of *‘āmmiyya*) or the *fušḥā-‘āmmiyya* debate (Daniëls 2002, 2018; Suleiman 2003, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> For other examples of script indexicality, see Suleiman 2013b, 35-43.

<sup>33</sup> SaJ’s choice to broadcast the news in Lebanese and frame it as such can be seen as a way of popularizing and naturalizing the idea that Lebanese is a language and not a dialect, even if SaJ was not exactly a mass media channel.

labeling during the process of national identity construction, meaning that national identity and language are mutually constitutive, as pointed out above. On a political level, Akl gave shape to his ideas by founding the Lebanese Renewal Party (*ḥizb al-taḡaddud al-lubnānī*) and he was also the spiritual father of the Guardians of the Cedar Party founded by Sakr. Both parties were extremely Lebanese nationalistic and took pronounced anti-Palestinian, anti-Syrian and anti-pan-Arab positions (Salameh 2010; Bawardi 2016).

Most sources carefully state that in Lebanon, Muslims tend to stress its Arab identity, while (Maronite) Christians tend to stress its exclusive Lebanese identity (see f.i. Al Batal 2002; Bawardi 2016). While this accurately describes broad political and ideological tendencies, we have to be careful linking them to specific forms of nationalism or linguistic attitudes, as well as to specific cases. Identifying oneself with the Lebanese state does not necessarily preclude identification with a broader (pan)Arab identity and identification with an exclusive Lebanese identity does not necessarily mean a position in favor of the (exclusive) use of Lebanese or that one considers it to be a separate language rather than a variety of Arabic. Suleiman (2003, 204-219), for example, discusses two examples of Lebanese intellectuals of Maronite background who were staunch defenders of an exclusive Lebanese identity, but who considered *fushā* as the linguistic basis for Lebanese nationalism rather than Lebanese<sup>34</sup>. Also Kaufman (2014) refers to several examples of proponents of a non-Arab Lebanese national identity who considered Arabic to be the national language of Lebanon. On the other hand, Arab nationalist sympathies or sentiment do not necessarily entail negative attitudes towards non-*fushā* varieties (Albirini 2016, 160). This being said, claiming that the SLA basically was a (Maronite) Christian militia to explain its choice to broadcast the news in Lebanese is not satisfactory for the following reasons. Even if most of its leadership indeed consisted of Christians, many of its soldiers actually were Shiites<sup>35</sup> (Herzog 2009). Some sources mention (Shiite) Muslim membership to underscore that the SLA was not essentially a Christian militia that envisioned a dominantly Christian Lebanon (Hamizrachi 1988; Nissan 2003). Others mention, however,

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<sup>34</sup> However, we have to keep in mind that both examples discussed by Suleiman predate the Lebanese civil war.

<sup>35</sup> This probably explains why in my recordings, which coincided with Ramadan, the times marking the beginning (*imsāk*) and the ending (*iftār*) of the fast were announced at the end of the 12:30pm news broadcast.

coercion and financial necessity as factors for Shiite membership to the militia (Beydoun 1992). Moreover, there was a tension between confessional inclusiveness and anti-Muslim positions in the broader ideological network to which the SLA belonged (Plonka 2006). In what follows we will look closer into the SLA's political and ideological networks. A limited network analysis demonstrates that the SLA and the Guardians of the Cedar were closely connected and Sakr regularly supplied personnel to the SLA<sup>36</sup>. In its turn, as mentioned above, Sakr's Guardians of the Cedar Party was closely connected to Akl's Lebanese Renewal Party and shared its political and ideological positions. Moreover, Sakr was a co-founder of *Lebnaan* (1975-1990). This journal was the political organ of the Guardians of the Cedar Party in which Akl's ideas on the Lebanese language and its orthography were published and applied<sup>37</sup>, along the political and ideological viewpoints<sup>38</sup> of the party (Plonka 2006, 428-429). We can therefore claim that the SLA was, via the Guardians of the Cedars Party, ideologically connected to the Lebanese Renewal Party and that the SLA was ideologically inspired by Akl's Lebanist ideas. Moreover, Akl's ideas were well-known in Lebanon, as he often presented them via diverse media channels. On the basis of this, we can solidly claim that the linguistic choice made by SaJ was not (purely) functional, but also had strong symbolic dimensions. We can therefore consider the choice of broadcasting news items in Lebanese and framing them explicitly as newscasts "in the Lebanese language" as a powerful metalinguistic comment on Lebanon's national identity.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This article has analyzed the linguistic, functional, and symbolic dimensions of language use in news broadcasts by *Ṣawt al-Ġanūb*. The description of the main linguistic features of the news bulletins in Lebanese demonstrates that the 'Lebanese' data display complex combinations of *fūṣḥā* and Lebanese elements on all linguistic levels, which seem at

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<sup>36</sup> Nisan (2003) mentions at least eight high ranking commanders who were affiliated to both the Guardians and the SLA.

<sup>37</sup> Between 25 March 1983 and 26 January 1990 the journal was published in Akl's Lebanese alphabet (Plonka 2006, 428-429).

<sup>38</sup> These consisted of Lebanese linguistic nationalistic positions, in combination with extreme anti-Palestinian and racist positions, as well as an ambiguous position towards Islam (Plonka 2006, 429).



times idiosyncratic. Rather than describing them as hybrid or mixed forms, they can also be described in terms of codeswitching. This latter approach, when systematically applied to the complete corpus of *fushā* and Lebanese bulletins, would allow for a more fine-grained description of the dynamics between *fushā* and Lebanese. This will be hopefully achieved in a follow-up paper. After exploring the functional and symbolic dimensions of SaJ's language choice, we directed our focus to the political and ideological underpinnings of language choice. By contextualizing the linguistic choices of the radio station and connecting them to the political and ideological affiliations and networks of its administrator, the SLA, they can be understood as a metalinguistic comment on Lebanon's national identity. However, by broadcasting the 10am news in Lebanese and labeling it as 'the news in the Lebanese language' the SLA not only underscores its adherence to Lebanese exclusivism, or Lebanonism as formulated by Said Akl, but also flags its opposition to the Taif Agreement, both on the level of the immediate political and practical implications it entailed for the SLA as well as its references to the Arab identity of Lebanon. In doing so, the proxy army of the IDF deployed via SaJ language as a proxy for their political and ideological position in the complex Lebanese post-Taif political landscape.

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