Yasir Suleiman. 2011. Arabic, Self and Identity. Oxford U Press.

Chapter 3

Arabic, Self and Autoethnography

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the language-and-Self link in the study of Arabic in the social world. For this purpose, the chapter will investigate two sites in the authors' own linguistic behaviour as a teacher trainer in the Arabian Gulf region for the symbolic meanings they can yield in line with chapter 2. Central to this investigation is the concept of identity as a continuum that is bounded on one side by fixity and on the other by variability. The Self here is treated as a repertoire of roles, resources and attributes that are context-dependent.

The material in this chapter is presented as an autoethnography. It is written in a first-person voice to reflect on the experiences of the researcher as researched subject, using memory, introspection, self-reports and personal interpretation to retrieve the data and explain them. I am aware that autoethnography is controversial in social research and that its employment here is a novel practise in Arabic sociolinguistics; for these reasons, the chapter ends with a critique of the application of this mode of enquiry in this case.

FROM COLLECTIVE IDENTITY TO THE SELF

During the past decade, the main focus of my research has been the intersection of language, identity and conflict in the Middle East. Initially, my main interest was in collective identity in its national and ethnic manifestations, which I approached by examining how these forms of identification (the ethnic and the national) are articulated ideologically for task orientation in the cultural and, most important, political domains. This research led me to examine how languages in the Middle East are involved in social and political conflicts over cultural representation, school curricula, political and legal rights, nation building, state formation, memory and territory. In conducting this research, I was mainly interested in the macroanalysis of language as a cultural formation, or in its role as sociopolitical location for investigating the complex ways in which the group expresses its identity and pursues its interests in situations of conflict. In this connection, collective identity is sometimes treated as an essentialist construct or as a prediscursive phenomenon that points to an objective reality 'out there,' especially in

ideologically driven discourse. In this sense, collective identity is viewed as a 'natural' or essentialist category of identification that is characterised by fixity and continuity over time and that is constrained by social structures that minimize or neutralize the role of human agency in shaping and reshaping identity. This, clearly, is an exaggerated and naïve view of identity.

But equally exaggerated are poststructuralist and postmodernist views that insist on the fracture, fragmentation, incoherence, amorphousness, decentring or incessant flexibility of identity.[1] Identities are not given, but they do not undergo radical transformation all the time. They are expressed through lifestyles, but they are not in themselves lifestyles. This is particularly true of individual identity, which I call Self here to distinguish it from collective identity.[2] While the Self cannot be completely fixed and homogeneous, the postmodern idea that it has 'no stable core but is . . . discontinuous and fragmented' cannot be true, either, as an alternative paradigm (Sermijn et al. 2008: 634). The emphasis on the rampant variability and mercurial temporariness of the Self in postmodernism is categorically the same, in spite of the difference in content, as the emphasis on the fixity and coherence of the Self in naïve-realist or realist-positivist modes of thinking. As two ends of the spectrum, these two views agree on eliminating the middle ground, denying that identity exists on a continuum that is bounded by fixity on one end and by variability on the other.

For this reason, I steer a middle course between these two views in this study, although it is hard to establish where fixity ends and variability begins. This is a weakness in my position that I cannot eliminate, but in the competing rhetorics of the Self between the total coherence of the realist-positivist paradigm and the incoherence of its postmodernist alternative, the middle ground is bound to have some intuitive appeal that accords with how people experience their identity (or aspects of it). Embodying stability with change, continuity with discontinuity, homogeneity with heterogeneity and unity with fragmentation, these currents in the making and marking of the Self and collective identity are to be conceived not as separate or unrelated binaries but as forces in a buzzing beehive of order and diversity. In thinking about the Self, I take a view that considers the individual as a 'basket [or, better still, 'repertoire,' to avoid the notion of accumulation conveyed by 'basket'] of selves which come to the surface at different social moments as appropriate' (Cohen 1994: 11). This view will be expounded in the linguistic autoethnography that follows.

I have dealt with issues of identity and conflict in the Middle East insofar as these relate to language in two book-length studies (Suleiman 2003; 2004b). The main focus of these two studies was group identity and

1 This postmodern concept of identity is linked to globalisation, multiculturalism and the emphasis on consumption and political struggles in modern society (see Widdicombe 1998: 204–6).

2 In this work, *identity* is used as a cover term for both *collective identity* and *Self*.

intergroup conflict at the supranational, national, subnational and ethnic levels. These studies were driven by a quantitative and symbolist framework, with the aim of mining the political meanings in what I have described in chapter 2 as 'residual spaces of liminality.' This book continues this interest in the nexus of language, identity and conflict in the Middle East from the twin perspectives of qualitative and symbolist research, as I have discussed these in chapter 2. But it also injects a new direction. It focuses on many parts on the Self (individual identity) and language, a topic I introduced into play in my study of language and conflict in Israel and Jordan (Suleiman 2004b).

In this context, my main interest in this chapter will be aspects of my own linguistic behaviour as an Arabic-language trainer in the Arabian Gulf, with the aim of showing that issues of identity are complex and positional and that they crop up in ordinary contexts to serve a variety of extralinguistic purposes. In particular, I am interested in a set of sites of identity, as these are displayed in my language production, while training the Arabic-language teachers in Doha on the use of the *Curriculum Standards for the State of Qatar: Arabic Grades K to 12*, which I authored with Alaa Elgibali of the University of Maryland (2004). In analysing these linguistic sites of identity, I will reflect on what I think informs them, whether it is my ideological views, public self-image, instrumental purposes, the immediate contexts of situation, the role of the audience as a constraining factor, private fears, or any historically situated social or political frames of reference pertaining to these sites.

I am aware that this kind of exploration is fraught with methodological problems, not least the fact that I am acting as informant and analyst or as researcher and researched subject at the same time and that my data are delayed[3] or retrospective self-reports[4] that I, as a researcher, have retrieved from memory (long) after the event. This is why I am offering the following accounts of identity in the form of an exploratory linguistic autoethnography, as a self-reflexive set of observations and analyses which, I hope, may receive cross-subjective validation in future research. Such validation would induce confidence in this line of enquiry and ascertain the reliability of the conclusions I draw. However, I am also aware that others may disagree with my views, as will become clear in chapter 4 in my discussion of the place of the *fuṣḥā* in Arab culture. I will deal with these and other methodological issues later in this chapter.

Some contextual information about my work as Arabic-language teacher trainer in the Gulf region is necessary here before I begin this autoethnographic exploration. In 2002, Qatar initiated a wide-ranging and, in the Arab

3 For an interesting application of 'delayed data,' see Köroğlu (2007).

4 See McDonough (1978) and Suleiman (1992) for the use of self-reports in language learning.

context, pioneering educational reform, which led to the writing of the *Curriculum Standards for the State of Qatar* in 2004 (Suleiman and Elgibali 2004), along with standards for English, mathematics and science (biology, chemistry and physics). The production of these standards coincided with the establishment in September 2004 of what have been called the Independent Schools in Qatar (*madāris mustaqilla*), which roughly equate to the Charter Schools in the United States (Brewer et al. 2007). In 2005, I was additionally asked to produce a set of *Arabic Schemes of Work for the State of Qatar* (Suleiman et al. 2006) to help teachers implement the standards. Starting in September 2004, I was asked to conduct standards-based teacher training, which continued until the spring of 2008. In 2007, most of the training took place in the basement of the Education Institute in Doha. The building has four training halls in the basement. Sometimes the training for all four subjects (Arabic, English, mathematics and science) took place at the same time, mostly in the evenings. During prayer times and coffee breaks, teachers congregated in an open space in the basement to socialize. The training for all subjects was mixed; it was attended by male and female teachers from a variety of Arab backgrounds (mainly Egyptians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and female Qatari teachers). For most of the training, I was the principal trainer, but I had help from cotrainers who also acted as observers for feedback purposes.[5]

USING THE *FUṢḤĀ*, MARKING THE SELF

In the context of my teacher-training work in Qatar (and elsewhere), *fuṣḥā* refers to a continuum of styles or levels of language that are perceived to be noncolloquial by the teachers participating in the training. *Fuṣḥā* here is a matter of perception and degree, rather than a precisely defined category of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, as used in this chapter, the term *fuṣḥā* does not completely describe the materials used in the training, a very limited portion of which was, in fact, in the colloquial, but refers to the variety of Arabic I used to conduct the training. This *fuṣḥā* aimed at eliminating the following: (1) salient phonological and morphological features of the principal trainer's colloquial dialect, for example, the use of the glottal stop instead of [q] of the *fuṣḥā*; (2) lexical items and classroom-management expressions that are identifiably colloquial, for example, *kwayyis* instead of

5 Between 2003 and 2008, my training was observed by a number of experts: Amal Ayoubi (School of Oriental and African Studies), Alaa Elgibali (University of Maryland), Hanna Haidar (City University of New York), Ronak Husni (American University of Sharjah, UAE), Gada Khalil (UNRWA, Jordan), Muna al-Kuwwari (Education Institute, Qatar), Abir Najjar (Jordan University), Ibtisam Naji (Education Institute, Qatar), Saleh Nusseirat (University of Maryland), Abdul Gabbar al-Sharafi (Sultan Qaboos University) and Iman Aziz Soliman (American University in Cairo). To the best of my knowledge, all institutional associations are current ones.

aḥsanta/i ('well done!') in *fuṣḥā* Arabic; (3) prosodic features, mainly tones of voice, that are characteristic of speech in the colloquial dialect; and (4) rare words and expressions that characterise the high end of the *fuṣḥā*. This *fuṣḥā* further aimed at using as much word-final vowelling (*i'rāb*) as possible, especially when I was certain of its correctness. In cases of doubt, I did not vowel the endings of words, using what is called the principle of *taskin* in Arabic, in conformity with the linguistically sanctioned maxim *sakkin taslam* ('when unsure, suppress word-final vowels to be on the safe side'). This operational definition of *fuṣḥā* corresponds to what Badawi (1973) calls *fuṣḥā al-muthaqqafin* ('educated *fuṣḥā*') in his study of the Arabic-language situation in Egypt.

In what follows, I will provide a set of reflections on my use of the *fuṣḥā* in the Qatar training insofar as this relates to questions of the Self and identity. The immediate aim of these reflections is to provide autoethnographic explanations of why I opted for the *fuṣḥā* in conducting this training, although I know I make mistakes in it, instead of using a form of Arabic that is heavily inclined towards my own dialect to minimize error making on my part. I knew this was a risky choice; some of the teachers were very proficient in the use of the *fuṣḥā*, and some among them felt very strongly about using it correctly. The fact that these teachers made their displeasure clear when their colleagues committed errors made my choice even more risky: I could become the target of their criticisms.[6] So, what were the factors that drove me to use the *fuṣḥā* at such a high intensity in my training when, in fact, I could have been exposing myself to damaging criticism and some loss of face professionally through this choice?

The most obvious answer may relate to a desire on my part to respond to the expectations of the audience in a particular professional setting: as Arabic-language teachers, they would expect me to use the *fuṣḥā*. This expectation on the part of the teachers may be justified but only up to a point. I say this because my experience in teacher training in Qatar and other Arab countries suggests that Arabic teachers may, in fact, prefer to use an elevated form of their colloquial dialect in professional settings, either out of habit or, most probably, because they want to avoid making mistakes in the *fuṣḥā* in front of their peers.[7] However, this fear of making mistakes,

6 Teachers in this group think of themselves as guardians and defenders of the language. In a recent intervention, the head of the Department of Arabic at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has dubbed these guardians the 'neo-cons' of Arabic grammar. Pursuing this analogy further, he calls the extremists among them *al-Luyīsiyyūn*, after Bernard Lewis, who is reputed to take a strong pro-Zionist line in his advice to the neo-cons on matters related to Islam, the War on Terror and the Arab-Israeli conflict. See *Al-Watan* (2008).

7 This, in my experience, is particularly true of female teachers and, also, most Egyptian teachers regardless of gender. Prestige as a factor in the speech habits of Arabic speakers operates differentially across the sexes, with women favouring prestige dialectal forms and men preferring *fuṣḥā* forms (see Ibrahim 1986). This may explain why members of the awkward squad were mainly men.

bordering on some kind of linguistic anxiety,[8] may be counterbalanced by the fact that teachers who may dare to criticise their colleagues—the 'awkward squad,' as I privately would call them in my Qatar training—often end up criticising each other the harshest, driven in this regard by their having an axe to grind or by the desire to author acts of one-upmanship for social and professional display, or for public ratification of their expertise and group affirmation of their self-worth.[9] In spite of this, the consistent use of the *fuṣḥā* in professional settings, even among Arabic-language teachers, is not a norm in my experience. This implies that my choice of the *fuṣḥā* was not a foregone conclusion, since I could have safely opted for an elevated form of my colloquial dialect or, alternatively, what is sometimes called Educated Spoken Arabic (Mitchell 1978; Mitchell 1986; Sallam 1979; Sallam 1980). Owing to this, my use of the *fuṣḥā* must have been motivated by additional factors.

Before dealing with these factors, it may be worth considering the extent of personal and professional risk to which I exposed myself through my choice of the *fuṣḥā* as the medium for the training. For a start, I knew that my exposure to risk could be serious but that it was, nevertheless, quite manageable. It was obvious to me that any critical behaviour by members of the awkward squad would most probably lead to antagonising their colleagues, the majority in the training, who would feel personally threatened by them. These teachers would most probably reason to themselves that if members of the awkward squad could get away with criticising me, they would definitely feel emboldened to criticise them. Defending me would, therefore, be their first line of self-defence. Second, I knew that members of the awkward squad would be inclined to think twice before daring to criticise me; they were bound to calculate that such an act on their part might not come without a cost. Criticising me in this situation would be tantamount to criticising a person in a position of professional authority in relation to them who, in retaliation, might do them harm by writing negative training reports about them or by criticising their performance on his visits to observe their teaching in the schools where they worked.

Clearly, I was in a position of institutional power in relation to the teachers attending the training, including members of the awkward squad.

8 A telling example of this linguistic anxiety occurred at the time of the Egyptian Revolution in 1952. Gamal Abdul-Nasir instructed Brigadier Jamal Hammad to write the First Declaration of the Revolution. Hammad related (in *Akhir sa'a*, an Egyptian weekly magazine, 22 July 2009, p. 32) that in composing this declaration, his first priority was to write it in a 'well-knit [*raṣīn*] style that is free of any linguistic mistakes lest people inside or outside Egypt do not take us seriously.' This anxiety seems to be deep-rooted in Arab culture. The Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan (d. AH 86/AD 705), an accomplished user of the language, is reported to have said that his diligence in avoiding mistakes in his Friday sermons 'turned his hair white prematurely' (Suleiman 2003: 53–54).

9 Most teachers in this category were male and university-educated, with degrees (ranging from BA to PhD) in Arabic.

This power was further bolstered by the fact that I had a doctorate, which, in Arab society, still endows its holder with status and prestige, particularly if it was gained from a Western university, as mine was. I could add to this, as another source of power, the fact that I am male, while most of the teachers in the training were female, and that I was older than most of the teachers, two prestige factors that in Arab society could cushion me against blatant criticism, provided that I was not hopelessly bad at my job. Not only would criticising me be seen as a risky matter because of my power as the (principal) trainer, but it would additionally constitute an infringement of some of the norms in Arab society that bind members of the majority in the training to one another, maybe causing them to stand up to members of the awkward squad.

I was fully aware of all of these considerations, including the need to co-opt members of the awkward squad socially in the coffee breaks to minimise any desire on their part to criticise me if I made mistakes in the *fuṣḥā*. My decision to opt for the *fuṣḥā* in my training did not, therefore, seem to be all that risky. Furthermore, I knew that even if I made mistakes, I could always try to have them 'forgiven' by invoking the maxim that it would be better to try to use the *fuṣḥā* though I make mistakes in it than not to use it at all, exploiting as background to this defence strategy the Prophetic Hadith according to which those who strive to provide sound judgement/opinion (*ijtihād*)—in my case, correct *fuṣḥā* Arabic—but fail will receive in the hereafter double the reward given to those who try to offer such opinion and succeed. I did, in fact, use this strategy to compliment teachers who made mistakes in the *fuṣḥā* when I felt that they might come under attack from members of the awkward squad. The point behind this defence strategy is simple common sense that is also socially and religiously sanctioned: making mistakes in the *fuṣḥā* is better than avoiding it. This may be considered as an overextension of the scope of the Hadith, but it is justified by the connection between Islam and the *fuṣḥā*.

Clearly, my decision to use the *fuṣḥā* was not such a big risk after all. It was a rational decision that I made by reference to a number of calculations. First, using the *fuṣḥā* enabled me to project the professional image of a trainer who valued this highly regarded variety of Arabic and was not afraid of making mistakes when using it. Using the *fuṣḥā* in the training, therefore, signalled cultural belonging and professional self-confidence on my part, two important attributes in constructing a healthy relationship with the teachers. The appeal to the Prophetic Hadith to justify or explain away mistakes in the *fuṣḥā* was clearly intended to take the high moral ground against the awkward squad by appealing to the commonsense notion that it was better to try and fail than not to try at all. The reference to the Prophetic Hadith also depicted me as a trainer rooted in his culture, a fact that I knew would enhance my standing among the teachers, the majority of whom displayed outward signs of religiosity (veils, beards, rosary beads, Islamic modes of greeting and praying in the coffee breaks). Using this strategy was ultimately aimed, should the need arise, at turning the tables on members

of the awkward squad by depicting them as mean-spirited and untrue to the spirit of tolerance inherent in their cultural and religious traditions. Finally, I knew that in the context of the training, the cards were stacked in my favour. I had authority and power by virtue of my position as the principal trainer; this was supported by my status as the holder of a doctorate from a Western university and by my being older than most of the teachers in the training.

My decision to use the *fuṣḥā*, therefore, showed me to be a good risk taker. However, I knew that this would only work if (1) I did not make too many mistakes or big 'howlers,' such as putting a singular subject (*fā'il*) in the genitive; and (2) I was able to maintain good rapport with the teachers, including members of the awkward squad, to keep them on my side and even to learn from them (which would appeal to their vanity or self-esteem). The point, however, in all of this is the centrality of issues of personal identity as a site of language behaviour that, on the surface, might have been considered banal and mundane. By digging deeper into this site, the language-Self link is revealed to be complex, positional and subject to the machinations of human agency.

But there were other reasons behind my use of the *fuṣḥā*. One relates to my view of myself as an Arab first *before* being a Palestinian or perhaps as an Arab first because I am a Palestinian. Notwithstanding the difficulty of defining what being an Arab means, I am so content to be one that when people (especially Arabs) ask me where I come from, I sometimes answer that I am an Arab. I did this particularly in my training in Qatar. This response confused my interlocutors, causing them to answer, 'I am an Arab, too, but I am from Egypt [or Syria or Jordan], so which country are you from?' Sometimes they tried to get the same answer by asking me where I was born, but when I refused to tell them, they would walk away in frustration. On these occasions, some of my interlocutors felt socially rudderless and confused, because I had deprived them of a compass direction in relation to which they could start the work of locating me in their social world, to read into me all of the preexisting sociopolitical meanings they might have associated with my 'submerged' nationality. For these teachers, I constructed myself as a semi-open/semi-closed book or as a nameless map in deciphering of which they would need to look for alternative clues, for example, any vernacular inflection in my *fuṣḥā* speech. My use of the *fuṣḥā* was, therefore, intended to obstruct any attempt to this effect on their part, as I will discuss below.

The teachers' insistence on establishing my country-linked identity shows the extent to which nation-state identities have become entrenched in the Arabic-speaking world. The teachers were not satisfied with the broadest definition I gave them, that of being Arab, as a specification of my identity. They felt that this did not identify me with sufficient precision. They wanted an identity label with a higher degree of specification. I did not blame them for feeling that way, not least because Arabic speakers tend to use nation-state identities in mixed national settings, such as those in the Gulf region,

as passwords to unlock a set of predetermined indices of interpretation that help them orient themselves in interacting with one another. Being Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Saudi or Palestinian carries with it stereotypical and other constructed meanings which interlocutors use in interacting with one another. With these indices, Arabic speakers can determine the degree of intimacy or distance they may wish to contract with one another in social interaction, or they may use these indices to open or close further spaces for finer readings of their interlocutors, for example, by asking in which village, city or part of a city an interlocutor was born to apply to them more refined schemas of interpretation. For example, among Palestinians, the main schema of identification consists of whether a person is *Madani* ('city person') or *Fellahi* ('country person') and if *Madani*, which city in Palestine he came from or even in which part or quarter of that city he originated. For the teachers, these categories acted as though they were cartographic conventions on a map that could help them navigate through their interlocutor (the principal trainer, in this case) as if he were a topographic text. These subcategories of identification could then be used in an economy of social values to determine the kind of status or prestige a person might be allocated, or they might be used to tell an interlocutor that they themselves came from the same city or village or that they had a friend in common who came from the same city or village, thus creating bonds between these interlocutors directly or indirectly.

By telling the teachers that I was an Arab, I tried to foreclose these avenues of interpretation and social-value allocation that would box me into a preconceived category of group-related meanings. This move on my part afforded me more freedom to construct who I wanted to be, while at the same time expressing my Arab signs of belonging as indices of my identity. Furthermore, by saying that I was an Arab and by using the *fuṣḥā* as the medium of my speech—this is the important point here—I tried to thwart any attempt on the part of any group of teachers to claim me as their own on nation-state grounds. To be an Arab and to use the *fuṣḥā* as a motif for this Arabness meant belonging to all of the national groups represented in the training, rather than to one exclusive *fuṣḥā*-based state-national identity. This more inclusive identity was important for my professional persona: I wanted to be perceived as equidistant from (or equally near to) all of the teachers, knowing that if I was not, I might be accused of favouritism. It was important to avoid this charge, not least because accusations of favouritism could affect my chances of being invited back to conduct more training in future years. The loss of such an opportunity would not only have a financial cost but would deprive me of (1) a golden opportunity to play a role in a flagship project of reforming Arabic-language teaching, which, as an Arab, I considered to be a great privilege; (2) the opportunity to collect more data on this reform, which I wanted to use in my research, as I am doing here; and (3) the opportunity to practice self-therapy by exorcising some of the demons of the past as represented in the excesses of the grammar-based teaching I had to endure

and suffer as a student in Palestine.[10] Clearly, my saying that I was an Arab and my speaking in the *fuṣḥā* in the training were interconnected and multilayered practises through which I intended to (1) express my views of who I was in nationality terms, rather than nation-state or citizenship terms; (2) bolster my professional persona as a teacher trainer; (3) protect my interests as a researcher who needed to have access to data; (4) protect an income stream through renewed opportunities for consultancy work; and (5) in a form of DIY therapy, cleanse the Self of the pedagogic demons of the past, of the excesses of 'grammar abuse' I had suffered as a student.[11] Speaking in the *fuṣḥā* was a choice laden with a variety of symbolic meanings for me: national, professional, economic and personal.

To ensure that I stood a good chance of achieving the above objectives, I knew I must use the *fuṣḥā* and do so without country-specific inflections as much as I could, which I think I did successfully. Arabic speakers use these inflections to guess the nation-state identity or region of a *fuṣḥā* speaker. I am attuned to these inflections myself and use them for exactly this purpose, for example, when I am watching the news on Arab satellite TV.

The following example from the training illustrates how teachers resort to these country/region inflections to guess the national identity of a speaker. In January 2008, the Education Institute in Qatar asked the trainers of the first four core subjects in the educational reforms (Arabic, English, mathematics and science) to exchange experiences by training the teachers in the other subjects on aspects of their (the trainers') work. As part of this programme, I trained the mathematics teachers on the Arabic standards. As was my usual practise, I spoke in the *fuṣḥā*. I was, however, surprised that instead of following the training, the mathematics teachers wanted to know my country of origin. I gave them my usual answer that I was an Arab, but this did not satisfy them. At several points in the training, the teachers interrupted me to guess my country of origin, using my spoken *fuṣḥā* as their main clue. Some thought I was Syrian or Lebanese, others were sure that I was Tunisian or Libyan, while others, a minority, believed that I was Jordanian. Now, I am a Jordanian citizen, but I do not speak with stereotypical (male) Jordanian inflection in the *fuṣḥā*, for example, a throaty *'ayn* or a hard *jim* (as in 'jam,' instead of the soft *jim* as in 'pleasure,' which I tend to use). Not a single teacher, however, thought I was Palestinian (my nationality), although all agreed that I could not be Egyptian, which indicates the high

10 Instead of proposing a grammar-based set of standards, we opted for standards that were text-type-driven. Not only did this make the grammar teaching function-based, but it also reduced the excessive reliance on grammatical forms as the organising principle pedagogically. The teaching of grammar in Arabic schools is the most challenging part of the Arabic curriculum, which most students tend to dread, as I did.

11 See Niazi (2008) and Khalifa (2008) for discussions of the teaching of Arabic grammar and, therefore, the *fuṣḥā* in Arabic schools. Khalifa provides a reading of an amusing poem by the Saudi poet and diplomat Ghazi al-Qusaybi on the topic.

recognisability factor of this variety of Arabic. The attempt to guess my identity went on for the duration of the training session, reflecting social curiosity and anxiety at the same time.[12]

This intense interest in my identity on the teachers' part indicates the importance in mixed Arab settings of establishing the nationality of interlocutors as a way of navigating social and professional interactions. It also reveals how language provides important clues in establishing these identities. The fact that the colloquial dialects are the norm in these, as in most, interactions provides speakers with rich clues to perform this task of 'identity spotting.' However, these clues become impoverished when speakers use the *fuṣḥā*. On these occasions, speakers look for country/region-bound inflections in the way the *fuṣḥā* is used, mainly through phonological and lexical clues. Some of these clues are easily recognised, for example the pronunciation of [j] as [g] or [dh] as [z] in Egyptian Arabic, but most of the clues the speakers use are inchoate. This makes the task of identifying a person from the dialectal inflection in his spoken *fuṣḥā* an impressionistic judgement. This impressionism increases when a speaker uses the *fuṣḥā* in a country/region-neutral way, as do, for example, most of the news readers on Al Jazeera.

In this respect, my use of country-neutral *fuṣḥā* was intended to underpin my claim of being an Arab, which, in my mind, is not linked to a particular Arab country. But it was this that the teachers could not accept at face value. For them, Arabness was not enough to identify an Arab when nation-state identities are the norm in the identity parade.[13] My refusal to identify myself in country terms and the absence of country-linked clues in my spoken *fuṣḥā* were, therefore, disconcerting 'postures' to the teachers. Instead of being read as I intended them, these 'postures' were viewed as attempts at dissembling, at withholding some relevant information to which the teachers felt they were entitled. In fact, some teachers felt that I was hiding something from them. Some also felt that I might be doing this because I was ashamed of my background, the typical expression being 'Are you ashamed of your origins?' (*inta/e khajlān min aṣlak?*). Others thought that I did not 'play ball fairly' in the identity game: they were entitled to know where I came from, since they told me where they came from. At times, teachers would walk away displeased with me, or they might come back again to interrogate me, having spoken to a cotrainer.

12 This session was attended by my cotrainer, Amal Ayoubi of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

13 Arabness and Palestinianness are constructed categories. This implies that they are imagined differently by different people, while at the same time showing some overlap or a 'common core.' Both the overlaps and the differences enable these categories to be used as resources in identity negotiation in society. In this research, these two categories represent long-term subject positions in comparison with my negative attitudes towards affectation and display in speech, which will be discussed later.

This intense activity in class and in the coffee breaks signals the importance of identity in mixed Arab settings and how closely linked this identity is to language as a marker of nationality. In fact, I never anticipated that my use of the *fuṣḥā* would arouse such intense interest or that it would be so strongly and intimately linked with issues of identity. The curious thing is that this marking of identity worked in reverse as a kind of unmarking of identity in relation to the dominant nation-state identities. Speaking a country/region-neutral *fuṣḥā* marks the speaker with a weak form of identity, which challenges the nation-state norms of reference that are heavily inscribed in Arab social life.

I said above that my view of my own identity as an Arab is strongly linked to my being Palestinian.[14] In view of this, the question may arise about why my *fuṣḥā* speech was not marked with a strong Palestinian vernacular inflection in the training. Was it because I was ashamed to acknowledge publicly that I was Palestinian?[15] Or was it, indeed, because I genuinely felt as an Arab first and a Palestinian second or equally as a Palestinian and an Arab? In response, I can say that I am not ashamed of being Palestinian and that I do genuinely feel as an Arab first and as a Palestinian second or, at least, equally Arab and Palestinian. I can go further and say that this play of identities is directly linked to my use of the *fuṣḥā* without country/region inflection in the training. Let me explain.

I happen to believe that the problem of Palestine is not a purely Palestinian problem but an Arab one. My identity in this respect is the product of many influences, including the school curricula under which I was educated in Jerusalem in the 1960s. I also happen to believe that the Palestinians do need Arab help and support, at the official and popular levels, to achieve their independence and secure their national rights. Because of this, I think it is important that I, a Palestinian, do what I can to maintain and service all existing links and channels of communication with all Arabs, regardless of their nationality, ethnic affiliation, religious background or gender. Claiming that I am an Arab and, more important, using the *fuṣḥā* on those occasions where I can do so in public fora are considered by me, delusionally perhaps, as important steps in this direction. This allows me to claim symbolically that—at some sociocultural and even political level—I am Syrian, Lebanese, Qatari, Omani, Tunisian, and so on.

14 I am, of course, aware that my identity is more complex. Having spent most of my life in Scotland and England, I also feel a strong sense of belonging to Scottish and British identities. And having moved to Cambridge in 2007, I know I have started to develop additional layers of belonging to my identity repertoire.

15 I was very surprised when the minister of religious endowments of a Gulf country, on a visit to Cambridge in November 2009, responded in this way when, having told him that I was an Arab, I added to a further question about my identity that I was Palestinian. To my surprise, he said that there was no need for me to be ashamed of being Palestinian. This was the first time that I was met by this response (this incident took place almost a year after I had finished writing this chapter).

Owing to this, my identity as an Arab must be a mixture of personal conviction and national interest. But as the discussion above has revealed, it is also a matter of principle and instrumentality, conviction and convenience, the personal and the collective, in addition to being context-bound. It is a complex identity, plural, not singular. It is a repertoire rather than a single theme. It involves roles and is used as a resource. And it is intimately linked to my positive attitudes towards the *fuṣḥā* and my using it without country/region-linked inflections in my training to achieve as many objectives as possible. The *fuṣḥā* may, therefore, be considered a motif for aspects of my identity repertoire. Using it may further be considered a form of self-deployment in public fora for image projection, as well as for instrumental purposes.

But there is more to this *fuṣḥā*-linked identity than the points I have made in the preceding discussion. I strongly feel that the state of being Palestinian is one of being an underdog in the Middle East. In these days of the hegemonic and coercive nation-state in the Arabic-speaking world, pan-Arabism is another manifestation of the underdog in the political life of the Middle East. And so is the *fuṣḥā*, which is being challenged from different directions and for different reasons by the colloquial dialects and by English and French, as will be discussed in chapter 4. And as a motif of aspects of my identity, the *fuṣḥā* symbolises my deeply felt personal marginality. As a Palestinian in exile, I have always thought of myself as a marginal (though not necessarily marginalised) person, even when in my professional life, I was close to the centre of some important institutional or national developments or events. Speaking in the *fuṣḥā* on my part was, therefore, a way of standing up for a number of underdogs in the political and cultural life of the Arabic-speaking world. It was also a way of dealing with my personal marginality.

Standing up for the *fuṣḥā*, for this is how I conceptualised my use of it in the training to what was a captive audience, was a proxy for matters of great concern to me at the personal and national levels. It was a way of asserting an identity that encompassed my exilic/diasporic and preexilic/diasporic life. It was a mode of cultural and psychological resistance against marginality in my personal life and hegemony in the public sphere. And it was a way of symbolically resolving some of my deep-seated anxieties, albeit momentarily. The *fuṣḥā* was not just a motif of aspects of the Self; it was also a form of therapy for this Self.

The teachers at the training knew that I was educated in Britain, that I worked in Britain, and that I had lived most of my life in Britain. I could have used these facts to opt for an elevated form of my colloquial dialect or for Educated Spoken Arabic, instead of using the *fuṣḥā* in the training, on the grounds that my Arabic had gotten rusty over the years. The fact that I did not avail myself of this option but insisted on using the *fuṣḥā* helped me project an image to the teachers of an Arab who had remained true to his roots and cultural heritage. The teachers appreciated this and reciprocated by trying to use the *fuṣḥā* as much as possible. Some transferred this interest

(روائع التعبير)

أي ياسر أتحفتنا بروائع	أزهارها من لمعة التنوير
اليسر في حسن الكلام دلالة	للرشد بل للعلم والتفكير
هذي طرائق درسنا في دورة	قدمتها بوسائل التغيير
أبدعت إذ فصلت كل صغيرة	والنحو يخدم من عرى التصوير
والبيك يبكي بعد عز قد مضى	استبدل الأوطان بالتهجير
تعطي عطاء لا يحاكى مثله	في الوصف في الإقناع في التفسير
لافض فوك جمعت كل كريمة	حسنا يقال لكل لفظ حرير
لله درك كم جمعت محاسنا	في البحث عن معنى بلا تقصير
أسعدتنا بطريقة أسلوبها	سهل منيع دائم التدوير
وختمتها ببطاقة لهوية	قسمتها بحرائر التعبير
بقصيدة حبكت نسيج خيوطها	أنا عربي من ثورة التحرير
إنا نقدم شكرنا لك خاصة	ولكل من يسعى إلى التطوير

إهداء للأستاذ الدكتور : ياسر
منسق اللغة العربية : عبد العزيز الحرباوي
مدرسة محمد بن عبد الوهاب الثانوية المستقلة .
١٨/ ١/ ٢٠٠٧ م

Figure 3.1. Exquisite expression (l. 5, reference to Mikhail Na'imeh's short story '*Sa'adat al-beik*'; l. 10, Darwish's poem '*Bitaqat huwiyyah*').

to the schools and insisted on using the *fuṣḥā* in their teaching, even at grade one.[16] Students picked up the language and started to use it spontaneously and without affectation or embarrassment, as I was able to observe on my school visits. By giving the teachers pride in the language and confidence in their ability to use it, I wanted to bring about a change in the image of the *fuṣḥā* in the schools. I wanted it to be seen as a vibrant and living language, instead of a boring and frozen one, as it is often perceived in schools throughout the Arabic-speaking world. I felt that I was on a crusade/*jihad* to achieve a number of pedagogic and national goals, each of which was expressive of aspects of my identity.

16 Some schools, in fact, added to this by conducting extended workshops on speaking *fuṣḥā* for their teachers. Most schools employed Abdulla al-Dannan for this purpose. A renowned proponent of the *fuṣḥā*, al-Dannan was responsible for scripting the popular children's programme *Iftaḥ yā simsim* ('Sesame Street' in Arabic) in a simplified form of the language. See Abu-Absi (1990); Abu-Absi (1991); Alosh (1984); Palmer (1979).

أتخيل اللغة العربية تتحدث إلى الدكتور ياسر فتقول:-

ولدي... خذ بيدي...

رأيت فيك نبراسا — يضيء الدرب بالفكر

ويعلي شأن أبنائي — ويهديهم إلى الرشد

يعود حنيني للماضي — لأبناء من العهد

فكم طال الزمان بنا — ليجمعنا على الحب

عقود لم أرى مثلك — يغار علي من نفسي

ويسبك من عباراتي — حليا يشبه العقد

يزين به جسدي الذي — ذاب من الركد

ويحيي منه أرواحا — قد اضطرت إلى الموت

ويُورق من جذوري — بساتينا من العطر

يفوح شذاها — للأفاق والأرض

فكم من أمة صرخت — صلاح الدين صُن عرض

وكم ناديتك ياسرا — فلتأتي على عجل

إهداء من القلب إلى من تنفست على يديه الهواء النقي .

منسقة اللغة العربية بمدرسة بلال بن رباح

رضى محموداليا

Figure 3.2. The Arabic language addresses Dr. Yasir.

Standing for a host of symbolic meanings, the *fuṣḥā* acted as a bridge between my exilic and preexilic selves. The *fuṣḥā* also acted as a link among my professional identity as a trainer, my collective identity as an Arab and a Palestinian in exile and my personal identity as a risk taker with deep-seated

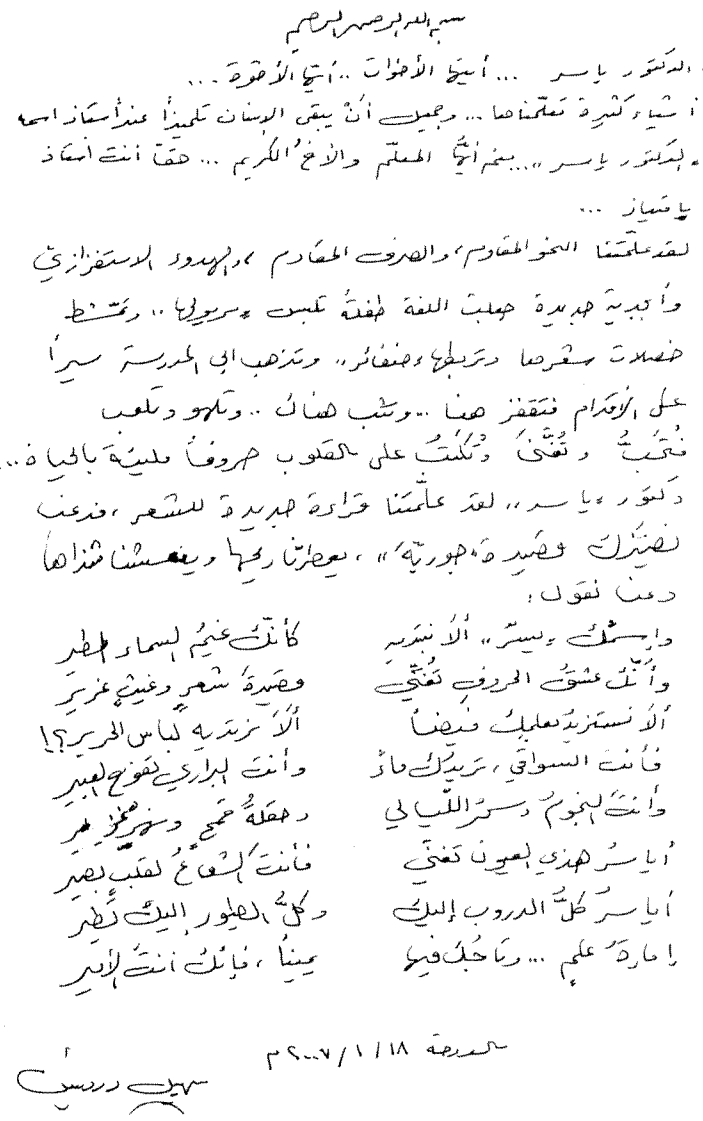

Figure 3.3. Your name is *yusr* ('ease').

anxieties. Using the *fuṣḥā* enabled me to engage in personal therapy to get relief from my fear of it as a schoolboy and, to some extent, from my exilic marginality. The teachers' positive feedback, some of it expressed in poetry and prose writing (see figures 3.1–3.4), validated my choice of the *fuṣḥā* and the image I wanted to project of myself. The more the teachers approved of my use of the *fuṣḥā*, the more determined I became to use it. Audience

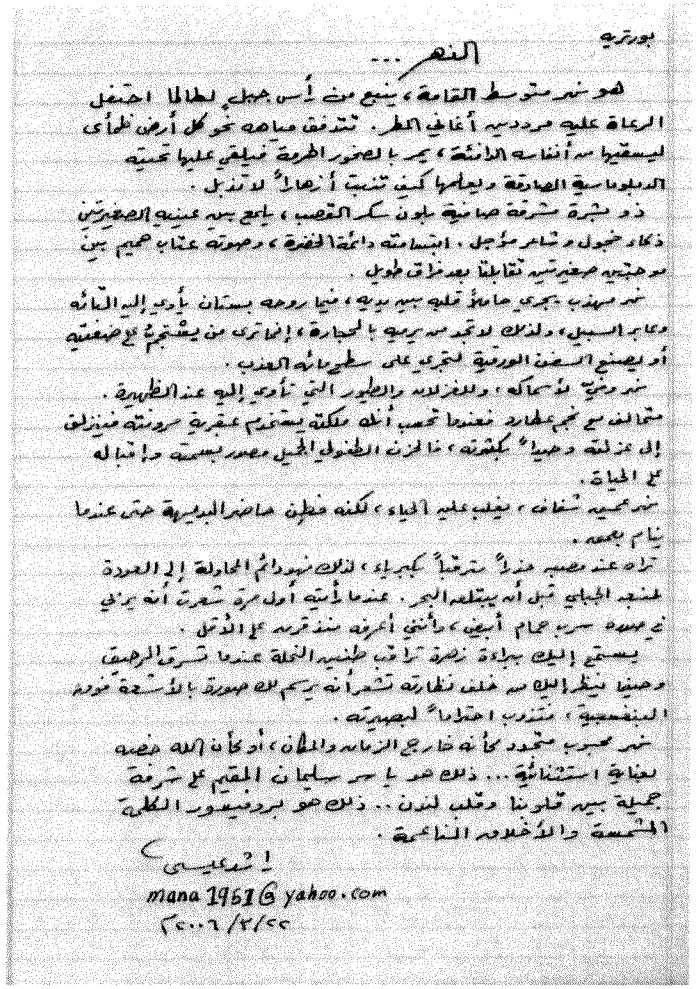

Figure 3.4. A river portrait.

approval was, clearly, an important element in my self-construction;[17] this fact points to the dialogic nature of the Self. However, I am not claiming that my positive attitude towards the *fuṣḥā* is shared by all Arabic speakers. As chapter 4 will show, some share this attitude but with a different inflection, and others oppose it, replacing it with a very negative assessment of the *fuṣḥā* on the personal and group levels.

17 This is why I have included the pieces written by the teachers as figures here, at the risk of appearing vain.

BANNING CODE-SWITCHING, MARKING THE SELF

In this chapter, *code-switching* refers to the mixing of Arabic with, mainly, English in spoken discourse. This phenomenon has been the subject of study in the literature,[18] comment in Arabic newspapers[19] and a TV discussion documentary, *Arabizi* (a blend of *'arabi* [Arabic] and *inglizi* [English]), aired on the Alarabiyya Satellite TV several times in 2006–08 and in which I have taken part. This scholarly and popular interest signals the increasing popularity of code-switching among young, educated speakers with a good level of competence in English, particularly women. The mixing of English and Arabic is a recent phenomenon in the Middle East in comparison with the much more established phenomenon of Arabic-French code-switching in North Africa and Lebanon. This phenomenon is called *'aransiyya* in North Africa, a blend of portions of the two words *'arabiyya* ('the Arabic language') and *faransiyya* ('the French language'). Code-switching, whether with English or French, involves the colloquial dialects or the *fuṣḥā*, although its occurrence with the former is far more widespread than with the latter.[20] For those who use it, code-switching is a style of speaking with strong symbolic meanings, most of which are related to notions of modernity and prestige.

It is, however, important to distinguish between code-switching and the use of borrowed words and frozen expressions from English into Arabic (for example, 'missed call'). Borrowing does not carry the same loadings in symbolic terms as code-switching does. For example, the use of English computer-related and mobile-telephone terminologies in Arabic is most probably a case of borrowing. Some of these terms have actually become productive in Arabic. For example, spoken Arabic has the verb *sayyiv* (from the English 'save'), which occurs in a productive conjugation paradigm: for example, *anā sayyavt* ('I saved'), *inta sayyavt* ('you [masc.] saved'), *inti sayyavti* ('you [fem.] saved'), *hū sayyav* ('he saved'), *hī sayyavat* ('she saved'), *hum sayyavū* ('they [masc./fem.] saved'). Borrowed terms do not elicit the same reactions of prestige and modernity as code-switching does, nor do they generate negative reactions or ridicule, as code-switching sometimes does. This is why the reactions of the teachers in the training to the poem about 'Computer Love' (see figure 3.5) were different from their reactions to the poem 'Hi, Arabs!' (see figure 3.6). In the former case, the teachers thought the lover was clever and funny in the way he used computer terminology, whereas they thought that the speaker in 'Hi, Arabs!' was affected and ridiculous. All of the English words in 'Computer Love' are borrowed terms; the same is not true of 'Hi, Arabs!' which is built around code-switching. The test for

18 For code switching with Arabic, see Bader and Mahadin (1996); Bentahila (1983); al-Dhuwadi (1981); al-Dhuwadi (1983); al-Dhuwadi (1986); al-Dhuwadi (1988); al-Dhuwadi (1996); Kamhawi (2000).

19 See al-Abtah (2001).

20 Among Israeli Palestinians, the code switching is with Hebrew, not English.

عشق كومبيوتري

هذه قصيدة طريفة عثرت عليها في أحد مواقع الإنترنت ثم قيل لي أنها للشاعر علي السبعان (على مسؤولية.. نايف الرشيدي)، وفيها يستخدم حبيبنا الغارق حتى أذنيه في عوالم الكومبيوتر والإنترنت خلاصة خبراته للتعبير عن مكنونات صدره، فيقول:

في (ديسك توبّ).. القلب: سوّيت.. (فايل)
.. باسمك.. وخزّنته.. بوسط (الديكومنت)
و(بيجك).. على (الفيفورت).. ما له بدايل
في (الميموري.. والهستوري).. قد تدوّنت
و(ايميل) قلبي صار لك حيل.. مايل
يكشف لك (الباسوورد).. من وين ما كنت
مبرمجه: (ديليت).. كلّ الرسايل
و(بلوك سندر) للمخاليق... إلاّ.. انت
سوّيت (شت داون.. وريستارت).. احايل
أثرك على (السيرفر) بحاله.. تمكّنت
جرّبت (داون لود).. باصعب وسايل
عيّا.. يتحمّل غيرك، وتالي اذعنت
لو سوّت (الماوس) بقلبي هوايل
سوّيت له (ريفرش)، وبحبّك اعلنت
يا (ويب ماستر) خاطري.. بالقبايل
ما لي (سبايت) غيرك... ولا بعد.. أنت
نذرت لك.. (كيبورد) قلبي، وشايل
لك في (فلوبّي) القلب.. صورة، ولا خنت
(دَبل كليكَ) اضغط.. على كلّ فايل
في القلب.. ما تلقى من الناس... إلاّ.. انت

المختلف، ع ١٥٩، أكتوبر ٢٠٠٤م.

• • •

Figure 3.5. 'Computer Love' (al-Khalidi 2007: 100).

عرب.. هاي

أحب هذا الشاعر الذي رمز لنفسه بلقب (صبي عسرا) فتاة (ثنائية اللغة)، فكانت هذه القصيدة التي مزجت كلماتها العامية بمفردات إنجليزية حيث يقول:

قلت: السلام.. وقال بالأجنبي: (هاي
.. يا مرحبا يا ساكن عيوني.. التو)
قلت: اركدي.. قالت بضحكة دلع: (هاي)
قلت: اش بلاك.. وقالت: (اش صار لك.. يو)
حنّا تطوّرنا، وصرنا.. عرب (هاي)
واللي تمسّك بالعوايد.. عرب (لو)

حنّا تمشّينا بمياهي، وهاواي
درنا مياديته... وبالسوق، و(الزو)
والاّ.. العرب.. كلّ العرب.. أصبحوا (هاي)
والناس (إن دس.. وورد).. ذا اليوم (أل سو)
أصبحت (نايس قيرل)، واخوي.. (قود هاي)
ذا حالنا... وان ما اعجبك.. يا ولد.. (قو)
قلت الوداع... وردّت بسخرة... (باي)
ونادت تعال... وقلت من ضيقتي: (نو)

ظروف، ع ٣، ص٥.

• • •

Figure 3.6. 'Hi, Arabs!' (al-Khalidi 2007: 305–6).

this was the fact that the Arabic teachers knew all of the borrowed terms in 'Computer Love,' but the English material in 'Hi, Arabs!' had to be explained to them. The degree to which code-switching has become a style of speaking among Arabs has found expression in a parody of this phenomenon by the Syrian comedian Yasir al-Azma, well known for his comedy sketches *Marāyā* ('Mirrors,' in the sense of holding a mirror to Arab society).[21]

A few factors stand behind Arabic-English code-switching. First, there is the massive spread of English through education, the media and new technologies in the Middle East in the last few decades. However, while the spread of English is a necessary condition for Arabic-English code-switching, it is not a sufficient one. What makes English available for code-switching is the perception of prestige and modernity it evokes by virtue of its connection with power and globalisation (see chapter 4). Another necessary

21 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0Se4D4DQRE (accessed 4 January 2010).

condition is the view of Arabic, particularly the *fuṣḥā*, as a traditional and, for some code-switchers, boring language that is unable to keep pace with the massive developments in modern society. For these code-switchers, the *fuṣḥā* is frozen in time and lacks the vitality associated with English and the colloquial dialects. To this may be added peer pressure facilitated by the fact that code-switching has, for some young people, become a style of speaking. Code-switching is a badge of belonging among code-switchers. Through it, they identify (with) one another as members of a social elite or as outsiders aspiring to join this elite.

These factors are part of the cultural landscape at work in code-switching in Qatar. However, for the Arabic-language teachers in the Independent Schools, there were three additional institutional factors that seemed to encourage code-switching. The first was the massive transformation in the school environments where they worked. Qatar took the decision to teach mathematics and science through the medium of English in the Independent Schools. This added massively to the prestige of the language in these schools, which, naturally, started to recruit teachers and administrators with competence in the language. Arabic mixed with English, or vice versa, started to be used more widely by the students, not just in their learning but also in communicating with their teachers and with one another inside and, I am sure, outside the classroom. This mixing of languages was inevitable, since neither the mathematics and science teachers nor the students were very proficient in English. In this newly emerging situation, the Arabic-language teachers began to feel marginalized; some started to learn English not just to move with the social trends in the new school environments but also to enhance their employment opportunities, since knowing English, or mixing it with Arabic, became symbolic of the Independent Schools culture.

The second factor is related to the first. To build schoolwide capacity on the administrative side and to support the introduction of English as the medium of instruction for mathematics and science in the Independent Schools, the Education Institute established what were called School Support Organisations (SSOs), the contracts for which were awarded to American, Australian, British and New Zealand education consultants.[22] These organisations were embedded directly in the schools. Most of their staff members spoke English as their first language, and only a very limited number knew or learnt Arabic. Their presence in the schools enhanced the position and prestige of English even further, motivating some Arabic-language teachers to learn English in order to communicate with them, instead of relying on school-based interpreters. This factor contributed to the spread of code-switching among the Arabic teachers, the idea being that the more access these teachers had to English, the greater their propensity to code-switch in the new school environments. I was able to track this

22 There was one German SSO, but its staff all spoke English, some as their native language.

myself on my visits to the schools. Thus, some Arabic teachers who at the beginning of the school year spoke Arabic only would start to code-switch as their English began to improve, whether through formal study or informally through contact in the school.

Finally, these two factors had a negative impact on the image of the Arabic teachers of themselves and of their subject. Some felt that Arabic started to lose ground to English and that this trend, if not checked, might be unstoppable. This was also a frequent subject of discussion in the press. In fact, some Arabic teachers in the Ministry of Education schools, which continued to teach mathematics and science in Arabic, started to send their children to the Independent Schools precisely because they taught these subjects in English. This was ironic, because these teachers often criticised the Independent Schools for what they perceived to be their poor standards in Arabic. As I said above, for code-switching to occur, the native language, in this case, Arabic, has to lose some or much of its prestige and standing in relation to its partner in code-switching. The *fuṣḥā* was that loser in symbolic terms, if not, in fact, in domain terms, in spite of serious attempts on the part of many Independent Schools to counter this trend. The use of code-switching by some Arabic-language teachers was part and parcel of the brave new world in the Independent Schools. Teachers who code-switched wanted to buy into the new culture in their schools. Code-switching was the symbolic capital they tendered to gain entry into, acceptance in or membership in this new culture.

In response to this trend, I banned all code-switching between Arabic and English in the training. One reason behind the ban had to do with the operational definition of the *fuṣḥā* as it has been outlined in the preceding section. Since this definition sought to exclude the colloquial dialects, it would be inconsistent for it to include code-switching. Code-switching involves a foreign language, and it often occurs with the colloquial dialects. Excluding it from the training hits two birds with one stone. The other reason had to do with raising the teachers' morale by giving them pride in the *fuṣḥā*.[23] I thought I was well placed to do this, because the teachers were aware that I knew English well. They often heard me use it in the training and on my visits to talk to the English-speaking staff in the Education Institute and to the staff in the (school-based) SSOs. They also knew that I live

23 In 2007–08, I used to call the Arabic teachers back from coffee breaks by referring to them as *ahl lughat al-qur'an* ('the people of the language of the Qur'an'). The mathematics, science and English teachers who would be talking to one another in English or in a mixture of Arabic and English used to object to this, saying that the language of the Qur'an belonged to them, too. Not only did the Arabic teachers find this amusing, but they also derived a lot of pleasure from being summoned back into the training with this morale-boosting call. However, on those occasions when a cotrainer or an observer was Christian, I did not use this call. I thought this might be insensitive because it excluded that person. Also, the omission of this reference is, in fact, closer to my own view of Arabic as the language of all Arabic-speaking people, regardless of their religion, ethnic background or state nationality.

and work in the United Kingdom in an environment completely dominated by English. In fact, English, more than Arabic, dominates my life in professional terms. I could have used this, as some Arab expatriates in a similar position sometimes do, to justify code-switching on my part, but I never did. Avoiding code-switching was not, therefore, triggered by lack of facility in English on my part but was the result of conscious choice. The teachers were very aware of this and often complimented me for acting in this way. This positive feedback convinced me that I was right to insist on a total ban on code-switching.

As important as the above considerations were, they do not directly touch on the language-Self link that is the main focus of this chapter. From the perspective of this study, there is a more important question to answer: How was the ban on code-switching related to my conception of my identity as I have described it above? First, the ban served to bolster my image among the teachers as a person who had remained loyal to the *fuṣḥā* and its associated culture, in spite of the allure of other internationally more prestigious cultures and languages in my life. This was more than a matter of image; it was a statement of fact, which the teachers knew to be true. Banning code-switching in the training was, therefore, not a cosmetic or (just) instrumentally driven matter but an expression full of identity-linked meanings. It was a symbolic act through which I asserted my Arabness. The teachers, however, knew that I was not against learning and mastering foreign languages, including English, but that I objected to their mixing them with Arabic in (and outside) the training. I did so because I think of code-switching as expressive of a relationship between Arabic and English in which Arabic, whether the *fuṣḥā* or the colloquial dialects, is treated as the less prestigious partner, a language characterised by cultural and, for the individual using it, psychological deficit. More important, my objection to code-switching is not because it mixes two languages but is owing to the connotations of superiority and inferiority between cultures that I believe it signifies. Code-switching, thus read, is expressive of defeatism. It is this attitude that I was trying to fight in instituting the ban on code-switching. This ban may be no more than a hopelessly romantic gesture against the unstoppable forces of globalisation, but I felt that in cultural politics, symbolic gestures similar to mine may not be completely futile. By giving the teachers confidence in the *fuṣḥā*, I thought they might be able to impart them (confidence and the *fuṣḥā*) to their students. The fact that the teachers were using the *fuṣḥā* in their teaching, as I explained above, gave me the confidence that the ban on code-switching was making a difference.

There is another identity-linked reason for the ban on code-switching. I think of this phenomenon as an affected style of speaking through which code-switchers seek to project a contrived image of modernity or high class. According to this, code-switching is a matter of display, which extends to espousing Western-oriented lifestyles in food and music, among other things, that, in their native settings, may, in fact, signify the opposite of high class. For a long time in Jordan, eating at McDonald's in Amman was,

curiously, considered an expression of a McDonald's-ised modernity and high class among young Jordanians, no doubt because only the well-off could afford the price.[24] McDonald's in Amman was a place where code-switchers could be seen in abundance. Because of these subliminal connections, code-switching was linked in my mind to an espousal of a modernity that, in my exilic life, is marked as low-class, not high-class. The modernity of the code-switchers was not the kind of modernity with which I felt any affinity; in fact, it was an alienating modernity for me when compared with the modernity that dominates my exilic life. It represented in its Arab context an act of misappropriation of something I thought I belonged to and hoped would find a genuine expression in Arab life through the arts, music and culture in its widest meanings. Code-switching, therefore, represented for me a motif of one culture mimicking another, rather than positively interacting with it. It was, furthermore, an expression of cultural defeat, an act of jumping the cultural ship before it sinks into oblivion. I find these meanings alienating and threatening, because they seem to indicate that there is no place for cultural resistance and rejuvenation and that being Arab is somehow being moribund and doomed to failure politically and culturally.

These meanings challenge my image of myself, my identity. But is it possible that this challenge has other dimensions? In particular, could this challenge have an age-related force owing to the fact that code-switching tends to be associated with young speakers? In other words, does code-switching appear threatening because it reminds me that I am no longer a young person and that I am hopelessly out of touch? I do not think so, for two reasons. On the one hand, I know I disapproved of code-switching when I was a student precisely because I thought it pointed to a frame of mind that signalled affectation, cultural defeatism and psychological deficit on the part of the code-switchers. My position in the Qatar training in 2004–08 was, therefore, not new. On the other hand, I tend to disapprove of code-switching even more when it is practised by older speakers, not least because I think that these speakers should know better. In fact, I tend to view code-switching among these speakers as a case of arrested development, the implication being that code-switching is an age-related phenomenon that people 'grow out of' as they get older and more mature.

Another reason behind my negative attitude towards code-switching is my view of it as representing a state of in-between-ness, of characterising people who are neither one thing nor another in cultural terms but (most probably) a superficial mixture of aspects of two cultures and two languages, none of which seems to be properly understood or mastered (although there are bound to be exceptions). But why should in-between-ness elicit a negative reaction from me? Is this not a case of the much-vaunted 'hybridity' that

24 The first branch of McDonald's in Jordan opened in the late 1980s or early 1990s in al-Suwayfiyya, one of the most expensive parts of Amman.

is said to characterise the postmodernity of our times? And aren't I in some sense a hybrid person, having been born in the Middle East but having lived most of my adult life in the West? If I disapprove of the hybridity of others, should I not also disapprove of my own hybridity if I am to avoid the accusation of having double standards?

These are difficult questions to answer, but I think that my negative reaction to the in-between-ness of code-switching has to do with the fact that I conceive of code-switchers as people who want to hedge their bets in terms of cultural belonging. They want to be in and out at the same time. They are masters of hyphenation and of sitting on the fence. In short, they are the sort of people who cannot be relied on if the cultural chips on the Arabic side were really down. These may not be rational reactions, but they sum up some of the feelings I have about this phenomenon as a (private) individual. As a researcher, I am, of course, aware that code-switching can be read in a variety of ways and that some of these may be totally different from mine.

To probe a little deeper into my reactions to the in-between-ness of code-switching, I will compare this mode of speaking with the use of English by Arabic speakers. As a supporter of Arabic, I should find code-switching more acceptable than the wholesale use of English by Arabic speakers. After all, code-switching is still rooted in Arabic on one side of the language amalgam. The use of English exclusively makes little or no reference to Arabic. However, my reaction is the opposite. I find the use of English, particularly if it is free of major errors, to be more acceptable than code-switching precisely because it does not signal in-between-ness. I am struggling to understand the basis of this reaction, but in doing so, I find Mary Douglas's comments on Sartre's ideas on stickiness to be helpful: 'The viscous is a state half-way between solid and liquid. It is like a cross-section in a process of change. It is unstable, but it does not flow. It is soft, yielding and compressible. There is no gliding on its surface. Its stickiness is a trap, it clings like a leech; it attacks the boundary between me and it. . . . Plunging into water gives a different impression. I remain a solid, but to touch stickiness is to risk diluting myself into viscosity' (Douglas 2002 [1967]: 47).

Code-switching is like stickiness for me. It is halfway between Arabic and English. It is a 'cross-section in a process of change,' the end point of which is not known. And most important of all, it 'attacks the boundary' between me and the Other, thereby challenging my identity. Speaking English is like water: coming into contact with it, I remain who I am. English, unlike code-switching, preserves the principle of alterity that is so important to the definition of one aspect of my identity curiously against one of its partners. Code-switching challenges this alterity by injecting ambiguity into it. Code-switching blurs the boundary between me and the Other, thus threatening my sense of Arab Self, whereas the use of English exclusively does not.

But does this mean that I do not code-switch at all? I know I do, but I also know that I do so mainly with Arabic-speaking interlocutors who, I think, have no linguistic or cultural chips on their shoulders. These people tend to be friends whom I know to have a deep-rooted allegiance to Arab culture

and the Arabic language. In fact, the moment I know that a person is using code-switching with me for display purposes, I find I either move completely towards English, if he or she speaks English well, or towards Arabic. In some cases, I would even exaggerate by using the *fuṣḥā* instead of my colloquial dialect, as if to put sufficient distance between me and him or her. My use of code-switching is, therefore, very positional; it depends on whom I am talking to and on my assessment of where my interlocutors locate themselves in identity terms. Furthermore, these interlocutors tend to speak English very well. This level of competence in the language is important for my assessment of code-switching, because it signals that the person could use English fluently if he or she wanted to; this, in turn, acts as a guarantee that the person concerned cannot be code-switching for display purposes.

Banning code-switching in the Qatar training was driven by operational (the definition of the *fuṣḥā*), instrumental (raising the teachers' morale and their confidence in the *fuṣḥā*) and, most important of all, identity-centred reasons. This ban is closely linked to my identity as an Arab who rejects cultural defeatism, dislikes affectation in speech, disapproves of the public display of affected prestige in language behaviour and feels uncomfortable with banal cultural in-between-ness and the ambiguity of identity that it signals. The ban on code-switching was not directed against English but against the attitudes towards this language that trade on the view of Arabic as a traditional, boring or frozen language.

CONCLUSION: ARABIC, SELF AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The reflections in this chapter have dealt with two aspects of my linguistic behaviour: my use of the *fuṣḥā* and the ban on code-switching in the training of Arabic-language teachers at the Independent Schools in Qatar in 2004–08. Analysing these aspects of my language behaviour as sites of identity exploration, I have tried to show how by focussing on the symbolic meanings of language use, on what is beneath and beyond language, we can tap into rich layers of signification that can help us decipher the complexity of the Self and identity. At no point in this exploration did I refer to what I actually said in the *fuṣḥā* in the training. My reflections were restricted to readings of the symbolic meanings of the *fuṣḥā* as form, rather than analysing its content or semantic import, and to the ban on code-switching, rather than investigating stretches of discourse in which code-switching is embedded. I am not denying the importance of instrumentality (as opposed to symbolism) here or of analysing how identities are enacted in discourse,[25] but my aim has been to show how symbolic meaning is important for

25 For the study of identity in discourse, see Benwell and Stokoe (2006); De Fina et al. (2006); Wodak et al. (1999).

studying language in society, which I have called *symbolic sociolinguistics* in earlier research (Suleiman 1999b). I am aware that the term *turn* has been bandied about a lot in the last few decades in the humanities and social sciences (*cultural turn, narrative turn*, etc.), but at the risk of adding to this expansion in the terminology of 'turns,' my research into Arabic sociolinguistics has been aimed at encouraging researchers to inject a 'symbolic turn' into their work. This symbolic turn is necessary if the study of Arabic in the social world is to be made relevant to other areas of enquiry, such as politics and history. However, for this interdisciplinary cross-fertilization to occur, neighbouring disciplines must be prepared to widen their scope to be able to take advantage of the interest in language symbolism.[26]

Another aim of the exploration above has been to show the richness of meanings that can be generated by adopting a qualitative approach to studying sites of language production or nonproduction.[27] While quantitative studies will always be important in studying language in the social world, by revealing correlations and causal links between linguistic variants and social variables, qualitative explorations can yield a very rich catch of insights and interpretations that may not be captured using frequency counts or similar statistically based methods. In this chapter, the link between language and Self was explored through personal experience, memory recall, introspection and life story or self-reports to reach deep into the factors that motivate aspects of the language behaviour of the researcher as researched subject. The immediate aim here is not to arrive at generalisations that apply beyond the life story being studied but to offer subject-specific details and interpretations that may or may not resonate with other Selves. My use of the *fuṣḥā* may not convey the same set of symbolic meanings as those of other subjects; the same is true of my symbolic reading of code-switching. However, regardless of the specific meanings these two phenomena may convey, identity, as a constructed entity, is always invoked in the interpretation and analysis of these data.

The combination of the symbolic and qualitative orientations above creates a powerful instrument for exploring sites of identity in, through, beneath and beyond language use, as I will discuss in the next two chapters. They turn what may seem mundane and banal into a productive field of enquiry. They have the effect of problematising or unfamiliarising the familiar, the use of the *fuṣḥā* and code-switching in this case, thus turning it into

26 See Myers-Scotton (1993) for a discussion of the social, including symbolic, meanings of code-switching. Poplack's (1988) study of the symbolic meanings of code-switching in identity terms in the context of Brussels and Catalonia may also be of interest.

27 Qualitative research uses a variety of empirical materials, including 'case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 2). In this chapter, 'personal experience, introspection and life story' are the most relevant. Other chapters in this work use other types of material.

a social location for multilayered analysis through which archived aspects of the Self are revealed. This approach to investigating language in society helps reveal the Self as a multifaceted construct that is fashioned by considerations of collective affiliation, the moral economies of society, professional interests, personal therapy and economic self-interest. As it emerges from this mode of reflexive investigation, the Self is not an accumulation of attributes but a construct that stands at the intersection of many forces in social life; hence the reference to it as a 'buzzing beehive' at the beginning of this chapter. It is not just a set of roles that people perform; it is also an important resource that people deploy to achieve a variety of objectives.

In addition, the exploration above powerfully affirms the situatedness of language use and, thus, the positionality of identity as discussed in chapter 2. As Elliott writes, 'social practices, cultural conventions and political relations are a constitutive and powerful backdrop for the staging of human experience and the drawing of self-identity' (2001: 6). In discussing my use of the *fuṣḥā* and my attitude towards code-switching, I have taken full advantage of the point Elliott makes. I have thus related these aspects of my linguistic behaviour to my being an Arab, a Palestinian, an exile, a researcher, an educational consultant driven by considerations of instrumentality, a calculating or shrewd risk taker, a wounded subject driven by the need for some performance therapy and a person who does not like affectation and veneerlike display in language behaviour. I have also related this behaviour to a set of observations I made about the teachers attending the training, including their interest in nation-state identities, their responses to social and school trends in language behaviour, the solidarities that might exist among them, the fault lines that might divide them and their morale in their work environments. The Self that emerges through this exploration in language use is a constructed one over which I, as author, exercise some agency. It is not a prediscursive or a given Self but one that is forged in, through, beneath and beyond discourse in relation to a community of practise (the teachers) whose members have shared conventions and norms.

In this respect, identity is a 'project of the Self,' to use a popular formulation in recent studies of identity in discourse (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). But it is also an intersubjective project based on an assumption of *alterity*, 'the fact that it is not possible to posit identity without speaking of difference, of otherness' (Suleiman 2006d: 51). Identity, therefore, is as significantly about inclusion as it is about exclusion. My pan-Arab identity has meaning only when considered against, among other things, nation-state identities with which it is contrasted. My use of the *fuṣḥā* acquires meaning in identity construction only because it is contrasted with the use of the colloquial dialects or other linguistic forms in speech, for example, Educated Spoken Arabic. The same is true of code-switching; this type of linguistic behaviour acquires meaning only because it contrasts with other ways of speaking. Otherness or difference helps structure the Self and enables symbolic meanings to emerge.

And yet identity is an ill-defined concept. For some, it is a matter of being (a noun); for others, it is a matter of becoming and doing (a verb). For some, identities stand for roles that people internalise and enact in their lives; for others, they are social categories that, through internalisation and differentiation, acquire a psychological reality that is relatively stable. Do these and other differences mean that we should do away with identity as an analyst's tool?[28] Opinions differ on this. My own take on it is driven by utilitarianism: until we can develop a more precise understanding of identity or a different one altogether that replaces it, we have little choice but to continue to work with the concept, in spite of all of the vagueness and ambiguities it carries (Hall 2000; Suleiman 1997). Doing away with the concept of identity because it is vague will not cause it to disappear. Nor will it make those phenomena with which we deal under this concept disappear. They would still be there, and they would need to be dealt with using something like the present concept of identity or a variant of it.

I have referred to the above set of reflections as autoethnographic and to the text of this chapter as an autoethnography.[29] This classification will need some explanation because of the different understandings of autoethnography in qualitative research; I will use as background Ellis and Bochner's discussion of autoethnography (2000). As an autobiographical form of writing, autoethnography is usually written in the first-person voice and aims through a collage of personal experience, memory, introspection and reflection to produce texts that link the Self to culture contextually through description and interpretation. Using a variety of formats—for example, short stories, novels, poems, memoirs, fragmented essays or social-science research reports—autoethnography is a form of personal narrative or a narrative of the Self in which the author turns his scholarly gaze on his own personal life, feelings, thoughts, ideological positions and emotions, with the aim of producing a multilayered text that is evocative and full of contextual details. Challenging the strict separation of researcher and researched subject (or gazer and gazed) in quantitative and positivist modes of practice, which I discussed in chapter 2, autoethnography 'often focuses on a single case and thus breaches the traditional concerns of research from generalization across cases to generalization within a single case' (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 744). In autoethnography, the authoring 'I' does not stand outside the text but is embedded in it at different levels: 'the subject and object of research collapse into the body/thoughts/feelings of the (auto) ethnographer located in his or her particular space and time' (Gannon 2006: 475).

28 For the difference between identity as an analyst's and participant's resource, see Widdicombe (1998).

29 See the following for examples of autoethnography: Brogden (2008); Ellis (2004); Evans (2007); Gatson (2003); Kaufman (2005); Kirova (2007); LaRaviere (2008); Magnet (2006); Pelias (2003); Waymer (2008).

Furthermore, autoethnographic texts blur the boundaries among different genres of writing, producing what are sometimes called 'messy texts' that 'move back and forth between description [and] interpretation,' 'erase the dividing line between observer and observed,' 'produce local, situated knowledge' and 'recreate a social world as a site at which identities and local cultures are negotiated and given meaning' (Denzin 1997: 225). Autoethnographic texts are often written in evocative language that invites the reader to interact with the text on a personal level to generate deep intersubjective understanding. The Self in an autoethnography is vulnerable because the 'I' of the emerging text may appear in a 'less than flattering' light because of doubt, the fear of self-revelation, anxiety about 'not being able to take back what [has been written] or of [not] having any control of how readers interpret it' (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 738). There is, therefore, double jeopardy in the critiques of autoethnography: the target of these critiques may include the researcher and, more dangerously for the individual, the researched subject.[30] Denzin's demand that writers 'strip away the veneer of self-protection that comes with a professional title and position . . . to make themselves accountable and vulnerable to the public' (2003: 137) may, because of this double jeopardy, prove to be difficult to apply fully in autoethnography. While using metaphors is said to be part of the attempt to be vivid and evocative in autoethnographic writing, there is no doubt that metaphors are sometimes used to avoid peeling away at the protective layers of the Self; they are used for their suggestive power rather than concreteness. Finally, autoethnography may serve a therapeutic function for its author and, through the act of sharing personal experience, for the reader with whom this experience resonates. Autoethnographic writing is not motivated by therapy, but the opportunity to face some of the 'demons' of one's past may make the gazer a better researcher. That is so because the more aware we become of our own likes and dislikes, the more able we are as researchers to monitor them and to ameliorate their excessive influence on our research.

To what extent does the text of this chapter conform to the preceding outline of autoethnography? The use of the first-person voice, the reliance on personal experience and reflection and the utilization of both description and interpretation to link language to Self in society are autoethnographic features of the text in hand. As a self-narrative, the present text breaches the traditional positivist separation of the researcher and the researched subject. It concentrates on a single site of personal experience in the professional life of the researcher, reads it for the sociocultural meanings it can convey and stops short of claiming that these meanings are generalisable in

30 Davies et al. (2004: 383) comment on this aspect of autoethnography: 'Reflexive writing can be passionate and emotional. It can be writing in which the mind, heart, and body are all engaged. Yet once those words are out there in the world, objects themselves for reflection by others as well as ourselves, they can become weapons to turn against us.' Their comments summarise the point well.

the way they have been formulated to other subjects (without, however, denying that it may resonate with them). Therapy is not an aim of this autoethnographic text, but it emerges as a factor in it, in that the researcher's use of the *fuṣḥā* offers him an opportunity to overcome some of the pedagogic demons of the past.

In spite of these factors, the present text is best described as a 'tame' autoethnography. Compared with other autoethnographies I have read, it is not as evocative, vivid, full of detail, rhizomatic or messy. The language is still restrained, fairly abstract and reluctant to let go of a traditional form of rationality whereby logically calculated moves are made from one argument or interpretation to another. The Self that emerges is multiple, but it is still fairly coherent, rather than amorphous or fractured. Because of this, the present autoethnography is weak on vulnerability. This may be the result of self-surveillance on my part or the fear of criticism from fellow Arabic sociolinguists who will read this work from a predominantly variationist, correlationist and nonsymbolic perspective. For example, I was aware in writing this autoethnography that readers from these horizons of expectation may think of its author and the Self it portrays as self-absorbed, self-indulgent, narcissistic, culturally blinkered, instrumentally driven and nationality-obsessed. However, even if these were the conclusions that readers might draw from this linguistic autoethnography, the fact that it may be construed to convey these meanings would suggest that autoethnographic reflection is a useful mode of investigating the language-Self/identity interface in Arabic sociolinguistics.

In offering this self-reflexive text, I am aware that autoethnography, along with other forms of qualitative research, has been the subject of methodological criticism. Most of these criticisms are aimed at the lack of evaluation measures that correspond to validity and reliability in quantitative research. Being based on memory, introspection and self-reports in which the dividing line between the researcher and the researched subject is breached, autoethnography is said to be subject to data contamination, subjective bias and other kinds of distortion that render its results problematic in methodological terms. Offering self-reported data, interpretations and constructions of the Self, autoethnography acts as judge and jury in its own court of scientific evaluation. The question facing autoethnography, therefore, is what measures can be used to assess the quality in this type of qualitative research. If truth, generalisability/applicability, consistency and neutrality—as the 'gold standards' in quantitative research—cannot be used to interrogate autoethnography methodologically, what other criteria can be used for this purpose?

There is not an agreed-upon set of criteria for performing this task in the literature, not least because autoethnography itself is ill defined.[31] However,

31 See Seale (1999) for a useful discussion of measuring quality in qualitative research. Seale deals not with autoethnography specifically but with qualitative research as a category.

the following may be used here (Seale 1999). First is transferability, which means that the results of autoethnographic research, its interpretations through symbolic connotation, can be found to apply in comparable situations with similar meanings or values. Thus, the link between my positive attitude towards the *fuṣḥā* and my identity as Arab or as Palestinian may be found to apply to other subjects in similar or different contexts. However, not all of the results in an autoethnography may be transferable intersubjectively, the reason being the highly personal nature and context boundaries of some of these results. For example, my view of the *fuṣḥā* as an underdog may not be shared with other subjects who think of their identity in Arab and/or Palestinian terms and who, in fact, may be well disposed towards this variety of the language. The same applies to code-switching: while some Arabic speakers may share my attitude to this style of speaking, others may read this phenomenon very differently, endowing it with positive connotations of modernity and liberalism.

Second is confirmability; this is basically about confirming the dependability of an autoethnography. Auditing is one procedure for doing this. In the present autoethnography, I have listed the names and current institutional associations of all those who monitored my work as a teacher trainer or who worked as cotrainers with me,[32] the idea being that these individuals can provide eye-witness accounts that can confirm some of the data. However, confirmability operates vis-à-vis events and situations, for example, what happened in the training or my descriptions of the language situation in the schools, but it does not apply to the interpretations given to these events and situations.[33] To use an old-fashioned formula, confirmability here is a matter of surface structure, not deep structure. As an extra measure, I have also kept some field notes on what happened in the training and what I thought about events, situations and characters at the time of the training. These field notes are not records of events or situations but representations of those events and situations. The use of these field notes offers some protection against the wear and tear of memory over time.

Autoethnography as a technology of self-representation that stresses unfettered constructivism, (infinite) open-endedness and variability is not a view to which I subscribe in the study of the language-Self link.[34] I believe

32 See notes 5 and 12 above.

33 This also applies to quantitative and positivist research. In this connection, Cameron et al. (1992: 12) provide the following comment: 'You cannot validate a particular observation by repeating it. However many questionnaires you give out or interviews you conduct, it is impossible to be sure that all respondents who gave the "same" answer meant the same thing by it, and that their responses are a direct representation of the truth.'

34 See Cameron et al. (1992: 11) for a similar position with respect to ethnomethodology: 'People are not completely free to do what they want to do, be what they want to be. . . . On the contrary, social actors are schooled and corrected, they come under pressure to take up certain roles and occupations, they are born into relations of class, race, gender, generation, they occupy specific cultural positions, negotiate particular value systems, conceptual frameworks and social institutions, have more or less wealth and opportunity . . . and so on, *ad infinitum*.'

that there must be limits to construction if, as Seale rightly warns (1999: 470), constructivism is to avoid descending into nihilism; hence my insistence on the importance of quantitative, correlationist and functionalist research in Arabic sociolinguistics, alongside research that is driven by qualitative and symbolic agendas such as this one. Like Seale, I subscribe to a middle way between the naïve realist and the instrumentalist or hocus-pocus views of reality.[35] Following the Popperian paradigm,[36] it is not logically possible to observe a preexisting reality without a point of view; observation is, therefore, always mediated by 'pre-existing ideas and values' (Seale 1999: 470); in other words, observation, or gazing, as the autoethnographers call it, takes place not in a vacuum but in relation to something else that guides it, helps structure it and makes it cohere. It is this middle position that, in fact, explains the deviations from standard autoethnography that I have identified above. Rather than being accidental, these deviations are intended. They are meant as a counterposition to what I consider to be the excesses of constructivism and postmodernity in the study of identity.[37]

35 For naïve realism and instrumentalism in science, see Chalmers (1978); Householder (1952); Nagel (1974).

36 See Popper (1969; 1975; 1976).

37 It is these excesses that have given rise to what is known as the Sokal affair or hoax in the literature, wherein Allan Sokal, a physicist, submitted a hoax article to the journal *Social Text* to expose the sloppy and bogus attitude towards evidence and 'objective reality' that characterises postmodern scholarship (see Dimitriadis 2008: 6–8).

Chapter 4

Arabic, Self and Displacement

This chapter investigates the language-Self link by examining a corpus of four texts authored by writers of 'Arab' origin who spent most of their lives in exile or in the diaspora: Edward Said, Leila Ahmed, Moustapha Safouan and Amin Maalouf. Attention is given to the interplay between language and Self, on the one hand, and the notions of displacement, trauma and globalisation, on the other. A key thesis here is that language is as relevant a marker of individual identity, the Self, as it is of group or collective identity. It is, however, important not to draw a sharp distinction between the Self and collective identity; the two feed into each other.

The discussion of the texts chosen for study will proceed as follows. First, I will provide a fine-grained analysis of each text separately, focusing on how it conceptualises the language-Self link. This analysis will highlight those conceptualisations that are of direct link to displacement, trauma and globalisation. Second, a long conclusion will be devoted to comparing these texts against the background of the three operative notions of displacement, trauma and globalisation.

Through these discussions and in line with chapter 2, language is treated as a symbolic resource that can enhance our understanding of how individuals conceive of themselves and their communities. Its function here is to mark identity at the macro level. To achieve a richer understanding of the language-Self link, however, we would need to adopt a micro-level perspective that moves investigations of this link from identity marking to identity inscription. This can be achieved by tracking how the Self is expressed through discourse features in stretches of text. As important as this perspective is, I will not pursue it here but hope to return to it in future research.

OUT OF PLACE, BETWEEN LANGUAGES

The title of Edward Said's (1935–2003) memoir *Out of Place* (1999) hovers tantalisingly over a rich field of signification that is very difficult to pin down. The most obvious interpretation of the title relates to a geography-decentred world, the fact that Said lived through many displacements which had a defining impact on him as a person and on his work as an intellectual,