# Arabic Dialogues

## Phrasebooks and the Learning of Colloquial Arabic, 1798–1945

## Rachel Mairs

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**UCL**PRESS

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# Note on research data set

This book is accompanied by a data set which is available online on the University of Reading Research Data Archive, at https://doi.org/10.17864/1947.000469. This data set is freely downloadable by anyone with an internet connection and may be cited and used under a Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

The files available are as follows:

- A catalogue of colloquial Arabic phrasebooks discussed in this book (referred to in the text of this book as 'the Catalogue').
- Two Gephi network graphs:
    - Graph 1 – Social relationships between authors of Arabic instruction books, learners of Arabic and other significant figures.
    - Graph 2 – Plagiarism and influence between Arabic instruction books.
- Graph 3 – Number of colloquial Arabic instruction books published each year, 1798–1945.
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Access to this data set is not essential in order to follow the arguments of the book, but it is intended to provide access – in a user-friendly manner – to material that could not be presented adequately within the confines of a print publication.

# Acknowledgements

I am pleased to say that at least one of the subjects of this book would have heartily disapproved of it. Fāris al-Shidyāq (1805–1887), author of the 1856 *Grammar of the Arabic Language* discussed in Chapter 2 (and many other literary works besides), deplored:

> the vanity and love of fame among English people, particularly in matters of knowledge and science. This vanity could lead a person who happened to know a few words of Arabic, or Persian, or Turkish, to mention in any book he authors in his language all that he knows of these languages, to give the impression that he is a linguist. All that he has to do is to write these words, rightly or wrongly, and then to put some pompous titles on the title page of his book.
>
> (*Kashf* 120, trans. Ismail 2018, 75)

I am not English, although I have lived in England for many years, but I am exactly the kind of linguistic dabbler who should think twice before writing a book about Arabic. My training was as an ancient linguist, not a modern one. Most of my academic publications are on material in the ancient Egyptian languages, Greek and Latin. I have been learning ancient languages, through the grammar–translation method, since I was 11, and this has had an impact on how I learn modern languages, including Arabic: I am good at memorising tables and less confident in speaking spontaneously. My language learning experience, in other words, is not dissimilar to that of many nineteenth-century European learners of colloquial Arabic. I did not start trying seriously to learn Arabic until I was in my twenties, and then my studies were intermittent, frequently interrupted by the demands of work and by uncertainty over which dialect I should commit to. The textbooks I used – in classes, or by myself – include the typical works used by English speakers learning *fuṣḥā* (standard literary Arabic): Wightwick and Gaafar's *Mastering Arabic*, the *Al-Kitaab* series from Georgetown University Press, and Peter Abboud's *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic*. I can read *fuṣḥā* texts, including the Nahḍa writings discussed in this book, slowly and with much consultation of Hans Wehr's dictionary. I only began to knuckle down to learning Egyptian dialect a few years ago, and am

delighted that Lebanese and Syrian friends now make fun of me for my Egyptian pronunciation.

I would not presume to write a book about al-Ṭahṭāwī, the Nahḍa or Arabic sociolinguistics, so I hope that al-Shidyāq would forgive me for writing this one – but in any case, in his work with European colleagues, he was a chronic enabler of this sort of behaviour. A native or accomplished Arabic speaker would have written a different book about the history of learning and teaching Arabic, but I think that my particular experience as a language learner grants insight into the experiences of learners of Arabic in the period under discussion. Sometimes, being an ancient linguist is helpful in unexpected ways. When learning to read Yiddish for this book, I had a head start because I had already learnt the square Hebrew script in order to read scholarly editions of ancient Aramaic texts. But there is another serious issue that my language learning history draws attention to, which is that of persistent Orientalism in the academic structures and institutions that govern teaching of the languages of the ancient and modern Middle East in Europe and North America. Thankfully, individual attitudes to the Middle East among scholars have shifted decisively, although not universally, over the past few decades. But it is still the case that university courses in the ancient history and archaeology of the Middle East seldom allow students the opportunity to learn the modern languages of the regions they study. There are many practical and bureaucratic reasons why this is so – and I was certainly encouraged and supported in travelling to Egypt when I was an undergraduate, even if Arabic was not on the curriculum – but ancient world studies would be all the richer for integrating the modern languages and cultures of the places under study, and allowing students to learn, for example, about al-Ṭahṭāwī's or al-Shidyāq's perspectives on the history of their own cultures. So to an extent, this book is by way of atonement for not having learnt Arabic sooner.

I am immensely grateful to all of my Arabic teachers over the years – who have shared something of the richness of their Syrian, Sudanese and Egyptian dialects, even if they were teaching me *fuṣḥā* – and to all the friends who have patiently helped me practise. For answering queries, for alerting me to materials I didn't know of, or for useful discussions and moral support, I am thankful to my coconspirators on the *Everyday Orientalism* blog, Katherine Blouin and Usama Ali Gad, and (in alphabetical order) Omniya Abdel Barr, Heba Abd el Gawad (my designated responsible adult), Eleanor Dickey, Kitty Falconer, Katherine Harloe, Brendan Haug, Sulayman al-Huraira, Sarah Irving, Zena Kamash, Rosie Mack, Ahmed Mansour, Nicola McLelland, Aviad Moreno,

Maya Muratov, Ian Rutherford, Karène Sanchez Summerer, Amara Thornton, Yair Wallach, Liesbeth Zack and Sary Zananiri.

My really sincere thanks to the staff of the following libraries and archives: the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem; the Australia War Memorial; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Library; the Cadbury Library Archives, University of Birmingham; the Imperial War Museum; the Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire; the Kenyon Institute, Jerusalem; Gail Wiese at the Kreitzburg Library, Norwich University Vermont; the Library of Congress; the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford; the National Library of Israel; the New York Public Library; the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; the State Library of New South Wales; the Taylor Institution, Oxford; the Victoria and Albert Museum; and the University of Reading Library, especially the Inter-Library Loans service. In most previous research projects, I have kept my head down and tried to bother busy librarians as little as possible, but I have genuinely inconvenienced staff at each of the institutions listed here, and I am extremely thankful for their help. (If anyone ever needs to consult the Taylor Institution's set of the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* again, it's upstairs in the graduate room, not in the Main Stacks with the rest of the Yiddish books.) Many more libraries and collections provided crucial materials online, and I would like to pay a special tribute to all those who have been involved in digitising manuscripts, books and recordings which I was able to consult during lockdown. A lot of these materials could and should be made more use of by historians, in particular the amazing resource that is the Imperial War Museum sound archive, containing thousands of hours of recordings of interviews with combatants and non-combatants in war.

The British Academy made this book possible by granting me a Mid-Career Research Fellowship in 2018, which relieved me from teaching and administrative duties for a year. I thank the academy for its support, without which it would have been impossible for me to embark on a project of this size. The Council for British Research in the Levant awarded me a Residential Fellowship to spend some time at the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem in autumn 2022 to work on a different project, but I also took the opportunity of access to Palestinian and Israeli libraries to tie up loose ends for this book, and so I thank them for their support. My colleagues in the Department of Classics at the University of Reading have provided a congenial and supportive working environment, and continue to indulge me as I drift further and further away from any reasonable definition of 'Classics'. For their hospitality and feedback, I thank the places where I have delivered papers based on this research: Ain

# Introduction

## 'He cannot speak Arabic unless he has a book in his hands'

Scholarly command of a language and the ability to function in it in day-to-day life are two very different things. An encounter between two famous scholars in Paris in the late 1820s makes this abundantly clear. The Egyptian Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873) was in France as *imām* (religious leader) to an educational mission sent by the ruler of Egypt, Muḥammad ʿAlī.[1] Al-Ṭahṭāwī, who had been educated at the ancient university of al-Azhar in Cairo and was a protégé of the renowned scholar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, had shown an aptitude for French, and combined his spiritual duties with studying alongside the Egyptian students. Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838) was the doyen of European academic Orientalism, author of numerous works on Arabic, who regretted never having had the opportunity to travel in the Middle East himself (Messaoudi 2015, 46).

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's impressions of Silvestre de Sacy, recorded in his memoir, are frequently quoted in works on both men, and on nineteenth-century encounters between Europe and the Arab world:[2]

> In spite of appearances, the idea that foreigners do not understand Arabic when they do not speak it as well as the Arabs is without any foundation. Proof of this is my encounter in Paris with a distinguished French personality, famous among the Franks for his knowledge of Oriental languages, especially Arabic and Persian, whose name is Baron Silvestre de Sacy. He is one of the notables of Paris and a member of several scholarly societies of France as well as

of other countries. His translations are widely distributed in Paris, whereas his proficiency at Arabic is such that he summarized a commentary of the *maqāmāt* by al-Ḥarīrī under the title *Mukhtār al-shurūḥ* ('Selection of Commentaries'). He learned Arabic, so it is said, by his powers of understanding, his keen intelligence and wide erudition – and without the help of a teacher, except at the beginning. He did not have instruction on, for instance, Shaykh Khālid – not to mention *al-Mughnī*, which he can read. Indeed, he several times taught classes on al-Bayḍāwī. However, when he reads, he has a foreign accent and he cannot speak Arabic unless he has a book in his hands. If he wants to explain an expression, he uses strange words, which he is unable to pronounce properly. [... His style] is eloquent, even though it has slight weaknesses owing to his familiarity with the rules of European languages, as a result of which he tends to use expressions [from those languages] in Arabic.

(al-Ṭahṭāwī 1834 III.2, trans. Newman)

Al-Ṭahṭāwī is impressed at the knowledge of Arabic grammar and literature that Sacy has managed to acquire without the benefits of a traditional Azharian education, where he would have listened to the explication of a text as part of the *ḥalqa* ('circle') of a qualified teacher. Despite their differences in training, the Classical Arabic texts studied and esteemed by both men, whether in Egypt or in France, are the same, giving them a sense of intellectual connection. Al-Ṭahṭāwī does not specify the language in which he and Sacy spoke to one another, but it seems probable that this was French, because Sacy was unable to speak Arabic 'without a book in his hands'. The Indian traveller Mirza Abu Taleb, who had met Sacy in 1802, likewise found his spoken Persian weak (Abu Taleb Khan, trans. Stewart, 1810, Vol. II, 144). Sacy's Arabic pronunciation, al-Ṭahṭāwī wrote, was poor and his expression unidiomatic, with linguistic interference from his native French. Although al-Ṭahṭāwī makes it clear that these failings do not detract from the value of his scholarship, Sacy was unable to communicate effectively in spoken Arabic.

It is important to bear in mind al-Ṭahṭāwī's own recent experience of language learning when reading this passage. On their arrival in France in 1826, he and the other members of the Egyptian mission had received intensive training in French, to prepare them to move on to specialised study of other academic subjects in the target language. There is no doubt that the training they received made them capable readers and writers of French, but an oral command of the language seems to have been more difficult for them to achieve. Edme-François Jomard, director of the

specially established school at which they were taught, regretted that the Egyptian government had not sent younger students (Jomard 1828, 105); the older members of the mission, in their twenties and even thirties, were less malleable and less quick to pick up a new language and new ideas. The mission students were also kept relatively isolated from French society, with their movements strictly controlled, giving them little opportunity to practise the language in its social context. It seems that al-Ṭahṭāwī had trouble pronouncing French well (Heyworth-Dunne 1939a, 265), just as Sacy had difficulty pronouncing Arabic.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī's description of Sacy's Arabic, then, is the assessment of someone who had himself recently become very aware – perhaps painfully aware – of the distinction between reading and writing a language on the one hand, and speaking it on the other. Al-Ṭahṭāwī praises Sacy's textual command of Arabic, just as contemporaries praised al-Ṭahṭāwī's skill in translating from French into Arabic (Jomard 1828, 104). It is the oral aspect of their encounter that represents the missed opportunity.

For a long time I assumed that Edward Said had discussed al-Ṭahṭāwī's meeting with Silvestre de Sacy; Sacy certainly occupies an important place in Said's *Orientalism* (especially Said 1978, 123–130). But when I came to look through Said's works for the relevant passage, I found that he does not. I made the assumption I did because al-Ṭahṭāwī's account of their acquaintance, in his 1834 book *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ bārīz aw al-dīwān al-nafīs bi-īwān Bārīs*, can be subjected to such a classically Saidian analysis. Silvestre de Sacy, the venerable Orientalist who has never himself experienced the Orient, displays his textual knowledge, his command over the Arabic language, to a young Egyptian scholar with whom he is unable to converse in Arabic. Sacy's response to *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* reinforces this impression. In a letter which al-Ṭahṭāwī quotes in the published version of his book, Sacy is highly complimentary about the work, but notes that 'it does not always comply with the rules of Arabic grammar. This may be due to the fact that the author wrote things down in a hurry, and he will probably correct the mistakes in the fair copy' (al-Ṭahṭāwī 1834, 286, trans. Newman). We could dissect the role of knowledge and power in the al-Ṭahṭāwī–Sacy relationship, as I have done here rather clumsily, at length. What I would emphasise is the critical yet neglected role that *spoken* language, in addition to written language, has in encounters of this sort. Spoken language represents a fundamental challenge to the Orientalist's mastery of his domain.

This book is about communication between Arabic speakers and speakers of other languages outside the Orientalist's study. Silvestre de Sacy's concern – and to a slightly lesser extent, al-Ṭahṭāwī's – was mastery

of the written word, the ability to study and translate texts. But the primary, original mode of linguistic communication is speech. While an increasing body of scholarly research, which I will discuss presently, examines the history of the learning and teaching of written language, less emphasis has hitherto been placed on the learning of spoken language. One of the principal reasons for this relative neglect is, of course, that our historical evidence for language learning in the past is almost entirely written evidence. Only in isolated cases, such as the meeting between Silvestre de Sacy and al-Ṭahṭāwī recounted above, do we find helpful allusions to the spoken communication that accompanied acquisition of written languages. This makes phrasebooks and other instruction books all the more valuable as testimony on spoken language use. For Arabic, moreover, the problem is more acute than for European languages: spoken varieties of Arabic are very different from the written language. Historically, they have seldom been written down, and thus most of the textual tools developed for teaching 'Arabic' to speakers of foreign languages have been directed towards written Arabic, not the spoken language of the streets.

In the following chapters, I will examine how Arabic speakers and speakers of European languages found ways of communicating with one another, between Napoleon's Expédition d'Égypte and the Second World War. My primary source of evidence for this spoken linguistic encounter consists of a body of material – phrasebooks for colloquial Arabic – that has rarely been discussed in the academic literature. The teaching of spoken Arabic was a field adjacent to, though frequently interconnecting with, academic Orientalism. Many of the figures I will discuss were trained or taught in institutions which also, or primarily, taught written Arabic. But a larger proportion of the learners and teachers considered in this book were not university students or academics, but people – often of little formal education in their own language – who needed spoken Arabic in order to live and work in the Middle East. This book is about their lives, personalities, careers and networks, and those of the people who tried to teach them Arabic.

The research questions I bring to this subject matter are many and varied, but my most fundamental concern has been to document this little-known body of material – instruction books for colloquial Arabic; to retrieve information about the people (themselves usually little known) who wrote and employed these books; and to reconstruct the processes by which the books were composed and put to use. This constitutes the primary research contribution of the present book, and has been hard won from a wide variety of historical sources, discussed in the following sections. Few of the works I analyse have ever been subject to scholarly

analysis before, and nor, for the most part, has any research ever been undertaken into their authors. My analysis – addressing my 'research questions' proper – centres on how teachers and learners dealt with the considerable challenge of teaching and learning colloquial, dialectal Arabic, and moreover of doing so through an unpromising medium for instruction in a spoken language: a book. Readers who are particularly interested in the overall picture of how many books were published for colloquial Arabic, when and in what languages, and in broad trends within the corpus as a whole, may wish to turn immediately to the graphs provided in the online materials accompanying this book, and to the discussion in Chapter 7. The approach I take over the following chapters is, however, a microhistorical and biographical one, concerned with small-scale, incremental developments in Arabic pedagogy over a long period of time, and with the place these books and the Arabic language occupied in the lives of individual people.

## Context and parameters

Historians of the Middle East will have noticed immediately that my periodisation is a very traditional one: from Napoleon to the Second World War or, to frame it in Arab terms, roughly from Nahḍa (the Arab 'Renaissance' of the nineteenth century) to Nakba (the dispossession of the Palestinian people in 1948). The use of this specific period as a unit of analysis dates to not long after its conclusion. Albert Hourani's classic study of *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, for example, covers the years 1798–1939 (Hourani 1962). The Second World War and its immediate aftermath can plausibly be argued to act as a historical watershed in the Middle East: the war itself, with European military occupation of the region; the independence of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan immediately after the war; the 1947–1949 war in Palestine, with the Nakba and creation of the state of Israel; and the Egyptian Free Officers' coup of 1952.

It is becoming less plausible, on the other hand, to treat 1798 as a watershed. Many historical studies, particularly in the mid-twentieth century, regarded the brief French occupation of Egypt in 1798–1801 as a decisive turning point in Middle Eastern history: an encounter that brought the countries of Europe and the Middle East into sustained contact, and fundamentally changed the political, economic, technological and cultural landscape of the Middle East. Many of the works of scholarship that I will discuss in Chapter 1, for example, adopt this perspective. But to treat 1798 as a turning point in Middle Eastern history is also to take a Eurocentric

attitude, one that prioritises interaction with Europe over internal developments within the Middle East itself. As scholars, most notably Peter Gran, have pointed out more recently, there has been too much emphasis on 1798 as a break, and this neglects important continuities before and after the French invasion (Gran 2020, 110–111; see also Gran 1979).

The burgeoning field of Nahḍa studies (with a flood of important publications since the 2010s, for example Bou Ali 2012; Patel 2013; Hanssen and Weiss 2016; El-Ariss 2018; Hill 2020) has also served to show how crucial it is to examine this period from within, not from outside, the Middle East. Many of the works and authors considered in this volume are products of the Nahḍa, the Arab intellectual 'Awakening' of the second half of the nineteenth century, through into the early twentieth century. Important innovations of the Nahḍa included the production of Arabic translations of seminal European works of scholarship and literature; emergence of Arabic journalism; and the development of *al-lugha al-'Arabiyya al-fuṣḥā* ('the eloquent Arabic language', on which see further below) as a modern and flexible vehicle for the expression of thought on every topic under the sun. All of these important developments intersect in numerous places with my discussion of language learning and phrasebooks.

The reason why I have adopted the periodisation I have is that my topic is precisely the intense period of interaction between Arabs and Europeans that resulted from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, and everything that came after it. European impressions of the Middle East have been the object of study for a long time, and continue to be, for example in the publications of the Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East (https://www.astene.org.uk/). The converse – Arab and Middle Eastern impressions of the West – have begun to be more intensely scrutinised (see e.g. Sabry 2019; Dabashi 2020), and a number of key nineteenth- and early twentieth-century accounts of travels to Europe and America have been translated into European languages (e.g. Newman 2004; Abdel-Malek and Kaḥlah 2011; Zakī et al. 2015). Reading such accounts – of Europeans in the Middle East and Arabs in Europe – in counterpoint to one another can grant many insights.

Take, for example, the linguistic experiences of Aḥmad Zakī Pasha (1867–1934) during his trip to Europe for the International Congress of Orientalists in 1892, recounted in *al-Safar ilā al-mu'tamar* ('The Journey to the Congress'). In Liverpool, Zakī tells an English acquaintance that he plans to visit Wales (Zakī 1894, 187–188). The Englishman warns him that his English is too weak, and that even were it perfect it would not do him much good, since Welsh is a completely separate language. Zakī points out that plenty of Europeans visit Egypt – and write about

it – without knowing anything of its people's language (*lisān*) or mores (*akhlāq*). His English friend counters that these visitors can use works written by previous (European) travellers, that English is widely known in Egypt, and that they can hire interpreters (*tarājima*). Zakī tells him that he can do exactly the same in Wales, and moreover that he has already travelled through Spain and Portugal without knowing the language. As the argument continues, Zakī is clearly beginning to have fun at the expense of his companion. He shocks him by saying that he also wants to go down a coal mine and, promising to write, hops on the train to Wales. Zakī sees his experience in visiting and writing about Europe as equivalent to that of Europeans visiting and writing about the Middle East – and language is an important part of both these encounters. In this book, I will move frequently between individual Arab and European perspectives on the teaching and learning of Arabic.

The first printed phrasebook for Arabic in a European language was published during the Expédition d'Égypte (1798–1801), and so this is where I begin (Chapter 1). The choice to end this study in around 1945 is a historiographical one, but also one that fits my source material. In the period after the end of the Second World War and direct European colonisation of Egypt and the Levant, one of the most important markets for Arabic phrasebooks (soldiers, colonists and administrators) dried up. Because I include Yiddish and Hebrew Arabic-learning materials in my study, the mid-1940s also represents an appropriate conclusion date. With the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, there were no more Yiddish-language materials for learning Arabic, and Hebrew-language materials changed dramatically in nature, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. In 1945, we find the first Arabic phrasebook specifically for American oil workers in Saudi Arabia, who became one of the genre's new audiences (Smeaton 1945). British and American security interests in the Middle East also led to new (and much improved) initiatives in teaching Arabic, from 1947 at the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies (MECAS) school at Shemlan in Lebanon (Chapter 4), and the various American programmes discussed by Fava Thomas (2016). Shortly after the appearance of the first modern 'Teach Yourself' Arabic book (Tritton 1943), too, seems an appropriate place to end.

The post-war period is also when the first scholarship on historical language learning and translation in the Middle East emerged. Jacques Tagher's *Ḥarakat al-tarjama bi-Miṣr khilāl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ʿashar* ('The Translation Movement in Egypt During the Nineteenth Century'; Tājir 1945) reviewed the 'translation movement' that began after the first Egyptian educational missions to Europe in the 1820s. In the same year,

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl published his study of al-Ṭahṭāwī (al-Shayyāl 1945), which was followed by works on the history of translation in the period of the French occupation of Egypt (al-Shayyāl 1950) and the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī (al-Shayyāl 1951). These are foundational works in the history of translation in the Middle East, and are still essential reading on the subject. In Chapter 1, I will explore further how the learning of European languages by people from the Middle East influenced the later learning of Arabic by Europeans. The timing of the publication of these works on the history of translation is significant: the immediate post-war and postcolonial period was a suitable one for reflection on the Arab world's relations with the West.

Although so far I have been using the words 'Arab' and 'Middle East' in quite a vague sense, this book has a specific geographical remit: Egypt, Sudan and the Red Sea littoral; Syria–Palestine (the historical 'Greater Syria'); and Iraq. It does not venture further west into North Africa, for the very good reason that there already exists a rich body of scholarship on Arabic learning in the French colonial Maghreb. I hope that my debt to this scholarship will become clear: in particular to Alain Messaoudi's *Les arabisants et la France coloniale* (Messaoudi 2015), and to Sylvette Larzul and Alain Messaoudi's edited collection *Manuels d'arabe d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Larzul and Messaoudi 2013). The nature of the European colonial presence in the Maghreb (the western Arab world) differed significantly from that in the Mashriq (the eastern Arab world, in which I include Egypt and Sudan). The French territories in North Africa were settler colonies in a way that British Egypt, under the polite fiction of the 'Veiled Protectorate', never was. This means that we find plentiful published learning materials for use in French schools, universities and other sites in the Maghreb itself, where the teaching and learning of French and Arabic took place within colonial institutions, and was subject to French colonial policy and supervision. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I will explore several institutional or semi-institutional loci of Arabic learning in British-ruled Egypt and Palestine, but there was never anything like the same official British interest in teaching Arabic in the Mashriq as there was French interest in the Maghreb.

In both regions, of course, far more language learning took place outside institutional contexts than within any organised educational system. In Algeria, Messaoudi notes that 'les Européens apprennent la langue arabe le plus souvent en dehors du cadre scolaire des chaires publiques, avec l'aide de ces nouveaux ouvrages pratiques, ou sans l'aide d'aucun manuel' (Messaoudi 2015, 184). It is this language learning, by 'ordinary people' outside schools and universities, with which I too am

principally concerned. I had initially imagined, when I first conceived of this project, that it would be challenging to differentiate clearly between scholarly works for studying Classical or literary Arabic, and less academic works for the spoken, colloquial language. In fact, this divide turned out to be much starker than I had envisaged. My focus is on books that value teaching a person to speak above teaching them to read and write Arabic; that aim to teach a colloquial form of the language that can be used for everyday communication, not a high literary register; and whose intended audience are not students in school or university. Relatively few Arabic instruction books for the period and regions with which I am concerned blurred these categories. Books for universities or other formal training programmes generally tended to be concerned with the literary language, and with reading and writing. This is true even of military training programmes (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), which rarely actually taught the spoken colloquial language that their students really needed. Scholarly grammars of literary Arabic were most often issued by established publishers, including university presses, and books on colloquial Arabic by smaller, commercial publishers, or private printing (the publishing industry is discussed further in Chapter 3).

There was also a socioeconomic divide between the intended audiences of Arabic instruction books. Academic grammars tended to be expensive, and to assume that their user had had an expensive education; colloquial phrasebooks were cheaper, and did not assume that the user, for example, knew Latin (cf. Messaoudi 2015, 230, on Algerian works of the 1840s and 1850s). Colloquial Arabic teacher Anton Hassan, whom we will meet in Chapter 1, was driven to write his own textbooks because his students at a technical college in Austria could not afford the existing ones. I will return to the question of literary versus colloquial Arabic below.

## Phrasebooks and histories of language learning and teaching

There are two important scholarly contexts within which I would like to situate this book. The first, as noted above, is Nahḍa studies, and in particular the rich body of work which explores how Arabs and Europeans regarded one another and came to terms with one another's differences, in the period of European colonial encroachment on the Middle East. The second scholarly context is that of the history of language learning and teaching, which has begun to coalesce as an international academic discipline only within the past 10 years or so (see, for example, McLelland

2015a; McLelland 2017; McLelland and Smith 2018; Offord et al. 2018; Mairs and Smith 2019; Coffey 2021). Some of the most important contributions of the emerging discipline of the history of language learning and teaching (the name adopted by the HoLLT network: http://www. hollt.net/) have been to restore agency to teachers as historical actors, and to examine how linguistic theories translated into classroom practice. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, the teaching of modern languages in European schools and universities changed dramatically, as teachers moved from prioritising grammar–translation methods to variations on the 'direct method', which aimed to teach a language, in that language, through communication (see e.g. Klippel and Kemmler 2021).

Like many other scholars engaged in history of language learning and teaching research, I am also interested in the authors and users of language textbooks, their methodologies and their expectations of one another. I depart from previous studies in the field in two major ways: in using phrasebooks and self-instruction books as my primary unit of analysis, and in dealing with languages outside Europe.[3]

The history of learning and teaching Arabic has previously been explored in the works on the colonial Maghreb cited above, as well as in a number of works on specific periods and locations, such as Early Modern Europe (Loop et al. 2017), Malta (Cassar 2011) or among Jewish immigrants to Palestine (Mendel 2016). The journal *Al-'Arabiyya* (which began in 1967 as *An-Nashra*) is a useful resource on the history of Arabic teaching in the United States over the past few decades. The research that comes closest to my own is Liesbeth Zack's, in which she analyses many of the same books for learning colloquial Arabic as I do, but as a source of information on the Egyptian dialect (Zack 2001, 2004, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2020). Sarah Irving also discusses some of the same phrasebooks I do, in her study of how 'Arabic teaching manuals, tourist guidebooks, nationalist pamphlets, and poetic and theatrical translations' reveal changing constructions of Palestinian identity in the first half of the twentieth century (Irving 2017, 9). As with Messaoudi's publications, noted above, I view my work as complementary to Zack's and Irving's, since I am not principally concerned with dialectology or identity formation, but with language learning.

The phrasebook genre, despite being a very ancient one (Dickey 2012), has not received much scholarly attention. Works for self-instruction – 'teach yourself' books – have likewise been comparatively neglected. There is a great deal of overlap between the two, if we consider phrasebooks as literally that – books of phrases to be read or

memorised – and 'teach yourself' books as aimed at teaching a broader competence in the language. Since both were used for the most part outside of formal educational contexts and without teachers, it also makes sense to group them together. Studies to date include Zack's dialectal analysis of some Arabic phrasebooks, McLelland on self-instruction works for Chinese (McLelland 2015b), and treatments of some individual books or language-contact scenarios (e.g. Considine 2001; Constantine 2013a; Constantine 2013b; Cowman 2014; Koch 2015; Hallett 2017; Kuldkepp 2021; Walker 2021). Louise Munch Sørensen's short but insightful article 'Popular Language Works and the Autonomous Language Learner in 19th-Century Scandinavia' is a rare example of a work that examines what she calls 'popular language works' – for use outside the classroom – as a genre in their own right. As Sørensen points out, the structure and content of such books is remarkably consistent across time and space: 'The method in itself is simple and has changed very little since the 19th century though the way it is packaged and delivered has undergone considerable transformation in recent times' (Sørensen 2011, 30). In Chapter 3, I will discuss how phrasebooks and self-instruction books for Arabic fit into this genre, as it developed in both Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

Although phrasebooks and 'teach yourself' books, as we will see, often billed themselves as useful for the proactive, independent learner and/or traveller, who wished to make their own way in Arabic, the conventions of the genre in fact discouraged improvisation. Phrasebooks make assumptions about their user: about their nationality, gender, race and attitudes towards the people and culture with whom they come into contact. As Nanjala Nyabola has explored in her memoir *Travelling While Black*, phrasebooks and guidebooks still assume a particular – white, privileged, Western, also usually male – traveller, and anticipate their experiences accordingly (Nyabola 2020). In Chapter 7, I will consider users' annotations on surviving copies of Arabic phrasebooks, which sometimes allow us to see how books could be adapted to other needs: a woman pencilling in feminine grammatical endings, for example, or workers writing down words they needed to do their job. Despite the formulaic nature of phrasebooks and self-instruction books (and Sørensen is correct that the genre is quite a rigid one), there are occasional moments of subversion hidden within them. In some cases, biographical research allows us to see that the author's motivation is more cynical than an altruistic desire to help with language learning, as in the case of the charlatan Carl Thimm (Chapter 3) or the anti-imperialist campaigner 'Abd al Ḥamīd Zakī (Chapter 5). We can also see content as more positive reflections of the authors' personalities and desires. Samar Attar,

novelist and author of *Modern Arabic: An Introductory Course for Foreign Students* (Beirut, 1988), writes of her language textbook as autobiography, recreating the Damascus she had left behind (Fay 2002, 215). The authors whom we will meet in this book both tried to recreate the worlds they were familiar with and imagined others.

Phrasebooks are notorious for equipping their users poorly to communicate in the target language, and have been sent up by humorists from Mark Twain to James Thurber to Monty Python. This is ironic, since many of the phrasebooks I will examine here expressly advertised themselves as much more useful than scholarly grammars in actually helping the user to communicate. The reasons why such books (or their owners) failed are many and varied. In the course of the following chapters, we will encounter phrasebook authors whose knowledge of Arabic was poor (in a few cases, non-existent); works that were too long, too complicated, too boring or simply too heavy; and above all, authors and learners who had overly optimistic ideas about learning to speak a language competently from a book.

Perhaps the greatest failing, however, concerns the social world in which most phrasebooks imagine their user operating: one in which a foreigner gives orders or otherwise makes their wants known, without forming friendships and collegiate relationships with Arabic speakers, of the kind that would encourage active use of the language and feedback from native speakers. In this respect, the most successful phrasebooks are, ironically, those that equip their user with only the very basics, and leave them to proceed by trial and error, living in an Arabic-speaking country. Lucie Duff-Gordon (1821–1869), arriving in Cairo for the first time in 1862, seems to have followed this approach: 'It would be very easy to learn colloquial Arabic, as they all speak with perfect distinctness that one can follow the sentences and catch the words one knows as they are repeated. I think I know forty or fifty words already' (Duff-Gordon, ed. Waterfield, 1969, 46). Her letters reveal that she became an effective communicator in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, even if we have no surviving native-speaker testimony on her pronunciation or grammar. Phrasebooks and self-instruction books could actually be barriers to communication, as many foreign visitors to the Middle East found. A tourist named A. P. Walshe had the following encounter with a student at al-Azhar in 1899:

> This youth was unmistakably the rising hope of his Alma Mater. You saw it at once in his conceited air and self-satisfied manner. It was further evident that he was regarded by his fellows as a prodigious linguist. With the aid of a few Arabic phrases I had committed to memory, I essayed

conversation with this budding genius. He treated my scanty Arabic with disdain, as if its exiguous nature were beneath his notice, and with a chuckle of delight and a triumphant glance at his companions, dumbfounded me with the poser – 'Mister, what is the time?' This elicited a chorus of applause from his fellow pupils, and even the very Shekh who was attending us round the sacred edifice, could not refrain from marks of wonder and astonishment. Without awaiting an answer, the phenomenon, turning to his mutes, straightaway launched into what seemed to be an animated discourse on the intricacies of the English idiom. It was clear the boy hadn't the vaguest idea of the meaning of the phrase he had fired off with such a flourish of trumpets, and further, in that one phrase he had exhausted his whole stock of English.

(*Faringdon Advertiser and Vale of the White Horse Gazette*,
Saturday 27 May 1899, 5)

Unintentionally, and perhaps unperceived by Walshe, the young Azharite was making a good point, revealing his interlocutor's basic repetition of book-learnt Arabic phrases for what they were. This is another missed connection, of the same nature but different in magnitude to that between Silvestre de Sacy and Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī. Both sides were able to recognise deficiencies in the other's command of the spoken language, but neither was able to remedy them in a way that would encourage mutual understanding. Perhaps we also find hints here of the disorienting, psychologically uncomfortable sensation described by the literary critic Abdelfattah Kilito as arising both from hearing a foreigner speak one's language and from not understanding theirs (Kilito 2008, 87). How phrasebooks promoted both understanding and misunderstanding will be one of the central themes of this book.


## Mastering Arabic

This book is not expressly about the Arabic language and its dialects, but about the history of how people have tried to communicate and aid communication in Arabic. I have not written the book an Arabist would have written (I confess the limitations of my own Arabic in the Acknowledgements to this volume), but have written as a sociolinguist and historian, for a broad audience of linguists and historians, including those who have no knowledge of Arabic. For this reason, an introduction to the challenges of learning spoken Arabic is in order. Arabic speakers may find that some of what follows glosses over complexities or fudges controversial

topics, but my intention is to make this book accessible (and with any luck, interesting) to readers who do not know Arabic.

It is no coincidence that people – including Edward Said (1978, 77–78) – speak of 'mastering' languages, or of having a 'command' of them. On one level, this is a metaphor for the language learning experience: one of overcoming the challenges of learning a difficult language, making it submissive to the learner, and allowing them to 'command' its full repertoire in order to accomplish their goals. On another level, however, this 'mastery' of language can be seen as part and parcel of the European colonial domination of the Global South. Languages could be forced into the model of European grammatical traditions, codified into grammar books and ordered into families, by the very same missionaries, soldiers and settlers who colonised the people who spoke these languages. Examples of this will recur frequently in the following chapters, where we will see the mastery of spoken Arabic as part of wider aims to master a country and its people.

From a linguistic point of view, the point needs to be made that 'command' and 'mastery' are not realistic models for how individuals actually acquire languages. We learn languages by fits and starts, and may be able to buy a train ticket but not have a conversation about the United Nations, or vice versa (the latter reflecting the content of one of the most popular sets of English textbooks for Arabic today, the *al-Kitaab* series: Brustad et al. 2011). These terms are, however, very commonly used in the memoirs, travelogues, letters and diaries which I have searched for evidence of Arabic language learning in the period of this study. It is common to the point of cliché, for example, for biographies of nineteenth-century visitors to the Middle East to say something along the lines of 'he quickly mastered the local dialect of Arabic', without providing any evidence at all to support this. The reasons for such statements are both ignorance of the practicalities of language learning, and problems in the perception of people who speak foreign languages by those who do not. 'Fluency', likewise, is not a useful index to use when assessing language competence, no matter how often we encounter it in historical descriptions. The word may be in common parlance, but it is not linguistically useful. Multilingualism is best assessed as occurring in specific 'domains' of competence, something which we can also access in historical material (see, for example, the influential set of studies on the ancient Mediterranean world in Adams et al. 2002).

Since this is a work of sociolinguistics and social history rather than applied linguistics, I will not have much more to say about effective Arabic second language acquisition (for a good introduction, see Alhawary 2018). Occasionally we will meet figures who did learn good, practical

spoken Arabic. I am interested in those whose use of the language can be verified by the accounts of native speakers, or from the things that they were able to achieve in Arabophone contexts, and not so much in those who developed a reputation as 'fluent Arabic speakers' among Europeans, which is usually treated as equivalent to 'native level'. The key example here is of course T. E. Lawrence ('of Arabia'), whose Arabic was certainly extremely good. His colloquial, dialectal command of the language was strong enough for him to be made fun of by workers on an archaeological dig in Egypt for speaking like a Syrian (letter of 18 January 1912 to D. G. Hogarth: Bodleian Library, Oxford, MSS. Eng. d. 3335). One of Lawrence's teachers, Fareedah al-Akle, thought him 'a good linguist' (Mack 1976, 78). Lawrence himself, however, was well aware that he could not pass for an Arab, and the historian Suleiman Mousa, who interviewed a number of Arabs who had known Lawrence personally, found that they all 'unanimously agreed that as soon as Lawrence spoke one sentence of Arabic, it was clear to all concerned that he was a foreigner' (Mousa 1966, 268; on Lawrence's Arabic, see also Mairs and Muratov 2015, 50–55).

In English and other foreign-language accounts of Lawrence, nevertheless, his reputation as a native-level Arabic speaker persists. This is a common phenomenon. To someone with no knowledge of a language (or, in the case of many English speakers, no personal experience of successfully learning a language to a high level), competence in a language can be quickly upgraded to 'fluency' or 'native level'. Similarly, in his study of Arabic learning in French colonial Algeria, Messaoudi has found that 'la légende héroïque de la conquête de l'Algérie, et les enjeux politiques qui opposent civils et militaires à la fin du Second Empire, ont sans doute amené à mythifier l'officier des bureaux arabes, à grossir sa connaissance effective de l'arabe' (Messaoudi 2015, 181). In the following chapters, I will therefore be sceptical about reports from other foreigners of the Arabic abilities of foreigners, and thus about the level of Arabic they achieved from a particular instruction book, or their qualifications to write one.

What specific challenges did Arabic pose for learners in the period from Napoleon's expedition to the Second World War? I would like to divide these into two groups: linguistic and pedagogical. 'Arabic' is actually a group of varieties, with a 'high' variety, used in formal writing and speech, existing in a diglossic relationship with a number of spoken 'dialects' (see, for example, Haeri 2003 on the symbiosis of Classical Arabic and Egyptian Arabic in everyday life). This is a vast and complex topic, to which Arabic-speaking readers will require no introduction. For non-speakers of Arabic, I will pick out some aspects which will be of relevance in the following chapters.

In Arabic second-language teaching in the present day, it is usual to distinguish 'Modern Standard Arabic' (in English parlance) – a variety used in the press and news media, in most books and on formal occasions – from 'dialects', which are what most people speak every day with their family and friends and as they go about their daily life. The dialect is usually referred to as *ʿāmmiyya* ('common' or 'popular') in the regions covered in this book, and the formal variety as *al-lugha al-ʿArabiyya al-fuṣḥā* ('the eloquent Arabic language'). I use the Arabic term *fuṣḥā* in preference to 'Modern Standard Arabic' (*fuṣḥā* should be pronounced with the emphasis on the first syllable, and the 's' and 'h' as separate sounds: FUS-ha). Sometimes linguists distinguish *fuṣḥā* from the 'Classical' Arabic of the Qur'ān, but native speakers tend not to make a firm distinction. I will occasionally refer to 'Classical' Arabic to mean the language of the Qur'ān or of medieval or earlier Arabic texts. *Fuṣḥā* is taught in schools, and can be understood (although not always actively used) throughout the Arab world. Dialects, however, can differ so greatly as to be mutually unintelligible unless users deliberately adapt their speech.

In the nineteenth century, the situation was not quite so rigidly defined. Many of the individuals discussed in the following chapters were actively involved in the creation of a new formal register of written Arabic – what became modern *fuṣḥā* – out of the Classical language of the Qur'ān and historical authors. Both *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya* were evolving, with changes including the creation of new words for new concepts, both technological and ideological. Liesbeth Zack has used some of the same phrasebooks I discuss in this study to explore the development of modern Arabic vernaculars (e.g. Zack 2017). But some things in Arabic pedagogy have been constant. From the past to the present day, teachers have often had strong opinions on which form of the Arabic language students should learn, and students have also often been disappointed to find that they have learned one 'Arabic' when they really need another, or rather multiple varieties.

Differences between what I will, for convenience, call *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya*, and between regional varieties of *ʿāmmiyya*, were (and are) significant enough to cause serious problems for learners. I note just a few examples here, again primarily for non-Arabic-speaking readers. Vocabulary for everyday items could be completely different. Pronunciation also differed. In Egypt, for example, the Arabic letter *jīm* tends and tended to be realised as the equivalent of the English 'hard g' sound (as in 'good'), not as 'j' (as in 'jet'), which is its pronunciation in other varieties of Arabic. *Qāf*, the voiceless uvular plosive in *fuṣḥā*, most often comes out as a glottal stop in Cairene Arabic (*ʾuṭ* instead of *quṭ* for 'cat'), and as

'hard g' in southern Egypt. There are also morphological and syntactical differences. Egyptian Arabic negates with the particles *mish/mush* or *mā … sh* (a little like the French *ne … pas*), which are a distinctive feature of the dialect, instead of *la* or *mā*. In both Egyptian and Levantine Arabic, the preposition *bi* can be added to the beginning of a verb to form the so-called '*bi*-imperfect', with slightly different shades in meaning. I will note these features frequently in the phrasebooks considered in the following chapters. Their presence in a phrasebook can be a good indicator of whether the author actually knew the particular dialect well.

Conversely, some features of *fuṣḥā* or even more formal Qur'ānic Arabic can indicate that the phrasebook author either is aiming at this formal register of Arabic or is unaware that the dialects do not have these features. These include the Arabic case endings (*'i'rāb*), which are not used in the spoken dialects. These can appear as short vowels at the end of a word, or as *tanwīn* 'nunation' (endings *-un*, *-in* or *-an*) on an indefinite noun or adjective. Another more indirect piece of evidence that a phrasebook author is familiar with Classical Arabic comes in the choice of vocabulary. The characters Zayd and 'Amr, and the verb *ḍaraba* 'hit', are ubiquitous in the works of the Classical Arabic grammarians, used to illustrate grammatical points. As Yasir Suleiman points out, 'Amr and Zayd 'have been hitting each other for centuries' (Suleiman 1991, 84), but they are no longer a part of modern Arabic language learning (learners who use the popular present-day series *al-Kitaab* have instead Mahā and Khālid). But in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we still occasionally encounter 'Amr and Zayd beating each other up in phrasebooks, and they are a sign that the author was taught Arabic grammar in the traditional manner.

A not dissimilar species of linguistic interference in Arabic instruction books comes from the classical languages of ancient Greece and Rome. European authors of Arabic phrasebooks had often been educated in Greek and Latin, learned through the grammar–translation method and through memorisation of paradigms. Sometimes, we see evidence of them trying to fit Arabic, an Afro-Asiatic language, into the forms of these Indo-European languages. *'I'rāb*, for example, could be interpreted as the same phenomenon as Greek and Latin noun case endings, even though in Arabic *'i'rāb* also appears on verbs to indicate grammatical mood. The Arabic verb was amenable to being tabulated like a Greek or Latin verb, with its different stems, prefixes and suffixes to mark number, gender and time of action, but here too forcing Arabic into Indo-European patterns glossed over differences. Because of their familiarity with Latin and Greek, many European learners seem to have been more comfortable with Classical

Arabic than with the dialects. In phrasebooks for *ʿāmmiyya*, however, it is important not to dismiss Latin and Greek influence as inappropriate 'classicising' of the same nature as ʿAmr, Zayd and *ʾiʿrāb*: the use of the same methods and terminology by which they had learnt Latin and Greek in childhood may in fact have aided Europeans in learning *ʿāmmiyya*.

Beyond variation in dialect and register, some features of Arabic *tout court* were challenging to learners in the period covered by this book, and continue to be. The Arabic script does not routinely mark short vowels, which are indicated with diacritical marks over and under letters where they do appear. Religious texts and books for young children learning to read are an exception. Most of the phrasebooks I discuss here contain Arabic text transcribed into another script which the learner already knows (Latin, Cyrillic or Hebrew), but some do use Arabic script, and in these the presence or absence of the diacritical marks that indicate short vowels is significant. The phonological inventory of Arabic is different from that of most European languages and can be difficult for learners to acquire (see several of the studies in Alhawary 2018). We will meet many examples in the following chapters of learners who failed altogether. The fricative consonants can be tricky, depending on the native language of the learner. *Fuṣḥā* has /θ/ (*thāʾ*) and /ð/ (*dhāl*), which occur in English (as the 'th' sounds in 'thing' and 'that') but not, for example, in French. In the Arabic dialects, these tend to be 'simplified' to /s/ or /t/ and to /z/, respectively. The voiceless velar or uvular fricative *khāʾ* is mentioned in many phrasebooks, and is compared to examples from the European languages in which equivalents occur. Also often mentioned is *ʿayn*, the voiced pharyngeal fricative, of which we will see many creative descriptions by phrasebook authors, since it is not found in European languages. The Arabic emphatic consonants (*ṭāʾ*, *ẓāʾ*, *ḍād* and *ṣād*) are also usually considered difficult by learners, but many phrasebooks in fact omit detailed description of them, seemingly expecting the learners to make do with the equivalent non-emphatic consonant, even though this can completely alter the meaning of a word. I discuss the matter of teaching pronunciation more fully in Mairs (forthcoming-f). In the Catalogue (see the prefatory Note to this book, and further discussion below), I provide excerpts from authors' descriptions of *khāʾ*, *ʿayn* and *ṣād*, by way of illustration.

The challenges of representing Arabic speech in non-Arabic scripts are legion, and I will discuss the transcription used in many of the individual phrasebooks considered in the following chapters. Some were more systematic than others, with clearly set-out tables of transliteration equivalents, explaining how they rendered each Arabic letter into their

own script, and how it was to be pronounced. Some have no transliteration or pronunciation guide at all, but it is possible to examine the contents of the phrasebook to see how they have chosen to represent Arabic sounds, and to assess these choices. Sometimes, the transliteration system used tells us something about how the author spoke their own language. In English, the difference between rhotic and non-rhotic dialects (whether or not someone articulates the letter 'r' in all word positions) can be visible in Arabic phrasebooks whose transcriptions have rogue instances of 'silent r'. When I quote directly from Arabic phrasebooks, I reproduce words and phrases as they are spelled in the book, with 'translation' into a more standard system of transliteration where necessary. Throughout the book, I have used the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system for the transliteration of Arabic. For Arabic names, I have used the same system, except where the person themselves favoured a particular romanised version of their own name.

The question of pronunciation brings me to my second category of challenge faced by Arabic learners: pedagogical. Although more modern developments in language teaching – the use of audio and video recordings, and even diagrams of points of articulation within the human mouth – can aid in learning pronunciation, there is no substitute for interaction with (and correction by) native speakers. There is plentiful evidence from the period covered by this study that those who attempted to learn Arabic pronunciation from a book alone most often met with failure. We have already seen how Silvestre de Sacy, who had never travelled to an Arabic-speaking country, could not pronounce the language correctly. Reports such as this are common in historical accounts by speakers of Arabic and other Middle Eastern languages who met teachers and students of these languages in Europe and America. The Indian scholar Mirza Abu Taleb Khan (1752–1806) complained that his students in London who had studied from one of John Richardson's (1740/41–1795) works on Persian required complete retraining: 'I found it much more difficult to correct the bad pronunciation he had acquired, and the errors he had adopted, than it was to instruct a person who had never before seen the Persian alphabet' (Abu Taleb Khan, trans. Stewart, 1810, Vol. II, 42). Turkish intellectual Namık Kemal (1840–1888) likewise observed:

> Some Europeans who are interested in Islamic languages but haven't been able to learn them from the standard grammar manuals are putting together their own grammar rulebooks to more easily instruct others in these languages. Some people actually believe they have

learned these languages by reading such manuals. The things being learned and taught are so strange that, when I was in Paris and found myself attending a Turkish lesson open to the public, I could not understand a single word of the teacher's recitation. Had I not heard a few Turkish prepositions here and there, I would have thought the language being taught was one about which I knew nothing.

(*Renan Müdâfaanâmesi*, trans. Aron Aji and Micah A. Hughes, in Çelik 2021, 76)

This problem of book-taught Western Orientalists having weak pronunciation continued well into the twentieth century, as Thomas Naff's fascinating collection of memoirs by scholars of the Middle East reveals. Charles Issawi (1916–2000) recalled of studying with the Oxford Orientalist David Margoliouth (1858–1940) that 'his erudition was fantastic, but I had never heard anything resembling the sounds that issued from his throat when he spoke Arabic – which means that I had never met an Orientalist' (Issawi in Naff 1993, 144). Teaching Arabic in Edinburgh in the period after the Second World War, Pierre Cachia (1921–2017) found himself having to find innovative ways of teaching the pronunciation of *ʿayn* to a student who was keen to learn, but found the available books unhelpful:

The prevalent standard is well illustrated by an incident involving Professor A. S. Tritton – an amiable and lively eccentric who worked assiduously in the British Museum Library long after he had retired and who was invariably kind to me whenever chance took me to the same shelves. Britain still had some toeholds in the Middle East at the time, and a subaltern in Inverness who was being posted to Libya was enterprising enough to buy Tritton's Teach Yourself Arabic; but he got as far as the Phonetic Introduction only to be nonplussed by the description of the sound of ayn, so he appealed for help from the author. Airily ignoring the title of his own book, Professor Tritton wrote back that one would have to be a genius to teach oneself Arabic, and he then added: 'As for the sound of ayn, don't worry about it – it is no sound at all.' The young officer then turned to me and I sent him a tape explaining and illustrating the distinctive Arabic phonemes, but it is surely revealing that a senior Arabist of the day could have completed a long and not undistinguished teaching career without so integral an item in the alphabet having as much as registered in his ear.

(Cachia in Naff 1993, 14)

Cachia's experience of Tritton chimes with that of many other native or near-native speakers encountering Euro-American academic Arabists (Cachia was born in Egypt to Maltese and Russian parents). He liked and respected Tritton (1881–1973), but *Teach Yourself Arabic* (Tritton 1943) was not fit for purpose.

As Tritton freely acknowledged, it is impossible to 'teach yourself Arabic', or any language. Even someone who learns the contents of a book is being taught by its author. A reviewer of Jane Wightwick and Mahmoud Gaafar's popular *Mastering Arabic* (first edition, Macmillan, 1990) looks at the matter from the perspective of both a teacher and a learner:

> Like many who travel to the Middle East before studying Arabic, my first exposure to the language was a teach-yourself Arabic book. Also like many in a similar situation, I found the book to be more or less useless. My opinion of this type of book has not been changed much over the years or more recently when new ones appear with great frequency. It was with this in mind that I approached my review of Wightwick and Gaafar's *Mastering Arabic* with some trepidation. I am pleased to report that while no one will actually 'master' Arabic by using this book, it does offer an excellent introduction to Modern Standard Arabic for self-learners.
>
> (Christopher Stone in *MESA Bulletin* 40/1, 2006, 124)

It will be seen repeatedly over the following chapters that books with modest ambitions worked best. While I doubt that any of them ever, on their own, taught a user to speak Arabic, they could provide useful information and encourage good learning habits.


## Assembling and dissecting the corpus

The corpus of material analysed in this book consists of phrasebooks and self-instruction manuals for learning colloquial Arabic, in European languages, for use in the Mashriq, in the period from 1798 to around 1945. On the one hand, this corpus is quite clearly defined. I exclude, for example, grammars of Classical Arabic, Ottoman Turkish textbooks of Arabic, and phrasebooks published for the Maghreb. There are, however, a few grey areas. My use of terms like 'phrasebook' and 'instruction book' is not rigid, because the books I describe often incorporated elements of phrasebook, dictionary and grammar. I prefer terminological flexibility to establishing any precise definition of what a 'phrasebook' is and then

having to constantly allow exceptions. Because I look at Yiddish–Arabic phrasebooks for use by Jewish immigrants to Palestine (Chapter 6), I also bring in Hebrew material produced for the same purpose. I make occasional exceptions and discuss books whose primary objective is to teach the written language, where their authors also produced books for the colloquial language, or there is evidence that learners were using them alongside colloquial phrasebooks. There are some gaps in coverage. I have only been able to access copies of a handful of the books for learning colloquial and written Arabic produced for Greeks resident in Egypt and Palestine during the period (see Gorman 2021), although I hope to be able to examine these in a future publication. Altogether, I examine books published in nine languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian) and in the territory of 25 modern countries (Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Malta, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Germany, Austria, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Australia). These works are collected in the Catalogue, which details more than 200 books; I am certain that there are other examples that I have missed. Patterns in the publication of Arabic phrasebooks in these individual languages over time are presented in Graphs 3–5 and discussed further in Chapter 7.

Locating instruction books for colloquial Arabic has not been simply a matter of searching in library catalogues. I have scoured WorldCat (https://www.worldcat.org), using keywords in several languages – indeed, sometimes so frequently and rapidly that the website mistook me for a bot. The online catalogues of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, British Library, University of Oxford, Bibliothèque nationale de France and National Library of Israel have also been especially useful. Many of the phrasebooks I discuss, however, fall into the categories of 'grey literature' (materials produced for circulation within an organisation, such as an army or police force: Chapter 4 and Chapter 5) or ephemera, and some only ever circulated in manuscript form. These are not systematically collected by scholarly libraries, and it has taken several years of hunting in museum collections, in second-hand bookshops (in several countries) and on eBay and other online auction sites to find the ones I have. Even those phrasebooks that were issued by established publishers sometimes survive in very few library copies worldwide – because they were published in short print runs, because they were published in the Middle East, and/or because they were printed on poor-quality paper in flimsy paper covers and have simply disintegrated.

In taking my search for source material beyond the university library, I am aware of participating in a trend among some historians of the Middle East. Lucie Ryzova's innovative and immensely productive 'Ezbekiyya Methodology' of research involves gathering materials from the Sūr al-Azbakiyya used book and paper market in Cairo (Ryzova 2014, 26–31, cf. Ryzova 2012; I will return to Azbakiyya in Chapter 1). Tarek Ibrahim has used ephemera such as postcards found on eBay, as well as unpublished architectural drawings, to shed new light on the great Cairo institution Shepheard's Hotel (Ibrahim 2019). The materiality of the books I discuss is important. They were not books to be placed on a library shelf, but tools to be used. As such, they bear the marks of this use (discussed in Chapter 7), and we should imagine that many more were probably used to the point of destruction than survive.

Many of these materials have not been previously described in scholarship and survive in only a few copies in institutional libraries or private collections. I have tried to strike a balance between description and analysis of the material, including the construction of overarching arguments and narratives. But this is of course challenging. Books must be described before they can be analysed, and if I am essaying the first description of a great number of phrasebooks, then some of the discussion must inevitably become a little repetitive. The benefit of repetition, however, is that it reveals structures and patterns. It will quickly become clear to the reader, for example, that phrasebooks followed a set template, and that deviations from this are significant. These structures and patterns will be revisited in Chapter 7.

Beyond the books themselves, I have used published primary sources and scholarship, but also a great deal of archival material. Individual archives and archivists are named and thanked in the Acknowledgements to this volume. Archival material can pull the historian in a great number of directions, all of them potentially interesting and productive, but the line of enquiry I have always tried to follow is that of the lived linguistic experience of language book authors and users, whether these be pioneers of the Nahḍa, missionaries, dragomans (interpreters and guides), settler colonists or soldiers. A user's experience can be gleaned from sources such as memoirs and letters, but there are more immediate, tangible ways of accessing the experiences of learners of Arabic. Some wrote their names in and annotated their books (Chapter 7), and oral history recordings from the Imperial War Museum in London allow us to literally hear the voices of some who learnt (or failed to learn) Arabic in the early twentieth century (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5; since I make use of these recordings in only two chapters, I have reserved fuller discussion of them until Chapter 4).

Authors may seem easier to identify than learners, but in fact there are often 'hidden authors' of Arabic phrasebooks. Many books that bear the name of a European 'author' on the title page were in fact composed in whole or in part by native Arabic speakers, who are either thanked in passing, or referred to obliquely, without even their name. In cases where substantial contributions can be demonstrated, I have added the names of Arab coauthors in the Catalogue, even if these do not appear on the title page or cover. In other cases, all I can do is make a point of noting where a European author almost certainly had help.

As well as adopting this kind of life-writing approach to phrasebook users and authors on the level of individual biography, I have also found it useful to examine their connections. As well as collecting data on the lives of language book authors and users, and trying to reconstruct how they composed and used these books, I have mapped connections between them. Two Gephi social network graphs accompany this book, which are discussed fully in Chapter 7, and may be downloaded from the University of Reading Research Data Archive (see the prefatory Note). In Graph 1, I show acquaintances between Arabic teachers and learners, as well as a few other significant figures. Arrows indicate teacher–student relationships, with the arrow pointing in the direction of the student. Graph 2 shows influence and plagiarism between Arabic instruction books, which was considerable. These graphs are, of course, imperfect representations of a complex social and intellectual world, but they can be used to illustrate some of the key themes which emerge from this book. For example, the centrality of Silvestre de Sacy in a graph whose focus is on teachers and learners of *colloquial* Arabic shows not just how well connected he was in European Orientalist circles, but also the prestige of studying or associating with him. The authors of surviving written sources are more likely to mention Sacy if they had any passing contact with him than they are, say, his Paris contemporary Michel Sabbagh. Social groupings within the graph also show us something of the geographical reach of Orientalist networks, and the diversity of non-university sites in which the learning of Arabic took place. But these are just some very brief preliminary observations.


## Summary

The chapters of this book overlap both chronologically and geographically. Each looks at a particular context or set of circumstances under which foreigners learnt colloquial Arabic. Chapter 1, 'Cairo and Paris (1798–1869)', begins by examining how European attitudes to and

practices in teaching the Arabic language were transformed by Napoleon's Expédition d'Égypte. In Paris, the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes increasingly integrated colloquial Arabic, under native-speaking teachers, into the curriculum over the course of the first decades of the nineteenth century. The discipline of Arabic studies in Europe, however, remained dominated by Classical Arabic and by teachers such as Silvestre de Sacy who valued the literary language over the colloquial. In Egypt, the encounter with Napoleon and the French also brought changes to language learning. Muḥammad ʿAlī sent educational missions to Europe, and returning students – including Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī – introduced the teaching of European languages. Students educated at the School of Languages (Madrasat al-Alsun) in Cairo published textbooks for French. The teaching of Arabic to Europeans and of European languages to Arabs stood in a symbiotic relationship, and authors developed textbooks by drawing on both European and Middle Eastern traditions.

Chapter 2, 'Fāris al-Shidyāq, Asʿad Yaʿqūb al-Khayyāṭ and Protestant missions (1819–1920)', looks at the role of Christian missionaries in the teaching and learning of languages in the Middle East. I follow the career of two particular individuals, Fāris al-Shidyāq and Asʿad Yaʿqūb al-Khayyāṭ, and discuss the role languages played in their own lives, as well as the materials they developed for teaching Arabic to foreigners. The chapter concludes by examining the long reach of missionary activities both in teaching languages in and of the Middle East, and in the cultural landscape of the region.

Two related topics are tackled in Chapter 3, 'Tourists' phrasebooks and self-instruction: the business of language book publishing (1830–1935)'. Tourism in the nineteenth-century Middle East developed according to specific technological developments (steamships and railways) and political circumstances (colonialism). Phrasebooks for colloquial Arabic are an excellent way of exploring how foreign visitors conceived of the Middle East (including the ways they denigrated it), and how this changed throughout this period. They also show how an increasingly wider range of authors (not just scholars) understood the project of teaching Arabic to foreigners. The publishing industry must be considered in tandem with the tourist industry. Books for self-instruction, in all fields, became popular in the early nineteenth century, and there are many 'teach yourself' works for languages, including the Arabic language. Arabic phrasebooks for tourists in the Middle East developed in a complex symbiosis with the genres of guidebook, travelogue and (self-)educational textbook, and their users could be at the same time tourists, pilgrims, armchair travellers and those seeking to better themselves.

Chapter 4, 'Arabic in war and occupation I: the Veiled Protectorate to the First World War (1882–1914)', and Chapter 5, 'Arabic in war and occupation II: the First and Second World Wars and Mandate Palestine (1914–1945)', explore military learning of Arabic, mostly by English-speaking forces in the Middle East. They cover the British 'Veiled Protectorate' over Egypt of the 1880s, through the First and Second World Wars, including Mandate Palestine. Most phrasebooks and self-instruction books for soldiers were not officially issued by the British military, but published independently by soldiers or by locals. In fact, British official neglect of the need for language learning seems to have caused serious problems in some theatres in the First World War, notably when Indian troops were deployed to Iraq. Cairo during the First and Second World Wars, as a place where soldiers took their leave, saw the publication of a wide selection of informal phrasebooks by Egyptian authors, which taught their users how to drink and whore in often very crude Arabic. In Mandate Palestine, archival documents show how British soldiers and police chafed against official directives that they should learn Arabic. Only in the Second World War do we begin to find British and American armed forces issuing useful and well-thought-out materials for learning Arabic, leading to the institutional Arabic-learning programmes of the post-war period.

In Chapter 6, 'Arabic, Hebrew and Yiddish in Palestine (1839–1948)', I turn to the question of the learning of Arabic by Jewish immigrants to Palestine. This is an issue that has become clouded by the Nakba, the establishment of the state of Israel and subsequent events. It is clear, however, that some Jewish immigrants to Palestine did learn to speak Arabic in order to communicate with their Palestinian neighbours, and that there was a range of works available, in Yiddish and Hebrew, to help them do so. The authors of some of these were Arabic-speaking Jews (Mizrahim and Sephardim), but in the earlier part of the period they were mostly European Ashkenazim. In the 1940s, the picture changes decisively, and Arabic learning among Jews becomes a matter of security and intelligence, not of neighbourly coexistence.

The Conclusion, Chapter 7, attempts to tie all of these threads together, and also examines the networks of language learners and teachers who produced these books. Books, as well as people, are connected, and I show how common plagiarism was between the phrasebooks discussed here, even across languages. I also return to the question of the materiality of phrasebooks, looking at what annotations can tell us about the people who used these books, and how – or whether – they learnt Arabic.

# Notes

1  I use the Arabic version of Muḥammad ʿAlī's name for the sake of consistency, because it is how he is referred to in the Arabic primary sources and scholarship which I use in this book. Many scholars in Western languages use the Ottoman 'Mehmed Ali', which would probably be more appropriate if I were writing about the man himself, since the dynastic family was, for much of its period of rule over Egypt, primarily Turkish-speaking. On Turks and Turkish culture in Egypt, see İhsanoğlu 2011.

2  See, for example, Tageldin 2011, 113–114; Wick 2014, 414; Sabri ad-Dali 2016, 110–111; Irwin 2018, 165. Egyptian writers later in the nineteenth century tried to knock Sacy off his pedestal – usually by questioning the perfection of his written Arabic, rather than pointing out his difficulties in speaking the language (al-Shidyāq, *al-Sāq ʿala al-Sāq* 5.3.10, to be compared with *Kashf al-mukhabbā ʿan funūn Ūrubbā* 271; ʿAlī Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya al-jadīda* 11.10).

3  Asian, African and American languages have been making increasing inroads into HoLLT.net publications: for example, Mairs 2018; García-Ehrenfeld 2019.

# 1
# Cairo and Paris (1798–1869)

## Fī ʾl-Azbakiyya

In October 2019, while I was conducting research for this book in Cairo on what would turn out to be my last trip before the pandemic, I took a wrong turn coming out of ʿAtaba metro station, and, disoriented, ended up making a complete circuit of the old Azbakiyya Gardens. Although it is not obvious today, this part of Cairo was an epicentre of cultural interaction between Arabs and Europeans, and Arabic and European languages, in the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth. Many of the people and institutions with which I will be concerned in this book were based in the Azbakiyya. Many of the language books I consider were designed to be used in the streets around it.[1]

Azbakiyya in the late eighteenth century was a place of leisure and entertainment, just outside the walls of the medieval city. Birkat al-Azbakiyya was a seasonal lake, and its shores were lined with palaces which – along with the canals that connected the lake to the Nile – made it an attractive base for the French army when they occupied Cairo in late July 1798 (on the district in this period, see Behrens-Abouseif 1985). Muḥammad Bey al-Alfī, a Mamluk (member of an elite caste of soldiers of slave origin, many of whom ascended to high positions in Egypt), had just built a palace on the still-undeveloped western side of the lake (Figure 1.1). It had extensive gardens, and occupied the whole area to the west of what is now al-Gumhūriyya Street between about 26 July and Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī Streets, including Muḥammad Bey al-Alfī Street itself. Napoleon commandeered Alfī Bey's new palace. The Egyptian historian ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī lamented:

**Figure 1.1** The Palace of Alfī Bey during the Expédition d'Égypte (*Description de l'Égypte*, État moderne I, Pl. 52). Public domain. Available from the Library of Congress at https://bit.ly/3Np4v64.

> Bonaparte took up residence in the house of Muḥammad Alfī Bey in Azbakīya in the section of al-Sākit, which the same amir had erected the year before. He had decorated it and had spent a great amount of money on it. He had laid it out with splendid rugs. Just when it was finished and he had settled in it, this occurred. It was vacated and left, with all its contents, as if the amir had built it just for the commander of the French. The same thing happened with the house of Ḥasan Kāshif Çerkes in Nāṣirīya.
>
>       (*'Ajā'ib al-Athār* III 11, trans. Philipp and Perlmann 1994, 17)

In another of his accounts of the period, al-Jabartī adds that, to heap insult upon injury, the French stepped 'on the carpets with their shoes and sandals as was their custom, since they never take off their shoes with which they tread upon filth, not even when they sleep!' (*Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr*, 8b, trans. Moreh 1975, 57). Later, al-Jabartī visited the French in the fine houses which they had occupied in the Nāṣiriyya quarter, including that of Ḥasan Kāshif Çerkes, as I will discuss below.

    A few days after he had ruined Alfī Bey's carpets, Napoleon wrote a memo ordering that a house be requisitioned to set up a printing press, library and scientific laboratories. He concluded: 'Je désirerais que cette

maison fût située sur la place Ezbekyeh, ou le plus près possible' (Bonaparte 1858–1870, Vol. IV, No. 2938, 2 August 1798). The building chosen for the new Imprimerie Nationale, where a French–Arabic phrasebook would shortly be printed, was on the northeast corner of the lake, now Ḥārat al-Ruway'ī, an extension of Nagīb al-Riḥānī Street.

Galila El Kadi has fittingly described Azbakiyya as the theatre where the great spectacles of the French occupation were enacted (El Kadi 2009, 177): the celebration of the Mawlid al-Nabī, the French launch of a hot air balloon, and the assassination of General Kléber in the garden of the palace of Alfī Bey. Kléber's assassin was Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, he of the eponymous modern street. In 1801, the French left, but Alfī Bey was never able to recover his beautiful palace, which was gutted by fire that same year (Behrens-Abouseif 1985, 81; El Kadi 2009, 177).

British officer Sir Robert Wilson, who was in Cairo just after the French left, described Azbakiyya at this time:

> The palaces of the Beys are large; two or three of them are very fine buildings; particularly Cassan Bey's, where the Institute was held, and the house in Place Bequier, in which Kleber lived, and in the garden of which he was murdered.
>
> (Wilson 1802, 115)

In Wilson's mind, Arabic sounds and words are domesticated, rationalised into something more familiar. The initial fricative of Ḥasan Kāshif Çerkes' name becomes the English 'hard c'. The name 'al-Azbakiyya' is creatively misunderstood as 'Place Bequier', a European-style city square with a French name.

Under Muḥammad 'Alī, the lake was drained and turned into a park. Azbakiyya became an interface between the medieval city to the east and the developing modern city to the west. In the late 1830s, the site of the former palace of Alfī Bey was used for a School of Languages (discussed below) where Egyptians who had returned from Europe taught European languages to their compatriots. In the 1840s, Shepheard's Hotel was opened on the site. British economist Nassau Senior, in Cairo in 1855, visited the engineer and educator Hekekyan Bey and asked him what had become of the various schools established under Muḥammad 'Alī:

> Senior. – Of the School of Languages?
>     Hekekyan. – Abolished by Abbas. Shepherd's [*sic*] Hotel in the Esbekeeyeh was built to receive it. Mr. Shepherd and his waiters are

the successors of the Professors of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, French and English.

(Senior 1882, 215)

As Tarek Ibrahim's recent study has emphasised, 'few places in Egypt reflected the profound social, cultural and political changes in Egypt in the 19th century as did Shepheard's Hotel' (Ibrahim 2019, 13). The hotel's terrace was a legendary, and tightly controlled, point of interaction between Egyptians and foreign tourists and residents (Mairs and Muratov 2019). The row of shops adjacent to the terrace included the bookseller Diemer's, which sold guidebooks and phrasebooks like *Betitkállim bil-árabi? / Sprechen Sie Arabisch?* (Klippel 1913, title page; Diemer's is visible in a postcard of 1906 in Ibrahim 2019, 34, Fig. 17). Thomas Cook's main Cairo office was a few steps to the north of Shepheard's. Across Azbakiyya, the site of the Imprimerie Nationale had become the Hotel Bristol. Guests at Shepheard's as late as the 1940s were (implausibly) shown 'Kléber's tree' in the hotel gardens, from behind which the assassin had supposedly leapt at his victim (Hughes 1949, 18). The last of the hotel's various iterations burned down during the anti-British riots of January 1952.

To the north of Azbakiyya, cultural and linguistic encounters of a rather different nature took place. The old lakefront became Wagh al-Birka Street, now Nagīb al-Riḥānī Street. This was the area known to foreign troops in Cairo during the First and Second World Wars as 'the Birka' or 'the Wazza'. It had respectable places of entertainment (some discussed in Cormack 2021), but was best known for its bars and brothels. Phrasebook author Mohamed Hammam, writing for British soldiers in 1915, is thinking of the Birka, not of Shepheard's, when he provides them with the following conversation:

IN AZBACIA
Feel Azbakiah

| | |
|---|---|
| Come here girl | Taali hina ya bint |
| Yes, sir | Na'am ya seedi |
| What is your name | Ismik aih |
| My name is Hanem | Ismy Hanem |
| You are a pretty and gentile [*sic*] | Enti hilwa wilateefa |
| And sympathetic too | Wikafeefa kaman |
| I love you so much | Ana ahibbik kiteer |

(Hammam 1915, 14)

As if the nature of the exchange were not clear enough, Hammam's soldier continues, 'Let me kiss you for half millime / Khallin aboosik bi nuss malleem.' In the Mūskī, stretching east from the southern side of Azbakiyya, tourists used their phrasebooks to bargain for souvenirs instead of sex.

Although the international hotels have moved over to the Nile, and the Azbakiyya Gardens are a fraction of their former size, a walk around Azbakiyya is still a fruitful way of thinking about language contact in Cairo. The Sūr al-Azbakiyya book market sometimes yields old phrasebooks among its used paperbacks and piles of historical ephemera (Ryzova 2012).

## *Jeunes de langues*

I have opened with a tour of Azbakiyya because a sense of place is so crucial to understanding how the study of colloquial Arabic by foreigners evolved in the early nineteenth century. Personal journeys and connections are also central to this story, which will move back and forth between Cairo and Paris over the course of this first chapter. The first modern, printed, pocket-size Arabic phrasebook was produced by a Frenchman in Cairo in 1799, during the French occupation, in a building on Azbakiyya. In Chapter 3 I will look at the history of phrasebooks and self-instruction language books in Europe before this date, and later in this section I will discuss manuscript Arabic phrasebooks, but 1799 is still an important watershed.

This chapter examines a network of individuals who were involved in teaching and writing about colloquial Arabic in the period from the Expédition d'Égypte roughly to the reign of Khedive Ismāʿīl. There is some chronological overlap with other chapters, but my focus here is on Cairo and Paris, and on this single, though extensive, group of connected individuals (see Graph 1, discussed further in Chapter 7). This network had several institutional nodes, which did not necessarily have fixed physical locations: al-Azhar, the Collège royal, the Institut d'Égypte, the Imprimerie nationale, the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, the École égyptienne, the Madrasat al-Alsun and the Būlāq Press. Many of the individuals I consider here were associated with more than one of these institutions.

French savants who arrived in Egypt in 1798 already had at their disposal many printed and manuscript works on the Arabic language: some produced and used in scholastic contexts, others by pilgrims, merchants

or diplomats (Girard 2013; Brentjes 2017; for a catalogue of vocabularies and phrasebooks produced for Ottoman Turkish in Romance languages before 1730, see the Appendix to Rothman 2021). Silvestre de Sacy began the introduction to his own *Grammaire arabe à l'usage des élèves de l'École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes* (first published edition 1810, but based on a manuscript compiled in 1796–1797 and now in the Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations: Messaoudi 2015, 49–50) by placing his work at the end of a chain of books for elementary Arabic going back to Pierre d'Acala in 1505. These, he divided into two classes: those which followed Arab grammarians and those, following on from the pioneering work of Thomas Erpenius and his 1613 *Grammatica Arabica*, which adopted 'un système moins compliqué et plus analogue aux méthodes que l'on suit ordinairement dans l'étude des langues savantes' (Sacy 1810, vi). His own work was included in the latter category: Sacy's *Grammaire* was innovative because it was composed in French rather than Latin, which opened up the study of Arabic to students who had not had a traditional classical humanist education (Messaoudi 2015, 49). I will return to Sacy and the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes (established in 1795) below.

Not all Arabic works used in teaching in France in the Early Modern period, however, were printed, and not all were dedicated to the Classical language. As well as there being grammars and dictionaries used to teach Arabic in the manner of a 'langue savante', the long-established *jeune de langues* system for the training of commercial and diplomatic interpreters generated works of a different character. An École des jeunes de langues had been established in Paris in 1669, where young students were taught by eminent scholars and given a solid foundation in Latin and Greek, but an important part of such training took place in Constantinople, in an establishment run by the Capuchin order (Messaoudi 2015, 25–6, 30–31).

*Jeune de langues*-style teaching also had an impact on Arabic teaching at more academic institutions, like the Collège royal. François Pétis de La Croix (1653–1713) had learnt Arabic, Turkish and Persian during a long period of study in the Middle East, and produced his own teaching materials for use at the Collège royal which reflect this immersion. These survive in manuscript (Ageron and Jaouhari 2014, 398; see also Brentjes 2017). His *Grammaire arabe* was the first such work in French rather than Latin. When Pétis de La Croix was living in Aleppo in 1673, he also produced a manuscript to which he gave the title *Méthode d'apprendre l'arabe facilement en faisant voir la practique* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF ms. Arabe 4361). This work has several characteristics in common with later phrasebooks. It promises an 'easy method' of learning

Arabic. It is laid out with sections of vocabulary and then connected dialogues, with the target language and translation in facing columns. And it incorporates text from existing works. The 'Dialogues pour apprendre la langue arabe', as Ageron and Jaouhari point out, belong to a body of material that was already being used to teach Arabic to foreigners in Arab Christian milieux in Egypt and Syria (Ageron and Jaouhari 2014, 413). They identify several other manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France that include some of the same dialogues. It is difficult to tell how long this material had been in circulation, and who were the original authors.

Two eighteenth-century manuscripts survive of a similar French–Arabic manual. One, now in the British Library, dates to around 1700 (Matar 2009, 118–119, with the reference British Library MS C 153; I have not been able to consult this in person). This copy apparently contains a Romanised transcription of the Arabic sentences, thus allowing it to be used by learners who do not yet know the Arabic script. The Harvard copy of the same manual (Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Arabic SM 321), however, does not consistently include Romanisation, so – like Pétis de la Croix's text – could not have readily been used by absolute beginners; one page (88) does contain a transcription of the Arabic. The manuscript bears the Arabic ownership inscription and stamp of one 'Qārdūn' who was 'French dragoman in the city of Tripoli in Syria', with a Hijrī (Islamic calendar) date of 1198 (AD 1783). The Harvard catalogue suggests that this is Denis Dominique Cardonne (1721–1783), a *jeune de langues* who was brought to Constantinople as a child and subsequently became professor of Arabic, Persian and Turkish at the Collège royal (1768–1783). The date 1783 suggests that Cardonne may already have been dead when the inscription was made, by someone else, at the time of the book's passing into an institutional collection. (I have been unable to place him in Tripoli.) Appropriately, one of his several Orientalist grandsons, Alexandre Cardin (1786–1839), dragoman at the French consulate in Egypt, translated al-Jabartī (Cardin 1838; see the analysis of this translation by al-Ḥaq 2008).

Unlike the weightier (in both senses of the word) grammatical and lexical works printed in Europe, manuscripts such as this could act as more practical tools for communication in the Middle East itself. Archives worldwide contain many similar works in European vernacular languages. The orthography of both the French and the Arabic of the Harvard manuscript is eccentric to a modern eye, indicative of its period, but perhaps also of its production and use by those who were not educated to a high literary standard but were nevertheless efficient communicators.

The end of the first section, for example, contains instructions in French and Arabic on how to travel from Aleppo to Cairo (Houghton MS Arabic SM 321, Seq. 12):

> Si vous voulez aller dalep au Caire Il fault cheminer dicy a tripoly, mais depuis tripoly Jusq. a damiette Il fault aller par mer, Enfin de damiette au Caire Vous montire sur riviere du du [*sic*] nil dont leau est aussi douce q. le sucre ou bien le miel dAvettes.

> (If you want to go from Aleppo to Cairo, you must go by land [the Arabic specifies *timshī fī al-barr*] from here to Tripoli, then from Tripoli to Damietta you must go by sea, finally from Damietta to Cairo, you go on the river Nile, the water of which is as sweet as sugar, or even bees' honey.)[2]

This same passage appears in Pétis de la Croix's manuscript of over a hundred years earlier. As we will see later in this chapter, the dialogues contained in these manuscripts enjoyed a long life in language teaching, finally making it into print in 1813.

## Langlès, Volney, Lakanal and reform of Arabic teaching in France (1780s–1790s)

The intensification of military and commercial contacts between western Europe and the Middle East in the late eighteenth century, of which the Expédition d'Égypte was part, created a demand for new approaches to learning Arabic. Although tools such as the manuscripts I have just discussed did exist, Arabic teaching at the École des jeunes de langues and the Collège royal in Paris was not fit for purpose, and by the time of the French Revolution, reform was clearly needed (Girard 2013, 12). There would always be a place for the learned study of Classical Arabic, but a new focus was needed on practical command of the modern language in its various forms, both scholarly literary Arabic and the spoken regional dialects.

Louis-Mathieu Langlès (1763–1824) had studied Arabic and Persian at the Collège royal, and was a student of Silvestre de Sacy. In 1790, he gave an address before the Assemblée nationale constituante (which had been formed during the Revolution) insisting on the importance of 'Oriental' languages for both trade and scholarship. Langlès argued that chairs of Arabic, Turkish and Persian should be created at Paris and Marseille (Girard 2013, 12).

Another former student at the Collège royal, the comte de Volney (1757–1820), also advocated for greater investment in the teaching of Oriental languages. Volney had travelled in Egypt and Syria in the early 1780s (Volney 1787). He noted the reduction in travel times between Europe and the Arab world, and the increasing economic integration of European and Middle Eastern markets. There was still, however, a significant cultural divide, product in part of a linguistic divide that Europeans tended to overcome by using interpreters, rather than themselves learning Arabic, Turkish or Persian (Volney 1795, 2–3). In an undated, posthumously published essay, 'Vues nouvelles sur l'enseignement des langue orientales', Volney criticised the École des jeunes de langues for not providing instruction by native speakers, or immersion in the language, so that when students finally went to the Middle East no-one could understand them because of the bad habits they had picked up in pronunciation (Volney 1837, 524–525; on Volney and Arabic pedagogy, see Gaulmier 1945). At the Collège royal, meanwhile, the course was scholarly and demanding, and the rate of attrition among students thus high. Between them, the two institutions were not producing a sufficient number of Arabic, Turkish and Persian *speakers* to meet France's diplomatic and commercial needs. Volney proposed setting up a school where boys of no more than 12 years old would be taught Oriental languages by native speakers in an immersion environment. This was an excellent plan, but it never came to fruition. In his 1795 book he also proposed a still more radical solution to the problem of training in Oriental languages: a system of Romanisation for languages that used the Arabic script, which would facilitate their acquisition by Europeans (Volney 1795). In many ways, this sets the tone for the works that followed over the succeeding decades, which tend to play down the supposed difficulty of Arabic for Europeans, and propose methods to overcome what they see as the principal hurdles.

The year 1795 also saw the publication of a report by educator and politician Joseph Lakanal (1762–1845) on the status of the teaching of Oriental languages, which 'occupant un rang distingué dans tous les établissemens consacrés à la propagation des lumières' but had been neglected in France, especially since the Revolution. His assertion that 'la nation française ne doit être étrangère dans aucun pays' is ominous in view of the invasion of Egypt three years later (Lakanal 1795, 2). Like Volney, his emphasis was on the commercial and diplomatic advantages of learning Eastern languages. As a result of Lakanal's report, an École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes was established at the Bibliothèque nationale, as one of the 'Écoles de l'an III' of the Revolution (on its establishment and history, see Carrière 1883; Labrousse 1995; Messaoudi 2015, 38–42).

Teachers at the school were charged with composing grammars in French of the languages they taught (Lakanal 1795, 7; Messaoudi 2015, 49), which is the origin of Sacy's *Grammaire arabe*.

I will return to the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes and its teachers and students after I have discussed the Expédition d'Égypte. But let us note for now that the linguistic project of bringing France and the Middle East into closer contact began well in advance of the military invasion of Egypt, and may even be seen as its necessary ideological prelude.

## Printing Arabic on the Expédition d'Égypte

The bibliography, contemporary and modern, on the Expédition d'Égypte is vast, and I will only consider a small portion of it here.[3] In 1798, a French military force invaded Egypt under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte. The principal strategic purpose of the expedition was to indirectly attack Great Britain, by interrupting one of the routes between Britain and India. The French were defeated by the British and withdrew in 1801, and in retrospect the intellectual aspect of the campaign (rather than its military failure) came to achieve primacy in French public discourse. French savants studied all aspects of ancient and modern Egypt during the expedition, leading eventually to the publication of the monumental *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1822). As I have already noted in the Introduction, I do not subscribe to the now outdated view that the Expédition with its 'army of savants' brought the Enlightenment to Egypt (which is, at best, naïve) and thus represents a critical historical watershed. But I do consider it as a catalyst that made both the French and the Egyptians think differently about their place in the world, and come up with schemes that would have lasting repercussions.

One of the first students at the new École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes when it opened in 1795 was Jean-Joseph Marcel (1776–1854; on his life, see Belin 1854). Marcel also had a professional background in printing. His former teacher, Langlès, recommended him for a position on the Expédition, where he served as an interpreter and also took charge of the expedition's official press. In later life, Marcel recalled how unprepared he had been for his first encounter with Arabic as a living, spoken language:

> When, almost forty years ago, I arrived in Alexandria, even though I had followed the classes of the most learned professors of Oriental Languages in Paris with enthusiasm and not without some profit,

I found to my disappointment that I could not make myself understood to my servants, and for my part I had no greater success in understanding them. However, the shaykhs and *savants* of the city, who were well versed in the literary language, understood me, although they told me that I spoke like a book – and this was certainly not intended as a compliment. So I applied myself with zeal to the study of the colloquial dialect [*dialecte vulgaire*], the only speech that was intelligible to everyone.

> (Quoted in Wassef 1975, 133, fn. 3; Marcel is writing in 1837.)

The accusation of 'speaking like a book' would frequently be levelled at European Arabists, and as in Marcel's case, it was not meant as a compliment. It is also significant that Marcel notices that even scholars who *could* speak to him in Classical Arabic did not themselves habitually do so. The difference between Classical and colloquial Arabic was not simply one of education. Rather, the two comprised a single repertoire that an individual might move within.

Marcel initially worked in Alexandria, but in October 1798 printing operations at the newly named 'Imprimerie nationale' were moved to the northeast corner of Azbakiyya. He was visited there by members of the local *'ulamā'* ('scholars', but here meaning specifically Islamic scholars), some of whom had already seen printing works in Constantinople and Lebanon, and they were particularly struck by the press's potential for printing and circulating Arabic manuscripts (Niello Sargy 1825, 337–338). The reason Marcel was able to print in Arabic at all was that the Arabic font (along with a Greek one) had been seized by the French army from the College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome (Canivet 1909; Heyworth-Dunne 1939a, 99; Wassef 1975, 24–25; see also 'La correspondance inédite du géomètre Gaspard Monge (1746–1818)' on the EMAN platform: https://eman-archives.org/monge/, Nos. 86 and 134). As well as equipment, the French took the personnel needed to operate an Arabic press, including Don Elias Fatḥallā, who had been Chair of Syriac and Chaldean at the Propaganda Fide, and the printer Antonio Mesabki, who was from Damascus (Canivet 1909, 4–5).

Marcel's Arabic publications at the Imprimerie nationale in Cairo, and at its predecessor the Imprimerie orientale et française in Alexandria, are the fruit of both his scholarly training at the École des langues orientales in Paris, and the shock of his first encounter with spoken Arabic (literary and dialectal) in Egypt. The earliest is probably the *Alphabet arabe, turk et persan, à l'usage de l'Imprimerie orientale et française*, printed at Alexandria (Marcel 1798a). Marcel's initials 'J.J.M.' appear on the final

page of the booklet, but it seems likely, given its contents, that the former staff of the Propaganda Fide press had a hand in preparing it. It consists of 16 pages laying out the Arabic script as used to write Arabic, Turkish and Persian, and showing how letters should be printed in every possible combination, including complex 'stacking'. This booklet served both to demonstrate what the press could do, and as a reference for future Arabic printing jobs.

Another of the early works printed in Alexandria was *Exercices de lecture d'arabe littéral: à l'usage de ceux qui commencent l'étude de cette langue* (Marcel 1798b). Again, this has Marcel's initials on the final page. It is only 12 pages long and consists of short extracts from the Qur'ān, in vowelled Arabic, with transliteration and interlineal translation. The fact that it is described as being for beginners suggests that Marcel had himself been taught Arabic according to a similar method, at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes and in his earlier studies (he had begun studying Oriental languages as an adolescent). The works he produced after the press moved to Cairo, however, are of a different nature.

Marcel's *Vocabulaire français-arabe, contenant les mots principaux et d'un usage plus journalier* (Marcel 1799) does not bear his name, but a manuscript of the work in the Bibliothèque nationale de France has his initials at the end of the preface. This manuscript also has the significant addition 'dans la langue vulgaire' to the title (BnF Ms. Arabe 4356). Although the works produced in Alexandria show that the press could print Arabic text, the *Vocabulaire* is entirely in transliteration. Marcel explains the pronunciation of Arabic and the transliteration system in the opening pages of the book. For example, *'ayn* /ʕ/ is indicated with a circumflex and should be pronounced 'du gosier et d'une maniere brève' (Marcel 1799, 4). *Ghayn* /ɣ/ 'doit être rendue par une articulation douce et intermédiaire entre le *gu* et l'*r* graseyée à la manière des provençaux'. As well as trying to describe to a French speaker how to pronounce Arabic, Marcel describes differences in pronunciation between Arabic dialects:

> Words that are written the same way can be pronounced in a different manner, and sometimes, in Egypt, in several different ways. This is the case in particular with those containing the Arabic letter *Qaf* ق: this letter is pronounced from Alexandria to Cairo as a brusque *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* or *ou*, according to the vowel that follows it; from Cairo to the Cataracts it has a *gue* sound, although scholars, those who speak pure Arabic, Franks and Syrians who live in Cairo pronounce it like *que* or *k*.

Consideration has also been given to the colloquial [*vulgaire*] pronunciation of the Arabic language in Egypt, in rendering *the* ث (whose 'pure' pronunciation should be that of the English hard *th*) as *t*, and expressing *djym* ج (which should correctly be pronounced *dj*) as *g* or *gu*.

(Marcel 1799, 5–6)

Although French scholarship was, of course, aware of dialectal differences in modern spoken Arabic, Marcel is innovative in trying to help the user 'perform' the language in a social context, without judging the vernacular merely as a degraded form of the Classical. When he arrived in Alexandria, as noted above, he had set himself to studying the 'dialecte vulgaire, le seul qui pût être intelligible pour tous'. His *Vocabulaire* is the product of this, and on the whole it is a successful one. If one reads his text aloud, pronouncing the words in the way a French speaker would, then the result is something recognisable in Arabic – which is more than can be said for many of the phrasebooks I will consider in subsequent chapters. He provides variants which the user might hear, particularly for words containing letters like *qāf* /q/, which, as he describes in his preface to the book, is usually realised as a glottal stop in Cairo and northern Egypt, and as a 'hard g' in the south (Figure 1.2; note, for example 'Qalb, Galb, Alb, Qolb' for *qalb* 'heart').

The vocabulary section of the book contains 54 pages of useful, practical words, covering topics such as the natural world, food and drink, family, the professions and military terminology. There follow 16 pages of forms of common verbs, in the past and present tense, imperative, and active and passive participles, as appropriate. The present tense that Marcel gives is the *bi-*imperfect, which is not used in Classical Arabic, but is used in the spoken Arabic of Egypt and parts of the Levant to indicate habitual or continuous action, and is more commonly encountered than the simple present tense (Figure 1.3). Another distinctively Egyptian feature of the language of the book is the negative *mish* or *mush*, for example in the phrase 'Je n'ai pas soif. Ana mouch aâtchan' (Marcel 1799, 71).

The book concludes with eight pages of phrases, on essentials such as eating, drinking, travelling and learning Arabic:

Parlez-vous arabe? Betetkellem b-il-aârabi?
Je parle un peu. Beatkellem choyé choyé.
Mais avec le temps je l'apprendrai. Amma maâ tonl éz-zeman bataâllem-hou.
Où avez-vous appris à parler arabe? Fayn taalemta el-aârabi?
Au Kaire. Fi Massre.

(Marcel 1799, 76)

*Langue.* Lissan. Lessan.

*Menton.* } Daqan. Dagan. Daan.
*Barbe.* }

*Joue.* Qradd.

_____

*Cou.* Raqabé. Ragabé. Raabé.
*Corps.* Guessed. Djessed.
*Épaule.* Ketf.
*Bras.* Deraâ.
*Coude.* Kouoû.
*Main.* Iéd.
*Main droite.* Iemin.
*Main gauche.* Chemal.
*Doigt.* Assbaâ.
*Pouce.* Ibham.
*Ongle.* Dafer.
*Poing.* Qabdé. Gabdé. Abdé.
*Mamelle.* Nouhoud. Biz. (*Plur.*) Bezaz.

_____

*Cœur.* Qalb. Galb. Alb. Qolb.
*Poumon.* Rié.
*Estomac.* Miñdé.
*Foie.* Kebd.
*Boyau.* Misran.

_____

B

**Figure 1.2** The pronunciation of the Arabic letter *jīm* in Marcel, *Vocabulaire français-arabe* (1799), 17. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

There is no doubt that, in the right hands and with patience on the part of both user and interlocutor, Marcel's *Vocabulaire* could be used as a practical phrasebook to help a French person communicate in Egypt. I will return below to the subject of how well the French on the Expédition d'Égypte actually communicated with Egyptians.

| Viens. Gui. Taâla. [ 70 ] | | [ 71 ] |
|---|---|---|

**PHRASES FAMILIERES.**

*Pour demander quelque chose.*

Donnez-moi du pain. Aâti-ni qrohz.
Apportez-moi de l'eau. Guib ly moyéh.
Je vous remercie ( mot à mot : Que Dieu aug-
mente ton bien ). Ketir allah qraïr-ak.

*Du boire et du manger.*

J'ai faim. Ana guâân.
Que voulez-vous manger. Tekoul ai.
Donnez-moi quelque chose à manger. Aâti-ni
chey aakoul.
Je suis rassasié. Ana chabaân.
J'ai grand soif. Ana aâtchan ketir.
Versez-moi de la bière. Soubb-ni bouzah.
Buvez. Ochroub.
Je n'ai pas soif. Ana mouch aâtchan.

Il a versé. Sabba.
Il verse.
Il versera. } Biéssoubb.
Verse. Soubb.
Versé. Mesboube.

Il a vu. Chafa.
Il voit.
Il verra. } Biechouf.
Vois. Chouf.

Il a voulu. Arad.
Il veut.
Il voudra. } Bierid.
Veuille. Erid.

Il a voyagé. Safara.
Il voyage.
Il voyagera. } Biéssafer.
Voyage. Issafer.
Voyageant. Mussafir.

**Figure 1.3** 'Familiar phrases' in Marcel, *Vocabulaire français-arabe* (1799), 70–71. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

The *Vocabulaire* is a small book, in octavo format, and could reasonably have been carried around by someone day to day. It is not much larger than the phrasebooks produced in Cairo during the Second World War, which were designed to fit into a soldier's uniform breast pocket (Chapter 5). Marcel's *Grammaire arabe-vulgaire, du dialecte d'Égypte* of the same year is in a larger format. The first part, which was the only volume to appear before the revolt against the French in Cairo forced the project to be abandoned, has 168 pages. It covers the script and nominal morphology. It is a curious mixture of Arabic and European grammatical traditions. Marcel uses Arabic grammatical terminology, but he also forces Arabic nouns into a Latin case framework of nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, dative and ablative – mostly formed using prepositions, and without reference to the actual Classical Arabic case system (*ʾiʿrāb*). Marcel's description of the language as 'vulgaire' seems to refer to the fact that it is stripped of some of the grammatical trappings of Classical Arabic (such as *ʾiʿrāb* and nunation; see Introduction) and uses Egyptian pronunciation (e.g. *jabal* 'mountain' is transliterated 'gebel', p. 120). It is difficult to tell how specifically Egyptian he intended the work's language to be without the volume on the verb, which never appeared.

Marcel's works had a long afterlife. He himself produced a 'sequel' to the *Vocabulaire* for the Expédition d'Alger (Marcel 1830), and other authors used his works as a foundation for their own (e.g. Vincent 1830).

## Al-Jabartī, al-ʿAṭṭār and the savants

Despite the efforts of Arabists like Marcel, the initial linguistic impression made by the French in Egypt was not a good one. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1753–1825), our source for the French defilement of Alfī Bey's palace on Azbakiyya, takes a certain glee in picking apart the Arabic translation of Napoleon's initial proclamation to the Egyptian people, circulated after he landed at Alexandria in July 1798. In his *Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr* ('History of the Period of the French in Egypt'), al-Jabartī meticulously, and at considerable length, corrects the grammar of this and other French proclamations.[4] Shaden Tageldin has pointed out that al-Jabartī is deliberately linking 'corrupt language ... to corrupt colonial designs' (Tageldin 2011, 47). The problem with the French translations is one of both register and dialect, and they also contain basic spelling and grammatical mistakes (see the analysis of Doss 2008 and Muḥammad 2008). We cannot ascribe them to any individual translator, but they seem to have been produced by the Expédition's savants and its interpreters, who were mostly Syrian Christians (Philipp 1985, 45; al-Shayyāl 1950, 51–61). None of these had had the kind of thorough, traditional Arabic grammatical and literary education that al-Jabartī had at al-Azhar.

Al-Jabartī's own Arabic is far from the Classical ideal, and shows in particular linguistic interference from his native colloquial Egyptian (Moreh 1975, 25; Hanna 2014, 53). But al-Jabartī, of course, is a linguistic, cultural and religious insider, and while he moves between registers of written Arabic, he does not make any actual mistakes. He has earned the right to break the rules, and, indeed, at this period, he was one of a number of eminent Arabic writers experimenting with introducing elements of the vernacular into formal written discourse (for a longer historical perspective on the formation of Middle Arabic, see Hanna 2014, 31–66). Al-Jabartī's education at al-Azhar has equipped him to write perfect Arabic, but this competence also allows him the freedom to innovate and deviate from the Classical ideal. In this, we already see the tension between formal traditions of language and literature, and the demands of practical translation and language learning.

Al-Jabartī subsequently was a regular visitor to the Expédition's savants in the Nāṣiriyya quarter of Cairo, where he was shown their books and scientific instruments and noted with approval that they were working hard on their Arabic:[5]

> I saw some of them who know chapters of the Qur'ān by heart. They
> have a great interest in the sciences, mainly in mathematics and the

knowledge of languages, and make great efforts to learn the Arabic language (*al-lugha al-ʿArabiyya*) and the colloquial (*al-manṭiqiyya*). In this they strive day and night. And they have books especially devoted to all kinds of languages, their declensions and conjugations as well as their etymologies.

(*Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr* 25a, trans. Moreh 1975, 117)

A friend of al-Jabartī, Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (*c.*1766–1835) had a still more ambivalent relationship with the French and their attempts at Arabic. Having first fled to Upper Egypt during the French invasion, al-ʿAṭṭār then returned to Cairo in 1801, where he met the French for the first time (on al-ʿAṭṭār, see Khouri 1992; al-Shayyāl 1951, 29–32; on relations between Egyptians and the French more broadly, Raymond 1998). Unlike al-Jabartī, who presents an eye-witness account of the French occupation, al-ʿAṭṭār presents his own linguistic encounter with the foreigners under the guise of fiction. His *Maqāmat al-Faransīs* ('Maqāma of the French', text: al-ʿAṭṭār 1858; trans. Gran 1979, 189–191, and Tageldin in El-Ariss 2018, 117–124) follows the literary conventions of the *maqāma*: a tale set within a framing narrative, including *sajʿ* (rhymed prose) and short passages in verse. Al-ʿAṭṭār is thus able to distance himself from the encounter, by adopting a fictional persona (Tageldin 2011, 62–64).

Just how autobiographical the episode in fact is, and who the French savants in question were, is a matter for debate. The reason for distancing is not just the taboo cultural attraction to the French, but also the erotic language in which this attraction is expressed. Al-ʿAṭṭār's narrator is drawn to the Azbakiyya quarter where the French are staying, where he finds himself struck by the beauty of some young French men in the street. They approach him and start a conversation. Unlike his friend al-Jabartī's encounter with poor translations into Arabic, and French people working hard at learning the language, al-ʿAṭṭār's narrator is astonished to find these savants speaking Arabic 'free from ungrammatical usages and from barren phraseology and other defects' (trans. Gran 1979, 189). This, of course, is fantasy, as Marcel's own testimony about his spoken Arabic reminds us. They discuss Arabic literature together, and he is impressed at their devotion to the subject. Al-ʿAṭṭār's narrator becomes a regular visitor to the French. Like al-Jabartī, he inspects their books and scientific equipment. They consult him on the meaning of terms in Arabic texts, and 'each time they asked me to clarify an utterance, they would look it up in a precious tome on language, written in Arabic in the style of *al-Jamhara* and translated into French' (trans. Tageldin in El-Ariss 2018, 122). The narrator struggles with his own fraternisation with the French,

and ultimately decides to distance himself from them. He concludes: 'May God forgive me for what I have done.' The 'real' al-'Aṭṭār likewise struggled with, and because of, his connection to the French, and left Cairo for Istanbul after the occupation ended, returning only in 1813.

Both al-Jabartī and al-'Aṭṭār noted that among the linguistic resources available to the French in learning Arabic were books. Although al-Jabartī does say that the savants were trying to learn the colloquial language as well as Classical Arabic, the books he describes are of a conventional sort: codifications of grammatical and etymological information. Al-'Aṭṭār describes the savants comparing the information on the meaning of words he gives them to what is written in a book 'in the style of *al-Jamhara*'. (Is it the book's accuracy or al-'Aṭṭār's authority that is being doubted?) This is most probably a reference to Ibn Durayd's (837–933) *Jamharat al-lugha*, a monolingual Arabic dictionary at that time available only in manuscript (modern edition: Ibn Durayd 1993; Tageldin suggests Ibn Durayd or else Abu Zayd al-Qurashi's *Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab*). The book is described as being in Arabic and translated into French (*bi al-lafẓ al-'Arabī wa turjim bi al-Faransīs*), which is sufficiently ambiguous to fit any Arabic–French grammar, bilingual dictionary or phrasebook, whether in manuscript or printed. There are therefore numerous candidates for the books that al-Jabartī and al-'Aṭṭār saw in the possession of the French savants in Cairo. Among the possibilities are Marcel's grammar and vocabulary, or manuscripts of dialogues like that of Pétis de la Croix. If al-'Aṭṭār mistook Latin for French (al-Jabartī does not specify the language of the books he saw), then we might also include printed grammars of Arabic such as that of Erpenius, or Golius' 1653 *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum*. It is probable that the savants possessed all of the above, and al-Jabartī and al-'Aṭṭār provide us with testimony that they were putting them to use, but what were the linguistic results?

## French soldiers and the Arabic language

The lived experience of language on the Expédition – how Arabic was learnt, spoken, understood and regarded in practice – is more difficult to access in the sources. The Expédition d'Égypte is very well documented, and the surviving sources, moreover, allow us to transcend the elite, top-down, Eurocentric perspective that one might expect to dominate in primary source material on events that took place over 200 years ago. We have both Egyptian and French eyewitness testimony and reflection on the political and cultural repercussions of the Expédition. In addition to

the French official record of events – not just the *Description de l'Égypte*, which was published only much later, but contemporary official publications of the Expédition such as the *Courrier de l'Égypte* and *Décade égyptienne* – we have testimony by regular soldiers. French eyewitness accounts alone are so numerous as to require their own bibliography (Meulenaere 1993, although more manuscripts have been discovered and published since this date). Very few of these works, however, even mention the Arabic language. None refer to Marcel's *Vocabulaire* or any other works of its ilk. The overwhelming impression one gains from reading these memoirs is of soldiers too focused on the minutiae of military tactics or of basic day-to-day survival to look beyond this. Many authors seem to have had little sustained personal interaction with Egyptians.

Overall, it seems reasonable to conclude that many of the French learnt *some* Arabic, but only some learnt a lot. Lack of widespread knowledge of Arabic was in part responsible for the major French intelligence failure of the Expédition: the failure to recognise the revolt brewing in Cairo in October 1798 (Raymond 1998, 124). In addition to his comments on the written Arabic of the French proclamations, al-Jabartī also quotes (briefly) from a Frenchman speaking Arabic: faced with his assassin, Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, in the garden of the palace of Alfī Bey, General Kléber says *mā fīsh* 'there is not' (*'Ajā'ib* III, 116). This short phrase in Egyptian dialect is the kind of thing that many of the French in Egypt will have learnt, and perhaps deployed inappropriately as a generic negative. Another French soldier, Lieutenant Laval, recalled asking a woman selling bread if she had any more and being told 'la, la mafich' ('no, no, there isn't any'), which he does not translate, but seems to have understood (Grandjean and Laval 2000, 174).

Among the very few exceptions to this general rule was Charles François (1775–1853), an officer who had served in the army since 1792 (François 1913; new edition: François 2003;[6] for a summary of his career, see Clarke and Horne 2018, 1–2). François' journal traces how his competence in Arabic developed gradually through greater exposure to the language: from incomprehension, to a passive understanding, to the ability to speak for himself. After the Battle of the Pyramids, locals came to the French camp to sell them food. François noted that 'beaucoup engagaient la conversation; naturellement, nous ne comprenions guère' (23 July 1798: François 2003, 221). A little later, in Cairo, François and his comrades met and became friendly with a local apothecary who had an Italian father and thus spoke Italian, a language that was then more widely understood in Egypt than French, although there were few speakers of either. Since the soldiers had served in Italy before coming to Egypt, 'quelques-uns de nous

entendaient fort bien' (25 July 1798: François 2003, 222). It is significant that François says that the French soldiers *understood* Italian, suggesting that their passive command of the language was stronger than their active, as might be expected from learners. Like François, Laval also took some time to learn 'un peu la langue arabe' and was helped by some local Jews who spoke Italian and could explain things or act as interpreters (Grandjean and Laval 2000, 177). A few months later, François tells us that 'je commence à comprendre l'arabe', sufficient to communicate with a captured Mamluk named 'Alī (14 February 1799: François 1913, 24). Domains relevant to their military duties – negotiating a surrender and taking a prisoner's name and rank – are likely to have been the first in which François and his comrades learnt to function in Arabic. The following month, François was in the village of Miski, just outside Acre. This extended stay in a single location allowed him to develop an ongoing relationship and dialogue with speech partners, and thus 'je commençais à parler passablement l'arabe, et, pendant mon séjour à Miski, je m'instruisiais avec nos guides des mœurs de leur pays' (François 1913, 30).

After this, François' journal begins to contain more frequent references that show that he was able to understand what was going on around him. In Cairo that summer, 'comme beaucoup de nous entendaient un peu la langue arabe', he was able to listen to talk in the streets and coffee houses and gather intelligence about the public mood (15 August 1799: François 2003, 336). On a journey between Cairo and Suez, 'comme j'entends passablement l'arabe, je m'instruis dans ce voyage de tous les usages particuliers aux peoples de l'Orient' (December 1799: François 1913, 76). François gradually becomes a more confident active user of Arabic. In April 1800, he was able to expose a British soldier among captured rebels in Cairo by addressing him in Arabic; the man was unable to answer (14 April 1800: François 2003, 375). This does not, of course, mean that François' Arabic was any good. It simply means that he was able to sound the part to someone who spoke even less Arabic than he did.

It is clear that the sojourn in Miski improved François' Arabic greatly. There were other contexts in which he spent sustained time with Arabic speakers. He bought a concubine named Anif. He claims that she was the daughter of a Circassian concubine of Alfī Bey and grew up in his house on Azbakiyya. (He does not say that Alfī Bey was her father, and so it seems probable that Anif's mother was simply a member of his household, not his concubine.) François says that Anif called him 'Miabibé', which he glosses as 'mon ami' (23 June 1801: François 2003, 432). The term must derive in some way from *ḥabībī* ('my darling'). Either François has added a 'mi' and dropped the initial aspirate (as would be natural for a French

speaker to do), or Anif herself created a portmanteau word combining a French or Italian possessive with the Arabic term. If the latter is the case, then she and François may have communicated in a pidgin.

François was taken prisoner two days after parting from Anif for the last time; there is no record of what became of her. Among his guards 'plusieurs parlaient l'arabe, que je comprenais fort bien' (25 June 1801: François 2003, 434). He was taken to Aleppo, where his knowledge of Arabic proved a two-edged sword. As for a later prisoner of war in the same region, Percy Walter Long, whom I will discuss in Chapter 5, Arabic will have been a means of survival. It allowed François to build a friendship with an Arabic-speaking officer, Mahomet, who also taught him a little Turkish (27 September 1801: François 2003, 439). Speaking Arabic and wearing local dress also, however, made it difficult for François to prove that he was French and get released after the end of hostilities. Those around him in Aleppo 'sont étonnés de m'entendre parler arabe avec facilité, et ils ne peuvent me croire Français en me voyant nullement gêné dans mes vêtements turcs' (François 1913, 85–86).[7] François eventually was able to make his way back to Europe, where he continued his career as a soldier.

François' experience demonstrates several things that will recur in subsequent chapters. First, it shows the common use of an auxiliary language, in this case Italian, as an alternative or a preliminary to Europeans learning Arabic. Later in the nineteenth century, Anglophone tourists in Egypt were advised to brush up on French rather than attempt Arabic. Second, the few Europeans who took an interest in Arabic and learnt it well tended to be relatively young (François was in his mid-twenties) and to have the opportunity (or be compelled) to live in sustained day-to-day contact with Arabic speakers. This may seem like a very basic point, but it is the inverse of the fundamental reason why later would-be learners of Arabic from tourist phrasebooks so seldom succeeded: most of the people around them could speak their language. Third, learning Arabic was a long-term enterprise, and different skills developed at different speeds.

Although François hints that some of his comrades had similar linguistic experiences to his own, no other surviving account traces the language-learning experience in even the sparse detail of François' journal. Some refer to communicating by 'signs' – an improvised 'language' of gesture, hand movements and facial expressions (Vertray 1883, 63). François was not alone in learning Arabic from a female teacher. Jacques Miot, describing the women abandoned by the Mamluks in their flight from Cairo, recorded that they, 'en nous donnant des leçons d'arabe, apprenoient à prononcer des mots français: ce n'étoit pas ordinairement

les plus décens qu'elle retenoient' (Miot 1814, 240). Many later soldiers in Cairo would also focus their first efforts in language learning on sexual vocabulary and swearwords (Chapter 5).

Memoirs – even those, such as François', which present themselves as day-by-day journals – were often revised long after the Expédition, which tempers their usefulness as contemporary linguistic testimony. A good example is Joseph Laporte's illustrated account of his time in Egypt and Syria, published in a charming facsimile edition in 2007. The complex intertextuality that went into the composition of this work is confirmed by a second, longer, unpublished manuscript which has come to light more recently (Pietri 2019). Much about Laporte's account appears fresh and immediate. Even before arriving in Egypt, he had developed a habit of learning to count in the language of the country where he was fighting. The manuscript opens with the numbers from 1 to 100 written out in Italian and German 'd'après la prononciation' (Laporte 2007, no pagination). Later on, Laporte supplies the same for Arabic (Laporte 2007, 408–409):

> Un - ouaed
> Deux - etneine
> Trois - atalati
> Quatre - arba
> Cinq - campsine
> Six - setti
> Sept - saba
> Huit - atamani
> Neuf - tessa
> Dix - achera

… and so forth. Laporte's spelling rings true for a French speaker beginning Arabic. He omits *'ayn* /ʕ/, renders *shīn* /ʃ/ as 'ch' and simplifies *khā'* /x/ to 'c' and *thīn* /θ/ to 't' (the latter would be done in Egyptian speech in any case). A 'p' intrudes in *campsine* = *khamsīn* 'fifty', an error for *khamsa* 'five'. The number list, then, comes across as an authentic response from a learner who is unfamiliar with Arabic phonology, noting down what he hears from the speech of an Arab and making a few mistakes along the way. It is not copied from Marcel or any other contemporary source.

Laporte's work is, however, more complex than this. It was revised many years later, and Laporte visibly used the works of other writers, both pre- and post-Expédition. Quite early in his account, he describes Arabic as 'une langue dont les sons barbares et l'accent âcre s'effrayent son oreille' (Laporte 2007, 38). This is an unattributed quotation from

Volney (Volney 1787, 3: 'une langue dont les sons barbares et l'accent âcre et guttural s'effrayent son oreille').[8] Laporte may have read Volney for himself, or he may have used the account by one of the Expédition's savants, Louis de Laus de Boissy, who also quotes at length from Volney (with attribution), including this passage (Laus de Boissy 1799, 156). Elements such as this make us question how much Laporte is giving us his own first-hand views of Egypt, and how much he is simply supplying a French audience with what they expect and have enjoyed in other works.

Relatively lowly members of the Expédition such as François, Laporte and Laval had little contact with the official interpreters. Another officer, Vertray, noted that the few available interpreters were all requisitioned by the generals (Vertray 1883, 63). François and Laval were both able to use the services of Italian speakers in Cairo, and this kind of ad hoc interpreting or mediation seems to have been common. Abraham Salamé (1788–1850), whom we will meet again in Chapter 3, was 10 years old when the French arrived in Egypt. His father's family were originally from the region around Acre in Palestine, and his mother's from Aleppo, but he was born in Alexandria and grew up in Rosetta (Salamé 1819, ii–iv). The family were Christians. Writing in England in later life, Salamé recalled:

> When the French were compelled by the British forces to evacuate Egypt, and while both armies were yet there, my father took me from school and put me as apprentice in his own warehouse, where, in a short time, through my practice with the English and French officers, I became acquainted with some words of both languages, and with the names of all the goods in the house, and assisted my father as interpreter; for he only spoke the Arabic, and all his business in the house was carried on sometimes by signs, and sometimes through the medium of a friend of his who knew the Italian language.
>
> (Salamé 1819, vii–viii)

This scenario must have been quite common: Italian as a lingua franca, and a young boy learning what French and English he could on the job, starting with the names of objects around him. Salamé's father had a friend who was 'in the French service' (his nationality is not specified) and was selling his books on leaving Egypt. He gave Salamé 'a grammar of three languages, – Italian, French, and English' (Salamé 1819, ix; the book may be Bottarelli 1777). Salamé studied from this. By the time he was 14, he 'could speak the Italian language tolerably well; and a little French, with a very few words of English' (Salamé 1819, x).

Salamé's later career as an interpreter took him to Algiers in British service, and to London, where he was naturalised as a British citizen in 1837. He appears occasionally in English newspapers in the 1810s–1830s, named as 'His/Her Majesty's Oriental Interpreter' or 'Oriental Interpreter to the Government' accompanying diplomats from Algeria, Morocco and the Sublime Porte. Edward Lane consulted 'my friend Mr. Salamé' in his translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* (Lane 1840 I, 434, n. 30). Jason Thompson has identified Salamé as the Egyptian living in London to whom Lane refers in passing in his *Modern Egyptians*, which suggests that Salamé was in fact one of Lane's earliest Arabic teachers, before he first left for Egypt (Thompson 2009, 21–22). Salamé died while accompanying a Yemeni party in Egypt as English interpreter (*London Evening Standard*, 3 September 1850). His personal seal, which may be seen on a letter in the British Library, bears the initials 'A S' and a sphinx, reflecting his Egyptian background (British Library, Western Manuscripts, Add MS 27952).

It is thanks to Salamé's long subsequent career as an interpreter that we are granted this insight into the experience of a boy picking up words of French and English from soldiers in his father's warehouse. The Expédition d'Égypte, for all its brevity, had a long reach. Although even many official Expédition interpreters remain only names (see the lists in La Jonquière 1907 I, 510, or Goby 1955–1956, 337), several went on to play important roles in language teaching both in Europe and in France's next major imperial venture in North Africa. In the immediate aftermath of the Expédition d'Égypte, there was little incentive for interpreters to publish Arabic grammars or vocabularies. (Arabic teaching and publication by Orientalists in Paris in the early 1800s will be discussed in the following section.) But the Expédition d'Alger in 1830 provided an impetus to the study of Arabic and brought new opportunities for Arabic speakers, including those who had been in Egypt decades earlier (Larzul 2013).

In some cases, the Arabic of the authors of new language books for French North Africa had been dormant for a very long time. Such is the case with Paul Vergé's *Recueil de grammaire arabe et italienne traduite en français, précédée de détails sur les campagnes de l'armée d'Égypte* (Vergé 1846). Despite its title, the account of the Expédition d'Égypte is the book's main event, taking up 27 of its 37 pages. Vergé bills himself as 'ex-interprète de cette Langue [i.e. Arabic] dans l'Armée d'Égypte' but makes it clear that he is publishing this book now because of the more recent French colonisation of Algeria: 'Il est fort essentiel pour la jeunesse de connaître la langue arabe, attendu qu'elle est en usage dans toute les villes maritimes pour le commerce des nations de l'Europe, et notamment dans nos colonies françaises en Afrique' (Vergé 1846, 3).

Advertising himself as an interpreter may have been good marketing, but the story which emerges in Vergé's text is rather different:

> My greatest concern, when I arrived in Cairo, was to get hold of an Arabic–Italian grammar from the monks in the Frankish quarter. After taking all necessary precautions with these monks, I obtained it. They recommended that I translate the Arabic and Italian into French. It was my only resource to protect myself against all the perils we faced. So I spent all the hours I had free from my duties transcribing the two languages. Since I spoke Italian very well, I translated the Arabic into Italian, and the Italian into French, and by applying myself I succeeded, in the space of three months, in speaking Arabic very well, to the point that the locals said that I was not French. The reputation I acquired for speaking that language meant that I was frequently called upon by the General Staff, to make purchases for them, and other kinds of enquiries, and I was often invited by Turkish businessmen to sit at their table.
>
> (Vergé 1846, 9–10)

As seen in several of the other accounts discussed here, Italian was a gateway to Arabic for Vergé. The book he acquired in Cairo may have been one of the manuscripts or printed works discussed above, the same kind of tool that al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Jabartī found the Expédition's savants using. The fact that Vergé was pressed into service by the general staff says more about the French lack of interpreters than it does about his Arabic, just as the dinner invitations and compliments say more about Egyptian hospitality and appreciation for the effort he had made. The vocabulary list that comprises the remaining 10 pages of the book looks to have been printed from notes made at the time, and – despite Vergé's use of an Italian Arabic grammar, and the book's title – to have been written down by ear from a speaker of Cairene Arabic. It is unusable: full of inaccuracies and with an eccentric and inconsistent transcription system. For example, *ashrab* 'I drink' comes out as 'Echarop ... boire' and *quṭṭ* 'cat' as 'Octe' (the initial 'q' in the latter is realised as a glottal stop in Cairo, and the 'b' in *ashrab* could reasonably have been heard by Vergé as a 'p'). 'Jeune fille' is given as 'Yabente', for *yā bint*, addressing or calling to a girl. The book concludes with the numbers in Arabic, again with an odd transliteration ('Gouate' for *wāḥid* 'one'). For the most part, it is possible to work out what Vergé is trying to say if you already know Arabic, but for a learner the book will have been frustrating.

As well as Marcel, pupils of the newly founded École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes who served as interpreters on the Expédition

include Pierre Amédée Jaubert (1779–1847) and Jacques-Denis Delaporte (1777–1861). Jaubert later returned to teach Turkish at the school, for which, as was customary, he published a Turkish grammar (1823). Delaporte went on to a distinguished diplomatic career in North Africa (Féraud 1876, 195–199). His son Jean Honorat (1812–1871) was born in Tripoli (Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 132–133) and followed a career as interpreter and author of highly successful and often reprinted Arabic books (Delaporte 1837; Larzul 2010, 92; Messaoudi 2009, 3). Delaporte senior himself published a Berber grammar, but nothing for Arabic. Another family's service as Arabic interpreters and language teachers spans the generations, from the Expédition d'Égypte to the Expédition d'Alger and beyond: the Pharaons, who like Abraham Salamé's family, were Syrian Christians settled in Alexandria (Messaoudi 2004). Elias Haninié Pharaon was recruited as an interpreter for the Expédition d'Égypte. The family moved to France, shortly after the birth of Elias' son Joanny (1802–1846). Joanny Pharaon received a multilingual education in Marseille, and worked with the Egyptian educational mission which arrived in Paris in 1826. His work with this mission, and the language books which he produced, will be discussed below. He spent his later career as an interpreter and Arabic teacher in Algeria (Messaoudi 2015, 159–162).

## The École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes

### Tools for Arabic teaching at the École spéciale

The aftermath of the French expedition produced a new impetus and new conditions for language learning in both Egypt and France. During the Expédition itself, Jean-François Ruphy began work on a *Dictionnaire abrégé françois-arabe, à l'usage de ceux qui se destinent au Commerce du Levant* (Ruphy 1802). Ruphy seems to have been very young (Messaoudi 2015, 551, gives his date of birth as 1785) and he thanks Silvestre de Sacy in his 'Discours préliminaire' to the dictionary, which suggests that he was his student at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes. Ruphy writes that when he delivered the book for printing, the French possession of Egypt still seemed secure, and he hoped that the dictionary would 'faciliter promptement les relations qui devoient s'ouvrir à la paix générale entre la métropole et la nouvelle colonie' (Ruphy 1802, i). But Egypt did not become a French colony, and Ruphy also seems not to have pursued his career as an Arabist.

Despite Marcel's innovations, there were still no widely available tools for learning Arabic in French. In 1803, Auguste-François-Julien Herbin (1783–1806), a student of Langlès and Silvestre de Sacy at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, published *Développemens des principes de la langue arabe moderne: suivis d'un recueil de phrases, de traductions interlinéaires, de proverbes arabes, et d'un essai de calligraphie orientale* (Herbin 1803). In the Preface, he presents a grim view of the state of the field: the number of dragomans, or interpreters, is decreasing; elementary instruction books in Arabic are hard to come by; available grammars and dictionaries are all in Latin, which is no longer so commonly understood; Sacy's French grammar of Arabic exists in manuscript form only; and existing works deal with Classical Arabic, not 'l'arabe moderne' (Herbin 1803, i). Herbin describes how conversation with native speakers has shown him 'la différence qui existe entre l'arabe ancien et l'arabe moderne, et les variations qu'éprouve cette dernière selon les divers pays où elle est en usage' (Herbin 1803, ii).

Since the foundation of the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes in 1795, colloquial, dialectal Arabic had tended to be regarded as a degraded form of the literary language, and taught accordingly (Messaoudi 2015, 38–39). Literary Arabic was the essential foundation on which students were to build their later acquisition of an Arabic dialect, if they acquired this at all. Only in 1803, after the experience of the Expédition d'Égypte (and employing one of its members), was a separate 'Chaire d'arabe vulgaire' established, and this variety continued to be taught only after students had completed a thorough study of literary Arabic. The École's course listing for November 1822 makes this subsidiary status very clear: 'Arabe vulgaire' is taught by a method which explores 'l'analogie et la différence de la langue parlée avec la langue savante'. As Madiha Doss has noted, this 'Arabe vulgaire' was conceived less as a specific dialectal form than a variety of mixed or 'Middle Arabic', a consciously living, spoken language, but one that retained some features of the Classical language (Doss 2013; cf. Doss 2008). Herbin did not quite grasp the difference between 'Middle Arabic' and the colloquial dialects, which makes his work jumbled and difficult to use. Throughout the nineteenth century, terminological inconsistency reigns in European description of different registers and dialects of Arabic. 'Arabe vulgaire' and its equivalents in other European languages can refer to a simpler form of the Classical language (which developed, in the course of the Nahḍa, into today's Modern Standard Arabic or *fuṣḥā*) or to regional dialects, or to a mixture of the two.

Before I move on to discuss the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire, it is necessary to say a little about Silvestre de Sacy, who dominated Arabic teaching

and scholarship in Paris throughout this period. Sacy (1758–1838) is the central, most connected figure in the network diagram in Graph 1, which – as I will discuss in Chapter 7 – speaks to the longevity of his career, his political influence and the respect he received as a scholar and teacher. Since Sacy was principally interested in Classical Arabic, he is not my primary focus here, but, as we will see, he had a profound influence on the teaching of 'Arabe vulgaire' in France, and on the careers of teachers of the language. As the teacher of Marcel and others, his influence can probably be seen in their work. His *Grammaire arabe à l'usage des élèves de l'école spéciale des langues orientales vivantes* was not published until 1810, but remarks by Herbin and others indicate that a manuscript version of it was being used for teaching at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes for some years before this date. It is a grammar of the Classical language, with full *'i'rāb* and *tanwīn*.

It is important to make the point, as Alain Messaoudi does, that we cannot simply divide French Arabists of the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into two camps: impractical armchair Orientalists and practical, colloquial Arabists (Messaoudi 2015, 46–47, 85–88). The divide between 'savants de cabinet' and 'drogmans' (heirs of the *jeune de langues* system) becomes quite stark only from around the 1820s, with the latter increasingly marginalised in French scholarly institutions and publications. By the 1830s, writers like Sacy's pupil Victor Letellier were bemoaning the fact that 'nos plus fameux philologues' paid no attention to pronunciation and the colloquial language, which was essential for travellers (Letellier 1838, vii; I will return to Letellier in Chapter 3, on tourism). Sacy was curious about the modern spoken dialects of Arabic, and regretted not having had the opportunity to travel in the Middle East in his youth (Messaoudi 2015, 46). His personal library, as revealed by the catalogue when it was auctioned after his death, was heavy on literature, grammar and old manuscripts, but did contain material on Middle Arabic and the Arabic dialects (Merlin et al. 1846). He owned copies of Marcel's books, and of the various works published by holders of the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire, including Don Raphaël's Italian–Arabic dictionary, published at Būlāq after he had left Paris (on these works, see further below). Sacy also owned copies of works published for the French occupation of Algeria, such as Marcel 1830, Vincent 1830, Pharaon 1832 and Delaporte 1837. I suspect that Sacy was given many of these books by the authors, but he did take an interest in modern literary and dialectal Arabic, so will not have found them uninteresting.

## The Chaire d'arabe vulgaire: Arab teachers

The first holder of the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes was Don Raphaël de Monachis (from 1803 to 1816). There followed a short interregnum before it was taken up by Ellious Bocthor in 1819. Armand-Pierre Caussin de Perceval was appointed to the chair in 1821, and retained it until his death in 1871 (Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 372). The personal and institutional connections with the Expédition d'Égypte and with institutions in Cairo were strongest in the first two decades of the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire, exemplified by the figure of Don Raphaël de Monachis.

Rāfā'il Anṭūn Zakhūr *rāhib* 'the monk' (1759–1831), as he styles himself in his Italian–Arabic dictionary, was born in Cairo to a Melkite (Greek Catholic) family in 1759 (on his life, see Bachatly 1935; Tājir 1945, 19–21; al-Shayyāl 1951, 74–83; Coller 2011, 105–106; Messaoudi 2015, Annexes 268–269). At the age of 15, he went to Rome, where he studied at the Greek seminary of Sant'Atanasio and the University of Rome. During this time, he learnt Italian, Greek and Latin. In 1781 he returned to the Middle East and took holy orders at Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ near Sidon, where he remained until 1794. During this period, he travelled to Rome to act as interpreter on an ecclesiastical mission. In 1794 he returned to Cairo in the service of the Bishop of Beirut.

Don Raphaël (as I will call him for convenience) became Napoleon's 'personal interpreter' on the Expédition d'Égypte (al-Shayyāl 1950, 69–82), although this was an honour that was also claimed by several others. Bachatly suggests that he was recruited by other Melkites already working in this capacity (Bachatly 1935, 242). He acquired the title 'Premier Interprète du Divan du Caire' and is thus the 'first interpreter' mentioned by al-Jabartī (Bachatly 1935, 248; see e.g. al-Jabartī *'Ajā'ib* III, 142, 148 and elsewhere, where he names him as 'Rafā'īl'). Uniquely among the Egyptians and other Arabs who interpreted for and worked alongside the Expédition's savants, Don Raphaël – distinguished by his education in Europe – was himself appointed as a member of the Institut d'Égypte, in the section 'Littérature et Beaux-Arts'. He was also a member of the Commission des Sciences et des Arts, collecting material for the Déscription de l'Égypte. In addition to making translations and assisting in ethnographic studies, he also engaged in scientific work, drawing upon his earlier medical studies in Rome (Bachatly 1935, 242; Coller 2011, 105–106). During this time he added French to his linguistic repertoire, although he continued to use Italian in personal notes and correspondence with foreign authorities; the first French document he wrote dates to late 1800 (Bachatly 1935, 249–250).

Don Raphaël was not among the Egyptians who left for France when the French withdrew. He remained in Cairo for another two years, but wrote to Napoleon twice (in March and November 1802), stating that he intended to devote his life to serving the French Republic – whether sincerely, or in the hope of a future position with Napoleon (Bachatly 1935, 253–254; al-Shayyāl 1951, 74–75). He took Horace Sébastiani's diplomatic mission to Cairo in 1802 as an occasion to renew his acquaintance with the French authorities, and appears to have received sufficient encouragement to sail for Marseille in 1803. En route to Paris he visited Grenoble, where he again met Joseph Fourier, the former secretary of the Institut d'Égypte, and for the first time encountered Jean-François Champollion, later his student (Messaoudi 2015, 57).

If Don Raphaël had hoped that travelling to France would lead to personal advancement and a renewed acquaintance with Napoleon, he was successful. In September 1803, Napoleon appointed him as 'Professeur-adjoint' at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, holding the newly created 'Chaire d'arabe vulgaire'. The post came with an annual salary of 5,000 francs, somewhat less than the 6,000 francs paid to the other chairs (Messaoudi 2015, 62). According to Amédée Jaubert and Louis Costaz, fellow members of the Institut d'Égypte,[9] he was an asset because:

> He speaks and writes Italian correctly and with ease, and through this medium his knowledge of Arabic language and literature can be used to the advantage of the Bibliothèque nationale, whether in teaching public classes on the language of his nation, or in translating extracts from some of the previous manuscripts that we have in our possession.
>
> (Report to the First Consul, 21 September 1803, Archives nationales de France, F 17,13.612, quoted by Messaoudi 2015, 62)

Napoleon continued to show favour to Don Raphaël, perhaps prizing this tangible – and, in his Eastern monk's robes, visible – reminder of his Egyptian campaign. Don Raphaël was present at Napoleon's coronation in December 1804, receiving a gift of 1,200 francs on the occasion (Theiner 1869, 227), and is depicted in Jacques-Louis David's painting *Le Sacre de Napoléon* (Mairs forthcoming-c).

Although he had Napoleon's favour, Don Raphaël was not well received by Silvestre de Sacy at the École des langues orientales. Sacy took the appointment of a second Arabic professor as a personal insult, and was further offended when students were drawn to Don Raphaël because of

his ability to guide them in pronunciation and spoken Arabic (Bachatly 1935, 255; Labrousse 1995, 62). Jean-François Champollion studied with Don Raphaël in Paris between 1807 and 1809, and wrote to his brother:

> I'm working a lot with Don Raphaël, and I'm already roaring along nicely in Arabic; I conjugate verbs, translate dialogues, make compositions ... He always calls me Ebni (my son).
>
> (Champollion and La Brière 1897, 59–60)

Influenced by the lessons he was taking from Don Raphaël, Champollion began to sprinkle his correspondence with Arabic words and phrases, and to refer to himself as 'al-seghir' rather than 'le jeune' to distinguish himself from his elder brother (Messaoudi 2015, 57; Louca 1988).

The division of labour between Sacy and Don Raphaël was clearly defined, as may be seen from contemporary announcements of their courses at the École des langues orientales:

> On Tuesdays and Thursdays, at 1pm, M. SILVESTRE DE SACY, member of the Institut and of the Légion d'honneur, will alternate classes on Chapters 38 and following of the Alcoran and Volume II of the History of Tamerlane by *Ahhmed-ben-A'rabcháh*, beginning with Chapter 13. At the beginning of course, if necessary, he will give some elementary lessons.
>
> On Wednesdays, at 5pm, D. RAPHAEL will give lessons in pronunciation and reading *arabe vulgaire* and colloquial conversation.
>
> (Reported in the *Magasin encyclopédique, ou Journal des sciences, des lettres et des arts*, January 1806, 421)

Sacy and literary Arabic come first, reference is made to Sacy's titles and honours, and he teaches twice a week in the middle of the day. Don Raphaël teaches once a week in the late afternoon, his position in the Institut d'Égypte is not mentioned, and his lessons are described in less detail.

It is frustratingly difficult to find information about the works composed by Don Raphaël during his time in Paris; none were printed. In 1928, Charles Bachatly was able to examine an 800-page manuscript in Don Raphaël's own hand which contained copies of numerous documents in Arabic, Italian, French, Latin and Greek relevant to his work and the events in which he was caught up (Bachatly 1931). Among the contents were several polyglot vocabulary lists. I have been unable to find any more

information about this manuscript, its location, or what happened to it after Bachatly examined it. In Paris, Don Raphaël translated works both from Arabic into French (the tale of Sindbad the sailor) and from French into Arabic (fables of La Fontaine), as well as composing a work in Arabic on Napoleon (which he never completed) and *Marj al-azhār wa bustān al-ḥawādith wa al-akhbār* ('The Hubbub of Al Azhar and the Garden of New Events'), which critiqued the teaching methods at al-Azhar compared to those in France (Coller 2011, 106, on this and Don Raphaël's other manuscript works; Messaoudi 2015, 71).

Although none of Don Raphaël's own work was published during his tenure at the École des langues orientales, in 1813 the school's founder and director, Louis-Mathieu Langlès, did publish an edition of a *Grammaire de la langue arabe vulgaire et littérale* from a manuscript by Claude-Étienne Savary dating to 1784. Savary (1750–1788) travelled in Egypt in the late 1770s. In his *Lettres sur l'Égypte*, he does not give much information about how he learnt Arabic. We learn nothing of his teachers, and thus have no idea of any potential coauthors or sources of text for his dialogues, other than evidence internal to the text itself. He states that he was accustomed to speak Arabic in Egypt and that he spoke it well enough to pass for a Turk, but not an Arab: betrayed by his pronunciation, he records once being told 'Rouh anni ia kelb' ('Get away from me, you dog': Savary 1785, 77, 297, 149). He states that he spent a year in Damietta 'perfecting' his Syrian Arabic, but does not explain how he did this; presumably it was through conversation with Syrian merchants based there (Savary 1785, 273). Savary seems to have composed his Arabic grammar while in Egypt, although the final manuscript was not sent to the Imprimerie royale until 1784, where – since they lacked an Arabic typeface – it remained until the Revolution (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, vii). It was not finally published until 1813, after the publication of the Arabic grammars of Herbin 1803 and Sacy 1810. Langlès states that he benefited from the observations of Sacy, Don Raphaël and Michel Sabbagh on the manuscript (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, ix). Michel Sabbagh, then attached to the École des langues orientales, was commissioned to rework the four first dialogues into Egyptian dialect (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, ix). Throughout the work, Langlès supplies a series of 'remarques' to explain or supplement Savary's description.

The position of Latin in the work is curious: Langlès supplies a Latin preface, an abbreviated version of the French one, and Savary's parallel text to the Arabic is bilingual, in French at the head and Latin at the foot of the page. To a modern reader, this serves to emphasise the extent to which Arabic is being fitted into a Latin grammatical framework for a

European audience, and this will have been evident – and perhaps even seemed old-fashioned – to learners at the time. Nevertheless, this was not the last European language textbook to use Latin: Dutch Orientalist Taco Roorda (1801–1874), for example, published an entirely Latin *Grammatica arabica* in 1835 (Roorda 1835).

Savary's work is also very much the heir of the manuscript tradition of works for the training of *jeunes de langues*. As Langlès points out, the dialogues 'sont répandus depuis long-temps parmi les droguemans du Levant' (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, ix). These are the very dialogues that appear in the group of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century manuscripts I discussed earlier. Pétis de la Croix prepared his version in Aleppo, and Savary's experience suggests that they also circulated in Damietta – a location mentioned in the dialogue from the Harvard manuscript discussed above. These manuscript works tend to include a mix of dialectal features, hence the need for Sabbagh to prepare a purely Egyptian version.

Savary introduces the Arabic alphabet and devotes some space to pronunciation, noting, for example, the usual Egyptian versus Syrian pronunciation of *jīm* (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, 6). He emphasises the importance of distinguishing *hā'* /h/ from *ḥā'* /ħ/, and notes that *khā'* /x/ is to be pronounced 'from the throat' and that the sound 'est absolument inconnu dans notre langue'. He describes the emphatic consonants as 'strong' and says that 'nous connaissons peu cette distinction de consonnes fortes et faibles; mais elle est très sensible dans l'arabe' (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, 8). Most of the first volume is made up of conjugations of common verbs, in a more literary form (without, for example, the *bi*-imperfect). Only belatedly (p. 239) does he move on to nouns and adjectives. Grammatical endings (*'i'rāb*) and nunation (*tanwīn*) are introduced, although Langlès adds in one of his remarks that 'elles sont presques inutiles dans le langue ordinaire' (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, 252). Elsewhere, both writers mix colloquial Egyptian with standard literary Arabic: Langlès uses 'raïeh' (Egyptian) for the verb 'to go' (p. 271) and Savary the Egyptian 'dé' and 'di' for the demonstrative pronouns alongside the standard 'hada' and 'hadé' (pp. 272, 274). This kind of 'mixed' Arabic is typical of the language described as 'arabe vulgaire' in many works of the period (Doss 2013).

The second volume of the book contains almost a hundred pages of dialogues, with Sabbagh's rendering of the first four into Egyptian dialect, and some Arabic stories and songs added by Langlès. The dialogues are given in two forms: two pages of Arabic text with interlinear word-for-word French translation; followed by two pages containing the text in transliterated Arabic and French translation in two columns, with a Latin version at the foot of the page. This section is where the continuity

with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *jeune de langues* training is clearest. The conversations between two scholars, Ali and Mourad, for example, appear in more or less the same form in the Harvard manuscript discussed earlier in this chapter. Some of the content must have seemed outdated in 1813, such as when Mourad says that 'quelques savants ont écrit en arabe, d'autres en grec; la plupart des autres ont écrit et écrivent en latin encore aujourd'hui' (Savary, ed. Langlès, 1813, 327): this is visibly a text of the Ancien régime, not of the reign of Napoleon. By Section 6, the interlinear translation in the Arabic text is dropped, as is the transliterated Arabic. Instead, we find two pages of Arabic text alternating with two pages of French and Latin translation. The student is clearly expected to have progressed to reading the Arabic script fluently by this point. Sabbagh's Egyptian versions of the dialogues appear in Arabic-script text only, without transliteration or translation. Unlike the Savary versions, these use Egyptian forms such as the negative *mā ... -sh* and the *bi-*imperfect.

Given Langlès' editing of the book, it seems likely that this text was used in classes at the École des langues orientales during Don Raphaël's tenure. In 1816, Don Raphaël left France and returned to Egypt. Bachatly attributes this decision to the loss of his patron and protector, Napoleon, after his defeat at Waterloo and exile, and the reduction of his salary under the new government's spending policies. Shayyāl prefers to look at pull factors alongside this: news of the modernisation policies of Muḥammad 'Alī – policies which 'aimed to transfer [knowledge] from the West, and whose primary weapon was translation' – and thus new opportunities for educated multilinguals in his new institutions in Cairo (al-Shayyāl 1951, 77). More specifically, Shayyāl points to the presence in Paris around this time of Muḥammad 'Alī's envoy 'Uthmān Nūr al-Dīn, who may have been a direct source of information about Muḥammad 'Alī's policies, and of encouragement to return.

It is uncertain whether Don Raphaël was approached by Muḥammad 'Alī or vice versa, but by 1822 he was teaching Arabic at the school founded by Muḥammad 'Alī in Būlāq, located in the palace of the Pāshā's son Ibrāhīm. The Italian traveller Giovanni Battista Brocchi encountered him there in December of that year, teaching alongside two Italians, and recorded that he had spent some years in Paris and that he was proficient in Italian (Brocchi 1841, Vol. 1, 159, 173). A few days later, Brocchi visited the newly established Būlāq Press, where he saw Don Raphaël's Italian–Arabic dictionary (al-Shayyāl 1951, 77; on the history of the press, see Raḍwān 1953; Serageldin et al. 2005; and, concisely, Dayeh 2019, 248–252).

Don Raphaël's *Dizionario Italiano e Arabo / Qāmūs Iṭālyānī wa ʿArabī* is often considered the first book issued from the Būlāq Press (Serageldin et al. 2005, 109), although Brocchi recorded that at least three works were printed before it. The choice to produce an Italian dictionary makes sense considering the prominent role played by Italian expertise and the Italian language in the creation of the press: Muḥammad ʿAlī had sent Egyptians to Italy to be trained in printing technology and had imported equipment from Italy. Don Raphaël's introduction to the work is brief, and focuses on praise of Muḥammad ʿAlī and a simple statement that he had studied Italian, and intended this work to be a reliable guide to essential vocabulary (Zakhūr 1822). Part I contains 199 pages of words arranged in Italian alphabetical order, often with several definitions given in Arabic. Part II contains a further 159 pages of what Don Raphaël considers the vocabulary items which are 'più necessarj [*sic*] e più utili per parlare' (Zakhūr 1822, 203). These are arranged by topic, beginning with religion, time and the natural world, and moving on to topics such as clothing, food and drink, the family, the home, the army and government. There are no conversational phrases, nor are there grammatical explanations. The dictionary may have been useful in the classroom, but it seems principally designed to assist in translation, a major concern of Muḥammad ʿAlī, and the institutions which he established, over the following decades. Don Raphaël himself went on to produce translations of technical and scientific works, and of Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Ma'ani 2010). I will return to language teaching and translation in early nineteenth-century Egypt below.

After Don Raphaël left for Egypt, the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire was vacant for some time. Michel Sabbagh (1775–1816; Messaoudi 2015, 319–320) gave some lessons until his death in June 1816. Like Don Raphaël, Sabbagh was a Melkite. He was born in Acre, and was grandson of Ibrahīm al-Ṣabbāgh, physician and adviser to the city's ruler, Ẓāhir al-ʿUmar (Nijland 2012; Philipp 1984, 165–166; on the al-Ṣabbāgh family: Shaykhū 1905). Michel Sabbagh was educated in Damascus and Egypt. He served as secretary to General Reynier during the Expédition d'Égypte. Unlike Don Raphaël, he left Egypt with the French in 1801. According to his student, Jean-Pierre Humbert, his house was looted and all his goods confiscated because of his association with the French (Humbert 1819, 291–292). Sabbagh was employed at the Imprimerie nationale and then at the Bibliothèque impériale, as a copyist of Oriental manuscripts. His personal papers, now in Geneva, reveal how, as a person in a position of comparative influence and security, he was drawn into the financial and personal affairs of poorer refugees from Egypt in

France (e.g. Coller 2011, 65). Unlike Don Raphaël (and perhaps in part because he was not employed at the École des langues orientales, and thus not an immediate threat or source of annoyance), Sabbagh had a good relationship with Sacy, who consulted with him and cited his responses several times in his *Chrestomathie arabe*. Sabbagh wrote a large number of literary and historical works while in France (listed by Nijland 2012), although few were published. Humbert makes the important point that Sabbagh, who died in poverty, lacked the financial resources to pay for publication of his own works (Humbert 1819, 293), something that was common at the time. Humbert himself later published a *Guide de la conversation arabe*, with essential everyday vocabulary listed by topic (Humbert 1838).

Although the École des langues orientales and its staff did support the publication of some of Sabbagh's works (Sacy translated a work on carrier pigeons and a poem on the birth of Napoleon II: Sabbagh 1805, 1811), no initiative was apparently taken to print his work on colloquial Arabic, which was of direct relevance to the École's activities: 'Risālat al-tāmma fī kalām al-ʿāmma wa al-manāhij fī aḥwāl al-kalām al-dārij' ('Complete Treatise on Common Speech and Course on the Condition of Colloquial Speech'). This manuscript was completed in Paris around 1812, but ended up in the Münchener Hof- und Staats-Bibliothek after Sabbagh's death, and was only transcribed and published by Heinrich Thorbecke in 1886 (Sabbagh, ed. Thorbecke, 1886). Most of the manuscript is in Sabbagh's hand, but with some material by Ellious Bocthor (see below), with whom Sabbagh seems to have been working in conjunction (Sabbagh, ed. Thorbecke, 1886, iv–v).

The question of why Sabbagh's manuscript on colloquial Arabic was not published during his lifetime is more complex than the École des langues orientales and its faculty valuing the work of European scholars trained in Classical Arabic over the expertise of native speakers in dialectal Arabic – although I believe this to have been a factor. Langlès went to the trouble of editing and publishing Savary's *Grammaire de la langue arabe vulgaire et littérale*, a manuscript that had languished unpublished for 30 years, and arguably been superseded by subsequent works. Sabbagh was commissioned to add Egyptian versions of Savary's dialogues, but not to write his own independent work. I find the dates of publication of Savary's manuscript and composition of Sabbagh's significant: working on the Savary text, published in 1813, may have directly prompted Sabbagh to produce his own work on colloquial Arabic, during 1812. Sabbagh notes the new opportunities and difficulties created by Europeans studying Arabic, especially outside Arabic-speaking countries. He states that he

has been repeatedly approached by 'the people of these countries who set themselves to teach this language' for assistance (Sabbagh, ed. Thorbecke, 1886, 3). He is perhaps thinking specifically of Sacy's queries and his work with Langlès on Savary's manuscript.

But there were other factors that made Sabbagh's work unsuitable for publication, in addition to simple discrimination. As Thorbecke notes, the Munich manuscript is still a rough draft and contains many 'Vulgarismen' and stylistic infelicities which would have been corrected later (Sabbagh, ed. Thorbecke, 1886, v).[10] Sabbagh also left gaps for Bocthor to add more material. As well as being incomplete, the manuscript is not in a style and format suitable for the École des langues orientales' teaching needs. Thorbecke found that 'diese Arbeit Ṣabbâġ's weit entfernt ist, europäischen Ansprüchen an eine grammatische Darstelling zu genügen' (Sabbagh, ed. Thorbecke, 1886, vi). It is not set out like a European grammar or teaching book, but written in continuous prose, apart from a few sections, for example pages 25–33, which contrast the dialectal and standard ways of negating verbs and expressing demonstratives. It is divided into 10 sections, beginning with the history of the Arabic language before and after the advent of Islam, and proceeding with notes on ellipsis, augmentation and contractions, assimilation, pronouns, nouns, verbs, particles, inversions and loanwords. Sabbagh states that he has drawn his material from his knowledge of the spoken vernacular, since there are no books on the subject. This is not a book from which one could actually study colloquial Arabic. Instead, it is a short linguistic treatise on language change and the development of dialects in Arabic, which will have been of interest to advanced students and scholars of the language.

Like Don Raphaël and Michel Sabbagh, Ellious Bocthor (Ilyās Buqṭur; 1784–1821) was a Christian, and had been an interpreter for the Expédition d'Égypte (Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 72; Coller 2011, 94–111; Louca 1953). He was a close friend of Sabbagh's in Paris. Bocthor was a Copt from Asyūṭ and had started to work with the French when he was a teenager; he was just 21 when he arrived in Marseille as a refugee after the French withdrawal. Edme-François Jomard, editor of the *Description de l'Égypte*, who knew Bocthor in France and probably before that in Egypt, emphasises how his youth, perseverance and 'natural talent' allowed him to achieve 'une connaissance parfait' of French, 'non seulement de notre idiome, mais encore de nos grammariens et de nos bons auteurs, philosophes, littérateurs et moralistes' (Jomard 1820, 38–39). After Bocthor's death, Jomard recorded that 'S'il était aisé de reconnaître à sa prononciation une bouche étrangère, il n'en était pas de

même pour la propriété des terms, et même pour l'élégance de la diction' (Jomard 1821, 239). As we have seen repeatedly, it was not just a colloquial command of Arabic and the language of instruction that made Arabic teachers prized, but erudition (and preferably a higher education) in both languages. Like Don Raphaël, Bocthor even knew Latin, which he studied in order to make use of Jacob Golius' 1653 *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* in composing his own dictionary (Messaoudi 2015, 230).

Bocthor found himself living in Marseille on a meagre pension. As Ian Coller has explored, life was hard for the Egyptian refugees. Even if they gained permission to move to Paris, as Bocthor did in 1812, opportunities for Egyptians were limited. As well as Don Raphaël at the École des langues orientales and Sabbagh at the Bibliothèque impériale, we find the Coptic priest Youhanna Chiftichi (also Champollion's teacher) employed at a wage of 2,000 francs on the Description de l'Égypte, but many other educated men did not succeed in finding teaching or other scholarly work (Coller 2011, 97; Louca 1988). Bocthor used his mission of compiling a French–Arabic dictionary – 'something France does not yet possess, and which answers the need both of literature and of public utility' – to argue for permission to move to Paris (report by the Minister of War to the Minister of Police of 23 August 1811, quoted by Coller 2011, 94). The need for such an Arabic dictionary, and for a modern linguistic approach to the description and teaching of Arabic, is a constant thread in his correspondence (Coller 2011, 101–112). In Paris, Bocthor worked on translations of Arabic correspondence from the Expédition d'Égypte and on materials, notably the map of Egypt, for the Description de l'Égypte which was then in preparation under Jomard (Bocthor and Caussin de Perceval 1828–1829, v). In late 1819, presumably on the recommendation of Jomard and others with whom he worked, he was appointed to the vacant chair at the École des langues orientales.

Bocthor's inaugural address as the new occupant of the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire on 8 December 1819 was an occasion for him to set out how he conceived of the role (discussed by Coller 2011, 111). The teaching at the École was, in his view, too bookish (Messaoudi 2015, 77). Bocthor strongly criticised the teaching of Arabic as a 'dead language' – at which, Coller observes, 'certain members of the audience must have shifted in their seats' (Coller 2011, 111) – and argued for closer relations between French people and Arabs, based on firm cultural knowledge and mutual respect. His teaching, as he outlined it, would be organised around four major points: reading (including reading aloud for correct pronunciation), explanation (including the different meanings of a word, its use and translation), speaking and writing. Students should study

calligraphy and handwritten Arabic. Bocthor emphasised the importance of learning pronunciation from a native speaker, implicitly criticising previous practice at the École:

> Instead of giving a false theory about the manner of pronunciation of a word, as has happened too often until now, I pronounce it in front of my listeners, inviting them to imitate me.[11]

Bocthor intended to draw his teaching materials and texts for class not from scholarly works that required extensive commentary and diegesis, but from simpler texts in wider circulation, which would be of greater use to student interpreters, travellers, traders and anyone who needed to communicate effectively in spoken Arabic.

Whatever scholarly Arabists such as Sacy may have thought of Bocthor's approach, and the confident manner in which he outlined it, it met with some approval. Jomard, who as we have seen was a supporter of Bocthor, thought that the government had made a wise decision in appointing him, since 'il n'y a que deux moyens d'en acquérir la connaissance et la pronunciation: l'un est de l'étudier à sa source; l'autre, de le recueillir de la bouche d'un naturel' (Jomard 1820, 38–39). Bocthor's plans for teaching at the École des langues orientales were, however, derailed by his premature death in September 1821, less than two years after his appointment. In his obituary, Jomard commemorated a man who had been 'un lien naturel entre la France et son pays natal' (Jomard 1821, 239); such links would be fewer over the succeeding years.

Bocthor produced some teaching materials during his short tenure at the École, which show how he was implementing the plans outlined in his inaugural address. These included *Alphabet arabe*, a short booklet that explained the Arabic letters in their separate and connected forms (Bocthor 1820), which will have been of particular use to elementary students. Its beautiful calligraphy is presumably Bocthor's own. His *Mukhtaṣar fī al-ṣarf / Abrégé des conjugaisons arabes* (Bocthor 1821) outlines the main parts of speech – the noun, the verb and the particle – but focuses on describing the verb in its various forms (quadriliteral roots, hollow verbs and so forth; see the review by Agoub 1835, 328–340, originally published in the *Revue encyclopédique*). It is written in Arabic, and will therefore have been of most use to more advanced students, although it is vowelled and thus accessible to learners. Langlès' copy – with an ownership inscription and handwritten dedication from the author – is now held by the University of Michigan, and is the copy digitised on the Hathi Trust portal (https://www.hathitrust.org).

Bocthor's long-anticipated dictionary was still unpublished at his death. The manuscript was purchased from his widow and entrusted for publication to Bocthor's successor in the chair, Armand-Pierre Caussin de Perceval (1795–1871). The dictionary was practically complete and needed only a few minor corrections, but, at the prompting of the project's patron, the Marquis Amédée de Clermont-Tonnerre, Caussin de Perceval incorporated materials which he had gathered in Syria, and some additions from the existing Spanish–Arabic dictionary (1775) of Francisco Cañes and Italian–Arabic dictionary (1636) of Domenicus Germanus de Silesia (Bocthor and Caussin de Perceval 1828–1829, vi). Again, we see much older European works on Arabic being pressed into service well into the nineteenth century, when better materials and direct knowledge from native speakers were available. Caussin de Perceval does not appear to have had access to his predecessor Don Raphaël's Italian–Arabic dictionary, published in Cairo in 1822. Bocthor would hardly have approved of Caussin de Perceval's additions. In his inaugural address in 1819, he had indicated that 'ni Golius ni Castel, ni Lafabrica, ni Cañes' should serve as a guide to 'le vrai sens que les Arabes attachent à un mot' (quoted by Louca 1953, 315).

Like many of the works produced by staff of, or for use at, the École des langues orientales at this period, Bocthor and Caussin de Perceval's dictionary sits in the middle ground between classical Qur'ānic or literary Arabic, and the spoken vernaculars. In the Preface, Caussin de Perceval states that it is not a work for armchair scholars, but 'particulièrement destiné aux personnes qui ont besoin d'apprendre à parler et à écrire la langue arabe, c'est-à-dire aux voyageurs et surtout aux interprètes' (Bocthor and Caussin de Perceval 1828–1829, vi). For this reason, the authors have avoided words that occur exclusively in scholarly or poetic usage and restricted themselves to those in everyday use in the written and spoken language. They have therefore included familiar conversational expressions 'même les termes bas et populaires', but have also included more elevated forms that are in common use.

This methodology presents some obvious problems. First of all, Bocthor was from Upper Egypt and Caussin de Perceval had spent his time in the Middle East in Syria and Lebanon. No mention is made of geographical variation in dialect in the Preface to the dictionary, and dialectal variations are only seldom indicated in the dictionary entries themselves. This difficulty is particularly acute since the dictionary is French–Arabic only: the user is looking up words to use in composing an Arabic text or utterance, not vice versa. Under 'Quoi', for example, Bocthor and Caussin de Perceval supply the Egyptian *ayh*, Levantine *aysh*
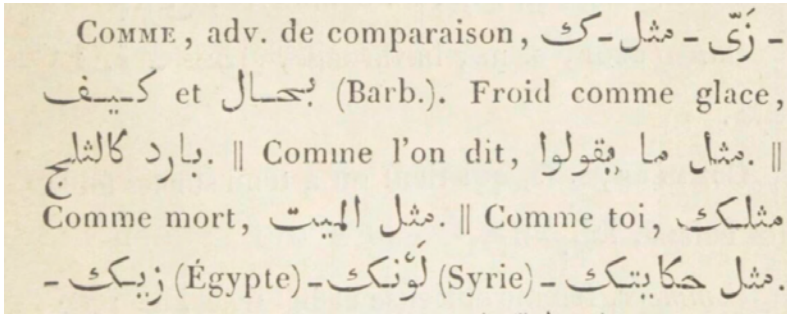
**Figure 1.4** 'Comme': extract from Bocthor and Caussin de Perceval's dictionary (1828–1829), Volume I, 168. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

and standard literary Arabic *kayfa* ('what?' 'how?') without explaining the difference. Only occasionally do the authors explain which words are used in which regions, such as in the entry for 'Comme' (Figure 1.4; see also the demonstrative pronouns s.v. 'Ce, Cet'). Without guidance from a native speaker, the user of this dictionary will have produced a kind of compromise Arabic, with features of various dialects (primarily Egyptian).

### The Chaire d'arabe vulgaire: the transition to French teachers

With the death of Bocthor, we reach the end of the tenure of native speakers of Arabic who had served on the Expédition d'Égypte in the chair of 'arabe vulgaire' at the École des langues orientales. In October 1821, Caussin de Perceval took over the chair (on his life and career, see Wallon 1880; Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 101–102). His father, Jean Jacques Antoine Caussin de Perceval (1759–1835), was a distinguished scholar of Arabic, who held the chair of Arabic at the Collège de France and had studied exclusively in Europe. The son followed a slightly different path to the same destination as the father, one that included a practical education in Arabic as well as a literary one.

Caussin de Perceval *fils* was born, fittingly, on the premises of the Collège de France, in one of the rooms that would later be part of the École des langues orientales (Wallon 1880, 395). He trained as a *jeune de langues* in Paris, and in 1814 left for Constantinople where he served as an apprentice interpreter at the French Embassy. He spent a year living in a monastery in Lebanon to immerse himself in Arabic. It would be pleasing if this were the same monastery where Don Raphaël had lived, but, given the identity of the author of the dialogues in Caussin de

Perceval's grammar (see below), it is likely that he stayed at the Maronite monastery 'Ayn Warqa, not the Melkite Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ. Caussin de Perceval was appointed as dragoman at Aleppo in 1818, but returned to France in 1821 to take up Bocthor's vacant position at the École des langues orientales. He spent the rest of his career in Paris, where, as well as holding positions at the École des langues orientales and Collège de France (where he succeeded his father in 1833), he did some military intelligence work for the French campaign in Algeria, translating seized documents. In 1849 he was appointed to the commission overseeing Arabic education in Algeria.

As both a former *jeune de langues* and dragoman and a scholar of Arabic in a more academic sense, Caussin de Perceval's experience enabled him, in Alain Messaoudi's words, 'd'harmoniser enseignement de la conversation dans une langue usuelle et étude de textes anciens, deux approches d'une langue dont il affirme l'unité profonde' (Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 102). Although he was not a native speaker, he had spent sufficient time in Lebanon and Syria living immersed in the language to regard and teach Arabic as the living language it was. A course advertisement from Caussin de Perceval's second year in the chair presents an interesting contrast to the 1806 course listing from Don Raphaël's tenure, quoted earlier (p. 59). Silvestre de Sacy still teaches Classical Arabic (termed simply 'arabe', and considered the default), but now three times a week rather than twice a week. The time allotted to 'arabe vulgaire' has increased considerably, from one class a week in the later afternoon to three in the middle of the day. Rather than Don Raphaël's 'leçons de pronunciation et de lecture de l'arabe vulgaire et de conversation familière', under Caussin de Perceval the remit of the professor of 'arabe vulgaire' has expanded to include discussion of the difference between 'la langue parlée' and 'la langue savante' and the study of Middle Arabic literature, as well as conversation and correspondence.

As well as Bocthor's dictionary, which he published in 1828–1829, Caussin de Perceval applied himself to one of the tasks required by the École des langues orientales of its professors: that of producing a French grammar of the language they taught. This was the origin of Sacy's 1810 *Grammare arabe*. One might reasonably ask why this requirement had not been enforced on any of Caussin de Perceval's predecessors in the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire. Bocthor was probably not in the post long enough, and his *Alphabet arabe*, *Mukhtaṣar fī al-ṣarf* and the dictionary project may in any case have satisfied the authorities at the École that he was fulfilling his obligations. Sabbagh never officially held the chair, although he did teach at the École. Don Raphaël, on the other hand, was in post for 13 years.

It may be the case that his French was not strong enough to compose a grammar, or that he was not considered capable of composing one in the European style. Sacy's enmity may have been a factor. It seems likely that Langlès' edition of Savary's grammar, discussed before, was considered a substitute in some way. Whatever the reasons for the delay, the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire finally yielded its own grammar in 1824, from Caussin de Perceval.

Caussin de Perceval conceived of the work as a complement to Sacy's grammar, to which he makes reference throughout. In his Preface, he sets out his intention of giving a 'connaissance pratique' of Arabic:

> To provide the interpreter, the merchant, the traveller, with the means of communicating verbally and in writing with Arabs; to shorten, as much as a book can, the long apprenticeship that a foreigner, transported to the Levant, is obliged to undergo, even if he has already devoted himself to the study of the scholarly language [*langue savant*] in Europe – this is the goal I set myself.
>
> (Caussin de Perceval 1824, i)

Sacy himself wrote a highly approving review in the *Journal des Savants*, in which he was scathing about the value of the works of Savary and Herbin that had preceded it (Sacy 1825). He thought that Savary had insufficient grounding in both literary and colloquial Arabic for the task, and that the money the government had spent on publishing it would have been wasted were it not for the dialogues and the tales added by Langlès. He does not mention Sabbagh. While regretting Herbin's premature death and loss to the world of scholarship, he found his work muddled: 'un mélange indigeste d'arabe littéral et d'arabe vulgaire'. (Caussin de Perceval nevertheless borrowed from his description of Arabic pronunciation.)

Caussin de Perceval's work, in contrast, is the product of a thorough study of both literary and colloquial Arabic, which he is careful to distinguish. In his view – one that has continued to be held in the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language – it is preferable to study literary Arabic first. This is because the grammar of 'arabe vulgaire' dispenses with many of the rules of the Classical Arabic grammarians and drops elements such as noun cases, so that learning the colloquial language as a student is a matter of dropping known rules rather than learning new ones. In addition, it has borrowed new vocabulary, especially from Turkish, and lost old items (Caussin de Perceval 1824, i). Caussin de Perceval points out that everyday written Arabic is closer in many respects to the 'langue savante' than spoken Arabic. As al-Ṭanṭāwī later did (see below), he also

points out that strict adherence to the rules of formal Arabic in colloquial speech is affected and pedantic: this in itself is incorrect usage (Caussin de Perceval 1824, ii).

While Caussin de Perceval's emphasis in the Preface is on the importance of practical communication, the grammar itself is laid out very traditionally, with verb tables and the same Latinate names used by Sacy for grammatical terminology (indicative, aorist) and parts of speech ('adverbe', even though he acknowledges that not all the words he considers in this section are adverbs, properly speaking). It is visibly a work for someone who has studied languages in this format before, probably Sacy's grammar. The language is a 'middle Arabic' or reduced form of the 'langue savante', and where forms are used that are specific to geographical dialects, these are usually Syrian. The guide to the alphabet and to pronunciation with which the book opens mentions the pronunciation of *thā'* /θ/ as 's' or 't'. Occasional mention is made of Egypt, for example in mentioning the *bi*-imperfect (p. 13). Caussin de Perceval clearly envisages the work being used in conjunction with teaching from a native (or fluent) speaker. He states that good pronunciation – which is essential – cannot be learnt from books and that his transliterations are only an approximation: 'Aucune description écrite ne peut donner une connaissance parfaite de la manière d'articuler certaines lettres, telles que celle-ci. Après avoir entendu et bien remarqué l'articulation que donnent à cette lettres les personnes qui la prononcent bien, il faut chercher à imiter leur prononciation' (Caussin de Perceval 1824, iv, 3).

We may say a little more about the context in which Caussin de Perceval imagines his work being used, or the learning contexts on which he was reflecting when he composed it. The book is – for want of a more elegant word – very 'dragomanny'. This is particularly the case with the dialogues and sample letter with which it concludes. The 20 dialogues tell the story of the 'aventure du négociant Franc avec Mohammed Tchélébi le droguiste, et le courtier juif Mouça' in Constantinople, where Caussin de Perceval himself went as a *jeune de langues*. The dialogues and letters are given first in French, then – opening from the back of the book – in Arabic. As the story proceeds, Mohammed and Mouça attempt to swindle the Frank, and the characters proceed through various learning-experience encounters with officialdom, such as a *Qāḍī* (judge) and an embassy dragoman. The dialogues are stated to have been translated from Turkish into Arabic by a priest 'Jean de Constantinople' (Yūḥannā al-Istanbūlī in the Arabic), a professor at the school at 'Ayn Warqa monastery in Lebanon. It seems probable that this is the monastery where Caussin de Perceval himself spent a year immersing himself in Arabic and that the

priest was his former teacher. ʿAyn Warqa was also where Asʿad and Fāris al-Shidyāq studied, before their association with American missionaries (see Chapter 2; on the foundation of the ʿAyn Warqa school, see Makdisi 2008, 73–79; Gemayel 1984, 1003–1009).

Although Caussin de Perceval does not state it, the work from which the dialogues were translated into Arabic is the cleric Pierre-François Viguier's (1745–1821) *Élémens de la langue Turque*, published at the French embassy in Constantinople in 1790 (Viguier 1790). Viguier's dialogues were also used by Nassif Mallouf (see Chapter 3) in his *Dialogues turcs-français* (Mallouf 1854), and a Persian version was edited and translated into German by Leopold Pekotsch (Pekotsch 1905). The sample letters and documents also speak to Caussin de Perceval's own experience as a *jeune de langues* and dragoman in Constantinople and Aleppo. They give the kinds of scenarios – letters between friends, financial wranglings, elaborate exchanges of diplomatic courtesies – that he himself must have encountered, and it is possible that they are authentic documents. Just as he himself drew on much earlier materials, Caussin de Perceval's book continued to be used well into the latter part of the nineteenth century. A Modern Greek translation was even produced in Jerusalem in 1883 (Persevalou 1883).

The first years of the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, then, were dominated by personnel who had served with the Expédition d'Égypte. Caussin de Perceval's long tenure, from 1821 to 1871, marks a period of transition. He himself was a product of both the *jeune de langues* system and the tradition of instruction in Classical Arabic at the Collège royal/Collège de France and École des langues orientales. During his time in post, Arabic teaching expanded in Marseille (where a chair had been established in 1807) and Montpellier, as well as in French Algeria (on the history of Arabic teaching in Marseille, see Louca and Santoni 1982). French attention shifted decisively away from Egypt towards the Maghreb. A chair of Algerian Arabic was established at the École des langues orientales in 1863, which was subsumed into the Chaire d'arabe vulgaire when Caussin de Perceval died in 1871. William MacGuckin de Slane, best known as a translator of Ibn Khaldūn and al-Bakrī, was his successor. In 1873 the École des langues orientales absorbed the École des jeunes de langues, which had been in a long, slow decline for many years (Messaoudi 2015, 64–70).

## From École égyptienne (1826–) to Madrasat al-Alsun (1836–)

As we have just seen, the teaching of Arabic in Paris in the 1810s and 1820s was shaped by teachers who had experienced the Expédition d'Égypte. While it certainly still remained possible to pursue a career as an 'armchair' Arabist in the eighteenth-century fashion, with a focus on the written word, new opportunities were created for students to study colloquial, spoken Arabic. This was true even before the conquest of Algeria in the 1830s brought about a renewed need for Arabic teaching in both metropolitan France and its new North African colonies. From the mid-1820s, a new wave of Egyptians came to France, not as refugees or teachers, but as students. These students were taught the French language and other subjects, and returned to Egypt to implement their knowledge and teach others (on these missions, see Prakash 2016 and Prakash 2018; names and biographical details of students are given in Heyworth-Dunne 1939a). The École égyptienne in Paris, established in August 1826, where members of the first Egyptian educational mission were taught, was shaped, like the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, by former personnel of the Expédition d'Égypte.

Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873), with whom I opened this book, is our guide to the experiences of this mission (the introduction and notes to Newman's 2004 translation *An Imam in Paris* provide the best and most recent account of al-Ṭahṭāwī's life and career; al-Shayyāl 1945 is still useful, especially given the author's interest in the history of translation). Al-Ṭahṭāwī is also, after Silvestre de Sacy and Fāris al-Shidyāq, one of the central figures in Graph 1. Not only was he acquainted with a large number of other Arabic teachers and scholars, but he also acts as a connecting 'bridge' between intellectual networks in Cairo and those in Paris, and between the generation of the Expédition d'Égypte and the age of Muḥammad 'Alī. Like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn a hundred years later, al-Ṭahṭāwī is significant as someone who received both a traditional Azharite and a modern European-style education, and was able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of each. Al-Ṭahṭāwī himself was born during the French occupation of Egypt, and thus would have had no personal memory of it, but he would doubtless have heard about the Expédition's savants from his mentor Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭār.

*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ bārīz* ('The Extraction of Pure Gold in a Short Report about Paris', to give Newman's translation of the rhyming title), published by the Khedival Press at Būlāq in 1834, was written while al-Ṭahṭāwī was still in France,[12] and gives us the author's experiences as a

language learner. How this shaped his later practice as a language *teacher* must be gleaned from the available evidence (which is not extensive) on the language school he later ran in Cairo, the Madrasat al-Alsun ('School of Languages'), and from the publications produced for use there. When the members of the mission arrived in France in 1826, their first task after leaving quarantine in Marseille was to learn the individual sounds and letters of French (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* II.1; Newman 2004, 158). Al-Ṭahṭāwī comments on the differences between French and Arabic. For example, French orthography does not always reflect pronunciation, as with the silent 's' at the ends of words, and tenses which in Arabic would be expressed with a separate form of the verb are formed using auxiliary verbs in French (e.g. *j'ai mangé* for *akaltu*). Al-Ṭahṭāwī views this as a weakness of the French language, making it *ḍayyiqa* 'narrow' or limited in scope (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* III.2).

In Paris, work began in earnest. The students resided at the École égyptienne, which was under the directorship of Edme-François Jomard, editor of the *Description de l'Égypte* and friend of the late Ellious Bocthor. It was located in a mansion at 33 rue de Clichy, about a 20-minute walk from the Bibliothèque nationale and École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes. Jomard has left a detailed account of the school's operation (Jomard 1828). Al-Ṭahṭāwī describes how:

> One of the educational habits of the people of Paris is to teach a person to read by means of books with large characters so that their shapes become embedded in his mind. These books contain the letters of the alphabet in their order, followed by a number of words exemplifying nouns and verbs. It is by this method that people learn how to write; one memorizes these words and pronounces them in the way that they should be pronounced so that people learn to speak really well from a very early age. Afterwards, you find a number of sentences that are easy to understand and that are suitable for young children. Here are some sentences from the book we used: 'This is a horse with three legs; birds have only two legs, but they have wings with which they fly; as for the fish, it swims in the water', etc. These are of course the kinds of things that are known to the speaker. This method is, in fact, similar to the [Arab] grammarians' 'the sky is over us, and the earth is below us', which is an example of something that does not contain new information. However, this differs from the way in which they explain composition: 'Speech is the assembled expression that conveys a complete self-contained meaning through composition.' In this book one also finds descriptions of well-known

animals, particularly of the kind that children like to play with, such as birds, cats, etc., followed by a small text on how children should behave, their obedience to their parents and so on and so forth.

(*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* IV.1, trans. Newman, 277–278)

Although al-Ṭahṭāwī does not explicitly say that this is also how the Egyptian students were taught, the placement of this passage in his discussion hints strongly that they were. There were, of course, no French textbooks for Arabic speakers at this period. If the adult Egyptian students found using children's books frustrating or patronising, al-Ṭahṭāwī does not tell us so.

A typical day at the École égyptienne (as related by al-Ṭahṭāwī in *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* IV.1) involved two hours of history in the morning, then French conversation and writing after lunch, followed by a drawing class and French grammar. Classes in arithmetic and engineering were held three times a week. At first, much time was devoted to learning the Latin script, but as the Egyptian students made progress, this was gradually reduced. About a month after arriving in Paris, they began to study Charles-François Lhomond's *Eléments de la grammaire française*. This descriptive grammar of French was first published in 1771 and went through numerous reprints and new editions in the nineteenth century. It was widely used in French schools for teaching pupils the grammar of their own mother tongue. It starts with phonology and then systematically describes the different parts of speech: nouns, articles, adjectives and so forth, with tables of verb conjugations. Later in his work, al-Ṭahṭāwī comments on how these French grammatical categories differ from Arabic ones (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* VI.2). When al-Ṭahṭāwī refers to Sacy's 1810 *Grammaire arabe* as being set out in a *tartīb 'ajīb* 'strange arrangement' (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* III.2), this is what he means: Sacy is fitting Arabic into the mould of a French grammar book like Lhomond's. In 1857, an Arabic translation of Lhomond's grammar was published in Paris by the Tunisian Sulaymān al-Ḥarā'irī, who would later teach at the École des langues orientales (Newman 2004, n. 475; al-Ḥarā'irī 1857).

Unfortunately al-Ṭahṭāwī does not comment on the effectiveness or otherwise of the books he used as learning tools, but he and others connected with the École égyptienne seem to have thought that developing future textbooks for French in Arabic would be a good idea. Silvestre de Sacy suggested to him that:

you should write a book on the grammar of the French language, which is used by all peoples of Europe and in all its kingdoms, in

order to lead the people of Egypt to the sources of our works on sciences and skills, as well as their methods. This would indeed give you great fame in your country and make people remember you for centuries to come.

(*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* IV.4, trans. Newman 2004, 284)

Joanny Pharaon, son of an interpreter on the Expédition d'Égypte, was one of the teachers at the École égyptienne during its first few months of operation (Messaoudi 2004). He may be the unnamed teacher mentioned by al-Ṭahṭāwī who taught the students the French writing system, then 'when in the end we had learned to write the script our teacher did not come any more' (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* IV.1, trans. Newman 2004, 278). After Pharaon left his position at the École égyptienne and returned to his home in Marseille, he published *Premiers éléments de la langue française à l'usage des Orientaux qui veulent apprendre cette langue* (Pharaon 1827), which bills him on the title page as 'Premier professeur du Collège Égyptien de Paris'. The book comprises six pages, in Arabic, describing French orthography and pronunciation. It is reproduced from Pharaon's handwritten text, not typeset using an Arabic font. Pharaon envisaged this booklet as the prelude to a fuller Arabic-language French grammar which he hoped to publish, but never did (Pharaon 1827, Avant propos). The preface thanks '[le] savant Schiek El-Réfahi' (i.e. al-Ṭahṭāwī) and reflects on the difficulty of teaching a language, especially since 'enseigner est un art que tous les Savants ne sont pas obligés de connaitre' – a jibe, it seems, at his fellow teachers at the École égyptienne. Pharaon hoped that his future Arabic grammar of French would be used to teach in Egypt as well as by educational missions in Europe. It certainly would have been useful for the Madrasat al-Alsun, as we will see below. Instead, Pharaon went to Algeria as an interpreter, taught Arabic and published French grammars of Arabic (Pharaon 1832 and Pharaon 1833; see Messaoudi 2004).

Let us return to the passage from *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* with which I opened this book. Al-Ṭahṭāwī may have found Sacy's spoken Arabic poor, and the way in which he set out his *Grammaire arabe* peculiar, but he had a high regard for his scholarship. Indeed, the way in which he writes about the Arabic works Sacy had taught and translated reads like a slightly more down-to-earth version of his teacher Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār's fantasised encounter with the French savants and their beautiful Arabic. Al-Ṭahṭāwī concludes:

In short, his knowledge, especially as regards Arabic, is famous, even though he can speak Arabic only with great difficulty.

In some of his books, I have seen [proof of] his great insight, significant explanations and powerful refutations. He is highly familiar with scientific books written in all languages. All of this stems from the fact that he has a perfect command of his own language after which he devoted himself completely to the learning of [other] languages.

(*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* III.2, trans. Newman 2004, 191)

As I have already suggested in the Introduction, al-Ṭahṭāwī must be thinking of his own experiences in learning French as he comments on Sacy's Arabic. For all the book learning the Egyptian students accomplished in their first year or so at the École égyptienne, they were not making much progress in spoken French because they were living together and speaking Turkish or Arabic (for the varied ethnic backgrounds of the mission's members, see Heyworth-Dunne 1939a, 159–163). Things seem to have improved somewhat when the students were then divided among French schools and private homes in groups of two or three (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* IV.1). But for al-Ṭahṭāwī, in the end, learning a foreign language was a route to the acquisition of knowledge through books, and in this poor pronunciation and conversational ability were not such major handicaps. It is significant that he mentions Sacy's 'perfect command of his own language' as the foundation for his acquisition of other languages. His own later grammar of Arabic for students of Egyptian elementary schools (al-Ṭahṭāwī 1869), viewed in this light, complements his work at the Madrasat al-Alsun. More specifically, al-Ṭahṭāwī's purpose in learning French was to translate French books into Arabic. At the Madrasat al-Alsun, language learning and translation were to go hand in hand.

When al-Ṭahṭāwī returned to Egypt in 1831, he first worked as a translator and French teacher at the School of Medicine, one of the many new educational institutions established under Muḥammad ʿAlī (the most convenient summaries of Muḥammad ʿAlī's educational initiatives, and the place of translation in them, are still Heyworth-Dunne 1939a and al-Shayyāl 1951; on al-Ṭahṭāwī's appointment to the School of Medicine, see Shamma and Salama-Carr 2021, 209–211). His colleagues there included a relative of Joanny Pharaon, who also translated several French works into Arabic and Turkish (see Appendix to al-Shayyāl 1951; Newman 2004, 41–42).

The 'School of Languages' was established in 1836 on the site of the former palace of Alfī Bey as the 'School of Translation' (*madrasat al-tarjama*, sometimes referred to as *madrasat al-mutarjimīn* 'School of

Translators'). Al-Ṭahṭāwī took over as director in January 1837, around which time it was also renamed as the Madrasat al-Alsun (Heyworth-Dunne 1939b, 965–966; on the School: Prakash 2016, 118–127; 'Abd al-Karīm 1938, 329–344). The School taught foreign languages, and from 1841 acted as a translation bureau. Arabic grammar was also taught, given al-Ṭahṭāwī's emphasis, noted above, on the importance of a strong command of grammar and style in one's own language as the foundation for learning another and undertaking translation. Teaching Arabic was also important because Turkish was still to a great extent the language of the elite in Egypt. When 'Abbās became ruler of Egypt, al-Ṭahṭāwī fell from favour and in 1850 was exiled to Khartoum where – appropriately – he passed his time translating Fénelon's 'mirror for princes' *Les aventures de Télémaque* into Arabic (Tageldin 2017; Hamad and Woltering 2018; Hill 2018). The School of Languages was allowed to fall into decline, and was closed in 1851, although it was reopened in 1863 under Ismāʿīl with al-Ṭahṭāwī once again as director. The present-day Kulliyat al-Alsun ('College of Languages') at 'Ain Shams University traces an institutional line of descent back to the Madrasat al-Alsun (http://alsun.asu.edu.eg, accessed 17 May 2023).

The Austrian geologist Joseph Russegger (1802–1863), one of the many foreign specialists brought to Egypt by Muḥammad 'Alī, recorded his impressions on visiting the Madrasat al-Alsun in 1839. He thought the School was one of the best such establishments in Egypt, although his tone is condescending:

> The boys are accepted there at a very tender age, of whom a certain number, as in all these institutes, receive board, lodging, laundry and a salary. One learns French, Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, and I met many of the boys who had already finished [studying] and spoke and wrote some of these languages. The director of the institute is one of the few officers of the viceroy who have really gained from their stay in Europe, and who have also made significant contributions to the institute. Here you can see at first glance what can be made of the capable Arab, the son of nature, full of common sense, if you treat him rationally and start his education where it should start, namely: at the beginning.
>
> (Russegger 1841, 185)

During his time in Egypt, Russegger had provided initial training to a group of Egyptian students who then went to study mining engineering in Austria. Among them was Muḥammad Anton Hassan,

later a teacher of Arabic in Vienna and language book author, who is discussed below (Chahrour 2007; Jontes 2011; Mairs forthcoming-h). The 'Vorstand der Anstalt' ('director of the institute') mentioned by Russegger must be al-Ṭahṭāwī.

The teachers at the Madrasat al-Alsun included both distinguished *'ulamā'* (some are listed by 'Alī Mubārak, *Khiṭaṭ* XIII, 54; Mubārak, trans. Fliedner, 1990) and foreign teachers, whom it is difficult to identify. Drawing on the archive of the Dīwān al-Madāris (Department of Education), the Egyptian historian Aḥmad 'Izzat 'Abd al-Karīm was able to uncover the names of four French teachers at the Madrasat al-Alsun: Kūt (Côte?), Btyīr (Pettier?), Dīzūn and Iskandar Dūda (Daudin?), but as he points out, the names are not known from any foreign source and so we cannot confirm what European names the Arabic transcriptions represent ('Abd al-Karīm 1938, 335; I have been unable to find plausible identifications for any of them). There is no secure information on what books were used to teach languages at the School, but we might suppose that al-Ṭahṭāwī would have introduced the books from which he himself was taught, such as Lhomond's grammar. The works published in the 1810s–1830s for teaching Arabic to French speakers may or may not have been available in Cairo, or of much use to Arabic speakers learning French. For Italian, Bocthor's dictionary published at Būlāq in 1822 would, of course, have been employed.

The success of the School's programme can be seen in the number and range of translations from European languages published by its graduates (see the appendix to al-Shayyāl 1951). Al-Ṭahṭāwī personally supervised and made revisions to translations produced at the School, and a further level of oversight was provided by having the work edited by a graduate of al-Azhar, to ensure a high standard of written Arabic (Cherkaoui 2017, 96). There is little or no evidence on the level of competence in spoken European languages acquired by students at the Madrasat al-Alsun, but this was not its purpose: it was geared towards producing translations and allowing the study of written works.

Direct contemporary evidence on how language teaching was conducted at the Madrasat al-Alsun is hard to come by. Two of the School's first cohort of students, Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad Qadrī, however, published language textbooks. These allow us some insight into teaching methods, and into the intellectual and professional networks of the School's graduates, including with members of the Muḥammad 'Alī dynasty.

## Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad Qadrī

Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī 'the Egyptian' was one of the first class of students to study under Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī at the Madrasat al-Alsun, which he entered in 1836/1837 (Heyworth-Dunne 1939a, 269; Tājir 1945, 103). While Don Raphaël de Monachis published the Būlāq Press's first dictionary of a European language, the honour of the first instruction book for a European language published there belongs to Khalīfa Effendi.[13] His *Qalāʾid al-jumān fī fawāʾid al-tarjumān / Instructions aux drogmans* (al-Miṣrī 1850) has a bilingual title, and is trilingual in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and French. It is possible that Khalīfa Effendi, of whom little is known beyond what he tells us himself in his publications, was – like many of the students on the missions to Europe and at the Madrasat al-Alsun – a native Turkish speaker rather than an Arabic speaker (İhsanoğlu 2011, 159, takes this as read).

Khalīfa Effendi's book is particularly interesting because it shows us something of how French scholarship intersected with Arabic-Turkish traditions at the Madrasat al-Alsun. The book has a title in *sajʿ* (rhymed prose) – 'Necklaces of Pearls on the Benefits of Translators' – and Ottoman Turkish features heavily in the introductory and dedicatory remarks. Khalīfa Effendi displays his erudition through wordplay and allusion. The book's cover has a quotation from the poet Safī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (1278–1349), to the effect that the more languages a person learns, the greater the benefit to them: these languages will help them in times of adversity. The main body of the book, in contrast, is modelled closely on two French books: a grammar and a phrasebook. Since Khalīfa Effendi did not himself travel to Europe, this indicates that these books were available to him in Cairo, and probably used in teaching at the Madrasat al-Alsun.

The book's brief, trilingual preface describes it as an 'Ouvrage très méthodique, destiné à ceux qui desirent apprendre à parler les trois Langues, Arabe, Turque et Française', although in practice the target language is definitely French. The French – but not the Arabic or Turkish – introduces Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī as:

> Khalifa Effendi, former pupil at the School of Languages and the School of Law in Cairo. Teacher of French to His Highness Moustapha Bey, son of the Viceroy of Egypt, during a stay in Constantinople, Head of the Bureau of Translators, attaché at the Ministry of Public Instruction, translator of the history of the reign of the Emperor Charles V by W. Robertson, and several other works.

'Moustapha Bey' is most probably Muṣṭafā Fāḍil Pāsha (1830–1875). Muṣṭafā was the son of Ibrāhīm Pāsha, who died in 1848. Khalīfa Effendi's reference to the latter as 'Vice-Roi' may indicate that the preface was written during his brief tenure as regent for Muḥammad 'Alī in 1848, or it may simply be that Khalīfa Effendi did not feel the need to explain that Ibrāhīm was not the current Khedive. Muṣṭafā was later active in the Young Turk movement, and was the father of Princess Nāzlī, who ran a famed literary salon in Cairo in the late nineteenth century. If we assume that he enrolled at the Madrasat al-Alsun when he was quite young, Khalīfa Effendi would have been in his twenties when he tutored the teenaged Muṣṭafā Fāḍil Pāsha in French in Istanbul in the mid-1840s. His appointment as head of the translation bureau attached to the Madrasat al-Alsun may then have come in the late 1840s.

Khalīfa Effendi was already an experienced translator by the time he produced his Arabic version of William Robertson's history of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, although he does not mention his earlier translations of works on logic and agriculture in the preface to *Qalā'id al-jumān* (see appendix to al-Shayyal 1951; cf. al-Shayyāl 1945, 68, and Sarkīs 1928, 834). The first of these translations was published in 1838/1839, only a couple of years after he had begun to study French at the Madrasat al-Alsun. The School's programme was evidently designed to produce results quickly. The first volume of his translation of Robertson's 1769 *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V, with a View of the Progress of Society in Europe* (via a French translation of the English) came out in 1842/1843, with the remaining three volumes appearing in 1850. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod discusses Khalīfa Effendi's translation in his classic *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe* (1963), and points out that his choice of book reflects his ideas about contemporary relations between Europe and the Arab world. Khalīfa Effendi explains his own motivation thus:

> I had a great desire to translate this work, especially because it combined two important aims: first, the history of Charles V, and second, the unveiling of the great events and the tremendous revolutions which took place in a great area of the globe, namely Europe, which moved from the most extreme degree of barbarism to the highest peak of civilization and happiness … It is also important for anyone wanting to learn about the administration of vast realms and about political principles.
> (Preface to *Itḥāf mulūk al-zamān bi-tārīkh al-Imbirāṭūr Sharlkān* Vol. 1, 1842/1843, 6, 9, trans. Abu-Lughod 1963, 74)

In Khalīfa Effendi's view, Robertson's Enlightenment-era interpretation of the reign of a sixteenth-century Holy Roman Emperor can be made directly relevant to contemporary Egypt under the Muḥammad ʿAlī dynasty. Europe has risen 'from the most extreme degree of barbarism to the highest peak of civilization and happiness', while the Muslim world has moved in the opposite direction: 'Muslims recognize this and are trying to rectify their own situation by sending students to Europe and by translating European works' (ibid., 4, trans. Abu-Lughod 1963, 156). When Khalīfa Effendi wrote these words, he had never been to Europe, although he would have read and heard much about France from his teachers who had been on student missions, including al-Ṭahṭāwī. His contemporary Fāris al-Shidyāq (whom Khalīfa Effendi may even have met, since al-Shidyāq was in Cairo in the 1830s and knew al-Ṭahṭāwī) also had a rose-tinted view of European civilisation, and was to be disappointed by some of what he found when he visited France and England (Chapter 2).

   When Khalīfa Effendi referred to 'les trois Langues' in the preface to *Qalāʾid al-jumān*, some of his readership may have been surprised that the words that followed were 'Arabe, Turque et Française'. The Ottoman Turkish version on the opposite page also uses the phrase *elsine-i selase* 'the three languages', which in established usage meant Arabic, Turkish and Persian. (The Arabic text simply says *kull min al-lughāt al-ʿArabiyya*, etc. 'all of the languages … '.) There were plenty of existing tools for learning some or all of the (traditional) 'three languages', such as a *Tercüman-ı Türkî ve Arabî* ('Turkish and Arabic Interpreter') published at Būlāq in 1837 (İhsanoğlu 2011, 136). Many of these books used the same dragoman metaphor as Khalīfa Effendi does in both the French and Arabic titles of his book. In the 1840s and 1850s, language books issued in Ottoman publishing centres such as Istanbul and Smyrna began integrating other languages into the *elsine-i selase* textbook model. Persian was the language that was dropped, and French, Italian, English and Greek were the most frequent additions (see Chapter 3 on Nassif Mallouf's language books). Khalīfa Effendi's new 'three languages', then, responds to contemporary developments in language teaching and publishing elsewhere in the Ottoman eastern Mediterranean.

   The notion of a trilingual language book, and its title, tie *Qalāʾid al-jumān* to Ottoman traditions. The contents and layout of the book, on the other hand, speak to Khalīfa Effendi's concern with learning from European scholarship, as articulated in the preface to his translation of the *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*. Khalīfa Effendi has used two principal models for his book: Lhomond's *Eléments de la grammaire française* and a phrasebook by Grégoire Hamonière (1789–1860).

The first two parts of the book – a trilingual vocabulary list and a collection of phrases – are adapted from one of the several phrasebooks for different languages published by Hamonière, starting in 1815. Little can be established about the life and background of Hamonière himself, but the publisher of his 1815 conversation guides in Spanish and Russian was Théophile Barrois, who had a bookshop at 11 quai Voltaire, just across the river from the Louvre. It is likely that al-Ṭahṭāwī, who was fond of Paris's bookshops (*Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz* III.7), was familiar with the establishment, since it was one of the few places in the city that stocked books on Arabic. An 1807 catalogue lists works such as Herbin's grammar. Several books in al-Ṭahṭāwī's personal library (as catalogued by Prakash 2016, 178–183) were published or sold by Barrois, and Barrois also published editions of Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque*, later translated by al-Ṭahṭāwī. It is therefore tempting to imagine that al-Ṭahṭāwī himself had picked up one of Hamonière's phrasebooks at Barrois' shop, and brought it back to Cairo, where it was adapted by his student Khalīfa Effendi.

That much is supposition, but the debt of Khalīfa Effendi's book to Hamonière is beyond doubt. In 1815, Hamonière brought out two books with Barrois: *Le nouveau guide de la conversation en espagnol et en français* and *Vocabulaire français et russe*. The two have similar contents, although for different languages, and Khalīfa Effendi could have consulted either, in their first or subsequent editions. Khalīfa Effendi has edited and rearranged the vocabulary lists somewhat, and he has supplied the Arabic and Turkish, but their contents and format make his debt to Hamonière clear. Khalīfa Effendi retains some specifically Christian terminology, such as *abbé*, but omits some less relevant religious and political terms (*archevêque*, *archiduc*).

The vocabulary comprises the first 50 pages of the book. Khalīfa Effendi then gives a list of verbs, by their French conjugation, which is again modelled on material from one of Hamonière's books (for example, pages 121–156 of the 1815 Russian work). The second part of the book, pages 90–200, has the dialogues. Some of the content here already chimes well with Khalīfa Effendi's scholarly and ideological priorities, such as the dialogue 'On the study of the French language' (Figure 1.5), which stresses the cultural pre-eminence of France in Europe and the world, and gives good advice for language learners ('Il faut parler le plus que vous pourrez'). Khalīfa Effendi also adds his own touches, with some remarks on history and the lessons to be learnt from it. The dialogue on touring a city is transferred to Cairo (this dialogue is discussed in Mairs forthcoming-a).

The sixth dialogue, on learning French, although taken from Hamonière, would have struck a chord with students of French at the

**Figure 1.5** Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī's *Qalā'id al-jumān fī fawā'id al-tarjumān* (1850) and Hamonière's Spanish phrasebook compared. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

Madrasat al-Alsun, especially those who found difficulty with the spoken language. Khalīfa Effendi's/Hamonière's learner says: 'J'entends un peu les auteurs à la lecture; mais je parle fort mal et je n'entends presque pas la conversation.' His interlocutor offers advice about learning the language in its social context:

> I believe that you are not frequenting society; the familiar style is full of expressions that are peculiar to it; this can only come from speaking with the French. Since I have been in France, I have applied myself more to reading than to conversation: but I have realised that the latter is no less important and for the past two months I have been frequenting the most select company.
>
> (al-Miṣrī 1850, 126)

The third part of the book, the French grammar in Arabic and Turkish, is 118 pages long. This is adapted from Lhomond's grammar, the book from which al-Ṭahṭāwī and his fellow students had studied in Paris. Khalīfa Effendi uses both French and Arabic/Turkish grammatical terminology and, as in the vocabulary and dialogues, adapts his material to his audience.

He gives example phrases such as 'le livre de Mohamet' and 'jadis il avait dans la ville d'Alexandrie une grande bibliothèque' (al-Miṣrī 1850, Part III, 5, 118). He uses the verb *frapper* to illustrate verb forms – corresponding in meaning to *ḍaraba*, the verb traditionally so used in Arabic grammars.

The Būlāq Press published *Qalā'id al-jumān* in 1850, the year in which Khalīfa Effendi's teacher al-Ṭahṭāwī was exiled to the Sudan, and shortly before the Madrasat al-Alsun was closed down. This was unfortunate timing, because it means it could not have been used at the school for which it was probably designed, at least until it reopened in 1863. Through his book, Khalīfa Effendi indirectly reveals what language teaching materials were available in Cairo to the students and teachers of the Madrasat al-Alsun at this period: works for teaching the *elsine-i selase* (certainly those published at Būlāq, and probably also those published in Constantinople and Smyrna), Lhomond's French grammar, and even some European phrasebooks, like those of Hamonière. It seems probable that al-Ṭahṭāwī and his colleagues used all of these in teaching at the Madrasat al-Alsun, and that Khalīfa Effendi himself may have used them in teaching Muṣṭafā Fāḍil Pāsha in Constantinople. While *Qalā'id al-jumān* is therefore the product of both Ottoman and European influences, Khalīfa Effendi combined this material thoughtfully and strategically to make a book that responded to the needs of his students in Cairo.

Muḥammad Qadrī Pāshā (1821–1888), like Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī, was one of the first students to study under Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī at the Madrasat al-Alsun. He was born in Mallawī to an Anatolian father and Egyptian mother and studied for a time at al-Azhar (on his life and career, see Tājir 1945, 102; al-Shayyāl 1962, 30; Castro 1991; Zack 2016, 558–559). Also like Khalīfa Effendi, he was tutor to a prince of the Muḥammad ʿAlī dynasty, Muḥammad Tawfīq Pasha (1852–1892, Khedive 1879–1892; he was the nephew of Khalīfa Effendi's student Muṣṭafā Fāḍil Pasha). Graduates of the Madrasat al-Alsun were closely connected to the royal house through networks of patronage and pedagogy.

After his studies at the Madrasat al-Alsun, Qadrī went on to specialise in legal translation, and also taught at the medical school in Cairo. He participated in the group under al-Ṭahṭāwī which translated the Napoleonic Code from French into Arabic. As well as translating legal works, Qadrī authored his own legal studies, and took a particular professional interest in the intersections and contradictions of Islamic and foreign legal codes as applied in Egypt, and in marriage law (Cuno 2015, 161–179). He served as an adviser to the Mixed Courts and held ministerial positions. The depth in which we are able to trace his career stands in contrast to the little we know about Khalīfa Effendi.

Qadrī's earliest language instruction book is intended to be used both by Europeans learning Arabic and Egyptians learning French: *La langue arabe et la langue française mises à la portée des européens et de la jeunesse égyptienne* or *al-Lāla al-saniyya fī lughatay al-'Arab wa al-Faransāwiyya* (Cadri 1861; the book itself bears dates of both 1861 and 1862 on different pages). It is dedicated to the statesman Muḥammad Sharīf Pāsha. Qadrī produced a revised edition in 1868 under the title *Nouveau guide de la conversation française et arabe, ouvrage élémentaire et classique, contenant une nouvelle méthode très facile pour apprendre aux Indigènes à parler le français et aux Européens à parler l'arabe en peu de temps / al-Durr al-nafīs fī lughatay al-'Arab wa al-Faransīs*. A later work of 1870 included Turkish along with Arabic and French – the new 'three languages' – but I have been unable to locate a copy of this. Qadrī's later works, *Abrégé de la grammaire française: traduite en arabe a l'usage de la jeunesse égyptienne* (1872) and *Alphabet et premier livre de lecture* (fourth edition 1873), both published at Būlāq, are more specifically directed at Egyptian schools; I have also been unable to consult these.

When one examines the books side by side, it is obvious that Qadrī has used Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd's *Qalā'id al-jumān* as a model. Both authors open their book with apposite quotations from the medieval poet Safī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī: in Qadrī's case, al-Ḥillī's lines on each language being like a person (*kull lisān fī al-ḥaqīqa insān*). Qadrī juxtaposes these verses with a quotation from Voltaire for good measure. The structure of the books is the same: a thematic vocabulary, then phrases. Qadrī's 1868 book is even closer to Khalīfa Effendi's, since it interpolates a list of common verbs, by French conjugation, between the vocabulary and the phrases. Many of Qadrī's sentences echo those in Khalīfa Effendi's book, with subtle changes in word order or vocabulary. For example, Qadrī offers similar advice to that quoted above on learning to speak French by frequenting 'les bonnes sociétés' (Cadri 1861, 478). Just like Khalīfa Effendi, however, Qadrī is very much a creative adapter rather than a plagiarist.

The Preface to Qadrī's work situates it within the modernising programme of Muḥammad 'Ali, who 'fit tous ses efforts pour faire renaître dans ce beau pays les arts et l'industrie' (Cadri 1861, iii). Qadrī conceives the study missions, the Madrasat al-Alsun and translation projects as central to this programme:

A school was soon established for European languages, and for reviving Arabic literature and poetry, which were practically dead. He [i.e. Muḥammad 'Alī] sent a great number of national subjects

to Europe to study sciences and arts, in their current homes, and to familiarise themselves with European ways, so that when they returned, they could spread the ideas of modern civilisation among their compatriots.

(Cadri 1861, iii)

More than two thousand practical works on all subjects were translated into Arabic by the students of the School of Languages [the 1868 edition adds here 'directed by the learned Rifaa Bey']. These translators, the majority of whom had studied law and political economy, themselves made no less a contribution to spreading ideas of progress and civilisation among their fellow citizens than did the scientific and military works that they translated. They were also usefully employed in the high branches of the administration, whether as writers or as administrators. Some of them devoted themselves to teaching and, by their diligent care, thousands of Egyptians learnt to speak French, English or Italian.

(Cadri 1861, iv)

Qadrī, who did not study in Europe himself, was one of this same generation of students at the Madrasat al-Alsun – and other institutions established in the same period – who benefited from the teaching given by the returning mission students. In his view, knowledge of a European language has become 'indispensable' to Egyptians, and French as a 'universal language' has become particularly essential. Conversely, he believes that knowledge of Arabic is 'de toute nécessité pour les européens résidant ou de passage en Égypte' (Cadri 1861, vi). As we will see in Chapter 3, by the 1860s the tourist trade was thoroughly established in Egypt, and there was a market for Arabic phrasebooks and instruction books for foreigners in Cairo.

Although Qadrī conceives his work as a 'guide de conversation française et arabe' (Cadri 1861, vii), it is on an altogether different scale to most of the phrasebooks considered in the following chapters of this book. The first, Būlāq edition, in three parts, is over a thousand pages long. The 1868 version, published by P. Cumbo, totals over eight hundred pages across two volumes. Like several of the other works produced in this period, it suffers somewhat from trying to fulfil too many functions simultaneously. It is neither a phrasebook for everyday use nor a grammar for study. It suits intermediate students (of either French or Arabic) rather than beginners, since there is no discussion of grammar and syntax, and

very little of the script and phonology. Qadrī provides a table of the Arabic alphabet, but gives only the isolated forms of the letters and little guidance on pronunciation (e.g. 'th anglais' for 'zàl' (*dhāl*), but without explaining which of the two English 'th'-sounds is meant, or that *dhāl* is usually realised in colloquial speech as 'z'; *ṣād* is given as 'sç', without further explanation). A note to the table announces that Qadrī will publish a separate work on the Arabic alphabet for foreigners. Like Nakhlah (whose work I will discuss in the following section), Qadrī includes both colloquial Egyptian and more formal Arabic (the two works are compared by Zack 2016). As Qadrī himself explains it, he has written the pronunciation of Arabic words in 'French characters' for the benefit of Europeans who cannot read the Arabic script. He has also given a literary and colloquial translation of each phrase in Arabic script. The transliterated version is colloquial, but sometimes a still more colloquial version than that given in Arabic. Thus, 'la plupart des phrases sont exprimées en arabe de trois manières' (Cadri 1861, vii).

Liesbeth Zack's analysis of the four-column division of the work makes Qadrī's strategy clearer (Zack 2017, 244–246; Table 1.1). Sometimes, the two middle columns – Arabic in Roman script, and colloquial Arabic in Arabic script – are identical. In other places, the version in Arabic script is less colloquial than the version in Roman script. In this example taken from pages 576–577 of the 1868 edition, as Zack points out, the Egyptian 'emteh' for 'what time?' (placed at the end of a question) contrasts with the more formal *fī ayy sā'a* (at the beginning of a question). In the second phrase, the *bi*-imperfect is used in the transcribed text, but not in the Arabic-script version. Both versions of the book retain this same four-column structure across their vocabularies, grouped by topic, and their phrases, grouped by the main verb used. The 1868 version adds a little to the French Preface, updating it to include praise of the new Khedive

**Table 1.1** Analysis of the four-column division of Qadrī's *La langue arabe et la langue française mises à la portée des européens et de la jeunesse égyptienne* (1868): Zack 2017, 244.

| A quelle heure reçoit le ministre des affaires étrangères. | Nazir il khàridjiieh ystacbil innas emteh | فى أى ساعه ناظالخارجية يستقبل الناس | فى أى ساعة يستقبل وزير الخارجية الناس |
|---|---|---|---|
| Il reçoit tous les vendredis à quatre heures. | Biystacbilhoum is sà'a arba'a yòm il djoum'ah | هو يستقبل الساعة أربعة فى يوم الجمعه | انه يستقبل الناس فى الساعة الرابعة من يوم الجمعة |

Ismāʿīl and announcing changes to the book based on 'l'expérience que j'ai acquise dans l'ensignement de la langue française aux Orientaux' (p. xiv); this teaching was at the medical school, but perhaps also at the reopened Madrasat al-Alsun. Qadrī states that he has chosen to follow in this new work 'une méthode plus classique et plus facile' although he does not explain this further. The order of the vocabulary has been modified, so that it now begins with the human body, rather than with God and the natural world. The lists of verbs are now ordered by their French conjugation (as Khalīfa Effendi had done) rather than by topic, a move overtly directed at Arabic-speaking learners of French rather than vice versa. A new section has been added on the conjugations of the verbs *avoir* and *être*. This is again of particular relevance to learners of French, since Arabic treats these concepts in very different ways: 'to have' is usually expressed with a preposition and possessive pronoun, and 'to be' is not expressed in the present tense at all. Qadrī's revisions therefore seem most clearly directed at Arabic speakers, not at French speakers.

The second version of the book again disrupts the order of the original slightly in the phrases, omitting to start with greetings and discussions of the time, and moving straight to phrases ordered by the verb used. Most of the phrases are generic in nature, of equal relevance to Arabic learners of French and French learners of Arabic. In the first edition, Chapter 17, 'Parler', Chapter 26, 'Apprendre, Étudier' and Chapter 27, 'Comprendre, Concevoir', use examples from French, such as 'À vous entendre parler, on vous prend pour un français' (Cadri 1861, 476). Chapter 17 also contains positive views on French as a language of international use, such as 'Il est honteux de ne pas savoir parler français' and 'On parle français dans tous les pays du monde' (Cadri 1861, 480; compare al-Miṣrī 1850, 125). Greek, German, Breton and Latin are mentioned in this section, but not Arabic. Other educational messages, consonant with Qadrī's role as a teacher, are given, such as 'Il ne suffit pas de lire. Il faut retenir ce qu'on a lu' (Cadri 1861, 562). In the 1868 edition, we find English and Turkish mentioned alongside French in the chapter 'Parler' (pp. 364–366), but again the emphasis is on acquiring good French. Elements are added that seem to speak more directly to Qadrī's personal experience and that of his students: 'C'est en Egypte que j'ai appris à parler le français. – N'avez-vous pas été en France? – Je n'y ai jamais été – Cela m'étonne, vous parlez très bien le français' (p. 366). A chapter on translation includes the following exchange (pp. 513–514):

> Les traducteurs sont-ils nombreux en Egypte?
> Il y a peu de traducteurs qui sachent traduire de l'arabe en français; mais il y en a beaucoup qui savent traduire du français en arabe.

This relates to the fact that the original purpose of the Madrasat al-Alsun was to produce translations of foreign works into Arabic, rather than vice versa.

Between them, Khalīfa Effendi, Qadrī and their colleagues at the Madrasat al-Alsun created a hybrid genre of language instruction book, which drew on both Ottoman/Arab and European traditions. As I noted above, they provide us with our best evidence on what teaching and learning at the Madrasat al-Alsun was like. It seems that teachers and students at the school had access to both Ottoman and European language instruction books; that teaching focused on translation from the target language into Arabic; and that a spoken command of European languages was valued, but considered difficult since few students had had the opportunity to visit Europe, unlike their teachers.

Khalīfa Effendi's and Qadrī's books act as a bridge between the early nineteenth-century institutional teaching of languages at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes in Paris and the Madrasat al-Alsun in Cairo, and the independent language-learning tools of the mid to late nineteenth century. They also speak to language learners of both Arabic and French, whether through design or adaptation. The Victoria and Albert Museum copy of *Qalā'id al-jumān*, as I will discuss further in Chapter 7, has the owner's inscription 'Cyril Graham (1856) Cairo'. It was acquired in Cairo by an Englishman travelling in the Middle East, and used by him to study Arabic. Although we might be sceptical about how useful a tool any of these books were for foreigners learning Arabic, they *were* employed in this way. Cumbo, who published Qadrī's 1868 book, issued an English phrasebook for travellers in Egypt only a few years later (Sacroug 1874). In Chapter 3, I will follow these and other books out of the classroom, to see how they met the needs of an emerging market of European leisure travellers in the Middle East.

## Beyond Cairo and Paris: Anton Hassan and Muḥammad 'Ayyād al-Ṭanṭāwī

### Arabic in Austria: Anton Hassan

My focus in this chapter so far has been on how people and institutions in Cairo and Paris shaped the teaching of Arabic and French to speakers of the other language, in the period from the Expédition d'Égypte to about the 1860s. It would be remiss of me not to look beyond this to how the Egyptian educational missions of the reign of Muḥammad 'Alī,

in particular, had an impact on the teaching of Arabic in other European countries. Expanding the focus in this way also allows us to see how Egyptians played a role in encouraging the teaching of vernacular, dialectal Arabic in Europe outside France. Furthermore, we can begin to explore how ideas about the teaching of Arabic to foreigners intersected with the concerns of the Arab Nahḍa. As I explained in the Introduction, my major concern in this book is not the Nahḍa per se, but in this section and in the following chapters, we will see how the ideas and personalities of the Nahḍa shaped language teaching. My subjects in this section are two teachers and language book authors who left Egypt for Europe in the period when Khalīfa Effendi and Qadrī were studying at the Madrasat al-Alsun: Muḥammad Ḥasan (known as Anton Hassan) in Austria, and Muḥammad ʿAyyād al-Ṭanṭāwī in Russia. Since I have published a more thorough biographical study of Hassan elsewhere (Mairs forthcoming-h), I do not provide here a comprehensive account of his life and work, focusing instead on his Arabic instruction books.

As I noted previously, among the foreign experts brought to Egypt by Muḥammad ʿAlī was Austrian geologist Joseph Russegger (1802–1863), who travelled widely in Egypt and the Middle East in the second half of the 1830s. Russegger proposed to Muḥammad ʿAlī that a group of students from Cairo be seconded to his geological expedition. After a year's apprenticeship, the most promising were to be sent on for further study in Austria, where they would take an intensive course in German and then study mining engineering at an Austrian institution. Muḥammad ʿAlī approved of Russegger's plan, and duly sent 10 students along to join the expedition, where they received their first instruction in the German language from Russegger's interpreter Suwatowsky, a Pole resident in Egypt (Russegger 1841, 119–120).[14] The Egyptian government implemented the plan more quickly than Russegger had anticipated, and the first students were dispatched to Austria in 1837 (according to Anton Hassan's later recollection), while Russegger was in the Sudan. Russegger returned to Europe in 1839, and noted in the account of his travels that he published two years later that the Egyptian students were now in Graz, and that he had heard that they were doing well in their training (Russegger 1841, footnote to p. 120). After some years in Graz, studying German and acquiring the necessary scholarly grounding for more specialised study, in 1843 the Egyptian students moved to the newly established Steiermärkisch-Ständische Montanlehranstalt in Vordernberg.

Muḥammad Ḥasan is not mentioned by name in Russegger's account, and we have little or no information on his life before he went to Austria, other than that he was in his late teens when he left Egypt and had

already received some education in Cairo. His career from his Vordernberg days onwards has been reconstructed by Marcel Chahrour and Lieselotte Jontes (Chahrour 2007, 132–138; Jontes 2011). 'Muhamed Hassan', born in 1819, appears in a list of students at the Vordernberg mining college in 1843–1844, along with four other Egyptians (Jontes 2011, Fig. 4). Three of the Egyptian students, including Hassan, left the institute in March 1844 because they had not met the required academic standard (Chahrour 2007, 133). The course was very demanding – the three Egyptians were certainly not the only students to drop out – but it is tempting to wonder whether the move from the larger and more cosmopolitan city of Graz also affected their motivation to continue.

Hassan found employment at the Staatsdruckerei in Vienna, where an increase in foreign-language publications had created a demand for multilingual proofreaders. The director of the press at the time was Alois Auer, himself a former language teacher, who organised language courses for Staatsdruckerei employees; it is possible that Hassan first taught Arabic there (Chahrour 2007, 133). Hassan was baptised in 1849 and took on the name Anton. Personal faith may or may not have played a part, but there would certainly have been greater opportunities available to him in Austria as a Christian. Baptism was not the only step he took to commit to life in Austria. He married an Austrian woman and also acquired Austrian citizenship. The marriage was childless and the couple divorced in 1857, on grounds of Rosa Hassan's adultery.

In 1852, Hassan began to teach Arabic at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut in Vienna, at an annual salary of 800 gulden for five contact hours a week. Internal reports on his teaching, based on classroom observation, were positive. In the summer of 1853, Hassan requested that his teaching hours be increased to six a week, to give additional time to advanced students, a request that was approved. In 1856 he was appointed professor of Vulgär-Arabisch at the Institut.

A glance at the catalogue of courses offered by the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut in 1853 shows how Hassan's colloquial Arabic fitted into the wider academic programme, and how the change of career to language teacher was not as great a leap from proofreader and mining engineer as one might imagine (see e.g. 'Kundmachung der Vorlesungen im k. k. polytechnischen Institute in Wien im Studienjahre 1853/54', *Laibacher Zeitung*, 27 August 1853). The Institut's courses were advertised in regional Austro-Hungarian newspapers. Students followed one of two main programmes: 'technical', which included courses in subjects such as elementary mathematics, practical geometry, mineralogy or agriculture; or 'commercial', with courses geared towards running a business. To be

admitted to either programme, students had to have completed six to eight years of secondary education, or else the Institut's own preparatory programme. Both streams could take Turkish, Persian or 'vulgär-arabisch' alongside their technical or commercial studies. Turkish and Persian are listed with 'professors' with German names. Anton Hassan – a new appointment – is 'provisional instructor' for Arabic. Although 'vulgär-arabisch' recalls the 'arabe vulgaire' of the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes in Paris, the two institutions were very different. At the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut in Vienna, colloquial Arabic was studied alongside vocational subjects, not classical Arabic or other Orientalist subjects.

The importance of Middle Eastern languages at the Institut can be seen in the fact that Turkish, Persian and Arabic are listed in their own section of the course catalogue 'Für beide Abtheilungen'. Other languages – French, English, 'Bohemian' (i.e. Czech) and Italian – are listed instead under 'Außerordentliche Vorlesungen', with other optional courses such as stenography and chemistry for sugar manufacture. There are other differences too. European languages are taught by teachers with the lower rank of 'Docent' or 'Lehrer', rather than 'Professor'. Judging by their names, most of these teachers seem to be native speakers. The European languages are taught with their literatures, which suggests that students might already have a fair degree of competence. The layout of the course catalogue makes it clear that Middle Eastern languages are a 'unique selling point' for the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut. In the 1850s, the lands of the Ottoman and Qajar empires offered great opportunities for precisely the kinds of technical and commercial students attracted to the school. Hassan had come to Austria in the first place on the recommendation of one of the many European men of science who sought opportunities in Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt. He was now completing the circle, by teaching Arabic to future Joseph Russeggers.

Hassan produced his own teaching materials for his Arabic course at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut at least as early as 1855, with the publication of his *Arabisches Lesebuch* (Hassan 1855). The *Lesebuch* consists of an excerpt from the epic tale of ʿAntar, a popular work commonly used as a set text in Arabic classes.[15] We may assume that this is what Hassan read with his students. In addition to the Arabic text, the book contains only a brief Foreword in German, which hints at a question that would come back to affect the development of Hassan's later career. Hassan notes that the language of the tale of ʿAntar is 'Mittel-Arabisch', which does not reach the 'correctness' of high literary Arabic. He has chosen not to modify the text to bring it closer to the classical standard

because this would fundamentally alter the style of the work. 'Der Kenner [i.e. a scholar of Classical Arabic] weiss obnehin, worin der Unterschied besteht', but Hassan implies that such a connoisseur is not his intended audience. In his course of 'Vulgär-Arabisch' at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut, he will have found it more appropriate to read with his students a text that was closer to modern colloquial registers, and unencumbered with the grammatical burdens of Classical Arabic, such as case endings.

I think it probable, however, that Hassan had begun writing and publishing his own teaching materials even before the 1855 *Lesebuch*. An anonymous 1854 *Kurzgefasste Grammatik der arabischen Sprache mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Vulgärarabischen in der Levante*, published in Regensburg, bears many similarities to Hassan's later 1869 *Kurzgefasste Grammatik der vulgär-arabischen Sprache*. The similarities, including the phraseology of the foreword, are such that either Hassan is himself the author of the anonymous work, or he has substantially plagiarised it. Because of the personal tone of the foreword, I think the former more likely:

> Any teacher of Arabic in public institutions will feel the need for a concise grammar. Sacy's language teaching book is too detailed for the beginner; its price, like that of Ewald's Grammar, also exceeds the means of most students. A concise, cheap grammar is a necessity. That is why the author has rendered Oberleitner's work into German, initially for his own students at a school in Austria. He makes no claim to originality. His only concern was to be of use to beginners. He has given special consideration to those candidates who intend to visit the Levant. There he has added some items than might lay a foundation for study of the vernacular.
>
> ([Hassan?] 1854, iii)

These remarks may be compared to Hassan's in his 1869 book, discussed below.

The anonymous author/Hassan here makes it clear that the book has been adapted from a work by Andreas Oberleitner (1789–1832). This is his 1822 Latin *Fundamenta linguae arabicae* (Oberleitner 1822). The descriptive grammar of Classical Arabic that comprises the first 116 pages of Hassan's book is indeed adapted and translated into German from Oberleitner's Latin. The verb tables, for example, are presented in exactly the same way in the two books. Beyond convenience, there are at least two good reasons why Hassan would have adapted an existing work of this sort. First, he was only a teenager when he came to Austria, and may not

have had a thorough education in Classical Arabic grammar and literature. Secondly, Oberleitner presents Arabic grammar in a format and using terminology with which Europeans will have been familiar. He uses terms such as nominative, accusative, genitive and aorist, which Hassan carries over directly into his *Kurzgefasste Grammatik*. The fact that the work is adapted from a Latin original might speak against Hassan as author, but it should be recalled that Don Raphaël and Bocthor both knew Latin, the latter learning it expressly in order to make use of European books on the Arabic language. Hassan may in any case have had assistance with the Latin from one of his colleagues or students. The convenience of this straight-forward existing grammar, published in Vienna by an author who was no longer around to assert his proprietary rights, may have outweighed the inconvenience of it being in Latin.

Another factor that might count against Hassan's authorship is the fact that the second part of the book, after the adaptation of Oberleitner's *Fundamenta linguae arabicae*, concentrates on the Arabic dialects of Palestine and Syria, not Egypt. Hassan may, however, simply once again have been making the most of materials immediately available to him, or tailoring the book to the specific needs of his students. These sections translate and/or adapt their contents from three other works, which Hassan acknowledges in the footnotes and in the preface. He has used the third, 1843, edition of Caussin de Perceval's *Grammaire arabe vulgaire, pour les dialectes d'Orient et de Barbarie* (first edition: Caussin de Perceval 1833) and another recent republication at the press of the Propaganda Fide in Rome, Agapito da Fiemme's *Flores grammaticales Arabici idiomatis ex optimis grammaticis* (Fiemme 1845). Presumably the Propaganda Fide had sourced a new Arabic font after Napoleon stole their previous one. Da Fiemme was a seventeenth-century Franciscan, and the first edition of his book – a pioneering study of dialectal Arabic, for the purposes of Catholic proselytisation – came out in 1687. These works by Caussin de Perceval and da Fiemme are both used in the first of Hassan's sections on 'die arabische Vulgärsprache', which he conceives of as a form of Middle Arabic: lacking the full grammatical complexities of Qur'ānic Arabic, displaying regional features (especially in pronunciation), but still a suitable vehicle for written literature and (Christian) scripture. After this grammatical description, there follows (pp. 141–155) a translation of the American missionary Eli Smith's notes on the pronunciation of Syrian Arabic, from the appendix to Smith's travelling companion Edward Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine* (Robinson 1841). We will encounter Smith again in Chapter 2. Hassan's book concludes with some 'Arabische Leseübungen nach der Vulgärsprache in Nazareth' (pp. 156–161), which are Christian texts (the

Apostles' Creed, the parable of the prodigal son and so on), again taken from Agapito da Fiemme's book.

Several of the language manuals I have already discussed in this chapter have a close intertextual relationship with one another – where they do not simply plagiarise – but Hassan is unusually open and generous in acknowledging his indebtedness to other works. This continues in his 1869 *Kurzgefasste Grammatik der vulgär-arabischen Sprache*, in which he is credited as author. In the foreword to this, he expands upon his remarks in the 1854 grammar about the practical needs of Arabic learners. Hassan's students at the technical school were not the typical market for specialist academic tomes: they were technicians and businessmen, studying languages so they could get on in their careers, not scholars or gentlemen of leisure. Previous Arabic textbooks were simply too expensive to serve this constituency. There was therefore a gap in the market for a shorter, cheaper work: 'Many listeners (i.e. students) and probably also many teachers of Vulgar Arabic in public institutions will have long felt the need for a concise textbook on this language, which is not too expensive' (Hassan 1869, iii). Hassan has been driven to produce such a work 'in the interest of my own pupils'.

Hassan states that the only really original elements of his *Kurzgefasste Grammatik* are the dialogues (see Zack 2017 on these as a source for contemporary colloquial Egyptian Arabic). The grammar section draws on the structure and contents of his own 1854 work, but is expressly for the colloquial language, not Classical Arabic. It is also compiled from a number of previous works in French and German, which Hassan helpfully lists in the Preface: Caussin de Perceval's 1824 *Grammaire arabe vulgaire*, al-Ṭanṭāwī's *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire* of 1848 (discussed below), Wahrumund's *Praktisches Handbuch der neu-arabischen Sprache* and Wolff's *Arabischer Dragoman* of 1857. Hassan also borrows the Arabic title of the *Kurzgefasste Grammatik* from al-Ṭanṭāwī's *Traité*: *Aḥsan al-nuḫab ī ma'rifat lisān al-'arab* ('The Best Selected Pieces for Learning the Arabic Language').

The major innovation of Hassan's 1869 work on his 1854 one – aside from the concentration on Middle or colloquial rather than Classical Arabic – is his inclusion of many example sentences and about 65 pages of dialogues. He has not been entirely upfront in his declaration that these are the only original part of the book, however, since some of them have been adapted from Qadrī's *Nouveau guide de la conversation française et arabe*. Compare, for example, the extracts in Table 1.2.

Note how Hassan has also retained Qadrī's use of French as the topic of the conversation, switching to German only later. The same advice

**Table 1.2** Comparison of extracts from Qadrī and Hassan.

| Qadrī 1861, 478 | Hassan 1869, 206 |
| --- | --- |
| Vous prononcez très-bien. | Sie haben eine sehr gute Aussprache. |
| Il vous faut souvent parler français. | Sie müssen oft französisch sprechen. |
| La crainte de mal parler me retient souvent. | Die Besorgniss schlecht zu sprechen hält mich oft zurück. |
| Ne craignez rien. | Fürchten Sie nichts. |
| Parlez souvent; soit bien, soit mal. | Sprechen Sie oft, ob gut ob schlecht. |
| J'ai la peine à m'exprimer en français. | Ich habe Mühe, mich im Deutschen auszudrücken. |

borrowed by Qadrī from Khalīfa Effendi on learning to speak the language by frequenting good society follows.

Hassan does contribute a great deal of his own original material in the dialogues, but the unacknowledged debt to Qadrī is clear. For some phrases, Hassan has simply switched Qadrī's French for German, and adapted the transliteration used in the most colloquial of Qadrī's Arabic options (e.g. *Làzim innak titcallim kitir bil fransàwi* becomes *lázim ánnak tet'kállam ketîr bi'l-fransâui*). Hassan would later himself be the victim of a more insidious form of plagiarism, when his work was 'borrowed' (and name misspelt) by Carl Thimm in his *Arabic Self-Taught* (Chapter 3).

The dialogues provide us with the best chance of accessing Hassan's classroom practice at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut and subsequently. Hassan's approach to the dialogues in the *Kurzgefasste Grammatik* differs fundamentally from that of many other grammar and phrasebook writers of the nineteenth century (Zack 2017, 246–247). We have already seen how Qadrī presented several different registers of Arabic in his phrasebook, with the most colloquial option tending to be the one in Roman script. Hassan, in contrast, presents a single colloquial or mixed register in both Arabic and Romanised script. I will return to this tension between standard literary and colloquial Egyptian Arabic after discussing the content of Hassan's dialogues.

There is already a certain amount of 'classroom Arabic' in Hassan's example sentences to the grammar. We find, for example, 'mîn 'allámak el-'árabi/Wer hat Sie im Arabischen unterrichtet', 'ádi el-chôgeh ílli 'allámni el-lisân el-'árabi/Das ist der Professor, der mich im Arabischen unterrichtet hat', and 'el-chátth dā mâ hûsch mufássir/Diese Schrift ist nicht leserlich' (Hassan 1869, 21–22). The dialogues themselves open,

as might be expected, with greetings, and there follow a large number of phrases for enquiring about and describing one's (ill) health (pp. 179–186); the order of the chapters is the same as that used by Qadrī. It is tempting to see Hassan's personal concerns reflected in this, since he suffered from very poor health throughout his years in Vienna. Pages 186–193 cover the weather, with some wistful remarks on the differences between the climate in Austria and Egypt ('el-máthat nâdir fi maçr/In Egypten Regnet es selten'). Again, although this is typical material for a language instruction book, the priority given to such phrases happens to correspond to Hassan's own personal situation. His health problems were compounded by the cold and damp in Austria, and he returned to Egypt to convalesce for four and a half years in the early 1870s, before dying in Vienna in March of 1876 (Chahrour 2007, 135–138).

The section on telling the time is laid out in a way suggestive of classroom conversation practice. It opens with the question 'What time is it?', posed in two different ways ('es-sâ'a kâm/Wie viel Uhr ist es?', 'min fádhlak qul li es-sâ'a kâm/Sagen Sie mir gefälligst, wie viel Uhr es ist'), and proceeds through a series of possible answers. There are places where a teacher's input would be necessary for a student to make the best use of the book; it would not be clear to someone studying by themselves, for example, why two possible phrases are listed for 'Es ist Nacht' or 'Der Tag endet' (Hassan 1869, 199). Similarly, the section 'fī al-'umr/Vom Alter' opens with variations on the question ''úmrak kâm sáne/Wie alt sind Sie?' (Hassan 1869, 202) and provides a repertoire of possible answers which the student could use with the teacher or their classmates. Some of the answers presuppose a fairly young student body, which would correspond with that of the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut ('abûk 'úmru kâm sáne/Wie alt ist Ihr Vater?', 'fât sinn el-chamsîn/ Er ist fünfzig Jahre vorüber': Hassan 1869, 204).

More than half of the total page count of the dialogues is occupied by phrases to do with speaking, learning and knowing, divided into the following sections (with the page numbers shown):

205–216: Vom Sprechen / fī al-takallum
216–220: Vom Lehren und Lernen / fī al-ta'līm wa al-ta'allum
221–229: Vom Wissen / fī al-'ilm wa al-dirāya
230–233: Vom Kennen und Erkennen / fī al-ma'rifa wa al-khibra
233–242: Vom Sagen / fī al-qawl wa al-akhbār

There is a striking absence of anything to do with Arabic literature or travel in the Middle East: although al-Ṭanṭāwī (see below) includes sample letters

to Egyptian officials and Arab songs, Hassan keeps his students' focus firmly in the classroom. The phrases he provides include exhortations to language learners. Native-level competence and good pronunciation are held up as ideals to aspire to: 'Sie haben eine sehr gute Aussprache', 'Sie sprechen wie ein Araber', 'Wenn man Sie sprechen hört, hält man Sie für einen Araber' (Hassan 1869, 205). The presence of a native-speaker teacher is implicit in much of such content.

Hassan's emphasis is on practice in conversing in Arabic, and he is aware of the need to bolster students' confidence in their speaking ability; he therefore retains much of Qadrī's content on this topic. To reservations such as 'Die Besorgniss schlecht zu sprechen hält mich oft zurück' and 'Ich habe Mühe, mich im Deutschen auszudrücken', he responds by emphasising the need to speak the language often and without fear of making mistakes: 'Sie müssen oft französisch sprechen'; 'Fürchten Sie nichts'; 'Sprechen Sie oft, ob gut ob schlecht'; 'Sie brauchen nichts als Muth' (Hassan 1869, 206). The inclusion of the phrase 'bijet'kállam biḥaflatha / Er spricht wie ein Buch' (Hassan 1869, 210: not in Qadrī) hints at avoiding the kind of 'book Arabic' which al-Ṭahṭāwī had observed in Silvestre de Sacy, and which Hassan himself must have frequently encountered in Vienna (the Arabic phrase refers to someone speaking as if they are presiding over a ceremony or formal occasion). Despite the fact that Hassan was by 1869 teaching at the Kaiserlich-königliche Orientalische Akademie, there is a 'shoutout' to the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut, suggesting that he was reusing materials already developed for use in his classes there ('In welchem Collegium haben Sie studirt? Ich habe an der polytechnischen Schule studirt': Hassan 1869, 218[16]). Mention of studying mathematics and geometry further supports this idea (Hassan 1869, 219).

Hassan's teaching career carves out its own place at the intersection of several notional Venn diagrams: colloquial dialectal versus written Arabic; native teacher versus European Orientalist; written versus spoken command of a language; technical school versus academe. Hassan was constantly frustrated in his attempts to secure recognition from the academy. There were two major issues at stake. First, and most fundamentally, there was the issue of his own livelihood: Hassan struggled to get by financially in Vienna, and his medical bills were unmanageably high. He sought a university position to save himself from financial embarrassment. Secondly, there was the issue of the position of colloquial, spoken Arabic as a subject of study in European universities. Hassan recognised that, just as European Arabists often had difficulty in actually speaking the language, native speakers were often not well equipped to teach Arabic

grammar and literature. He saw Arab and European teachers as having complementary skill sets:

> I know very well that one can speak a language and yet be unable to read it, that an Arab cannot automatically transfer the spirit of European philologists to his language, and that, bearing this in mind, [European universities/scholars] have often proceeded very cautiously in appointing native Arabs [to teach], so that grammar has been taught by a European scholar and practical exercises delivered by an Arab, as, for example, in St. Petersburg.
>
> > (Quoted by Chahrour 2007, 134–135, from the archives of the Technisches Universität Wien. Hassan is probably thinking of al-Ṭanṭāwī in St Petersburg, whose status as an Arabic teacher there will be considered below.)

Hassan constantly advocated for a new, practical approach to teaching spoken Arabic alongside traditional Orientalist scholarship, a topic on which he delivered a lecture at the meeting of the Deutsches Morgenländisches Gesellschaft in Vienna in 1858 (Deutsches Morgenländisches Gesellschaft 1859, 320). In the following year, he wrote to the University of Vienna to request that he be appointed to give some lectures there on colloquial Arabic. He stressed his qualifications as both a native speaker and a 'theoretician'. As Marcel Chahrour has pointed out, this indicates that for Hassan this was a matter not just of applying for a job to earn a salary, but of receiving recognition as an academic teacher (Chahrour 2007, 136). Even though he was allowed to introduce a course in colloquial Arabic at the University, this recognition was still in part denied him. Reinforcing the gulf between spoken colloquial Arabic taught by a native speaker at the Polytechnisches Institut and literary Arabic taught by European Orientalists at the University, the Sanskritist Anton Boller remarked that he thought colloquial Arabic unnecessary for University students (Chahrour 2007, 136). In a listing of University of Vienna academics and their courses for 1863–1864, Hassan appears towards the very end of the list for the Faculty of Philosophy, above only adjuncts and assistants, as a 'Lehrer' for the 'vulgär-arabische Sprache' (Mushacke 1863, 106). Several of his fellow language teachers from the Polytechnisches Institut appear alongside him, indicating that the two institutions often shared the same more junior staff for conducting the practical teaching of languages. Jakob Goldenthal, author of a Hebrew-language Arabic grammar (Goldenthal 1857; see Chapter 6), appears as an Extraordinary Professor, teaching two hours a week of 'Arab.

Gramm. in Verbindung mit prakt. Leseübg.', two on Sadi's 'Gulistan' and two on Rabbinical-philosophical literature (Mushacke 1863, lxxi). Professor Friedrich Müller is listed as teaching three hours of 'Arabische Schriftsteler', alongside two hours on Malayo-Polynesian linguistics (Mushacke 1863, lxxii). There are no Arabs other than Hassan listed as faculty members.

Hassan continued to teach part-time at both the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut and the University of Vienna, but his main employment from 1862 onwards was at the k.k. Akademie für Orientalische Sprachen, known as the 'Orientalische Akademie'. Courses at the Orientalische Akademie were popular. In 1868, 35 students took Hassan's 'vulgär-Arabisch' classes. He seems to have been well regarded as a teacher by his colleagues (Chahrour 2007, 136–137).

As I have already discussed, elements of Hassan's *Kurzgefasste Grammatik* hint that the work originated in teaching materials he had put together – whether 'borrowed' from other grammars of Arabic or written fresh – for his students at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut. His emphasis on the need for a cheap and convenient Arabic grammar is also in keeping with the notion that he had already been circulating his own teaching notes. These materials could date back to the early 1850s. Other parts of his book, however, were clearly composed while he was primarily teaching at the Orientalische Akademie, in the late 1860s, immediately before its publication. If one opens the book Arabic-style (i.e. from the 'back' for a European), it commences with 20 pages of short Arabic reading passages. These describe topical events from the late 1860s, such as the 1867 establishment of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, the Paris Exposition universelle (also 1867), an outbreak of rinderpest in Transylvania and the aftermath of the Third Italian War of Independence. The passages contain sparing use of vowel marks – sparing, but still significant, compared to other parts of the book, where unvowelled Arabic is given alongside a Romanisation. The reading passages, for which no transcription is supplied, therefore seem to be directed at a slightly different student audience from the dialogues – one whose goal is principally to read rather than to speak, and which might already have some background in literary Arabic, enabling them to predict the pronunciation of most words without the help of vowel marks.

It is therefore possible to discern something of how Hassan adapted his teaching style and materials for different institutions and student bodies in Vienna, and how throughout his career his own position shifted subtly between the opposing poles of 'native informant' and Orientalist scholar. His teaching materials were born of a complex, composite authorship,

in which he freely acknowledged borrowing text directly from other works published by Arabs and Europeans. This borrowing was both an intellectual and a practical strategy: he might as well make good use of existing textbooks, and he knew his students at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut could not afford these, so copying and circulating them (as I assume he did) was doubly productive.

## Arabic in Russia: Muḥammad ʿAyyād al-Ṭanṭāwī

It is useful to contrast Hassan's struggle to make a living and achieve academic recognition in Vienna with the position of other Arabic teachers in European institutions in the mid- to late nineteenth century. There is a clear divide between the status accorded those who had themselves had a higher education – in Egypt or in Europe – and those who had not. There is also a divide between those who were recruited by European universities from Egypt specifically in order to teach Arabic, and those who travelled to Europe for other personal or professional reasons and ended up teaching Arabic to support themselves. Muḥammad ʿAyyād al-Ṭanṭāwī (1810–1861), for example, travelled to St Petersburg in 1840, not long after Hassan first went to Austria to study mining engineering. Al-Ṭanṭāwī had moved in intellectual circles in Egypt. He had studied at al-Azhar, enjoyed a formidable reputation as a scholar even while still in his twenties, and collaborated with resident European Orientalists. Al-Ṭanṭāwī was recruited by the Russian Consul in Egypt to teach Arabic at the University of St Petersburg, on the recommendation of European Orientalists resident there. He was accorded a Chair in Arabic at St Petersburg in 1847, aged 37; at the same age, Anton Hassan was still scraping by on his classes at the k.k. Polytechnisches Institut.

Shortly after his arrival in St Petersburg, at the request of the Orientalist Christian Frähn, al-Ṭanṭāwī wrote a short account of his early life and education (text: Kosegarten 1850, 49–55, and Krachkovskii 1929, 89–93; German translation: Kosegarten 1850, 55–60; see also Halaby 2019 on al-Ṭanṭāwī and his works). He dwells in particular on the lectures he attended and books he studied at al-Azhar from the age of 13. When he was 18, his father died; he was deeply affected by the loss, and was unable to work productively for almost two years. Some time after his recovery, al-Ṭanṭāwī met the French Orientalist Fulgence Fresnel, later consul at Jeddah, who he recalled 'loves the Arabic language'. He took French lessons from Fresnel, and worked with him on his Arabic. Al-Ṭanṭāwī found that through teaching a capable student such as Fresnel and reading Arabic works with him, his own command of Arabic literature improved.

He met other foreigners through Fresnel, who had heartily recommended him as a teacher of Arabic language and literature.

Al-Ṭanṭāwī himself does not give much detail about his social networks among the scholars and Orientalists of Cairo, but they were wide-reaching. His teachers included al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Ṭahṭāwī, and he maintained a correspondence with the latter while he was in Russia (Krachkovskii 1929, 14–17, 21; al-Shayyāl 1962, 39–40, 84). Like al-Ṭahṭāwī, al-Ṭanṭāwī moved in both Azharian and European Orientalist circles. Al-Ṭanṭāwī, however, was not so directly involved in Muḥammad ʿAlī's educational and modernising projects. In contrast to al-Ṭahṭāwī, and despite his career as a teacher and scholar of Arabic in Egypt and Europe, al-Ṭanṭāwī seems to have had serious misgivings about the manner in which translation was carried out. In his autobiographical sketch, al-Ṭanṭāwī says that he was asked to 'serve the Pasha' on many occasions, but that he was not inclined to do so (text: Kosegarten 1850, 54–55, and Krachkovskii 1929, 93; German translation: Kosegarten 1850, 60). His principal reason for refusing was that he would no longer be able to teach at al-Azhar, but his concerns were also scholarly and linguistic. Without specifying whom he is talking about, he states that 'their work is loathsome' (*muqrifa*) since:

> the translator comes up with ridiculous words that make no sense so that the corrector [of the text] only understands the meaning after a lot of headache, and moreover they are arrogant.

The plural 'they' of this passage is not defined ('translator' is in the singular), but it seems clear that (despite his friendship with al-Ṭahṭāwī) al-Ṭanṭāwī is thinking of the translators trained at the Madrasat al-Alsun – like Khalīfa Effendi and Qadrī – and the translations they were already producing in the years before he left Egypt. His criticism seems to be directed at the use of neologisms, or the kinds of creative translation needed in order to find or create Arabic words for unfamiliar European political and scientific terms.

What his criticism is not directed at is the register of Arabic used, since al-Ṭanṭāwī both had a scholarly interest in Egyptian colloquial Arabic and defended its use as a register suitable for educated discourse. Among the manuscripts he brought with him to St Petersburg was an early seventeenth-century work on colloquial Egyptian by Yūsuf al-Maghribī (d. 1611), *Dafʿ al-iṣr ʿan kalām ahl Miṣr* ('Removing the Burden from the Speech of the People of Egypt'), an invaluable source on the kind of colloquial Arabic spoken in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Egypt (Zack 2001, 2004). Al-Maghribī was keen to demonstrate that many

words considered 'incorrect' in fact had solid Arabic roots, and to defend the use of Egyptian colloquialisms, which he felt were unfairly mocked. His influence is perhaps visible in al-Ṭanṭāwī's *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire*, a work that I discuss more fully below. The *Traité* opens with the statement that he has thought it useful to publish 'ce petit ouvrage sur l'arabe vulgaire d'Égypte' because it is important to know a language as it is truly spoken in a country:

> This idiom is not only spoken by all classes of society, but even by scholars, the majority of whom use it to explain works in literary Arabic. Although the latter is regarded as a sacred language ... nevertheless people make fun of someone who uses it as an everyday language and call him a محفلط 'pedant'.
>
> (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, v)

The word al-Ṭanṭāwī uses for 'pedant' – *muḥaflaṭ* – is from the same root as the word Hassan uses when he describes someone speaking too formally: *bi ḥaflaṭa*. Al-Ṭanṭāwī's conception of the diglossic relationship between colloquial Egyptian and literary Arabic differs subtly from that described by many of his contemporaries, both Arab and European. Rather than a division between a popular and a scholarly-religious language, he emphasises the importance of colloquial Egyptian Arabic even in the sphere of scholarship. His views on this seem to have influenced or reinforced Hassan's. The colloquial is not treated as a degraded form of the literary register: it is in fact inappropriate to use the latter in most social contexts. Al-Ṭanṭāwī gives us a sense of the actual sociolinguistic landscape of contemporary Cairo, one of which even foreigners with good Arabic could be unaware. He recounts how Fresnel was surprised to find even the poet Muḥammad Shihāb sometimes speaking 'comme un simple bourgeois, ابن بلد [ibn balad]' (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, vi). Al-Ṭanṭāwī's predecessor in teaching Arabic at St Petersburg University, Osip Senkovskii, also preferred to play down the distinction between classical and colloquial Arabic, although his priority was the literary language, which he taught using Sacy's grammar (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010, 164).

Al-Ṭanṭāwī knew Edward Lane during the latter's second stay in Egypt from 1833–1834, and maintained a long working relationship with him through correspondence (Thompson 2009, 297; Kudsieh 2016, 55–56; on other relationships between Egyptian and European scholars, see Öhrnberg 2004). He was Lane's collaborator on his translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* (Lane 1840), and the person to whom Lane

refers when he mentions 'my sheykh' in the notes to this work. Al-Ṭanṭāwī, in Cairo and St Petersburg, would send Lane, in London, his annotations on the printed Arabic text, with copious notes on the language and content. Lane acknowledged that the text had been 'revised and corrected, and illustrated with numerous manuscript notes, by a person whom I think I may safely pronounce the first philologist of the first Arab college of the present day, the sheykh Moḥammad ʾEiyád Eṭ-Ṭanṭáwee', although he downplays al-Ṭanṭāwī's contribution slightly by adding that he found most of the notes 'unnecessary, from the knowledge of the modern Arabic which I have acquired during my intercourse with the people who speak it' (Lane 1840, xii). Paulo Horta has noted, however, that 'Al-Tantawi had a more expansive sense of his contribution to the translation' (Horta 2017, 160); it might be fairer to consider Lane and al-Ṭanṭāwī as coauthors. The relationship between Lane and his latter collaborator, Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī, is recounted by ʿAlī Mubārak in his *Khiṭaṭ al-tawfīqiyya al-jadīda* ('The New Tawfiqian Description', XI, 9–13; Mubārak, trans. Fliedner, 1990). ʿAlī Mubārak compares Lane's Arabic favourably to that of Silvestre de Sacy. Lane is probably also the model for the unnamed Orientalist (*al-mustashriq*) in Mubārak's didactic novel *ʿAlam al-dīn* (see e.g. Dykstra 1977). During his first and second stays in Cairo, in the 1820s and 1830s, Lane lived on the Sūq al-Khashshāb (Thompson 2009, 50), a 10-minute or so walk northeast of Azbakiyya.

Al-Ṭanṭāwī enjoyed a high reputation as an Arabic teacher and scholar among the European residents of Cairo. Among them were two successive dragomans at the Russian consulate, N. Mukhin and Rudolf Frähn. Rudolf Frähn was the son of the Orientalist Christian Martin Frähn (1782–1851) who was seeking an Arab scholar to teach Arabic in St Petersburg. The Russian consul in Cairo, A. I. Medem, recommended al-Ṭanṭāwī, because of his reputation as a scholar and teacher, and because of his youth: he was not yet 30 (Kirillina 2005, 166–167). Muḥammad ʿAlī approved the appointment, and furthermore instructed al-Ṭanṭāwī to learn Russian so that he might be of service to Egypt in the future, as those Egyptian scholars sent on educational missions to other European countries had been. Al-Ṭanṭāwī, however, was not to return to Egypt. He did learn to speak Russian, although an academic who knew him, Mikhail Navrotskii, recalled that 'the shaykh had a peculiar accent' (Kirillina 2005, 173).

After his arrival in Russia in 1840, via Odessa, al-Ṭanṭāwī taught initially at the Institute of Oriental Languages of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an institution established on the model of the French École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes (Kirillina 2005, 168). His *Traité* is

the product of his teaching experiences there. In 1847, on Senkovskii's retirement, he was appointed to the Chair of Arabic at St Petersburg University. Despite falling into ill health in the late 1850s, he retained this position for the rest of his life.

As noted above, al-Ṭanṭāwī's *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire / Aḥsan al-nukhab fī maʿrifat lisān al-ʿArab* is devoted to the Egyptian dialect. It was written during his time at the Institute of Oriental Languages in St Petersburg and thus likely reflects his teaching practice there. It is dedicated to Nesselrode, the Russian foreign minister, and opens with an ode in French and Arabic on the occasion of the birth of Grand Duke Nicholas Alexandrovich (three years after his arrival in Russia, in 1843), in which he pays tribute to his imperial patrons: 'je ne suis qu'un hôte dans votre Empire, mais qu'ils sont nombreux, les bienfaits que vous avez prodigués à tour vos hôtes et à tous ceux qui vous on visités' (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, no pagination). The book was printed in Leipzig, probably because of better access to Arabic printing expertise in a city with a long tradition of Orientalism (in 1914, the St Petersburg Arabist I. Y. Krachkovskii still had to send the Arabic sections of his doctoral thesis to be printed in the Netherlands: Kratchkovsky 1953, 109). The publisher, Vogel, had considerable experience in printing works in non-Roman scripts, particularly Hebrew and Greek, although little by this date in Arabic. In the same year, 1848, Vogel also published an Arabic edition of a work by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (Sanûsî, ed. Wolff, 1848). That al-Ṭanṭāwī did not publish in Russian was not unusual for Orientalists of foreign origin in Russia at the time. Christian Frähn did not speak Russian, and delivered classes at the University of Kazan in Latin (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010, 97–98). In 1841, al-Ṭanṭāwī wrote to his friend Edward Lane that 'I have now started to learn Russian, although I give my explanations to the pupils only in French' (Richards 1999, 3). After eight years in the country, al-Ṭanṭāwī's French may still have been stronger than his Russian, since the language was widely spoken by the St Petersburg scholars and diplomats with whom he would have come into contact. He seems nevertheless to have been assisted in the written French of the book by St Petersburg colleagues (Halaby 2019, 139). Publishing in French in Germany could also have been designed to give the book a wider potential audience.

The length and depth in which al-Ṭanṭāwī discusses the ways in which the Egyptian colloquial differs from 'arabe littéraire' (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, vi–xxv) suggests that the work is directed at students who already have a good knowledge of formal Arabic. It uses Arabic script without transcription or explanation of the writing system, and there is no grammatical explanation other than what the student derives implicitly

from the text. Students will also therefore probably have required a teacher, especially since the script is unvowelled. It begins by introducing a series of basic vocabulary items (house, father, mother, book, town and so on) in the singular dual and plural, then in *iḍāfa* ('construct state' or 'genitive construction') forms with one another. Prepositions, adjectives, comparatives and superlatives are then gradually added to build longer phrases, so that by page 4 the student has reached 'la Néva est-elle plus large que la Seine?' and by page 6 'l'eau de la Néva est extrêmement froide'. Short sections on key parts of speech, such as numerals, pronouns and the demonstrative, follow. Each new grammatical element is introduced in short phrases, but with no explicit explanation. Al-Ṭanṭāwī moves on to sections with the titles 'Verbe être' and 'Verbe avoir', considering the language from a European language perspective, since Arabic does not usually express being and possession with a verb at all. The vocabulary and grammatical forms used are colloquial Egyptian (*mā- ... -sh* for the negative, *rāḥ* for the verb 'go': see further Woidich 1995 on Egyptian dialect in the work).

The following sections provide plenty of examples to illustrate verbal forms and syntax, but again without direct explanation. Several of the phrases are relevant to Russia (e.g. p. 19 'l'Empereur est allé à Moscou', which uses *al-qayṣar* for the Russian tsar), and while there is plenty of content that might be used in a diplomatic or governmental context (p. 23: 'a vous entendre parler de Constantinople, on croirait que vous y avez passé toute votre vie'; p. 44: 'j'ai vu aujourd'hui le drogman de la mission anglaise; il ne m'a rien dit touchant cette affaire'), there is very little of specific reference to the Arab world or to travel. Classroom phrases and reflections on language are also almost entirely absent, although included in the literary excerpts towards the end of the book we find some (unattributed) lines from Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥilli, which al-Ṭanṭāwī translates 'La connaissance des langues est pour l'homme de la plus grande utilité / Étudiez-les avec zèle, car celui qui connaît plusieurs langues, vaut plusieurs hommes' (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, 220–221). This is the same poet quoted by both Qadrī and Khalīfa Effendi in their books, with some of the same lines quoted by Qadrī – although quite freely translated.

Pages 16 to 100 are devoted to parallel columns of French and Arabic phrases, arranged according to keywords used, first alphabetically in French, then in Arabic (sans, selon, si, sous, suivant; zamān, zayy, sābiq, sāʿāt). There follow Arabic formulae and greetings (pp. 100–109) and proverbs (pp. 110–133). The remainder of the book consists of sample correspondence to acquaintances, government officials and professionals, in both simple and elevated literary styles, with receipts and contracts, and

a short section of untranslated Arabic stories and proverbs (pp. 133–231). Al-Ṭanṭāwī points out (in Arabic) that it is customary even for those who are not literate to go to a letter writer and have him write for them, or choose from a book of correspondence (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, 133). Most of these letters are addressed to anonymous correspondents ('N.N' in French, *filān* in Arabic), but some of the more literary ones do contain the names of individuals. Among these is Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (p. 156: named in the Arabic but not in the French translation), who, like al-Ṭanṭāwī, also collaborated with Lane. A long letter is addressed to al-Ṭahṭāwī: 'al-ustādh al-sayyid Rifāʿa' ('the teacher *sayyid* Rifāʿa'). Al-Ṭanṭāwī reflects on what he had heard from al-Ṭahṭāwī about his time in Paris:

> I am enchanted by the European way of life, by their gaiety, their customs, their education; I admire their country houses, surrounded by gardens and flowers, and other curiosities which you saw a long time before I did, in Paris. Petersburg in no way yields to Paris, and is superior to it in several points, for example by the breadth of its streets. I do not suffer from the cold, but I have still been obliged to wrap up my neck and cover myself with a good fur coat.
>
> (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, 171)

Another letter along similar lines, but to an anonymous correspondent, describes how different the climate in St Petersburg is from that in Cairo:

> Everything would be going well here, if the Neva had already frozen over. It has already frozen once, at the beginning of November, and little bridges had already been put over the ice, but the thaw came, the ice went away, and the Neva is today as free of ice as the Nile: something rare and almost unheard of this late in the season, since we are already at the beginning of December, and last year the river was already frozen over from the beginning of November.
>
> (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, 167)

Another sample letter addresses an unnamed (*filān*) 'mudīr madrasat al-alsun / chef d'une école des langues étrangères', congratulating him on having received an honour (al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, 142–143). He may be thinking of al-Ṭahṭāwī in Cairo (although he was not in a position to pay a call on him that evening, as the letter states), or engaging in wishful thinking about his own position in St Petersburg.

The *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire / Aḥsan al-nukhab fī maʿrifat lisān al-ʿArab* is a work that wears its scholarship lightly. It is born of

al-Ṭanṭāwī's teaching experience in Cairo and St Petersburg. It is not a 'teach yourself' book, and does require an Arabic-speaking teacher to be of use to a student. It is not surprising, given al-Ṭanṭāwī's close and productive working relationships with the foreigners he taught in Cairo, that he should place a book in an auxiliary position to the teacher–pupil interaction. Al-Ṭanṭāwī's focus is on practical Arabic, and he deliberately breaks down the distinction between *fuṣḥā* and *ʿāmmiyya*: *ʿāmmiyya* is used even by scholars, and *fuṣḥā* makes its way into the lives and communication practices even of uneducated people, through their use of letter-writers.

Al-Ṭanṭāwī was not the only Arab teacher of Arabic at St Peterburg in the mid-nineteenth century. ʿAbdalla Kalzī al-Ḥalabī (1819–1912), also known as Fyodor Il'ich Kel'zi, was an Armenian Catholic from Aleppo who moved to the Russian Empire in 1837 (on his life, see Ivanov and Mel'nichenko 2000, 28). He lived first in Odessa, then moved to St Petersburg, where he taught Syrian Arabic at the University of St Petersburg from 1856 to 1882. For the first five years, he was a junior colleague of al-Ṭanṭāwī. In 1863, after al-Ṭanṭāwī's death, Kalzī published a Russian-language Arabic phrasebook (al-Ḥalabī 1863), with a translation of some of Ivan Krylov's animal fables into Arabic, displayed in a two-column format with facing Russian text. The title page stated that this was for the use of students in the Oriental Faculty at the university, where it will have complemented al-Ṭanṭāwī's grammar, and other works in languages other than Russian.

*Russko-Arabskie obshchestvennie razgovory* – 'Russian–Arabic Social Conversations' – has the relatively prosaic Arabic title *Mukālamāt fī al-lugha al-Rūsiyya wa al-lugha al-ʿArabiyya al-mustaʿmala* ('Conversations in Russian and Customary Arabic'), without the rhymed prose used in many previous works. Kalzī describes the Arabic used in his book as *mustaʿmala* – 'customary, in use'. The Russian (but not the Arabic) states further that the Arabic is that used in Syria and in provinces of Turkey and Persia. This is not, however, a work on dialectal Arabic. Like al-Ṭanṭāwī, Kalzī has chosen the middle road of a fairly formal register, which lacks both strongly dialectal features and the *ʾiʿrāb* and other complex grammatical features of Classical Arabic. It is a register not dissimilar to the elementary *fuṣḥā* taught to foreign learners of Arabic today. The book is for someone who already knows how to read the Arabic script, although some of the text – especially towards the beginning of the book – has vowel marks.

Kalzī writes in the book's introduction that 'for the successful assimilation of any language, practice is necessary' (al-Ḥalabī 1863, unpaginated).

The student needs more than just reading and grammatical theory, and because *vostochnye yazyki* 'Eastern languages' present particular difficulty to students, they need practical exercises in these all the more. This conviction comes from his seven years' experience of practical teaching of Arabic in St Petersburg. Kalzī notes that there are no existing Russian textbooks suitable for his students, so he has 'borrowed' (*zaimstvovana*) from a book called 'Social Russian–German–French Conversations'. This must be *Russko-Frantsuzsko-Nemetskie obshchestvennye razgovory* (Coursier 1860), published in St Petersburg just a few years earlier, adapted by I. Paul'son from an original French–German phrasebook by Edouard Coursier, the earliest version of which goes back to 1835. Like other authors discussed in this chapter, such as Khalīfa Effendi and Anton Hassan, Kalzī has taken the model of an existing European language book and composed Arabic text to replace the original target language. More conventional grammar–translation Russian textbooks of written Arabic were produced by émigrés such as the Moscow-based Damascene Mikhail Osipovich Attaya (1852–1924; Attaya 1884) and Damascene-Kievan Tawfik Gavrilovich Kezma (1882–1958).

## Fī 'l-Azbakiyya

Hassan and al-Ṭanṭāwī ended their careers a long way from the Azbakiyya, where I began this chapter. The teaching of Arabic as a living, spoken language in Europe was made possible in the first half of the nineteenth century by the mobility of Arab teachers like Hassan, al-Ṭanṭāwī, Don Raphaël, Bocthor and others. European institutions like the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes were able to draw on the expertise of Egyptians who had been driven or encouraged to leave Egypt in the aftermath of the Expédition d'Égypte. Institutions in Cairo, conversely, benefited from the expertise of both Europeans attracted to Egypt to work in the service of Muḥammad ʿAlī, and Egyptians returning from travel and study in Europe, like al-Ṭahṭāwī. The teaching of Arabic to Europeans and of European languages to Arabs stood in a symbiotic relationship, and authors like Khalīfa Effendi developed textbooks by drawing on both European and Middle Eastern traditions. Beyond more abstract influence and inspiration, however, personal relationships were key to how languages were taught, by whom and using what materials. Graph 1 shows not just the density of personal connections around figures like Silvestre de Sacy in Paris and al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Ṭahṭāwī in Cairo, but also the intensity and frequency of the connections between these local networks.

I will return to the Azbakiyya in subsequent chapters, particularly the areas to the north and east of the square. More strongly than to this place, however, the teachers and language book authors I will go on to consider are all tied in some way to the networks and institutions I have discussed in this chapter – even from the unlikeliest of origins.

## Notes

1   In putting together this walking tour of Azbakiyya, I have used Al-Madaq, a wonderful online resource which allows the user to overlay historic maps of Cairo on satellite images of the modern city (https://www.almadaq.net/). The Al-Madaq maps labelled '1809 – French Expedition, detailed' (from the *Description de l'Égypte*) and '1915 – 1921' are the ones I have found most useful here.

2   Unless otherwise specified, all translations are my own.

3   Readers may find the following particularly useful: al-Shayyāl 1950; Laurens 1987; Raymond 1998; Cole 2007; Ibrāhīm and 'Abbās 2008.

4   *Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr* 4a-5b, translated in Moreh 1975, 43–47. On al-Jabartī's critique of the French translation, see Tageldin 2011, 37–55; Mirza 2014; and Abu-Lughod 1963, 12–13. Al-Jabartī wrote about the French occupation in three separate works: *Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr* 'History of the Period of the French in Egypt', *Maẓhar al-taqdīs bi-zawāl dawlat al-Faransīs* 'Demonstration of Piety in the Demise of French Society', and finally in the four-volume *'Ajā'ib al-athār fī 'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār* 'Marvelous Compositions of Biographies and Events'. On al-Jabartī's shifting attitudes to the French in these works, see al-Sayyid Marsot 1990, 116–117; Raymond 1998, 4–5; and Bjørneboe 2007. I have quoted from Moreh's translation of *Tārīkh muddat al-Faransīs bi-Miṣr* (Moreh 1975) and also used his Arabic text; Tignor's introduction to later editions of this translation takes into account post-Orientalism debates. There is no full translation of *Maẓhar al-taqdīs*. I have quoted from Philipp and Perlmann's translation of *'Ajā'ib al-athār* (Philipp and Perlmann 1994). On al-Jabartī in modern, largely Anglophone historiography, see Ruiz 2009. When Silvestre de Sacy included the text of the proclamation in his *Chrestomathie arabe*, he, too, noted the many grammatical errors: Déroche 2016, 71.

5   The context of this passage within al-Jabartī's account indicates that these visits were to the former house of Ḥasan Kāshif Jarkas/Çerkes, neighbouring the house of Ibrāhīm al-Sinnārī (now a cultural centre run by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina), and not far from the location of the present-day Institut français d'archéologie orientale. The house of Ḥasan Kāshif Jarkas is No. 123 and that of al-Sinnārī is No. 142 on the map in Raymond (1963, 81), off what is now Ḥārat al-Kāshif, just north of the Sayyida Zaynab mosque. This area was connected by canals to Azbakiyya, notably the major canal following the line of what is now Port Said Street.

6   The text given in these two editions is slightly different. I have cited the more recent by preference, but refer to the 1913 text where this contains relevant material not in the 2003 one.

7   It is likely that he accidentally passed for a Turk or Circassian with Arabic speakers rather than an Arab. The Ottoman army, like the empire, was multi-ethnic, and contained speakers of many languages.

8   Later in his travel account, Volney displays a more sympathetic attitude to the Arabic language, noting that other European languages also have consonants that French does not (Spanish 'j' and English 'th') and that differences in orthography between different European languages make presenting Arabic difficult too: Volney 1787, 79–82. This sets the stage for his writings on the 'simplification' and teaching of Oriental languages, discussed above.

9   Jaubert was also an interpreter and had been on Sébastiani's mission: Douin 1925, 5.

10  I am not convinced that all of what Thorbecke identifies as errors are in fact so: I think he has been over-zealous in 'correcting' a Middle Arabic text with dialectal features into a Classical Arabic one. As Thorbecke admits, his own lack of opportunity for travel in the Middle East meant that he was not thoroughly familiar with dialectal Arabic.

11  I have not been able to consult Bocthor's *Discours prononcé à l'ouverture du cours d'arabe vulgaire* directly, but take my quotations from Carrière (1883, 22–23) and Louca (1953).

12  In the previous year, Caussin de Perceval had published a lengthy French summary of it in the *Journal Asiatique*.

13  This is the form of his name which he uses to describe himself in the French preface to his book, so I have adopted it as a convenient shorthand.

14  I have been unable to find any more information about Suwatowsky.

15  In 1841, Caussin de Perceval – whose influence on Hassan's work is discussed below – published a set of extracts from the tale of 'Antar for the use of pupils at the École des langues orientales.

16  Hassan renders 'polytechnische Schule' in Arabic as 'muhandis'châne' or 'mádraset el-muhandisîn', meaning 'School of Engineers': the term used in Arabic for the École polytechnique in Cairo, where Hassan may even have studied before being seconded to Russegger's expedition.

## 2

# Fāris al-Shidyāq, Assaad Kayat and Protestant missions (1819–1920)

## Protestant missionaries in the Middle East

The College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome had a long history of teaching Arabic for the purposes of Catholic proselytisation, dating back to the 1620s (Girard 2017). In Chapter 1, we have already seen how this tradition was occasionally recognised and drawn upon by the producers of Arabic teaching materials and other printed works in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The Arabic font from the press of the Propaganda Fide was taken to Egypt in 1798 and used in French printing presses in Alexandria and Cairo. Personnel who had worked at the College and press of the Propaganda Fide, like Don Elias Fatḥallā (Fathi 2020) and Antonio Mesabki, also ended up working for the French press in Egypt. Don Raphaël de Monachis studied in Rome (although not at the Propaganda Fide), many years before he became Napoleon's interpreter on the Expédition d'Égypte. In the 1840s, Anton Hassan used a seventeenth-century Latin grammar of Arabic, recently republished at the Propaganda Fide, in producing his own first Arabic teaching grammar.

Protestant missionary interest in the Middle East and its languages, on the other hand, only became serious from about the 1810s.[1] No Protestant church had the resources behind it, or the depth of experience in language teaching for proselytisation, that the Catholic Church had, yet in the nineteenth century it was the Protestant churches that produced the bulk of printed language instruction materials for Arabic. In a later part of this chapter, I will return to examine how representatives of European Catholic organisations learnt and taught languages in the Middle East in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the first sections, I will concentrate on Protestant missionaries, mostly

English-speaking, and their travails in learning Arabic. As was the case with the networks of teachers and students of the Arabic language who interacted with one another in Cairo and Paris in the early nineteenth century, missionaries and their colleagues were linked by a close web of personal connections to one another (Graph 1). Beyond this, they intersect with the Parisian and Cairene networks discussed in Chapter 1, most notably in the figures of Eli Smith (who was taught by Silvestre de Sacy) and Fāris al-Shidyāq (who knew both al-Ṭahṭāwī and Caussin de Perceval). The English Orientalist Edward Lane and his sister Sophia were friends with the Church Missionary Society missionaries Johann Rudolph Theophilus and Alice Lieder in Cairo in the 1840s (Thompson 2009, 530), and Rev. Lieder also knew Fāris al-Shidyāq. Missionary and Orientalist networks therefore intersected, although they were not closely integrated. While the context for missionary teaching and learning of Arabic may be less overtly political than that discussed in the previous chapter, the presence of both British and American missionary establishments on Malta (a British protectorate from 1800) and the form of cultural imperialism that these missionaries sought to exert in the Middle East also mean that we cannot consider them as detached from political concerns.

Foreign Protestant missionaries had a strong incentive to learn Arabic. Their primary goal was to convert local Arabs to their own particular Protestant denomination, since proselytisation was a central principle of many Protestant churches. They therefore needed to be able to circulate religious literature and to speak and preach to people in their own language. (Another motivation for Christians to learn colloquial Arabic – pilgrimage – is discussed in Chapter 3.) Education and printing were central to missionary efforts to evangelise. Missions put considerable effort and resources into running schools and printing presses, to the extent that some thought they distracted from the 'real business' of saving souls (Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 39–40). Education was important because it offered an opportunity to inculcate 'Western' and Protestant values, both through teaching material (often religious works) and through the act of separating children from their home environment, especially for girls who boarded in missionary homes (Lindner 2009, 228–234; Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 166–168; on the specific strain of Protestantism promoted by American missionaries, and its theological and social values, see Khalaf 2012). The use of the Bible as a school text was a form of stealth evangelisation, both in Arabic-medium education and in foreign-language classes, such as the Italian lessons given by American missionaries in Beirut, which were attended primarily by buinessmen and interpreters (Khalaf

2012, 182). There were several missionary attempts to produce new Arabic translations of the Bible during the nineteenth century, by missionaries who had studied Arabic and native speakers of the language working in collaboration (Issa 2023).

The question of the most suitable form of the language for proselytisation greatly occupied missionaries. If they understood the difference between literary Arabic and the dialects at all (and some, as we will see, did not), they tended to have strong views on the use of the vernacular in speech and writing. The Lebanon- and Malta-based missionaries discussed in this chapter most often championed dialectal Arabic as the most effective way of communicating with potential converts. But literary Arabic – particularly as a vehicle for the translation of scripture – continued to have its advocates. The Cairo missionary Arthur T. Upson (1874–1958), as will be discussed in Chapter 5, insisted on the importance of using the more prestigious literary language in print, in preference to 'mush-mush language' (i.e. Egyptian dialect). Fāris al-Shidyāq, who later became one of the major literary figures of the Nahḍa, championed literary Arabic while still a young man working for American and British missionaries.

Protestant missionaries' need for Arabic – in order to preach, to translate and to live their daily lives – created opportunities for literate young Christian Arabs to acquire relatively prestigious and well-paying jobs with them. Although missionaries may have seen teaching and employing local Arabs as working towards their primary goal of proselytisation, the interests of these two groups were in fact often at odds. My focus is on two main groups of Anglophone Protestant missionaries: the British Church Missionary Society (CMS),[2] with its base in Malta from 1815, and American missionaries in Lebanon from 1819, supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). My focus is also on several young men from Christian Arab families who came of age in Lebanon at around the time the missionaries were establishing themselves – the Shidyāq brothers, Assaad Y. Kayat and the Sarkīs brothers – and how they pursued opportunities for education, travel and personal advancement both through and in spite of the missionaries. In the story of the Arbeely family, with which I conclude this chapter, we see some of the longer-term effects of the American Protestant missionary presence in Lebanon, and how missionary contacts and education indirectly led to the publication of an Arabic–English primer on the other side of the world.

## Missionaries learning Arabic

Although (as we have already seen) Arabic had long been taught in some institutions in Europe, both secular and religious, Anglophone Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century tended not to have any direct connection to this existing tradition of Arabic study. They viewed both European Catholic missions and local Christian churches in the Middle East as rivals for souls. The Middle East is home to a wide and diverse array of Christian demoninations, who differ on fundamental matters (such as the human or divine nature of Christ, and the authority of the Roman Pope) from one another, and from Western Catholic and Protestant churches. The Middle Eastern churches with which Protestant missionaries had the closest dealings were the Maronite and Melkite churches (both forms of Catholicism) and the various Orthodox churches. Because they viewed these churches as competitors, foreign Protestant missionaries were unable (and unwilling) to benefit directly from Arabic instruction either at Catholic institutions in Rome, or at Maronite or Melkite monasteries, as some of the Paris-based Arabic teachers considered in Chapter 1 did. In part for this reason, many of the American and British missionaries active in the Middle East in the period covered by this chapter never became proficient users of Arabic, whether literary or colloquial. Missionaries relied on 'native converts', many of them educated at monastic schools, which created tensions and conflicts of interest.

The ABCFM sent its first missionaries, Pliny Fisk (1792–1825) and Levi Parsons (1792–1822), to the Middle East in 1819. Their instructions included learning Arabic (Khalaf 2012, 146), but without explicit direction on how exactly this was to be achieved. The ABCFM missionaries all had very similar educational backgrounds, which put an emphasis on the Christian Bible and the (ancient) languages in which it had been composed. Most were young graduates of Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, without any experience of overseas travel or speaking foreign languages (Khalaf 2012, 149–150). It seems that neither the ABCFM in the United States nor the missionaries themselves had much idea of how they were to learn Arabic, nor of the vast differences between registers and dialects of the language. In practice, and in the absence of instructional materials, missionaries tried to learn Arabic by lodging with local families and hiring graduates of monastic schools or Muslim scholars as private tutors. Pliny Fisk and Jonas King, for example, spent some time in Aleppo 'pursuing the study of Arabic, under the instruction of Mussulman Shekhs' (*Missionary Herald* 21, 1825, 124).

Two American missionaries who did become proficient in Arabic were Eli Smith (1801–1857) and Jonas King (1792–1869). Smith left the United States in 1826 and was based initially in Malta, with periods studying in Egypt and Lebanon (on his life, see Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 97–99). He put considerable effort into his Arabic and eventually became highly competent, as his Arabic correspondence reveals (Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 124–125). He travelled with the biblical scholar Edward Robinson, and the notes on Palestinian Arabic which Smith compiled for Robinson's *Biblical Researches in Palestine* were used by Anton Hassan in his 1854 grammar (Chapter 1). Along with Cornelius Van Dyck (1818–1895), Nāṣīf al-Yāzijī (1800–1871) and Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–1883), Smith worked on one of the several projects to produce a new Arabic translation of the Bible in this period.

In a speech back in the United States in 1840, Smith reflected on the importance of missionaries learning languages in the field rather than from book study at home. He advised that potential converts were 'to be addressed, not in the language of books, but to be talked to as they talk, in their own idiom, and with their own accents and tones, which are acquired the more perfectly, the earlier in life they are attempted' (Smith 1840, 9):

> This command of their spoken language, can be gained better in the midst of them than at home [Smith means the United States]. There are *three* steps in the learning of a foreign tongue for the purposes of intercourse. One is to understand it in books, another is to understand it when spoken, and the third is to speak it intelligibly. Of these we usually in this country take only the first. It can be done any where, from the study of books. Yet even this can be accomplished fastest, where the same words and idioms are daily sounding in one's ears from the mouths of those around him. The other two can hardly be accomplished with entire success anywhere else.
>
> A book acquaintance with a language acquired at home, will indeed facilitate the acquisition of the practical part of it abroad. And still, while that book acquaintance can be learned more speedily where the language is spoken, it will be no economy of time to remain at home to learn it. Besides, I have found it of some consequence, in the learning of foreign tongues for use, that the learner do not carry on his study of the theory, much faster than he advances in the practice. If he does, he becomes too sensitive to the mistakes he will inevitably make at the outset, and there is a chance that diffidence will long prevent his attaining full fluency of speech. It is when the words are put to use as fast as they are learned, and the study of

books carried on at the same time, gradually to correct the errors that are made, that the most entire and speedy success is attained, in the acquisition of a language for missionary purposes.

(Smith 1840, 10)

Smith goes on to point out the advantages of learning Arabic within its social context, so that the learner has the opportunity to learn about the culture and to imitate native speakers. This advice is similar to the kind given in many of the phrasebooks considered in Chapter 1.

But along with his encouraging words about the best way of acquiring a language, Smith was well aware – through personal experience and observation of the experiences of others – of the blow to the morale of an enthusiastic (and naïve) missionary when he arrives in a country where he cannot make himself understood:

The missionary goes forth fired with zeal for the conversion of the world, expecting great things, and intending to attempt great things, perhaps not often with some degree of romance mingled with his ardor. But he finds himself suddenly brought to a stand, the moment he reaches his field. He has *no tongue* to preach or talk with. ... He has to submit to the drudgery of gathering vocabularies, or of turning over grammars and dictionaries, and to the drilling of Munshies and Mu'allims; he has to have patience to stammer on for months before he can make himself decently understood, and for a year or two before he can preach effectively; and must suffer the mortification, in the mean time, of feeling that almost every thought he expresses is maimed, and himself often worsted in argument, merely for the want of words.

(Smith 1840, 19–20)

Unlike Smith, Jonas King had studied Arabic before arriving in the Middle East. After graduating from Andover Seminary, King went to Paris, where he spent a year (October 1821–October 1822) studying Arabic via the medium of French in preparation for becoming a missionary. Accounts of his life, such as that given by Jessup (1910), tend to emphasise the fact that he was taught by Silvestre de Sacy, a famous name, but King was in Paris during the time when Caussin de Perceval was in post, and it may therefore be that he also had instruction in 'arabe vulgaire' or learnt something from Caussin de Perceval about Syria and Lebanon.

King left Paris for the Middle East in October 1822. He spent the summer of 1823 staying in the home of a Maronite merchant named

Yusuf Dumani in Dayr al-Qamar and hired his son as his full-time Arabic teacher (Makdisi 2008, 92). King returned to live and study in Dayr al-Qamar several times, between trips around Syria and Palestine, and in summer 1825 he studied Syriac there with Asʿad al-Shidyāq. The Dumani family's neighbour Mīkhāʾīl Mishāqa (who later converted from Greek Catholicism to Protestantism and became US Vice-Consul in Damascus) recalled that, after a couple of years of study, King 'spoke Arabic well' (Makdisi 2008, 93):

> We spent most evenings with him. My family felt very sorry for him because he was not Catholic and was going to Hell, and I used to laugh inwardly at both groups. I admired this man's good qualities, but I used to wonder how he could have a good mind and yet believe religious fables any sound intellect would reject. He used to travel to various places and then return to Dayr al-Qamar. Once he asked us to find him someone to teach him Syriac. Now we knew of the sons of Yusuf al-Shidyaq on the Beirut coast, who copied books for us for a fee. Their handwriting was beautiful and they had been educated at the Maronite school, which taught Syriac and Arabic. We brought him young Asʿad, son of Yusuf al-Shidyaq, and arranged a monthly stipend. He taught him Syriac in a short period of time and returned to his home grateful for what Mr. Jonas King had done for him, for he began to write for him in Arabic what he needed.
>
> (Mishāqa, trans. Thackston, 1988)

This first extended encounter between an American missionary and a member of the al-Shidyāq family was to have long-reaching implications for both the Protestant missions and the Arab Nahḍa. In fact, Mishāqa cannot claim to have been the first one to have brought Asʿad al-Shidyāq to the attention of the missionaries: al-Shidyāq had himself approached the Americans in Beirut a few months previously and offered to teach them Arabic, but was not engaged because they already had a teacher. The time al-Shidyāq spent teaching King in Dayr al-Qamar was, however, instrumental in his eventual conversion, and the tragedy that followed. As the reaction of Mishāqa's family shows, the Protestant missionaries were widely distrusted – at best pitied as eccentrics. Language learning provided an opportunity not just for missionaries to improve their Arabic, but for them to subject potential converts to extended proselytisation (Khalaf 2012, 228). Sometimes, this even worked.

I will return to the case of Asʿad al-Shidyāq below. As many authors have pointed out, the Protestant missions were a dismal failure, as far

as their original intention was concerned. While the mission societies at home in the United Kingdom and United States may have had high hopes of converting Muslims and Jews, once missionaries actually arrived in the Middle East they quickly realised that this was both dangerous and extremely unlikely to be successful.[3] Attempts at either converting Middle Eastern Christians to Protestantism or persuading them to reform their own churches along Protestant lines (with a focus on Scripture, education and Euro-American social values) also had very little success. The number of converts remained small, and local churches proved capable of defending themselves against outsiders (most vividly illustrated by the case of As'ad al-Shidyāq). Through activities they undertook to support their evangeli-sation (running schools, teaching languages, setting up printing presses), however, missionaries 'ended up, often through unforeseen serendipi-tous circumstances beyond their control, inaugurating liberal and secular transformations of much greater magnitude' (Khalaf 2012, 124).

The language instruction books produced under missionary sponsorship are of two sorts: phrasebooks for use by missionaries themselves, and schoolbooks for teaching pupils in missionary schools Arabic or English. Missionary activities did not create the Nahḍa, but through printing books like these and setting up educational institutions, they supported it (Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 26, 90–91; see also Bou Ali 2012). Several important figures, such as Fāris al-Shidyāq and Buṭrus al-Bustānī, who went on to significant journalistic and literary careers, worked with missionaries in their youth. Graduates of missionary schools may not have become preachers and pastors in large numbers, as missionaries had hoped, but they did become the teachers, writers and businessmen who were the most prominent voices of the Syrian Nahḍa. Samir Khalaf has argued that schools and printing presses allowed missionaries to exercise a form of 'soft power' (Khalaf 2012, 201–204) in Middle Eastern society – an argument I find persuasive – but I would add that the cultural and political impact of missionary activity may also be measured through the negative, as well as positive, results it achieved.

The two key figures in this chapter, Fāris al-Shidyāq and Assaad Y. Kayat, each fell out with the missionaries who had once employed them. Their aspirations for themselves were fundamentally at odds with what the missionaries required of a 'native assistant', as local Arab colleagues were patronisingly termed. The ABCFM 'sought to uphold a hierarchy that made it impossible for newly trained native preachers to work as equals with their American colleagues' (Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 21; Tibawi 1961). Nor did the ABCFM want pupils educated in missionary schools to become too 'Western' in their tastes or aspirations, since it made them

less suitable to act as missionaries among their own people (Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 57–58). The fact that many graduates of missionary schools used their education and knowledge of English to pursue university studies or build business enterprises – or emigrate to the United States, like the Arbeely family (see below) – was actually contrary to what the American missionaries were initially seeking to achieve.

When missionaries failed to give the locals who worked with them opportunities for self-advancement, this led to frustration and misunder-standings. Male American missionaries were well educated and had usually given up the chance of lucrative careers and comfortable family lives in the United States to come to the Middle East (Zeuge-Buberl 2017, 95). They lived on very little money and exercised a great deal of self-sacrifice. The toll on their health was considerable and most died premature deaths. They expected the same of others and were then disappointed when others did not share their devotion to the mission above all else. American mission-aries were especially disapproving of local colleagues and employees who pursued financial security, as we will see in the cases of Fāris al-Shidyāq and Assaad Kayat. Frustrated by the missionaries' neglect of their need to support themselves and their desire to live independent lives, they pursued connections and opportunities elsewhere.[4]

Kayat and al-Shidyāq both produced language books intended to help the missionary endeavour, but later pursued their own independent literary and commercial careers – in al-Shidyāq's case, satirising the mission-aries in his tour de force, *al-Sāq ‘ala al-Sāq* ('Leg Over Leg'). Antagonism towards missionaries was a productive cultural force in its own right. I therefore analyse the language books considered in this chapter according to their two competing goals: as tools of missionary education and pros-elytisation, and as sites of resistance to what the missionaries were seeking to achieve.

## The Shidyāq brothers

The short life of As‘ad al-Shidyāq (*c.*1798–1830) casts a long shadow. After tutoring Jonas King in Syriac at Dayr al-Qamar in 1825, he began to work regularly with the American missionaries. As well as teaching Arabic to the missionaries themselves, he was engaged by Pliny Fisk to teach Arabic grammar at the mission school in Beirut. Ussama Makdisi has traced the long spiritual and intellectual journey that al-Shidyāq had already undergone by this point: educated at ‘Ayn Warqa, he acted for a period as secretary to the Bishop of Beirut, but was subsequently in the

service of Muslim and Druze nobles (Makdisi 2008, 103–105). He was the American missionaries' first Arabic-speaking convert, and became their martyr, even before he was actually dead (Makdisi 2008, 150). He died in 1830 from ill-treatment and neglect, imprisoned in a Maronite monastery, where he had been pressured to repent his conversion to Protestantism.

My interest here is principally in the repercussions of the conversion and death of As'ad al-Shidyāq for his younger brother, Fāris (for whose biography and works, see Alwan 1970; Tarabulsi and Azmeh 1995; Hamarneh 2009). Fāris al-Shidyāq had also been associating with the American missionaries, although he had not gone so far as public conversion. In March of 1826, while both the Maronite church and the al-Shidyāq family were desperately trying to make As'ad renounce Protestantism, Fāris visited the American missionary Isaac Bird and confided in him that his other brothers and the Bishop of Beirut were putting pressure on him (Fāris) to toe the Maronite line. His brothers Manṣūr and Ṭannūs had beaten him. Fāris at first refused to leave the missionaries' house and go home; his brothers then forced him to. Fāris acted as a go-between for the missionaries and the imprisoned As'ad, as he tried to secure his brother's release (*The Missionary Herald* 23, June 1827, 169–177). Bird's report on the matter concludes:

> We must not omit to say, that *Phares*, who is often mentioned in the foregoing narrative, became at length entirely won over to the evangelical faith and practice, and joined himself to the missionaries, as his brother had done before him; and that, in order to save him from the melancholy fate of Asaad, which he had reason to expect if he remained in Syria, he was sent to Malta, where, under the care and direction of Messrs. Temple and Smith, and through the medium of the Arabic press, he may be expected to render himself useful to his benighted countrymen.
>
> (Bird in *The Missionary Herald* 23, June 1827, 177)

This is not quite how Fāris al-Shidyāq himself recalled things, or at least how he represented it later in *al-Sāq ʿala al-Sāq*, long after his relationship with the missionaries had soured. Neither the American missionaries (conceived of as the *khurjiyyūn* 'bag-men', akin to 'carpetbaggers') nor the Maronites (the *sūqiyyūn* 'market-men') come out of the episode well. Al-Shidyāq's alter ego character 'the Fāriyāq' is sceptical of the *khurjiyyūn*'s ideas and agrees with them principally in order to escape danger in Lebanon (*al-Sāq* 1.19.1–5). There follows a passage in the first person in al-Shidyāq's own authorial voice – not the more detached third-person narration about the

adventures of the Fāriyāq which dominates the work as a whole – in which he castigates the Maronite church for its treatment of his brother over something as trivial as religious doctrine:

> The whole matter comes down to no more than arguments between him and a patriarch over things that have no fixed measure or number or weight or volume. *You* might say that the steps from Qannūbīn to Sijjīn are three in number; *he* might say three hundred; *I* might say three thousand – what role do prison and torment have to play in such matters?
>
> (*al-Sāq* 1.19.22: al-Shidyāq, trans. Davies, 2015 [1855])

The American missionaries sent Fāris al-Shidyāq to Malta, via Alexandria, in late 1826. The ABCFM were trying to set up a printing press on Malta, but did not yet have Arabic type or someone capable of supervising the work, so al-Shidyāq was employed instead by the British CMS missionaries, with whom the Americans worked closely. He worked at the CMS press, which was already operational, teaching the missionaries Arabic, and later as a translator. From 1828, al-Shidyāq was paid partly by the CMS and partly by the ABCFM missionaries (Roper 1988, 118). Like his brother As'ad, and Assaad Kayat, Fāris al-Shidyāq was a promising recruit for the missionaries: a well-educated young man from a respectable Arab Christian family, with a talent for languages and a questioning mind. Fāris also had a rebellious streak – which, so long as it was directed against the Maronite church and his own family, the missionaries had as yet no reason to be troubled by. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the man who became one of the most provocative literary voices of the Nahḍa was never going to be a good fit with the pious and rather single-minded Protestant missionaries. Tarabulsi and Azmeh, fittingly, describe him as a *ṣu'lūk*, a wandering brigand–poet (Tarabulsi and Azmeh 1995, 6 ff.), and his irreverence for established authority is one of the things that make him so appealing to readers.

Al-Shidyāq's time with the missionaries in Malta is amply covered in his own works and in Geoffrey Roper's study of the CMS press (Roper 1988, 204–230; see also Davies' timeline correlating the lives of al-Shidyāq and 'the Fāriyāq' in al-Shidyāq, trans. Davies, 2015 [1855], 479–488). He was employed at the press, working on projects including the language books discussed in the following sections, from 1827–1828 and again from 1836–1842. The association ended in 1842, but he remained in Malta on and off until moving to England in 1848. He is sometimes credited with authorship of the *Brief Memoir of Asaad Esh Shidiak* published

by the ABCFM, but this was more likely to have been written by As'ad himself and Isaac Bird (Esh-Shidiak and Bird 1834; Roper 1988, 239). He spent 1828 to 1835 in Egypt, convalescing from tuberculosis – and along the way picking up a venereal disease, treated by a French physician in return for Arabic lessons for his son (*al-Sāq* 2.18.7). During this time he had a tumultuous relationship with the missionaries, and worked for a time for the Egyptian official newspaper *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriyya* ('The Egyptian Chronicle'). He became acquainted with al-Ṭahṭāwī, in the period immediately following the latter's return from France but before his appointment to the Madrasat al-Alsun (Chapter 1). The CMS had been paying close attention to publishing activities at Būlāq near Cairo, and the Būlāq Press in turn were aware of activities in Malta: in 1834, al-Ṭahṭāwī produced a new edition of one of the CMS's books on geography (Roper 1988, 248). The CMS could not compete with the opportunities and good pay offered by Egypt's ruler Muḥammad 'Alī's various publishing, translation and educational projects (Roper 1988, 124–125, 139). They found it difficult to find and keep good language teachers and translators like al-Shidyāq, largely because they expected them to accept less tangible spiritual rewards. William Kruse, a CMS missionary in Cairo, invited al-Shidyāq to a church service one day and was disturbed to overhear him remark scathingly to a friend, 'I have for three years past attended such Services, but God has not given me money' (*The Missionary Register* 18, 1830, 68–69).

When al-Shidyāq returned to Malta in 1835, much of his time was occupied by work on translation, or – as he put it in his novel *al-Sāq 'ala al-Sāq*, in an evocative description of the challenge of cutting through rhetoric to get to the core meaning of a text – as a 'dream interpreter' (*mu'abbir li al-aḥlām*; *al-Sāq* 3.4.4). Translation work at the CMS in Malta was complicated by the missionaries' lack of appreciation of the divide between literary Arabic and the dialects, and by 'naivety and ignorance in their view of the Arab reading public, and its receptiveness to the kinds of books, especially the Protestant propaganda, which they were publishing' (Roper 1988, 147; cf. 135–136). Al-Shidyāq was also employed to teach Arabic at the University of Malta and at elementary and secondary schools (on the history of Arabic teaching at the University of Malta, see Cassar 2011). From 1838, he worked with Christoph Friedrich Schlienz on an Arabic translation of the Bible, under the sponsorship of the Society for the Promoting of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). This translation never appeared, partly because of Schlienz's descent into mental illness (especially on a disastrous trip to Syria, vividly described by al-Shidyāq in *al-Sāq* 3.12–14), and partly because of CMS concerns

that the Arabic of the translation was too literary (Roper 1988, 132–133). Later, in England, al-Shidyāq would collaborate on another SPCK Bible translation project with Samuel Lee.

## Fāris al-Shidyāq and the ABCFM and CMS: a strained relationship

The language instruction books I discuss below cover both the period of al-Shidyāq's association with the ABCFM and CMS and his independent life in England and France. (I will not stray into his later life and journalism in Constantinople – on which see Sawaie 2013 – and his conversion to Islam.) By way of prelude to this discussion, I think it is useful to consider the tensions in his relationship with the Protestant missionaries in Malta and Egypt, because they explain the direction his literary career took. Thanks to the CMS Archives at the University of Birmingham, we can reconstruct this deteriorating relationship in sometimes excruciating detail.

While the ABCFM hoped that Fāris al-Shidyāq had come to Malta 'that he may follow his convictions' (*Missionary Register* 16, 1828, 58), they were quickly disabused of any hopes that he would be a pliable convert and willing servant of the mission. The CMS Archives make this very clear. In April 1828, missionary William Jowett, who was leaving for a stay in England, left written instructions for his colleagues in the CMS mission at Malta. These instructions mostly concern al-Shidyāq, who was exercising more personal autonomy than the mission thought was appropriate: 'His wish as expressed by himself, is, to feel himself his own master, but still serving the Church' (Church Mission Society Archives, CMS/B/OMS/C M O39/110). Jowett was concerned that al-Shidyāq was forgetting the 'obligations of gratitude' he owed to the American missionaries who had taken him out of Lebanon and away from persecution by the Maronite church. Still more concerning to him was the fear that al-Shidyāq was 'under the influence of that love of money which is the root of evil'. Al-Shidyāq found that the missionaries' food did not agree with him, so he had taken to dining at an inn, which Jowett disapproved of – probably because al-Shidyāq was drinking there too. The 'puritanical gloom of the missionary's lifestyle' was probably also responsible for him seeking to spend time away from the home of the recently widowed Daniel Temple of the ABCFM, where he lodged (Roper 1988, 210). Jowett suggested that al-Shidyāq's salary be reduced in order to make it impossible for him to continue frequenting the inn. He concludes:

We leave for Fares's frequent meditation, a word, peculiarly adapted
  to his situation.
– <u>Learn</u> –

(CMS/B/OMS/C M O39/110)

This did not have the effect Jowett hoped. Less than two months
later, Temple wrote from Malta to Jowett in London with news
about al-Shidyāq, who had tuberculosis. He had not given up going
to the inn and was considering a job offer from another missionary in
Jerusalem:

> Dr Stilton has examined the symptoms of Phares & is of opinion that
> he is not in <u>immediate</u> danger. The blood comes, he thinks, from the
> trachea, not from the lungs. He recommends leeches to be applied to
> his breast, & also entire abstinence from animal food & from wine.
> Rest, is, of course, among the things recommended. The failure of
> P. is a great disappointment to Mr Schlienz as well as to Messers B.
> [Brewer] & S. [Smith]
> 
> [At top of first page, as addendum:]
> Our unique friend & brother Wolff has just written a letter to
> Phares, thro Mr Wilson, to come to him to Jerusalem. Mr W. sent
> for P. without mentioning this to me, to come to him & receive this
> information. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous
> do?
>
> (CMS/B/OMS/C M O39/120)

In late July 1828, Temple again wrote to Jowett, apologising for troubling
him about al-Shidyāq once more. The American mission in Syria, which
was setting up a printing press, urgently needed someone capable of
translating and teaching Arabic and correcting Arabic texts. Al-Shidyāq
could not do this because he was still in poor health; it was, moreover,
becoming increasingly difficult for him to continue working for both the
ABCFM and the CMS missionaries:

> Fares has always expressed a wish to be free, & <u>loudly</u>, sometimes,
> & we do not wish to constrain him, but to leave him free, with the
> distinct understanding, however, that he can not now, circumstances
> being so much changed, serve us both as we had contemplated in the
> contract. It is our wish, by all means, that he should continue to assist
> Mr Schleinz, as we had agreed.
>
> (CMS/B/OMS/C M O39/121)

When al-Shidyāq was seeking to re-enter the service of the CMS in Malta in 1835, after his years in Cairo, he made a five-year contract with Schlienz spelling out his pay and duties: 'Translating from the English language into Arabic, correcting other translations & proof-sheets, copying, writing letters & reading with Mr. Schlienz, or any other Agent in his place, Arabic works, as either of them shall arrange, and not to serve anybody else' (CMS/B/OMS/C M O73/80, Cairo, 15 November 1835). The arrangement could be dissolved by mutual consent, the death of either party or 'any manifest neglect of the duties undertaken by Mr. Fares Shidiak, which may God prevent, as we trust he will'. In June 1842, two years after the expiry of the contract with Schlienz, al-Shidyāq was abruptly dimissed by Samuel Gobat (later Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem). He wrote to the CMS in London to complain that he deserved better treatment:[5]

> I would now ask whether after so many years services the Society sanction so unceremonious a dismissal of one of their servants who had served them with the best of his power for the last seven years in Malta and three in Egypt when on a former occasion he resided in the Island of Malta. The experience of the Society's past kindness and consideration leads me to suspect that there must be some mistake in Mr. Gobat's proceeding, and that the Society would never sanction so cool and unceremonious, not to say ungentlemanly dismissal. Had I not fortunately been engaged part of the day as professor of Arabic in the University, I should by this dismissal have been deprived of means for my own subsistence and that of my family consisting of a wife and two children, seeing that my salary was not paid me a day beyond that of my dismissal.
>
> (CMS/B/OMS/C M O8/43, Malta 16 June 1842)

The situation was not resolved to al-Shidyāq's satisfaction. Two years later, he wrote to protest again at the treatment he had received and at the CMS press's appointment of a new (and in his view, incompetent) Arabic translator:

> My dear sir
> I take the liberty of sending to you and to Dr. Mill an Arabic Poem expressing the ungenerous behaviours of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in not having remunerated me for ten years of faithful service to them and to the Missionary Society, and in having employed in my stead an ignorant person not withstanding I have addressed them in two letters respecting the

numerous grammatical mistakes he has committed, and to which I have not yet received an answer.

> I remain
> Sir
> Your obd. Servant
> Fares Shidiak
>
> (CMS/B/OMS/C M O8/51, Malta, 24 March 1844)

The poem – regrettably – is not preserved in the CMS Archives.

## Fāris al-Shidyāq and foreigners' Arabic

Al-Shidyāq had the opportunity to observe speakers of other languages using Arabic over many years, in many different linguistic domains and at many levels of competence. As someone to whom language was so important – a master Arabic literary stylist who revelled in his language's potential for sophisticated wordplay (see e.g. Junge 2019), and who took al-Fīrūzabādī's dictionary *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* with him wherever he travelled – it pained him to see Arabic misused, and more so to see those with a flawed command of the language praised as masters. In addition to his language instruction books, discussed in the following section, he reflected extensively on language learning and second language use in his semi-autobiographical novel *al-Sāq ʿala al-Sāq* ('Leg over Leg', al-Shidyāq, trans. Davies, 2015 [1855]) and his travel narratives on Malta and Europe, *Kitāb al-riḥla al-mawsūma bi al-wāsiṭa ila maʿrifat Māliṭa wa Kashf al-mukhabbā ʿan funūn Ūrubbā* ('The Mediated Journey to Gain Knowledge of Malta and Reveal the Arts of Europe'; al-Shidyāq 1863). Although *al-Sāq* is narrated from the perspective of an alter ego, 'the Fariyāq', I take the views he expresses on language as representative of al-Shidyāq's own. In al-Shidyāq's works on Malta and Europe, we find his views presented more directly through his own personal voice.

Although al-Shidyāq knew and worked with some missionaries who learnt Arabic – colloquial, literary or both – to a high standard, he encountered many more who did not. As a very young man in Lebanon in the early 1820s, he met foreigners who 'having made their way to our land to learn our tongue and after living among us a decade only to return as ignorant of it as they come', blaming illness and the climate for their failure to learn Arabic (*al-Sāq* 1.9.6, trans. Davies). Al-Shidyāq observed how this prevented them from understanding their neighbours and better integrating:

because of the foreigner's ignorance of the language of those among whom he dwells, he cannot learn their customs and ways and one and the same to him are their outer and their inner selves. He sees what he sees and learns nothing, hears what he hears and understands nought; thus the traveller has no choice but to hire a dragoman, depending on him for business of every sort.

(*al-Sāq* 1.9.6, trans. Davies)

Assaad Kayat – whom we will meet below – was acting as an unofficial dragoman and learning languages from foreigners in Beirut at around this time.

Despite foreigners' own difficulties with Arabic, al-Shidyāq was annoyed to find that on his first voyage from Alexandria to Malta in 1827, he was made fun of by fellow passengers for pronouncing the English word 'health' when drinking a toast as 'hell' (*al-Sāq* 2.3.3, trans. Davies): 'God destroy these louts! They live in our country for years and still can't pronounce our language properly. They pronounce *s* with a vowel before it as *z*, and the palatal letters and others are a lost cause for them, despite which we don't laugh at them.' As literary payback, al-Shidyāq tells the story of a foreign Christian minister who had lived in the Middle East for years but could still not deliver a sermon in decent Arabic. Although the sermon is fictionalised and told for comic effect, and for al-Shidyāq to show off his gift for wordplay, it incorporates real features of 'foreigner talk' with which al-Shidyāq must have been well familiar, notably inability to pronounce the emphatic and other 'difficult' consonants (*sīn* /s/ for *ṣād* /sˤ/, *dāl* /d/ for *ḍād* /dˤ/, *kāf* /k/ for *qāf* /q/, *hā'* /h/ for *ḥā'* /ħ/, and so forth; discussed by Davies in al-Shidyāq, trans. Davies, 2015 [1855], n. 438). Al-Shidyāq's minister weakens his consonants; in Chapter 3 we will encounter another comic foreigner, sketched by James Sanua, who goes too far in the other direction.

Application and pronunciation were not the only challenges faced by learners of Arabic. Travelling from Malta to England in 1845, al-Shidyāq offers some advice to travellers:

... when you enter their country and are ignorant of their language, don't insist on learning the dirty words from them first or delight in words for the sake of the things they denote, for every language in the universe has fair and foul given that language expresses the actions, deeds, and thoughts of men, which encompass, as all will agree, both the praiseworthy and the blameworthy. I hold you in too high esteem to imagine that you will be like those travelers who learn of other

people's languages only the names of certain parts of the body and other despicable terms.

<div style="text-align: right">(<em>al-Sāq</em> 4.1.3, trans. Davies)</div>

Swearwords and obscenities were indeed what some foreigners learnt first in Arabic (Chapter 5).

Al-Shidyāq is highly critical of the Orientalist establishment in England and France, and of its promotion of European scholars of Arabic over native speakers: 'It is customary in the lands of the Franks to draw their language teachers at their universities from their own race only, even if they were ignorant' (<em>al-Sāq</em> 3.20.6, trans. Davies). Al-Shidyāq finds this hypocritical, and asks whether an Arab who had studied French in the way French scholars studied Arabic would be accepted as a scholar:

> The most that can be said is that they have acquired a shallow knowledge of the scholarship of the Arabs via books written in French – and would they grant an Arab who had learned their language from books in his own was the equal of their own scholars, or that they needed to be educated by him?
>
> <div style="text-align: right">(<em>al-Sāq</em> 5.3.9, trans. Davies)</div>

He is particularly annoyed when those who do not themselves have the qualifications to do so utter empty praise of European teachers of Oriental languages, even to the extent of claiming that native-speaker teachers have much to learn from them (<em>al-Sāq</em> 5.3.2).

Like al-Ṭahṭāwī, whom he knew in Cairo after the latter's return from Paris, al-Shidyāq gives most attention to Silvestre de Sacy, the doyen of French Arabic scholarship. He does not appear to have known him personally, although he did have a passing acquaintance with Caussin de Perceval, whose teaching and scholarship he does not discuss (<em>al-Sāq</em> 4.18.11). Al-Shidyāq had read al-Ṭahṭāwī's <em>Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz</em> (see e.g. <em>Kashf</em> 222 in al-Shidyāq 1863), so his discussion of the Orientalists of Paris may be read in some ways as a response to this earlier work. While, in common with al-Ṭahṭāwī, al-Shidyāq considers Sacy a competent scholar of literary Arabic (<em>Kashf</em> 271), his concern is that Sacy's eminence has set a precedent for European Arabists with poor Arabic and little knowledge of or respect for the Arab world to be raised to high academic positions, while Arab teachers and scholars are denigrated (Ismail 2018, 79):

> It cannot be denied that Monsieur de Sacy acquired through his own efforts enough skill to be able to understand many of our books

and even indeed to write in our language. However, 'not everything white is a truffle'. Despite all of the foregoing he should not, God rest his soul, be placed among the ranks of the most reliable scholars, for he failed to grasp numerous matters in the areas of literature, lexicon, and prosody and I have, I swear, praised his command of the field and lauded his scholarship and merit time and time again. However, when this skill and command of his became a cause of evil – for they it was that emboldened others to take a leading role in teaching our language and seduced this liar into adopting an insolent attitude toward our scholars – I felt it my duty, out of concern for the rights of scholarship and scholars, to delete his name from among those of the shaykhs of the Islamic countries in their entirety as a slap in the face to those who have sheltered behind it and used his scholarship as a cover for false claims and arrogations. ... This book of mine may fall into the hands of a Persian or Indian professor and motivate them to take on the task of pointing out their faults in those two languages too,[6] for I am absolutely certain that they are even more ignorant where those are concerned, since more of them have traveled to the Arab lands than to any others (despite which they have learned nothing from them but lame language and nonsense).

(*al-Sāq* 5.3.10, trans. Davies)

In his lengthy discussions of the errors and hubris of foreign scholars of Arabic, al-Shidyāq's constant theme is the necessity of living among Arabic speakers and learning from the best Arab scholars in order to achieve a true knowledge of the language. The few European Arabists he praises have done precisely that: Edward Lane, George Sale, Theodore Preston (*Kashf* 121). Al-Shidyāq also has kind words for those foreign scholars of Arabic who may not have reached his standards in the language, but were nevertheless friendly and generous hosts, such as John Nicholson (Ismail 2018, 73). Among the Anglophone scholars whose work he criticises are Oxford's 'Shaykh al-'Arabiyya' (probably Stephen Reay: Roper 1998, 239) and John Richardson ('I swear by God he does not know of our language half of what I know of his; however, he dared to translate the Arabic grammar, which made him err, mix and distort, at length': *Kashf* 120–121, trans. Ismail 2018, 75). Al-Shidyāq's critiques are detailed and erudite: he provides details of how scholars misread words and distorted meaning (see further Ismail 2018; El-Ariss 2013, 60), in ways reminiscent of al-Jabartī's grammatical takedown of the French proclamations during the Expédition d'Égypte some decades earlier (Chapter 1).

Al-Shidyāq's criticisms are not entirely disinterested: he tried and failed to gain a university position in Europe teaching Arabic (Ismail 2018, 79). The appointment of incompetent Europeans is not just an insult to his language, but a personal affront. When he writes of the arrogance of English scholars – in the passage I quoted in the Acknowledgements to this book – he is probably thinking of how much better he himself could have done in the position:

> This vanity could lead a person who happened to know a few words of Arabic, or Persian, or Turkish, to mention in any book he authors in his language all that he knows of these languages, to give the impression that he is a linguist. All that he has to do is to write these words, rightly or wrongly, and then to put some pompous titles on the title page of his book. Others, for example, could write about the author that he is a member of this or that society, who wrote the summary of this or that book, or this or that note, or that he was the orator on this or that occasion, and so on. All this can be claimed in spite of the fact that if we look into his book we will find that it cannot elucidate even a single issue. This is because those authors do not learn languages from the owners of these languages, and hence they haphazardly give any interpretation that comes to their minds without worrying if by this they may attribute to these languages what is not in them.
>
> (*Kashf* 120, trans. Ismail 2018, 75; on this passage, see also Michael Cooperson in Shamma and Salama-Carr 2021, 234–240.)[7]

The Arabists of Paris also come in for special critique, in an entire Appendix to *al-Sāq*. This is in part because Paris (as was discussed in Chapter 1) was such a centre of Oriental studies, with institutes such as the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, but it seems likely that it is also because al-Shidyāq himself found the city and its people unwelcoming. In contrast to England, where lodgers were part of the household and a foreigner could easily pick up English from the family, he thought that a lodger in Paris could die without anyone noticing (*al-Sāq* 4.18.6).

There are two linguistic matters for which al-Shidyāq reserves special ire: the inability of Europeans to compose good prose and verse in Arabic (i.e. to have an active as well as passive command of the target language), and the focus on the colloquial. We can see the impact of these concerns in his own language books.

Inability or disinclination to write in Arabic troubles al-Shidyāq ('how is it that these professors never write a word in the oriental

languages?': *al-Sāq*, 5.3.6, trans. Davies). As someone who had worked on English projects to translate the Bible into Arabic, al-Shidyāq was well placed to comment on this. He had seen how dependent foreign scholars of Arabic were on native speakers to compose in the language. The reason for this, as he noted in many places in his writings, was the fact that most European Arabists had not thoroughly immersed themselves in an Arabic-speaking country and learnt from Arab scholars of Arabic. Samuel Lee, his collaborator on the Bible translation project in Cambridge, objected that Europeans could compose Greek and Latin verse without doing this (*Kashf* 122). Al-Shidyāq pointed out in return that Europeans who did this had studied these languages from childhood, and that they were from the same language family as English. (And, one might add, there were no native speakers of Classical Greek or Latin around to correct them.) Al-Shidyāq raises the stakes: 'I would give all my books to any European if he composed only two lines of poetry in Arabic, and they are correct and eloquent' (*Kashf* 122; see Ismail 2018, 83). Lee himself fails the challenge.

By the time al-Shidyāq published *al-Sāq* in 1855, the translation movement in Egypt was well underway, led by his old acquaintance al-Ṭahṭāwī and his pupils at the Madrasat al-Alsun (Chapter 1). As well as Arabic translations of works in European languages, scholars in Cairo were already producing works on the grammar of European languages, such as Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī's *Qalā'id al-jumān fī fawā'id al-tarjumān*. Al-Shidyāq knew Arabic speakers (such as al-Ṭahṭāwī, or indeed himself) who were capable of speaking and writing European languages well, because they had lived and studied in Europe.[8] The situation of Europeans who studied Arabic only in Europe was quite different. Al-Shidyāq viewed the translations such scholars produced from Arabic into French as motivated mainly by desire for fame and 'the craving of their compilers to join the ranks of authors', and wondered:

> ... why has none of them gone to the trouble of translating any French books into Arabic to show off his mastery in this area, given that he is supposedly the shaykh of those who study the language and the imam of its imams and when there are very estimable books in French in every field? Even more amazing is the fact that it has occurred to none of them to translate the grammar of their language into ours. Can there be any reason other than their reluctance to expose themselves to verification, refutation, and excoriation?
>
> (*al-Sāq* 5.3.6, trans. Davies)

Lack of active command of Arabic was one of al-Shidyāq's major concerns about European Arabists and their work. Another was the elevation of colloquial, dialectal Arabic to the status of a language to be acquired and studied in its own right. As we have seen in Chapter 1, during the early decades of the nineteenth century, motivated in large part by French military and commercial ventures in Egypt and North Africa, colloquial Arabic ('arabe vulgaire') achieved a new status in French academia, with its own dedicated chair at the École des langues orientales vivantes. Al-Shidyāq had a strong reaction to one particular modern dialect of Arabic, Maltese. In *al-Sāq*, he refers to teaching standard Arabic to Maltese speakers as 'treating bad breath (*bukhr*)' (e.g. 3.11.1–2). He viewed Maltese as a corrupted form of Arabic and could not stand the 'hideousness' of Maltese speech: 'No Arab can [bear to] hear these words, especially when they are uttered several times a day by ill-natured and churlish individuals' (*al-Wāsiṭa* 30, trans. Cachia 1962–1966, 116).[9] Maltese was an extreme case. We should assume that al-Shidyāq had no objection to Arabs speaking their own dialect in Lebanon, Egypt or anywhere else. What he did object to was the elevation of dialects by those who did not have knowledge of and respect for literary Arabic.

Although he was from a Maronite background and did not convert to Islam until later in life, al-Shidyāq did study Arabic grammar and linguistics with shaykhs at al-Azhar during his time in Cairo, around the turn of the 1820s–1830s (*al-Sāq* 2.18.1). He knew the value of such a rigorous education in Classical Arabic from personal experience. In contrast, in Europe:

> professors do not get their knowledge from those who are masters of it, such as Shaykh Muḥammad, Molla Ḥasan or Üstad Saʿdī. They acquire it parasitically and pounce upon it randomly. Those who graduate with some knowledge of the subject do so at the hands of Priest Ḥanna, Monk Tūmā, and Parson Mattā and then stick their heads into confused dreams, or stick confused dreams into their heads, and imagine that they understand things that they do not. Any of them who teaches an oriental language or translates from one you will find flailing around blindly. Anything they are in doubt about they patch up any way they please and anything that lies between doubt and certainty they conjecture or guess at, giving greater weight to the less weighty and preferring the less preferred. This is because there is nobody at hand to take on the task of pointing out their mistakes and helping them to improve.
>
> (*al-Sāq* 5.3.3, trans. Davies)

'Shaykh Muḥammad, Molla Ḥasan or Üstad Saʿdī' are stereotypical names for Arab, Persian and Turkish Muslim scholars. 'Priest Ḥanna, Monk Tūmā, and Parson Mattā', on the other hand, are ciphers for Christian Arabs of various denominations. It seems likely that al-Shidyāq is thinking specifically of the École des langues orientales vivantes, where Melkites and Copts like Don Raphaël de Monachis, Michel Sabbagh and Ellious Bocthor taught 'arabe vulgaire' (see Chapter 1). We know that al-Shidyāq was acquainted with their successor at the school, Caussin de Perceval, who had studied Arabic in a monastery in Lebanon. Not only does the teachers' Christian background mean that they do not have the command of Classical, Qurʾānic Arabic of the shaykhs of al-Azhar, but al-Shidyāq is also aware that they are not even trying to teach Classical Arabic.

Al-Shidyāq is scathing about the teaching materials produced for colloquial Arabic. One represents 'the correspondence of a Jewish broker with an imbecile merchant' (al-Sāq 5.3.6, trans. Davies). This may be Louis Jacques Bresnier's *Chrestomathie arabe-vulgaire* (Bresnier 1846; Davies suggests instead Bresnier 1855: on Bresnier, who was taught by Silvestre de Sacy, Caussin de Perceval and Jean Joseph Marcel, see Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 82–83). 'Another laboured to have printed silly sayings taken from the rabble in Egypt and the Levant, leaving whatever incorrect and corrupt language he found therein as is and seeking to make excuses for himself by saying "*sic*," which he thought would allow him to evade any blame or refutation' (al-Sāq 5.3.6, trans. Davies; Davies proposes that this is Berggren 1844, although many of the works discussed elsewhere in this book are possible candidates). Caussin de Perceval's *Grammaire arabe vulgaire* (Caussin de Perceval 1824) also comes in for criticism, identifiable even though al-Shidyāq does not name it: 'I wish I knew what was the point of one of these professors writing a book in corrupt mixed style, on the speech of the people of Aleppo, calling it a "grammar" and recording in it such words as [a list follows]' (al-Sāq 5.3.6, trans. Davies). Caussin de Perceval, as was discussed in Chapter 1, had previously been a dragoman in Aleppo, and his *Grammaire arabe vulgaire* bears many hallmarks of this. The book's dialogues, it should also be recalled, were translated by 'Jean de Constantinople', who taught at the monastery of ʿAyn Warqa, where Fāris and Asʿad al-Shidyāq had studied. Al-Shidyāq's dislike of Christian Arab teachers of Arabic in Paris may also owe something to his past experiences, and those of his brother, with the Maronite establishment.

Al-Shidyāq was one of the key figures in the nineteenth-century evolution of literary Arabic into a dynamic, modern register, capable of expressing new scientific and political ideas. Europeans learning colloquial

Arabic were, in a sense, insulting the language, its literary history and its creative potential – bringing it down to the level of their own, corrupt vernaculars:

> How is it, my dear professors, that you do not write books in that corrupt speech of your own that you call *patois*, and would you advise an Arab who has taken residence in Marseilles, for example, to talk like the people there or like the people of Paris? If you were to be rational about this activity of yours, you would have to record all the differences and variations present among Arabic speakers, for the people of Damascus use words that the people of Cairo do not and you may extrapolate from that to the rest of the Islamic countries. Indeed, the people of one area may use a variety of different terms. The speech of the Beirutis, for example, is different from that of the people of Mount Lebanon and the speech of the latter is different from that of the people of Damascus. This would lead you into folly and the corruption of this noble language of ours, one of whose distinguishing characteristics is that its rules have remained unchanged and its style fixed in the face of the extinction of all other ancient languages and whose writers of today are in no way inferior to their predecessors who passed away one thousand two hundred years ago. Is it that you envy us this and have been trying to transform the language and bring it into line with your own, in which you cannot understand what was written three hundred years ago?
>
> (*al-Sāq* 5.3.7, trans. adapted from Davies)

Al-Shidyāq uses the French word *patois* in Arabic, and makes a contrast between this 'corrupt speech' (*kalām*) and the kind of language appropriate for books. Scholars like al-Ṭahṭāwī had come to Paris and learnt elegant literary French: why should Europeans not repay the compliment, and seek to associate with Arab scholars and communicate with them in their own literary language? Al-Shidyāq would have appreciated the views of Arthur Upson (discussed in Chapter 5), who insisted on the use of literary Arabic in missionary tracts and translations to gain the respect of educated people, rather than resorting to the 'mush-mush language' of the Egyptian streets. If the colloquial must be taught, al-Shidyāq further reasoned, then it might at least be done systematically. This is indeed a serious weakness of many works of the period, which, as noted in Chapter 1, often combine features of multiple dialects.

## Al-Shidyāq's language books

Al-Shidyāq produced language books at two main periods of his life: between 1832 and 1840 while employed by the CMS in Egypt and Malta; and in the mid-1850s, working on his own account in Paris and London. Much later, in Constantinople, he brought out a new edition of one of his earliest works, an English grammar for Arabic speakers (al-Shidyāq 1881/1882), and also published further on Arabic grammar (see e.g. the simplified Arabic grammar he produced in 1872, *Ghunyat al-ṭālib* 'The Enrichment of the Student', discussed by Patel 2013, 108).

First of all, I would like to make a case for al-Shidyāq's (sole or collaborative) authorship of a work printed at the CMS press in Malta in 1832, the *Anglo-Arabic Primer and Vocabulary / Taʿlīm awwal maʿa qāmūs mukhtaṣar fī al-lugha al-ʿArabiyya wa al-Inklīziyya* ([al-Shidyāq?] 1832). To my knowledge, this is the first time that someone has made this identification. After a period studying Arabic with shaykhs and working for the journal *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, al-Shidyāq re-entered the service of the CMS in the spring of 1832, although he did not return to Malta until 1835. At some point in the latter part of 1832 (unfortunately the document in the CMS Archives does not bear a more precise date), he wrote a report about the CMS's school in Cairo. Al-Shidyāq was teaching Arabic grammar and written and spoken English to about twenty children, and he reported on the progress of the most promising students. One, Joseph Gauli, was doing well in spite of the fact that 'the Copts do not like to study the Arabic Grammar' (CMS/B/OMS/C M O 73/61). Al-Shidyāq's remarks focus on understanding of grammar and willingness and ability to memorise, which take precedence over handwriting and even personal hygiene, something the missionaries cared about. Of one boy, he notes that 'his handwriting in both the above mentioned languages [Arabic and English] is not fine, neither does he care to wash his face; but he understands the Grammar as well as one of 20 years of age, although he be but 12 years old'. Books printed by the CMS at Malta were used in instruction at the school:

> Joseph & Said read in the Grammar & in the vocabulary printed at Malta in the spelling book, & in the Psalms, ... But in respect to the rest of the children amongst whom there is Joseph & Andreas, & James, & George Gauli; they together form one class, having begun the study of the English language only a month & a half ago. However all of them understand to write Arabic. Carlo ranks between those above mentioned & this latter class, who also learns

every evening the same portion by heart as John does; but the others learn every day three words by heart & three from the spelling book, on which account they are called the اِكتيين actijin [*sic*], since the first word of the spelling book begins with the word <u>Act</u>.

<div align="right">(CMS/B/OMS/C M O73/61)</div>

The *aktiyīn*'s 'spelling book' was the newly published *Anglo-Arabic Primer*, as can be seen from its first page of vocabulary (Figure 2.1). It is appropriate for the use to which al-Shidyāq was putting it in his classes. It contains over a hundred pages of English vocabulary, listed by category. There is little in the way of linguistic instruction, but the book does have some features to help the learner, such as separating out syllables in longer English words. The *Primer* and other CMS books were also being used in a government military school in Cairo. As William Kruse reported in a letter of August 1833, the school had already 'purchased many of your Engl-Arabic vocabularies' and were keen to buy more schoolbooks from the CMS press (CMS/B/OMS/C M O73/65). We should imagine these being used alongside works from the Būlāq Press, like Don Raphaël de Monachis' Italian–Arabic dictionary (Zakhūr 1822; see Chapter 1). Kruse claimed that it was a visit to the Cairo CMS school that inspired al-Ṭahṭāwī



**Figure 2.1** Al-Shidyāq's *Anglo-Arabic Primer* (1832). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

to ask Muḥammad ʿAlī's 'permission to establish something like it, and thus the useful school for training up translators was established' (Krusé Journal, 10 April 1839, CMS/B/OMS/C M O45/163), but al-Ṭahṭāwī had had plenty of experience with educational institutions in Egypt and France, and hardly needed another source of inspiration.

Roper suggests that the author of the *Primer* was one of the American missionaries, since some American spellings are used (Roper 1988, 245), but it is equally if not more probable, in my view, that the author was al-Shidyāq – who had, after all, learnt his first English from Americans. An earlier work printed by the CMS press in Malta bears a similar title – *The Anglo-Greek Primer* – and does give the name of its author, Samuel Wilson (Wilson 1829). Wilson was an English CMS missionary; Fāris al-Shidyāq was a young man from Lebanon who had a strained relationship with the CMS. It is easy to see why one might be credited and not the other.

Over the following years, after the publication of the *Anglo-Arabic Primer*, al-Shidyāq authored a number of works in Malta, connected with his work for the missionaries or teaching Arabic in schools and the university in Valletta. He is not named on the title page of these either. In 1836, he brought out a grammar of English, *Kitāb al-bākūra al-shahiyya fī naḥw al-lugha al-Inkilīziyya* ('The Delicious First Fruits of English Grammar'), which he would issue in a new edition many years later at his own press, al-Jawāʾib, in Constantinople (al-Shidyāq 1881/1882). *Al-Bākūra al-shahiyya* is reminiscent in format of other language books of the period: an introductory section on pronunciation (al-Shidyāq goes into great depth on English's irregular orthography), followed by accounts of grammar and syntax with plentiful tables of irregular verbs. The second, Constantinople, edition of *al-Bākūra al-shahiyya* also includes another work al-Shidyāq published in Malta, this time with George Percy Badger, *Arabic and English Grammatical Exercises and Familiar Dialogues / Kitāb al-Muḥāwara al-unsiyya fī al-lughatayn al-Inkilīziyya wa al-ʿArabiyya* (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840).

Al-Shidyāq and Badger collaborated on a number of the translations produced for the CMS on Malta. Badger (1815–1888) was born in England but lived on Malta from early childhood; he thought much more highly of the island and its language than did al-Shidyāq (Roper 1984). He spent some time in Lebanon in the mid-1830s, where he learnt his Arabic, and then worked for the CMS back in Malta as a printer and translator. His friendship with al-Shidyāq endured over the decades, although he was also friends with al-Shidyāq's journalistic rival Rizqallāh Ḥassūn (on their spat, see Rastegar 2007, 119). Both men are thanked in the preface to his

*English-Arabic Lexicon* (1881). Badger records his obligation to 'his old friend the learned Shaikh Ahmad Fâris', with whom he began the dictionary project 40 years previously (Badger 1881, ix). The project had indeed been long in the making. A notebook in which Badger kept a journal and copies of his correspondence (including, in Arabic, with al-Shidyāq), now in the British Library, includes a letter to Lieutenant-General Sir James Outram, whom he accompanied as interpreter and chaplain during the Anglo-Persian War of 1856–1857. In this letter, written, from its position in the book, in 1857, Badger notes the other duties which have kept him from the dictionary and the need for such a resource:

> The only book of the kind available is Richardson's English, Arabic, & Persian Lexicon; but without venturing to offer any remark on the Persian, it is notorious that the Arabic portion of the work is well nigh useless, except perhaps to first-rate scholars who are able to discriminate amidst a number of appended Arabic significations the precise word required to represent any particular English meaning. It is, moreover, wanting in equivalents for thousands of nouns and phrases in modern use, and to represent which in Arabic any scholar finds the greatest difficulty.
>
> A very good French-Arabic Lexicon by M. Perceval has been published & has already gone through two editions; but though its utility is great in supplying Arabic equivalents for the innovations of modern science & acts among Orientals, it is confined to the vernacular dialect, chiefly of Egypt, and does not profess to be more than a Vocabulary of 'la Langue Arabe Vulgaire'.
>
> My object was to supply a work which should be useful to the English student of Arabic, whether he sought to acquire a knowledge of the language of books, or to confine himself to the acquisition of the vernacular dialect.
>
> (British Library Mss Eur B377)

Outram might have been expected to be sympathetic to the project, since he had known Edward Lane in Cairo in the late 1840s when the latter was wrestling with his own dictionary (Thompson 2009, 607–608), which had still not been published (the first volume was issued in 1863). Like al-Shidyāq, Badger considered Richardson's and Caussin de Perceval's works deficient, although he is rather more polite about it. Badger requests the East India Company's financial support to spend two or three years living in Egypt or Syria and hiring 'native assistance': 'My object, indeed, in wishing to reside in Egypt or Syria is that I might readily procure that

assistance from native scholars which is hardly to be met with elsewhere.' The East India Company had been unwilling to finance Lane's project a decade earlier. Badger did succeed in getting a grant of £500 from the Secretary of State for India after East India Company rule in India ended in 1858 and direct imperial rule was imposed. Once the first volumes of Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* began to appear, Badger was able to make use of them in compiling his own English–Arabic dictionary. He freely acknowledges this in his Preface (1881), and pays tribute to Lane, who had since passed away.

Badger seems to have known Habib Anthony Salmoné, an Arabic teacher who authored an article on the importance of Arabic studies in Britain (Salmoné 1884; discussed in Chapter 4) and who also wrote the Arabic section of Slack (1886). An offprint of the article is among the collection of pamphlets belonging to Richard Francis Burton, now in the Huntington Library (Envelope 77, Sir Richard Francis Burton Pamphlet Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California). A note on the article – presumably in the hand of one of Burton's correspondents – reads, 'Licked into shape for the writer, who appears a d ...[?] young[?] fellow, by G.P.B[adger]; he asked me to send you this copy.'

*Grammatical Exercises and Familiar Dialogues* (1840) was, as the title page announced, 'chiefly intended for the use of students in the English language'. It uses only Arabic script for Arabic and all the explanation is directed towards learners of English, but the dialogues and vocabulary could have been used by an Arabic learner who already knew the script and pronunciation, or who had help from a teacher. It was certainly sold as a work that could be used by both Arabic and English speakers, especially after the publication of al-Shidyāq's later *Practical Grammar of the Arabic Language*, discussed below. A catalogue of 'valuable books' issued in London by the firm of Bernard Quaritch in 1859 claims that 'this extensive series of Dialogues may be used by both Englishmen and Arabs' (Quaritch 1859, 109; the catalogue claims the book was 'edited by Faris'). The first section of the book provides short explanations of elements of English grammar and syntax in parallel columns in Arabic and English, with example sentences. English compound verbs are the main focus. A partial interlinear translation is given for the English, with Arabic glosses for the main English words. More 'short and familiar phrases' commence on page 65 and the book ends with an Arabic–English vocabulary (in English alphabetical order).

No author's name appears on the title page of the book. It is usually credited to al-Shidyāq and Badger, but al-Shidyāq appears to have been the principal author. It is written in literary Arabic, although the introduction

admits that in cases where no good equivalents existed in *al-'Arabiyya al-fuṣḥā*, they have used words current in some dialects but not others (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 3–4). Furthermore – and here al-Shidyāq's voice comes through clearly – they aim 'to provoke the Arabs into putting into circulation new post-classical [*muwallad*] expressions which will save them from choking on foreign jargon [*bi al-lughāt al-ajnabiyya*] and protect them from an inundation of it' (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 4, trans. Roper 1988, 229). As Geoffrey Roper notes, the content of the dialogues also suggests that al-Shidyāq was the main author, since it aligns so well with his priorities (Roper 1988, 246–247). 'The church has no power to inflict coporeal [*sic*] punishment' (p. 4) hints at the fate of his brother Asʿad. The ideas expressed on language and literature are also al-Shidyāq's.

The dialogues cover everyday topics such as eating and drinking, shopping, having clothes made, staying at an inn and so forth. Classroom phrases and vocabulary feature, as do reflections on language learning: 'I shall have been learning the English language three years next month' (p. 42), 'Can we learn without a teacher? – We may advance slowly without his assistance' (p. 45), 'Last week I intended to commence studying Italian' (p. 54), 'By observing the rules of grammar you will write correctly' (p. 57). Missionary preoccupations are also clear. As noted in the introductory section of this chapter, CMS and other missionary books printed in Malta and Lebanon have an unsubtle proselytising and westernising message. In the *Grammatical Exercises*, for example, we find sample sentences such as 'By continually mortifying out corrupt affections, we shall bring them under our control' and 'Do you observe all the commandments of the Lord' (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 42, 58; the second is an imperative, not a question). Other elements are more specifically (or stereotypically) Protestant: 'It is more healthy to rise early than late. – That has long been the opinion of the most eminent physicians' (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 86). As in Kayat's book (discussed below), there is an emphasis on female education, something both British and American missionaries sought to encourage:

> It would be a disgrace to any English lady to be without a good education. The poorer classes of females have also many opportunities of learning to read and write correctly, and of obtaining a tolerable acquaintance with arithmetic, geography and astronomy.
> I am sorry to say that this is not the case in the East.
>
> (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 104)

Praise of England and the English language also features heavily. London is described as 'the most renowned city in the world' (p. 92), and England's railways, industry, education, religious freedom and system of government are described in a stilted dialogue, whose purpose is more obviously propagandistic than practical. English is a useful language to learn because 'The English have extended their commerce beyond that of any other nation' and 'By becoming acquainted with the English language, I may be employed in a mercantile house, or as an interpreter in the British or Egyptian service' (pp. 113–114). This is reminiscent of the phrases about the value of French contained in works by Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī and other authors considered in Chapter 1.

At this point in his life, al-Shidyāq had not yet visited Europe. In addition to serving missionary goals, the dialogues may also reveal something of his wishful thinking about what he might find in England. The England sketched in these dialogues is not the one al-Shidyāq would write about in *al-Sāq* and his other later works. English scholars appear as careful students of Arabic authors neglected in the Middle East, who have formed learned societies, collected manuscripts and made translations of 'vast treasures of oriental literature' (pp. 97–98, 116). This is a classically Orientalist perspective. If it is what al-Shidyāq hoped of Europe – what he had heard of it from missionaries in Lebanon, Malta and Egypt – then his later writings show how disappointed he was. Another of the dialogues notes that 'We cannot expect to obtain a correct practical acquaintance with any people, unless we have a means of free intercourse with them' (p. 115). The reference here is to Arab knowledge of Europeans, but this is precisely what al-Shidyāq was to find lacking in European scholarship of Arabic.

The CMS press accounts show that only 22 copies of this work were printed in 1840 (CMS/B/OMS/C M O4/25). Two years later, having printed more in the meantime, they had a large number of unsold copies in stock (CMS/B/OMS/C M O4/27). At this period they were having difficulty in selling their books.

Al-Shidyāq's two other works for teaching languages were published in the 1850s, when he had left Malta for England and France. In 1854, he issued, with Gustave Dugat as coauthor, the second Arabic grammar of French (after al-Miṣrī 1850; the Arabic–French bilingual preface to the work claims that it is the first: Dugat and al-Shidyāq 1854, a–b). In *al-Sāq* (4.18.11), al-Shidyāq mentions having exchanged Arabic and French lessons in the early 1850s in Paris. Bechraoui suggests that Dugat was one of these unnamed language exchange partners (Bechraoui 2001, 111). Dugat (1824–1894) had studied Arabic in Algeria as well as at the École

spéciale des langues orientales vivantes in Paris (Messaoudi 2011; 2015, Annexes, 157–158). He translated an Arabic poem that al-Shidyāq had written in honour of the Bey of Tunis into French.

In format and content, al-Shidyāq and Dugat's *Grammaire française* follows closely al-Shidyāq's earlier Arabic grammar of English. The major difference is that the English grammar concludes with a section on prosody, where the French one instead has a few pages of conversational phrases. These dialogues are presented in French and Arabic in parallel columns, with a vowelled Arabic transcription of the French at the foot of the page (presenting, for example, 'y a-t-il' as *yātil* and 'C'est fort cher' as *sit fur shar*: Dugat and al-Shidyāq 1854, 127). Given al-Shidyāq's own statements – noted above – about his lack of French, Dugat's role seems to have been to help al-Shidyāq adapt his previous book. Along the way, some of the more overtly missionary content has been disposed of. Despite its deliberate pitching to a French colonial market (some of the example sentences relate specifically to Algeria), the book does not appear to have been successful (Bechraoui 2001, 120, could not find any reviews of it, and nor could I). The authors' wish for the book in the preface was only partly fulfilled: 'Que Dieu protège ce livre de la critique de l'homme frivole et rende tout homme sensé désireux de le posséder!' (Dugat and al-Shidyāq 1854, a–b). Although there was nothing similar for Arabs learning French, a large number of Arabic–French vocabularies and French grammars of Arabic had already been produced for use in French North Africa, especially Algeria. The market may therefore have been saturated – and without publication and distribution in North Africa itself, it is hard to see how the book would have sold many copies in Paris.

Al-Shidyāq's French and English grammars should also be considered in light of his statements about the failure of European scholars to master Arabic sufficiently to write grammars of their own languages (*al-Sāq* 5.3.6). As well as trying to make a living as a writer and teacher, he is also making a point about his own superior linguistic competence.

The *Practical Grammar of the Arabic Language* which al-Shidyāq published in London in 1856 (Shidiac 1856) furthers these ends. The title page announces him as 'a native of Mount Lebanon, Syria; formerly Professor of Arabic at the University of Malta; translator of the whole Bible into Arabic; author of "An English Grammar for Arabs," and of the Arabic work called "The Fariac"'. The Preface contains a note that 'Any gentlemen desirous of receiving instruction in the Arabic Language may obtain MR. FARIS'S address from the publisher.' This was one of several venues in which al-Shidyāq advertised his services as Arabic teacher. In the following year, one of his pupils translated a poem in praise of Queen

Victoria from al-Shidyāq's original Arabic into English, adding that the author was 'anxious ... to make known his presence in this country to those who may be desirous of obtaining instruction in that language' (Freeland 1857, 217). As exemplified also with his ode in praise of the Bey of Tunis and his earlier complaint to the CMS, al-Shidyāq frequently turned to verse to get his point across.

By the mid-1850s, al-Shidyāq was largely working on his own account as a writer and teacher, but he still sometimes invoked his time with the missionaries in contexts where it was advantageous to do so. In his August 1857 application for naturalisation as a British citizen, he describes himself as a 'Professor or Teacher of the Arabic Language' (UK National Archives, HO 1/41/1278a). He refers to the birth of his two living children in Malta – making them already British subjects – and his own long residence on the island. His work as 'Professor of the Arabic Language in the College belonging to the British Government at Valetta' is mentioned, but his work for the CMS press is not. The application emphasises that al-Shidyāq's move to the United Kingdom was supported by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (the organisation's name is written in a larger and more elaborate hand), for the purpose of translating the Bible into Arabic. Two of the four men who wrote in support of al-Shidyāq's application – which was granted the following month – give their occupation as 'bookseller'. One of them, James Madden, listed in the 1851 Census as an 'Oriental Bookseller', had been the distributor for Assaad Kayat's *Eastern Traveller's Interpreter*.

At some point in the early 1850s, al-Shidyāq had become acquainted with the firm of another London bookseller, Bernard Quaritch. In 1854, Quaritch published *A Practical Grammar of the Turkish Language*, by William Burckhardt Barker. The immediate context for the book's publication was the outbreak of the Crimean War, or, as Barker termed it, 'the unexpected relationship into which we have been brought with the Ottoman Empire' which created a 'sudden demand for elementary books on the Turkish Language' (Barker 1854, unpaginated Preface). Barker was to die in the Crimea two years later.

Al-Shidyāq's *Practical Grammar of the Arabic Language* is essentially an Arabic version of Barker's work on Turkish; whoever instigated their association, Quaritch had commissioned al-Shidyāq to produce a book on the same model. Parts of it are translated directly, such as the Vocabulary and large portions of the Dialogues. The works are laid out in a similar manner, with chapters titled 'Of Pronouns', 'Of the Verb' and so forth. Yet the *Practical Grammar* is visibly also the descendant of al-Shidyāq's previous language books. The influence of the Classical Arabic grammatical

tradition is evident too, not least in the use of the names Zayd and 'Amr in example sentences, and the verb *ḍaraba* 'to beat' (e.g. *ḍarabtu Zaydan* 'I beat Zayd': Shidiac 1856, 42).

The language that the book teaches is literary Arabic, including case endings and nunation, which may or may not have been what Quaritch had in mind for the Crimean War military market (see Chapter 4 on Anton Tien's service in the Crimean War). Its layout is similar to that of al-Shidyāq's earlier books as well as that of Barker's Turkish grammar, starting with the alphabet and pronunciation, and proceeding through a series of short grammatical lessons, with paradigms to be memorised. Some short prose passages, with interlinear translation, and a section of 'Dialogues' conclude the book. The dialogues are not really conversations, but a series of unconnected phrases. Some might be useful for travellers (p. 71: 'Have you any news?'; p. 75: 'If you have nothing to do, come with me to the bazaars'), but a lot of the more practical conversations to do with travelling and military matters from Barker's book have in fact been omitted – perhaps because Arabic would be of less immediate use in the Crimea itself. The language is slightly more colloquial than that used elsewhere in the book (for example, 'aish' for 'what?'). Religious content is absent, and there are only a few phrases to do with language learning or classroom instruction (e.g. p. 101: 'What do you call that in Arabic?'; p. 104: 'A man who cannot speak the language of the people among whom he sojourns may sometimes be in danger of starving'; p. 107: 'Tell me the name of this in your own language'; p. 108: 'Yes, Sir, I can speak a little Arabic').

The book does not appear to have sold well at first. Bernard Quaritch later recalled that before the first large order came in for his 'Anglo-Turkish and Anglo-Arabic grammars', he 'travelled all over London without finding a bookseller who would look at them' (*Wigan Observer and District Advertiser*, 6 September 1913, 4). Later, however, sales picked up. A reviewer in the *Revue de l'Orient* thought that these works which 'ont été publiés dans le but de populariser en Angleterre l'étude des langue [*sic*] turque et arabe, dont l'importance devient chaque jour de plus en plus réelle' would also be of use for French-speaking merchants who were used to making do with English books: 'Comme nous ne possédons pas encore en France de publications élémentaires analogues à celles que nous annonçons, nous sommes persuadés qu'elles seront très-utiles et très-commodes pour les commerçants qui sont à même de faire usage de livres rédigés en anglais' (L. R. in *Revue de l'Orient* 5 1857, 251; the review may be by Léon de Rosny, who specialised in East Asia, not the Middle East). The reviewer's ignorance of the many elementary Turkish and Arabic

books that had already been produced in French, in Paris and Algeria, is curious and may indicate that these did not circulate widely.

However shaky a start it may have had, al-Shidyāq's Quaritch-published grammar went on to enjoy a wide circulation. A couple of years after its publication, Samuel Ajayi Crowther – the first African Anglican bishop, and author of a grammar of Yoruba – was using it on a journey along the river Niger. Crowther found that local Muslim scholars could not read his Arabic Bible (unfortunately he does not tell us which translation this was), 'but took much delight in making out words from Faris El Shidiac's Arabic Grammar, the meaning of which I was enabled to give them from the English translation column both in Hausa + Nupe as occasion may require' (letter from Crowther to the CMS, quoted in Ney 2015, 46). Even when he had moved on from missionary employ, al-Shidyāq was still, unintentionally, writing for them. Quaritch brought out a second edition of the *Practical Grammar* in 1866, revised by Rev. Henry Williams, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, who notes in the Preface that the first has been well received. Williams' revisions are not extensive and he purposefully does not adapt the work much to include dialectal usage. There are only occasional additions to reflect the colloquial language, such as noting in the dialogues that the word normally used for 'bread' in Egypt is *'aysh*, rather than *khubz*. By 1889 the book was in its fourth edition.

## Assaad Yakoob Kayat and the Church Missionary Society

Assaad Yakoob Kayat (Asʿad Yaʿqūb al-Khayyāṭ, 1811–1865) knew both Asʿad and Fāris al-Shidyāq. He was born in Beirut to a Greek Orthodox family. In his memoir, *A Voice from Lebanon*, published in London in 1847, he places considerable emphasis on his early education in languages, and in the precocious interest he took and expertise he developed in commerce. Kayat's father and uncles spoke Arabic, Greek, Turkish and Albanian. One uncle, Attala, also knew Italian and had acted as interpreter to Sir Sidney Smith in Lebanon in 1799 (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 18), placing him on the other side of the Napoleonic wars in the Middle East from the interpreters and Arabic teachers considered in Chapter 1.

As a boy, Kayat learnt Greek from a teacher who spoke no Arabic. They were forced to use an improvised version of the direct method, in which only the target language is used. The teacher would indicate objects and say the name in Greek. Kayat would write this down, with the Arabic, and learn the words by heart: 'This mode I found most advantageous in

all the languages I acquired in after years; and I strongly recommend it to others' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 22). Things went less well when they moved on to verbs and the teacher attempted to illustrate the Greek verb *tuptein* 'to beat'. It may or may not be coincidental that the verb used by Classical Arabic grammarians in examples, *ḍaraba*, has the same meaning. Kayat started to work informally as an interpreter for foreign merchants in Beirut, and decided to learn Italian, but initially had little success in finding a teacher. In the street one day, Kayat, then aged 12, followed two strangers: Isaac Bird and William Goodell of the American mission. When they asked him what he wanted, he replied, 'I wish to learn your language' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 34). He started studying Italian with Bird, English with Pliny Fisk and Arabic grammar (which he had never before formally studied) with Asʿad al-Shidyāq (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 35–36). For the missionaries, the precocious, streetwise, multilingual Kayat – still at a potentially malleable and impressionable age – must have seemed like a promising recruit. For Kayat himself, the attraction was the opportunity to learn more languages and to spend time with foreigners – something which he enjoyed, but in which he also saw the possibility for financial gain and self-advancement.

By his own analysis, Kayat's greatest advantage in language learning was his lack of inhibition or fear of making mistakes: 'The main secret by which I acquired so many languages, both Asiatic and European, was this: no difficulty deterred me from speaking. I went on talking, and cared not if others laughed at my mistakes; and when absolutely at a loss for a word, I made myself understood by signs' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 38–39). He sought out contact with foreigners who spoke languages he did not already know. He learnt Armenian from missionaries, and French from copying letters for Swiss merchants who employed him as an interpreter (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 38, 43) – thereby presumably also learning a lot about running a business. This is the kind of language learning that tends not to leave archival or literary traces, but which must have been very common in a port city like Beirut. Kayat's written word lists have not survived, but his practice seems to have been similar to that exercised in the dragomanic manuscripts discussed in Chapter 1, and by the language learners who added extra lists of vocabulary inside their phrasebooks, like the examples in Chapter 7. When the Swiss and other Europeans left Beirut in 1827 because of worsening relations between the Ottoman Empire and European powers, Kayat went into business on his own account, trading goods throughout Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

Kayat's 'big break' came in 1830 when John W. Farren was appointed British Consul General in Syria. During Farren's earlier travels in Syria, his wife had stayed with the American missionaries in Beirut, and Kayat had

studied written English with her. Kayat was now given the position of second consular dragoman and was promoted to first dragoman a couple of years later, at around the time that Farren moved to Damascus (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 72, 74). Kayat continued to trade and to study languages throughout this period. On a ship from Sidon to Beirut, 'I had the best opportunity of improving in English, and adding to my vocabulary all the most common nautical terms, such as the names of the ropes, "ahead," "aye, aye, sir," "top-mast," "cabin," "gun-room," "sentry," &c.' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 80).

Kayat did not remain long in Damascus. His memoir is full of name-dropping: references to the illustrious persons with whom he was associated at one time or another. Three Persian princes passed through Damascus in 1835–1836, en route to England, and Kayat accompanied them as their interpreter. Naturally, he took advantage of the opportunity to learn Persian from them (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 107–108). He later translated the travel memoir of one prince from Persian into English (Najaf Ḳulī Mīrzā, trans. Kayat, 1839), although without the original it is difficult to tell how accurate the translation is, and how much of it may be Kayat's own narrative. When he returned to Damascus, he resigned his position as dragoman. According to *A Voice from Lebanon*, his intention was 'to contract, as far as possible, my commercial pursuits; and ... by intercourse with the natives, to ascertain by what means the welfare of the people would be most effectually promoted, and what had hitherto been the chief hindrances to improvement' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 144).

Kayat's promotion of himself as a 'native agent' – 'a Syrian Christian intermediary by means of which European missionary activity (and presumably other interests) in the Muslim world could best be served' (Salibi 1982, 145) – served his own personal interests as well as those of the missionaries and of the development of Syria. He had always had a keen eye for educational and business opportunities – which is not to doubt the genuineness of the connections and friendships he forged with foreigners. In contrast to the American missionaries, with their ideology of self-sacrifice, Kayat did not see why he could not prosper while at the same time doing good.

There was a utilitarian argument for 'native teachers and native preachers everywhere', part of which was linguistic:

How is an European to accommodate himself to all the Syrian customs? And how is he to speak fluently in the Arabic tongue? I have no fear of being contradicted by any linguist, when I assert that it requires a life to learn and conquer the guttural pronunciation of the Arabic letters. De Sacy, the best oriental scholar of modern

times in Europe, could not converse for a minute in Arabic, though he understood that language as well as any native Arabian. It is a sad mistake to suppose, because a man can utter a few Arabian words, as '*khubz*' and '*ma*,' (bread and water), that he is able to address an Arabian audience.

<div align="right">(al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 146–147)</div>

Like al-Shidyāq, Kayat seems to have read al-Ṭahṭāwī's account of Paris, with his description of Silvestre de Sacy's difficulties in spoken Arabic. He may also be reflecting on the difficulties of the missionaries he knew in Beirut with the Arabic language, although their own accounts tend to focus on the 'fluency' they achieved in it. As well as the utilitarian argument for employing Arabs, it is difficult to tell to what extent Kayat also had any deeper ideological or political commitment to Syrian autonomy: any he had would certainly have been masked in *A Voice from Lebanon*, which was published in England at a time when he was still fund-raising and promoting his ideas. Kayat was in contact with Fāris al-Shidyāq during this period, and when he stopped in Malta en route to England again in early 1839, it was 'my learned friend, the Arabian poet of the age, Mr. Fares Shediak' who arranged his accommodation (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 179). This is the period when al-Shidyāq would have been working on his and Badger's *Arabic and English Grammatical Exercises and Familiar Dialogues*. Al-Shidyāq seems also to have held Kayat in high esteem, since he refers to him in passing in *al-Sāq* as 'the skilled and sagacious Khawāja Asʿad Khayyāṭ' (3.1.56, trans. Davies).

In April 1839, Kayat arrived in London with letters of introduction from Farren and others. He quickly established connections with groups such as the Church Missionary Society and began to solicit their support for his 'native agency' project. Some CMS members had misgivings about the commercial enterprises Kayat was also pursuing alongside fund-raising, but he was able to assuage them (Salibi 1982, 148). As well as selling goods he had brought with him and lecturing and fund-raising, Kayat also spent some time in Cambridge, attending the university's public lectures and studying medicine with a doctor with whom he lodged.

During his 1839–1840 stay in England, and again when he was in the country from 1842 to 1847, Kayat toured the country giving lectures about Syria, the sights and customs of the Holy Land, and his own projects to evangelise, educate and provide medical care. In late 1839, he gave a talk in Leeds, dressed in an outfit reported to be 'similar to that worn at the time the Scriptures were written':

The appearance of this interesting stranger at the meeting on Monday night, excited great interest, and his first lecture at the Commercial Buildings, on Tuesday morning, was numerously attended, especially by the ladies, a large portion of whom, we observed wore the quaker's bonnet.

(*The Leeds Intelligencer*, 19 October 1839, 8)

There was something of the showman to Kayat's presentation. He told a receptive audience that he was 'endeavouring to bring his countrymen to a sense of their lost state by sin'. His own life story was central to the talk, although he misrepresented elements of it in order to win his audience's pity and support. He claimed to have studied Greek in secret, 'such being the antipathy of the natives of Syria to any language but their own, that they consider every person knowing any other must be under satanic influence' (*The Leeds Intelligencer*, 19 October 1839, 8). This does not tally with his description elsewhere of Beirut as a cosmopolitan port city, full of foreigners and their languages, or his own multilingual family. At the end of the talk, he sold copies of his translated book about his stay in England with the Persian princes, to cover his travelling expenses.

Regional newspapers contain many such reports of lectures given by Kayat during his second and third stays in England. At a lecture in London in 1843, organised by the Society for Promoting Christian Education in Syria, for example, Kayat again appeared in 'the costume of his native country' and spoke to a packed hall in correct, fluent English 'but marked by a foreign accent' (*Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, Thursday, 23 March 1843, 4). After the lecture, 'a liberal collection was made'. Kayat's portrait appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, which described him as a 'truly philanthropic Syrian' (29 July 1843, 13).

On his return trip to Syria in 1840, Kayat acted as interpreter and guide to Lord Francis Egerton (later first Earl of Ellesmere) and his wife, who found his services 'as invaluable as his company was agreeable' (Egerton 1841, 3). He taught Lord Egerton some Arabic (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 249–250). Lady Egerton was surprised to find that the British Consul at Jaffa could only speak Arabic and that women in Syria were poorly educated:

I visited Assaad's family, respectable good natured people. But whilst Assaad himself is a highly educated man, master of eight or nine languages, and has pursued his studies for some time at Cambridge, there is not one female member of his family who can read!

(Egerton 1841, 93)

By his own account, Kayat's short time back in Syria was busy. He accompanied Rev. and Mrs Schlienz and Fāris al-Shidyāq for at least part of their 1840 tour. Kayat and his family fled the British bombardment of Beirut in September 1840, during which time he married his wife, Martha, who was to return with him to England. Kayat – again, according to the account he wrote for a British readership in 1847 – devoted himself to missionary and educational work. He shared his experiences in Britain and Europe, demonstrating scientific devices he had brought back with him, such as an electric battery and a microscope. He urged younger Syrians: 'All great things have had a small beginning. Let us learn languages, let us translate good and useful books into our own language, let us teach our children, boys and girls' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 256). He found older people less receptive. When he was arguing for women to be allowed to sit with men and listen to him speak in private homes, one old man exclaimed, 'For God's sake let them all come out before Assaad Kayat makes us worship them!' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 258). Although Kayat claimed credit for the establishment of several schools during this period, it seems probable that his actual achievements were more modest (Salibi 1982, 150–151). He despatched six young men to study in England at the CMS's expense, including a member of the prominent Druze Jumblatt family, and his own brother George. Kayat wrote to the CMS about his hopes for 'the enlightenment of the Druses & of much good in this country' and for the potential of England to act as a 'civilising' influence:

> England I believe is the place for them & no other place. Let them see suitable society & breath English liberty, let them admire British constitution & English institutions, Let them see true religion & civilization.
> (CMS/B/OMS/C M O8, No. 40. Letter of 7 October 1841.)

Throughout this time, while engaged in the activities for which he had received funding and support from missionary groups in England, Kayat continued to engage in successful commercial enterprises. It seems to be in part because of this that he was summoned back to London to report to the CMS on his activities. He left Beirut for England with his family in October 1842. While Kayat continued to lecture and fund-raise for the Syrian youths who had already arrived in England to study, his working relationship with the CMS now broke down, although he continued to remain on cordial terms with members of the organisation. Kayat was not the self-sacrificing, obedient worker for the CMS that they seem to have expected him to be. He was also frustrated at the money that the CMS was

prepared to spend on sending European missionaries to Syria who did not have enough knowledge of its language and culture to achieve anything constructive. For one such scheme:

> several hundred pounds were contributed, and a man was sent out to Syria. This man was four months on the journey, including passage, quarantines, travelling on the Continent, &c. He did not speak a word of Arabic, and yet within this short time he did not hesitate, on returning to England, to say, that he had seen much of Syria and the Holy Land. I believe he gave lectures on the country he had visited, and had hearers; and I was told, that he described all the institutions, the feelings of the people, and their religious prospects; in a word, all about Syria. I must leave it to my readers to think how far the statements of such a man could be correct. I know one thing, that, after a residence of some years in Great Britain, although I speak the language and know thousands of well-informed people, yet I should feel great diffidence in attempting to speak about England, or even about London.
>
> (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 344–345)

Kayat therefore pursued other opportunities for business and professional development, helped by the influential connections he had made during his previous visits to England. He returned to his medical studies and, after four years' training at St George's Hospital, became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons.[10] During this time, he 'employ[ed] the solitary hours of the night, generally from one till two in the morning' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 355) in writing *The Eastern Traveller's Interpreter*, his Arabic phrasebook. This was published in London in 1844. Although it was not 'the first of its kind', as Kayat claims, his claim that it 'did well' may be more trustworthy (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 356). He supported himself and his family by importing goods from Syria and exporting English goods 'which sold well at home' (al-Khayyāṭ 1847, 356). In 1846 he applied for and was granted British citizenship. His application places emphasis on his missionary and educational activities (as did al-Shidyāq's later application for naturalisation) and service as an intepreter to Farren and the Persian princes, downplays his medical education and does not mention his commercial dealings at all (UK National Archives, HO 1/23/450). Two of the men who wrote in support of Kayat's application were clergymen.

Despite his continued reliance on Christianity, missionary activity and clergymen as part of his case for belonging and respectability, Kayat's next career move, now that he was a British citizen, was into consular

service, for which he was better suited, since the Foreign Office were not interested in his commercial activities (Salibi 1982, 152). Kayat was appointed as British consul in Jaffa and held the post from 1847 until his death in 1865. As consul – a post his sons held after him – he is mentioned in many travellers' accounts, including that of Herman Melville, who remarks on his 'aversion to converse' about his past missionary activities and the persistent rumour that this was because 'he was someway trickish with the funds' (Melville 1955, 160). Nevertheless, he maintained good relations with members of the CMS in London. Samuel Gobat consulted him in 1853 when William Kruse left his post in Nablus. Kayat urged them to be compassionate to Kruse, who was clearly 'not fit for the Nablouse mission', and suggested that he be allowed to stay in Jaffa (Church Mission Society Archives: CMS/B/OMS/C M O63/89B).

Kayat's *Eastern Traveller's Interpreter* was privately printed for the author, and sold at the bookshop of James Madden at 8 Leadenhall Street in London. Madden, who specialised in Eastern and colonial subjects, was later one of the witnesses of Fāris al-Shidyāq's petition for naturalisation as a British subject. The book is dedicated to John Farren. It is light on grammar, and Kayat's primary concern is 'not to point out the grammatical construction of passages, but to express the wants of the Traveller in the Arabic language' (Kayat 1844, 1). Some of his explanations of pronunciation are eccentric (*'ayn* is 'very like the bleating of a goat of a kid, *māā! māā!* An acute ear will catch it': Kayat 1844, 6). Some appear to have been copied from existing works without full understanding of the meaning. *Khā'*, for example, is described as 'the German *ch* in *nacht*, or *ch* in *loch*, in *Scotch*' (Kayat 1844, 5). Kayat (or the typesetter) has italicised 'Scotch' as if *khā'* is pronounced like its final 'ch', when in fact 'Scotch' refers to the word 'loch'. Others may reflect his own observations of English pronunciation, such as when he describes *ḥā'* as 'double the aspiration of the *h* in *mahogany*' (Kayat 1844, 5) – a word in which the English 'h' is pronounced closer to the Arabic *ḥā'*. Kayat's knowledge of Greek can be seen in both the alphabet table, where he puts a Greek *delta* (pronounced in modern Greek as /ð/) next to *dhāl*, and in the section on pronunciation, where he describes *ghayn* as 'the Greek γ as pronounced in Greece'. Unfortunately, his readership are more likely to have been familiar with Classical Greek in its English pronunciation (which treated *delta* as 'd' and *gamma* as 'g') than with modern Greek.

Kayat provides his words and phrases in both Arabic script and English transliteration, using English spelling conventions such as 'ee'

for ī and 'oo' for ū. Some of his Arabic-script spellings are influenced by pronunciation, such as when he spells the word for 'Monday' as *al-itnayn* instead of [*yawm*] *al-ithnayn* (Kayat 1844, 10; in the chapter on numerals, he writes it correctly as *ithnayn*). His transliteration scheme is not applied consistently, such as when he renders *Muḥarram* as 'Moohârâm' without indicating the *ḥā'* with a doubled 'h' as he does elsewhere. *'Ayn* is also commonly omitted in the transliterated Arabic. Kayat begins with personal pronouns, numerals and common prepositions. In Chapter VI he introduces the 'verbs in most frequent use', which he supplies in the imperative 'as giving directions to the Servant or conversing with others' (Kayat 1844, 17). Kayat later returns to the verb and provides a lengthier vocabulary in the conventional Arabic format, going by the third person singular of the past tense. He follows the practice of the Classical Arabic grammarians (and his own childhood Greek teacher) in giving examples from the verb *ḍaraba* 'to beat'. His explanation of how to form other forms of the verb on the basis of this is not always easy to follow, and he does not give the verbs in a tabular form, which most of his readership would have been more familiar with:

> Thus, in the PRESENT TENSE, the *First Person Singular* is formed by prefixing an ا *a* to the Verb (also, to make it more clear, by adding the Pronoun *I, thou, he,* &c.); thus in ضرب *dârâb*, 'to beat' or 'he did beat,' use the Pronoun انا *ânâ*, 'I,' and prefix the ا *a*, and say, انا اضرب *ânâ âdrob*, 'I beat'.
>
> (Kayat 1844, 153)

The dialogues and vocabulary list which constitute most of the book seem to be directed primarily at missionaries and merchants in the Middle East, in fitting with Kayat's endeavours at this period of his life. Even the initial section of greetings includes appropriate addresses to a bishop. Most of the content relates to Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, but there is one chapter on 'Discourse with a Captain of a Boat Ascenting the Nile', in which Syrian or standard Arabic pronunciation is nevertheless retained (p. 56: 'jédedéh' for 'new' which in Egypt would be pronounced 'gadīda'). The second and third dialogues, 'Discourse with an Interpreter' and 'Discourse with a Servant', equip the traveller to hire a dragoman, enquiring about his languages, knowledge of the country and previous service with Europeans (Figure 2.2). Sections follow on dealings with a merchant, mule-drivers, camel-drivers, a boat's captain, a servant preparing for a journey and the keeper of a caravanserai, things with which Kayat was familiar from his commercial operations. The user is equipped to set up a business ('How

| English | Arabic | Transliteration |
|---|---|---|
| Did you ever travel with any traveller before? | انت سَافرت مـع غير سـواح | ântâ sâfârt māa ghyr sooâhh. |
| Have you certificates of character? | عندك اوراق شهادات | āandâc âwrâc shehâdât. |
| What countryman are you? | انـت مـن اي بـلاد | ânt men ay belâd. |
| Can you teach the language? | انت بتحسن تـعـلـم الـلـغـه | ânt betehhessen tāalém al-lughâh. |
| How old are you? | تـدر ايـش عـبـرك | kâdâr aysh āamrâc. |
| What language do you speak best? | اي لغه بتعرف احسَن | ay lughâh btāaréf ahhssân. |
| Do you speak Turkish? | بـتـعـرف تـركي | btāaréf Toorkie. |

**Figure 2.2** Part of 'Dialogue II: Discourse with an Interpreter' from *The Eastern Traveller's Interpreter* (Kayat 1844), 27. Public domain. Available at https://bit. ly/43SsYWO

many ships come to Beyroot in the course of the year?', 'I want to hire a warehouse', 'I will bring you any good you like from England upon commission'; Kayat 1844, 54–55).

Overall, the book maintains a balance between God and Mammon. There are dedicated sections for enquiring about a person's (Christian) faith and knowledge of Scripture (p. 57: 'Do you believe in the only true God?' p. 60: 'Have you learnt the Ten Commandments?'), and for making enquiries about setting up a school (p. 62: 'I will open a school gratis', 'My wife will teach your girls'; missionaries were particularly concerned with girls' education: Khalaf 2012, 180–181). The missionary is also equipped to converse with an 'Eastern Bishop' and find out about his church (Figure 2.3), and his wife to converse with an 'Eastern Lady' and encourage her to have her daughters educated (p. 77: 'The English ladies will do all they can to help the Eastern ladies'). The final section of dialogues, 'Discourse on Researches of Antiquities', includes questions such as 'Are there in this neighbourhood any remains of ancient cities, temples, or castles?' and 'Are there any ancient inscriptions on rocks or stones?' (Kayat 1844, 79–80). At the end of the book, after the vocabulary and explanation of the verbal system, as if an afterthought, Kayat appends a final section of phrases, 'Inquiries on Holy Places, &c.'. This relates mostly to Palestine, especially Jerusalem and its environs.

DISCOURSE WITH AN EASTERN BISHOP.

| English | Arabic | Transliteration |
|---|---|---|
| Under whose patriarchate is this ? | هذه تحة كرسي اينو بطرك | tâhhet coorssee aynoo bâttrâc hâthéh. |
| The patriarch of Antioch. | بطرك الانطاكي | bâttrâc alântâkee. |
| What is the number of Christians in your diocese ? | كام كبة النصاري في ابرشيتك | câm câmeeât alnâssârâh fee abrâsheetâc. |
| How are your clergy educated ? | كيف كهنتكم يتعلمون | câif câhnâtcom yâtâālâmoon. |
| Do you use the Nicene creed ? | انتم تستعملون دستور ايمان النيقاوي | ântom tâstāāmâloon dâstoor aymân alnekâwe. |
| What are the points of difference between you and the Romish church ? | ما هي الفروقات ما بينكم و بين كنيسة رومية | mâ hee alfrookât mâ binee-com wâ bine câneessât roomiéh. |

**Figure 2.3**  Part of 'Discourse with an Eastern Bishop' from *The Eastern Traveller's Interpreter* (Kayat 1844), 68. Public domain. Available at https://bit.ly/43SsYWO

## Protestant and Catholic missionary printing in Syria-Palestine

Although Fāris al-Shidyāq and Assaad Kayat had difficult relationships with the American and British missionaries with whom they worked, their books still had an influence on subsequent generations of Arabs who engaged with Protestant missionaries in Lebanon on better terms. In 1834 the American Mission Press was finally established in Beirut, after a delay of some years because of lack of Arabic fonts and the necessary expertise. Like the CMS press in Malta, it printed mostly religious literature and schoolbooks, including language teaching books. From the 1860s, Beirut became an important centre of Arabic printing, and of the Nahḍa, to which foreign Protestant missionaries acted as inadvertent handmaids. Scholars and journalists like Buṭrus al-Bustānī and the Sarkīs brothers, to whom I now turn, participated in both missionary and Nahḍa networks (Auji 2018; Womack 2019, 4–5).

The best known of the Sarkīs family is probably Khalīl Sarkīs (1842–1915: Ayalon 2008; Womack 2019, 213–258), but his elder brothers Shahīn (1830–1870) and Ibrahīm (1834–1885) were also writers, and the latter a printer too (see e.g. Jessup 1910, 76, for Ibrahīm's role as chief compositor at the press; and for the Sarkīs brothers' family connections to other Lebanese Protestants, Lindner 2009, 288). In 1863, Shahīn and Ibrahīm published an Arabic–English vocabulary and dialogues with the American Mission Press (Sarkīs and Sarkīs 1863; the

book was in its fourth edition by 1888). In format, it closely resembles the school spelling and dialogue books produced by Fāris al-Shidyāq and his collaborators in Malta. Its first part consists of words listed by category ('The Table', 'Clothes', 'The Animals' etc.). These are given first in English, then in unvowelled Arabic. It is clear that the book is intended for use by Arabic speakers, presumably children in mission schools, although one surviving annotated copy shows that it could be adapted for use by an English speaker learning Arabic (see Chapter 7). Grammar is not explicitly taught, but there are tables of personal pronouns and several pages of the principal parts of irregular verbs ('see, saw, seen' etc.). The second half of the book is made up of dialogues on everyday subjects (greetings, travel, classroom phrases and so forth) which are in part copied from al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840. Although the correspondences are not so precise, some of the phrasing is also reminiscent of Shidiac 1856. Rather than cribbing uncreatively, as plenty of phrasebooks did, the Sarkīs brothers instead adapted al-Shidyāq and Badger's phrases. The reason seems to be that they found the Arabic too formal. Most of the changes in grammar or vocabulary tend towards bringing it a little closer to natural speech, while keeping it as *fuṣḥā* rather than a dialect. In Figure 2.4, for example, they change the verb *yaṣnaʿ* to *yaʿmal* for 'he makes'; it is interesting to note that in al-Shidyāq and Badger's interlinear translation, they too use *yaʿmal*. Other strategies the Sarkīs brothers adopt include omitting the particle *an* in subordinate clauses, and dropping redundant personal pronouns with
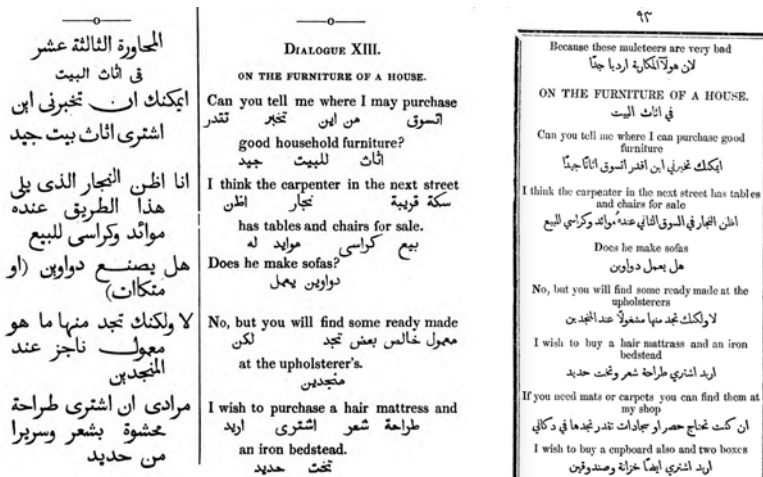


**Figure 2.4** Al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840 (left) and Sarkīs and Sarkīs 1863 (right) compared. The former is available at https://bit.ly/3Cm4BFo

verbs. The overall effect is to make the language less stilted, but still formal and educated.

Later Protestant missionary learners of Arabic will appear occasionally in the following chapters, such as Ion Keith-Falconer, whose Arabic teacher at Asyūṭ in Egypt in 1881 was married to a woman who had been 'at a college in Beyrout', suggesting an American missionary education (Sinker 1888, 123–124). Keith-Falconer used a child's Arabic reading book to study, which may have been a missionary publication. By the 1920s, we see some more developed and linguistically informed Arabic teaching materials for Protestant missionaries, such as George Scherer and Habib Hitti's *al-Kalām al-ʿArabī al-dārij fī Sūriyā* ('Colloquial Arabic Speech in Syria'; Scherer and Hitti 1920). This book is almost entirely in Arabic in the Arabic script, meaning that an Arabic-speaking instructor is needed, and suggesting that the direct method of using only the target language was employed. It seems likely that it was designed for missionaries and other learners who already knew literary Arabic. Scherer and Hitti note the difficulties faced by students of the colloquial who are used to learning languages from books, without access to native speakers:

> The Anglo-Saxon studies many languages in college, but his object in most cases is to learn and understand, rather than to speak, the language. When he goes to a foreign country, he naturally tries to follow the same method in learning another new language, and usually he struggles thro many difficulties before he learns to use the colloquial satisfactorily.
>
> (Scherer and Hitti 1920, iii)

From the 1840s, French Jesuits were also active in publishing and education in Beirut, where they began printing in 1848 (Delpal 2005; Herzstein 2015). Among the works produced at the Imprimerie Catholique, officially founded in 1853, were school textbooks. An anonymous work of 1862 contains phrases for classroom use, in French and Arabic, and incidentally provides us with some information on how French was taught at Jesuit schools in Beirut. The pupil is forbidden from speaking Arabic at school, and must ask permission to speak in Arabic if he does not know how to say what he needs to in French (Anonymous 1862, 10). This prescriptiveness was a product of both teaching by the direct method and Jesuit attempts to acculturate their pupils to European ways. A few years later, Father Joseph Heury (1824–1897) published a French–Arabic dictionary (Heury 1867); since this too has no name on the title page, I suspect that Heury was also the author of the 1862 textbook. Georges Nofal or Neuphal (i.e. Nawfal)

authored *Murshid al-mutaʿallim wa turjumān al-mutakallim / Guide de conversations ou vocabulaire et dialogues en arabe et en français* (first edition 1864), another schoolbook for teaching French to Arabic-speaking pupils. Nofal has used Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī's *Qalāʾid al-jumān fī fawāʾid al-tarjumān* as the source for some of his dialogues, for example the exchange 'Apprenez-vous le français? Oui Monsieur. Vous avez raison; c'est une langue si universellement répandue, qu'il serait honteux de ne pas la savoir' (Nofal 1876, third edition, 445). Earlier editions of the book explain only the Latin alphabet. The third edition supplements this with a table of the Arabic script, presumably so that the book might be used by French speakers studying Arabic. Other books of this sort printed at the Imprimerie Catholique include Roze 1873.

The dialogue or phrasebook model was also followed by French books for Catholic schools printed at Mosul (Anonymous 1897) and Jerusalem. The Franciscan press at Jerusalem was the first press in the city to print Arabic, and thus – like the Protestant and Catholic presses in Beirut – represents 'the more pragmatic side of the Arab world's *Nahda*' (Dakhli 2018, 365), since it printed books by and for the Catholic religious community in the city, but also took on the printing of many other materials for private and commercial parties, such as visiting cards and calendars. Fra Gaudenzio di Matelica (Gaudenzio Bonfigli, 1831–1904) directed a Franciscan school in Aleppo from 1861 to 1874, and was the author of two books printed at the Franciscan press in Jerusalem. His *Sillabario* for teaching Arabic-speaking pupils Italian was in its second edition in 1880; I have been unable to find the first edition. This contained some original dialogues in Italian, Arabic and French, mostly relating to classroom activities and religious instruction. In 1868, he published an *Introduzione allo studio della lingua araba: Ad utilità dei Giovani pp. missionarî di terra santa*. This was directed, in contrast, at the needs of Italian-speaking Catholic missionaries. It teaches literary Arabic grammar, drawing on, among other works, Silvestre de Sacy's *Grammaire arabe*, and the Latin works of Agapito da Fiemme and Oberleitner 1822, just as Anton Hassan had done (Di Matelica 1868, 4). Fra Gaudenzio uses some Arabic grammatical vocabulary, such as the Italianised 'moddareo' for *al-muḍāriʿ*, the imperfect form of the verb (Di Matelica 1868, 24). The book has a short section of dialogues, which focuses heavily on religious affairs. Some years later, another Aleppo-based Franciscan, Father Leone 'd'Aleppo', published a two-part *Elementi di lingua araba* at the same press (d'Aleppo 1889). This, too, is directed at fellow Catholic missionaries, and reflects a slightly more colloquial form of the language.

The priorities of foreign Christian missionaries in the Middle East were rather different from those of the language learners we encountered in Chapter 1 – both Arab and European – but the language instruction books they produced (or whose production they sponsored) have many features in common with previous and subsequent non-missionary works. Although there is a Christian moral tone to books such as Shidyāq's and Kayat's, and they include some highly specific materials such as terms for enquiring about a person's religious faith, the contents as a whole could be used by a person who was not primarily interested in either spreading or converting to Christianity. This means that they could readily be adapted to secular purposes. In Chapter 3, we will see how al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840 and Kayat 1844 both became the basis for later tourist phrasebooks. Fra Gaudenzio's works, in which the religious content predominates, could not be adapted in the same way. Like the 'dragoman dialogues' of previous centuries, which were reproduced in manuscripts over several hundred years and eventually found their way into print, dialogues written for printed books spread, meme-like, into books produced in widely separated times and places. Georges Nofal, a Francophone Christian Arab in Beirut, and Muḥammad Qadrī, a Muslim legal scholar in Cairo, both used Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd's dialogues when writing their own books in the early 1860s. Dialogues written for missionary phrasebooks spread into later works, to the point where, as we will see in Chapter 3, it beomes impossible to disentangle influence, plagiarism and literary osmosis from each other.

## Abraham Arbeely: Arabic in America

Let me conclude my discussion of Protestant missionary language books in the Middle East with one of their indirect descendants: an Arabic–English manual published in New York in 1896.

In 1860, the Arbeely family, who were Greek Orthodox, moved from Damascus to Beirut to escape sectarian conflict between Christians and Druze. The father, Yūsuf Arbeely, was a physician with a well-rounded education, who had studied medicine with Mīkhā'īl Mishāqa (discussed above; Khater 2016). In Beirut, he got to know the American Protestant missionaries, teaching them Arabic and helping with Cornelius Van Dyck's Bible translation project. His sons attended the Syrian Protestant College (later the American University in Beirut) and Protestant schools, although they remained Orthodox. In 1878, with the help of the missionaries, the family emigrated to the United States (for the full story of the Arbeelys, see Jacobs 2015; Khater 2016; and an interactive 'Arbeely Family Album',

Jacobs 2021). Although they were not converts, their lives and careers were therefore shaped by their interaction with the missionaries. The eldest son, Ibrahīm (1852–1919, known in America as Abraham), practised as a doctor, took part in the family's lectures and demonstrations of life in the 'Holy Land', and then branched out into journalism. The third brother, Nageeb, spent a period (1885–1887) as US Consul in Jerusalem, then returned to the United States. Another brother, Nasseem, became a dentist and opened a practice in Cairo opposite Shepheard's Hotel (which will feature heavily in Chapter 3), advertising himself as 'American Dentist' in the same building as a 'Modern School of Languages'. Both business signs are visible in a photograph in the collection of the Australian War Memorial (https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1006113, accessed 18 May 2023: Jacobs 2021; Nasseem Arbeely is listed as a dentist in the 1914 Baedeker guide to Egypt and Sudan).

Abraham and Nageeb founded the first Arabic newspaper in the United States, *Kawkab Amīrkā* 'The Star of America', in New York in 1892. It catered to the growing Arab population in the country, especially the 'Syrian colony' around Washington Street in Lower Manhattan (Jacobs 2015). *Kawkab Amīrkā* operated from a loft on Pearl Street, nearby. The reach of the paper, however, went far beyond the local Syrian community. Copies reached James Sanua in Paris, who wrote about *Kawkab Amīrkā* with enthusiasm in his own paper *Abū Nazzāra Zarqā'* (Chapter 3), and hoped that he would have the chance to visit New York and the Arbeely brothers en route to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago 'pour leur serrer affectueusement la main et leur faire nos compliments de vive voix' (Vol. 17, Issue 6, 1 May 1893). I have been unable to find out whether such a meeting ever took place. The Arbeely brothers were definitely acquainted with Getzel Zelikovits, who published his own Yiddish–Arabic instruction book in New York in 1918 (Chapter 6).

Although the Arbeely brothers were well-off and highly educated, and spoke English even before arriving in the United States, they were alert to the difficulties faced by later Arab immigrants. Many new immigrants became travelling pedlars, as explored by Linda K. Jacobs in her book *Strangers in the West* (2015), one of the advantages of this job being that it did not require good English. The writer Abraham Rihbany, who arrived in New York in 1893 and worked briefly for *Kawkab Amīrkā*, reflected on his own difficulties in learning English in his later memoir (Rihbany 1914). Abraham Arbeely's *The First Occidental Fruit for the Teaching of the English (and Arabic) Languages / Al-Bakoorat Al-Gharbeyat Fee Taleem Al-Lughat Al-Englezeyat* (as the title is spelled on its cover in Roman script) aimed to meet this challenge. In the introduction, Arbeely

calls it his patriotic (*waṭaniyya*) duty to help Arabic speakers who have come to the United States, by offering a book that was both 'innovative' and 'simple and easy'. Although he does not mention any sources directly, Arbeely hints that he has used other books in composing his own. It might be expected that he used the same books with which he was taught English by the American Protestant missionaries in Beirut, and indeed the book to which his bears the closest resemblance is Fāris al-Shidyāq's *al-Bākūra al-shahiyya fī naḥw al-lugha al-Inkilīziyya* (Malta edition 1836; Constantinople edition 1881/1882). Arbeely's title is an obvious allusion to al-Shidyāq's: he has replaced *shahiyya* 'pleasant, delicious' with the apposite *gharbiyya* 'Western', and the scholarly term *naḥw* 'grammar, syntax' with the more accessible *taʿlīm* 'teaching'. While *al-Bākūra al-shahiyya* has clearly been an inspiration, however, Arbeely has not directly copied or plagiarised any of the book. Here and there we see hints that Arbeely has referred to al-Shidyāq; both, for example, use the uncommon words 'leopard' and 'dungeon' in the section on English pronunciation (al-Shidyāq 1836, 11; Arbeely 1896, 19). Arbeely goes well beyond his source material, however, for example in his discussion of the silent 'd' in English words like 'handkerchief' and 'Wednesday' (Arbeely 1896, 23).

Al-Bakoorat Al-Gharbeyat* was first issued in weekly 16-page fascicles, with workbooks, in 1895 (Jacobs 2015, 279). In 1896 it was published as a single volume by the Oriental Publishing House – the imprint under which the Arbeelys published *Kawkab Amīrkā*. Arbeely wrote some new material for the book version: 40 pages to 'convert' the book for use by English speakers learning Arabic. The English Preface states that 'at the request of many friends in this country ... there has been added at the end of the grammar proper a key to the work which will enable the English speaking student to learn the Arabic from this same book' (Arbeely 1896, 3). Arbeely explains the Arabic script (including *tanwīn*) and its phonology, and gives about twenty pages of phrases, mostly to do with socialising and travel. A review by Duncan Macdonald in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* found the book useful, but complained that it was far more appropriate to the needs of an Arabic speaker learning English than vice versa (15.3, 1899, 181–182; Macdonald also reviewed Harder 1898 in the following issue of the journal). Macdonald's complaint seems a little unfair, since that was indeed its primary purpose, and he does not mention just how carefully and sensitively Arbeely has tailored the content and layout of the book to an Arab immigrant to the United States. The confusing orthography of English is explained at great length, over many pages. The example

phrases include many that would have been useful for Arabs peddling or looking for work, and some of the content is specific to the United States (references to the Fourth of July holiday) or even local to the 'Syrian colony' of New York ('I am going to my friend, whose address is at 25 Washington Street', p. 148). There is a section of model letters, covering everything from applying for a job to asking a father for his daughter's hand in marriage. The book teaches English, but it also teaches how things are done in the United States.

There is little about religion or missionary activities in *Al-Bakoorat Al-Gharbeyat*, but Abraham and Nageeb Arbeely did often run stories about Americans in the Middle East in *Kawkab Amīrkā*. In the autumn of 1892, they published a series of (anonymous) letters from readers about what they termed 'The Missionary Controversy' (*al-munāẓara bi-khuṣūṣ al-mursalīn*). Like the Arbeelys, many Syrians in New York had known American missionaries in cities like Beirut before they emigrated to the United States. While some wrote that they were grateful for the opportunities the missionaries had afforded them, principally for education, most had found the missionaries rude, over-privileged and out of touch with the local people and culture. One writer was especially damning about their treatment of local Syrian colleagues:

> When one of you comes to dwell among us, we notice a strange change in his conduct towards the natives after a short association with his colleagues of longer residence in the country. Instead of the agreeable American gentleman, who comes at first with apparently good intentions to do good in the country, we soon notice in you a spirit of arrogant selfishness and despicable prejudice against us incompatible with the avowed objects of your mission or calling.
>
> (*Kawkab Amīrkā*, Vol. 1, No. 25, Friday, 30 September 1892; translated from Arabic by the editors)

The writer mentions the high salaries the missionaries receive, in comparison with what they pay local colleagues. Things seem to have changed since the 1820s and 1830s, when ABCFM missionaries were certainly not well paid, and the CMS was in a constant state of financial near-collapse. He also dwells on the fact that American missionaries have worked harder at teaching Arabs English than at themselves learning Arabic, and have made competence in English an essential qualification for working with them. In the following issue (No. 26, Friday, 7 October 1892), the same writer concludes with an appeal to Syrians:

Demonstrate to the friends of Syria that contrary to what the missionaries would have them believe, there are in Syria, to-day, many educated men and women, in their employ, more able and better qualified than they are to carry on the great work among their countrymen.

These are the same complaints made by Fāris al-Shidyāq and Assaad Kayat, half a century or so earlier. By the 1890s, the schools and printing presses established by Protestant missionaries had borne fruit, in a generation of educated, cosmopolitan, multilingual Syrians, who were able to eloquently critique Europe and America in their own languages.

## Notes

1   There is a wealth of scholarship on Christian missionary linguistics in general, in all regions of the world affected by European colonialism. See, for example, the proceedings volumes of the International Conference on Missionary Linguistics, of which the most recent is Zwartjes and De Troia 2021.

2   The current name of this organisation is the Church Mission Society, which is also the name of its archive at the University of Birmingham. Until 1995, it was called the Church Missionary Society.

3   A letter by a Syrian American to the New York-based Arabic newspaper *Kawkab Amīrkā* in 1892 claimed that over the years American missionaries had never converted a single 'heathen' to Christianity, and that all those who associated with the missions had been Christian already (Vol. 1, No. 32, Friday, 18 November 1892).

4   It is interesting to note that both al-Shidyāq and Kayat became freemasons (the former in Malta in 1836 and the latter in London in 1837) at the time when they were seeking to establish networks beyond the missionaries. Yūsuf and Abraham Arbeely (see below) both became freemasons while still living in Beirut.

5   Roper (1988, 161) states that al-Shidyāq's colleague George Badger encouraged him to seek compensation and a passage to Egypt.

6   Mirza Abu Taleb, a Persophone Indian, had in fact already done so: see Introduction and n. 7 below.

7   Al-Shidyāq's criticism of England's poor linguists and their unfortunate habit of writing books – and of Sacy – is reminiscent of the earlier Persian-Indian traveller Mirza Abu Taleb Khan's discussion of English scholarship and critique of the Orientalist Sir William Jones. It may well be that al-Shidyāq had read his account, in one of its English translations. 'The eighth defect of the English is vanity, and arrogance, respecting their acquirements in science, and a knowledge of foreign languages, for, as soon as one of them acquires the smallest insight into the principles of any science, or the rudiments of any foreign language, he immediately sits down and composes a work on the subject, and, by means of the Press, circulates books which have no more intrinsic worth than the toys bestowed on children, which serve to amuse the ignorant, but are of no use to the learned. ... Far be it from me to depreciate the transcendant abilities and angelic character of Sir William Jones; but his Persian Grammar, having been written when he was a young man, and previous to his having acquired any experince in Hindoostan, is in many places, very defective; and it is much to be regretted that his public avocations, and other studies, did not permit him to revise it, after he had been

some years in India. Whenever I was applied to by any person for instruction in the Persian language who had previously studied this grammar, I found it much more difficult to correct the bad pronunciation he had acquired, and the errors he had adopted, than it was to instruct a person who had never before seen the Persian alphabet. Such books are now so numerous in London, that, in a short time, it will be difficult to discriminate or separate them from works of real value' (Abu Taleb Khan, trans. Stewart, 1810, Vol. II, 40–42).

8   Although not French, in his own case. Asked in Tunis if he knows French, the Fāriyāq responds, 'I have not bothered to learn it, for as soon as I started learning English I found myself forgetting an equivalent amount of my own language. Fate has decreed that my head shall hold only a predetermined amount of knowledge and that when that expands in one direction, it shrinks in another' (al-Sāq 4.8.7, trans. Davies). Abdelfattah Kilito, who has written movingly of his own journeys between French and Arabic, wonders: 'Was his fear of losing Arabic what motivated him to write several books about it?' (Kilito 2008, 72, fn. 3).

9   For a useful series of studies in Maltese linguistics, including its relationship to Arabic and to the Mediterranean lingua franca, see Saade and Tosco 2017.

10  At the time of his daughter Angelina's baptism in 1844, the Kayat family were living at 9 Upper Fitzroy Street in Fitzrovia, central London, and at the time of his application for British citizenship a few years later, nearby at 61 Gower Street.

# 3

# Tourists' phrasebooks and self-instruction: the business of language book publishing (1830–1935)

## Arabic for travel and self-improvement

This chapter considers books used by and marketed to leisure travellers and recreational language learners. My focus is on the British market for books on Egyptian Arabic, with some attention to works in French and German or for Syria-Palestine: to survey all travel phrasebooks for Arabic published for all regions and languages, even in the nineteenth century alone, would be an overwhelming task. The cumulative chart of colloquial Arabic phrasebooks published in 1798–1945 (Graph 2) shows a steady climb in numbers from the 1840s, which accelerates in the late 1860s and again in the 1880s. Two phenomena combined to bring about this vast growth in the number of Arabic phrasebooks in the second half of the nineteenth century: mass tourism and mass market publishing. Travelling to and around the Middle East was quicker, cheaper and safer than it had ever previously been. Books, too, were cheaper and easier to procure from booksellers, either from physical shops or by mail order. In the first part of this chapter, I show how European colonialism, the publishing industry, new transportation technologies and the evolution of existing traditions of language teaching set the scene for the tourist phrasebook boom of the second half of the nineteenth century. In the later sections of the chapter, I turn to examination of the phrasebooks themselves. The military Arabic phrasebooks produced during this period are considered in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the 1830s, steam travel made the 'overland' (in fact, mostly maritime) route between Europe and India through Egypt more popular than hitherto. At around the same time, the French colonisation of

Algeria and modernising programmes of Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt also brought more Europeans to North Africa, under varied circumstances. The number of European visitors to the Middle East grew in the late 1860s, with the opening of the Suez Canal and the first Thomas Cook tour to Egypt and Palestine, both in 1869. These events spurred authors and publishers to bring out new guidebooks and phrasebooks, for a market that was not just larger, but more diverse, now that overseas travel was increasingly affordable for middle-class travellers and considered safer and more comfortable for women and families. A further surge in both visitor numbers and phrasebook publications in the early 1880s reminds us of the colonial context of nineteenth-century tourism in the Middle East and North Africa. In certain cases, tourism itself can be regarded as a tool of colonial domination (as suggested in the subtitle of Zytnicki and Kazdaghli 2009), but everywhere it was facilitated by the infrastructures brought by colonial rule (La Barbera 2009). Tourism requires political stability, and colonial suppression of resistance also served to support the tourist industry. Tourism – and with it phrasebook production – continued to grow exponentially into the twentieth century.

There has been surprisingly little previous scholarship on language learning and tourism (see, for example, Phipps 2006; Koch 2015; Nasserstein 2019). My aim in this chapter is therefore to show the importance of the linguistic encounter within the tourist experience, and of language learning resources within the tourist economy. Dragomans bridged a linguistic divide between tourists and locals in the Middle East (Mairs and Muratov 2015, 2019). Many of the phrasebooks reviewed in this chapter identify themselves explicitly as substitutes for dragomans, enabling travellers to manage without their services. At least initially, however, tourist phrasebooks were poor substitutes for a dragoman, and it took some time for products to emerge that were fit for purpose: small enough to carry in a pocket, easy to understand, and containing phrases that answered a traveller's practical needs. As the nineteenth century progressed, these needs evolved, and new phenomena such as railways, steamships, hotels, restaurants and photography required new phrases and vocabulary.

For most of the period considered in this chapter, the tourist phrasebook is not a rigidly defined genre. Language books for use by tourists often contain short grammars and dictionaries of the target language as well as phrases, and the content – especially in French works for North Africa and English language works of the 1880s onwards – can overlap considerably with that of works for soldiers and colonial administrators. Language learning was not an experience that took place exclusively at the point of tourist contact. Many books were designed to allow self-study of Arabic

in advance of an anticipated journey. These fit within a wider nineteenth-century trend of books for self-instruction and self-improvement, outside of formal education. Books for learning languages without a teacher appear as part of popular series by commercial publishers, which enjoyed widespread distribution and were available at relatively low cost. I will examine the place of Arabic within these series, and the increasing accessibility of Arabic instruction to recreational learners who may never have intended to travel to the Middle East or North Africa.

## The overland route and the first Middle East guidebooks (1830s–1840s)

Although the real explosion of guidebooks, phrasebooks and travel accounts came with the arrival of mass tourism in the Middle East in the late 1860s, with a further increase in the early 1880s after the establishment of the British protectorate over Egypt, travellers prior to this point did have a few resources specifically designed for them. Jean-Jacques Rifaud (1786–1852), who excavated at archaeological sites in Egypt for the French consul Bernardino Drovetti in the 1810s and 1820s, published a *Tableau de'Égypte*, which was largely descriptive but also offered advice to travellers (Rifaud 1830). It included a 42-page French–Arabic vocabulary of the 'dialectes vulgares de la haute Égypte' as well as a shorter vocabulary of an African language recorded among transported slaves (on which see Nakao 2017). Although the orthography is not always easy to follow (e.g. 'Deloiti' for *dī-'l-wa'ti/waqti* 'now'; 'mous' for *mish* or *mush* 'not') and Rifaud has a tendency to drop entire syllables ('Sahalkaire' for *ṣabāḥ al-khayr* 'Good morning'), it is recognisably southern Egyptian Arabic. Ironically, the phrase 'Il ne prononce pas bien l'arabe' is included. Phrases such as 'La nature de la femme' and 'Dormir avec une femme' suggest activities that were not usually recorded in later phrasebooks of the era of mass tourism, but are in line with the sexual exploits that many travellers of the period saw as an essential part of a stay in Egypt.

Jakob Berggren (1790–1868), who travelled in the Middle East in the early 1820s, published his travel account in three volumes in Swedish in 1826–1828, but the publication of the intended 'supplement' of a French–Arabic vocabulary was delayed until 1844 (Berggren 1844). Travellers may still have found it useful then, since few similar works were available, but its size and weight – it was over 900 pages long – made it more likely to serve as a desk reference for a longer-term resident in the Middle East than a casual traveller's vade mecum. Many travellers of the era produced their

own manuscript 'phrasebooks' for personal use. Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859), for example, compiled a few pages of useful words in Egyptian Arabic ('Mâfeesh' for 'there is not', 'Fee' for 'there is') on his overland journey from Bombay to London in 1827–1829 (BL Mss Eur F88/46). Robert Hay, friend and sponsor of Edward Lane, who was resident in Egypt for longer periods, also kept notes of Arabic vocabulary (BL Add MS 31054).

Most guides and phrasebooks of the 1830s relate not to Egypt's own attractions but to its position on the 'overland' route between Europe and India. This route began to be promoted in the early 1830s, notably by Thomas Waghorn (1800–1850), as an alternative to the long voyage via the Cape of Good Hope. During the course of the 1830s, the spread of railways in Europe and of steamships on the Mediterranean and Red Sea made this overland route an increasingly viable option. Writing in 1849, manuscript collector Robert Curzon reflected on the rapidity of the change since his 1833 visit to Egypt: 'in those days there were no steam-packets traversing every sea, with almost the same rapidity and accuracy as rail carriages on shore' (Curzon 1849, 3). Waghorn was operating on the cusp of this change. He was mostly concerned with establishing a postal service, but also conveyed travellers. Among these, he found a market for literature relating to Egypt. Waghorn published an account of his own first overland journey (Waghorn 1831). In 1838, 'the Indian booksellers having of late received numerous applications for works on Egypt from Gentlemen whose thoughts are directed homeward by that route', Waghorn turned more decisively from description of the route to advice on how to follow it, and issued a compendium of 'Hints to Overland Travellers', compiled mostly from existing works (Waghorn 1838, unpaginated Introduction). This was first published in Madras and then in London, and numerous references within the text show that he intended the book to promote his own business as well as to aid independent travellers. In January 1840, from Alexandria, he ordered 50 copies of Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* and six of Sale's translation of the Qur'ān, for sale on to travellers or residents in Egypt (Searight 1997, 237; Emma Roberts, who used Waghorn's services along part of the route in 1839, also read Lane 1836: Roberts 1841).

The authors or compilers of early English guidebooks for the Middle East were conscious of treading new ground. Waghorn and others pointed to the lack of available materials for travellers on the overland route, even though it was no longer the preserve of adventurous independent travellers. Godfrey Levinge, author of *The Traveller in the East: A Guide*, found that, while there were many scholarly books on the Levant, 'few

of them contain information of that practical nature, which is essential to a person travelling through countries, where the manner of living, the modes of conveyance, the accommodation for travellers, the climate, and the habits of the people are so different from those of Europe' (Levinge 1839, i).

The Arabic language does not feature heavily in overland guidebooks of the 1830s. Levinge notes of the monasteries of Mount Lebanon that 'Europeans who wish to acquire the Arabic language, frequently establish themselves in one of these convents' (Levinge 1839, 10; examples include Caussin de Perceval and the Polish-Russian Orientalist Osip Senkovskii: Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010, 162). He also mentions that his valet, John Thompson, learnt enough Greek and Arabic to go shopping (Levinge 1839, 6). George Parbury did not cover language in the first edition of his *Hand Book for India and Egypt*, but for the second 'a copious Hindoostanee vocabulary has been prepared by a gentleman who has been many years resident in India, while a vocabulary of the Egyptian dialect of the Arabic language, has been expressly compiled for this edition by a very eminent Oriental scholar' (Parbury 1842, ix–x; the vocabulary, along with brief grammatical explanation, appears on pages 399–411). The identity of the 'Oriental scholar' is unknown. Although the vocabulary is advertised as 'Egyptian', there is little in it specific to the Egyptian dialect, other than favouring the pronunciation of *jīm* as a 'hard g'. The origin of the author – whether or not a native speaker of Arabic – is therefore open.

A curious volume produced probably in the late 1830s shows how travellers might assemble the necessary information from a variety of sources. It contains several relevant works bound together with a collective, printed title page (Barker 1827; Waghorn 1838; an excerpt from Wilkinson 1835; Mutti 1830; Mutti 1834; see Figure 3.1). It is small and light enough to be carried on the person. A docket bound inside the book states that it was 'Reprinted at the Imperial Printing Press No. 5' on Church Lane in Bombay, for the proprietor, the bookbinder J. J. Malvery. Aside from my own copy (acquired from a bookseller in Wales), the only other copy of which I am aware is that of the Uttarpara Jaykrishna Public Library in West Bengal, digitised on the Internet Archive (https://archive. org/details/dli.bengal.10689.6661/mode/2up).

In combining practical advice and notes on the itinerary and points of interest along the way (by Barker, Waghorn and Wilkinson) and words and phrases of Arabic (by Wilkinson, Waghorn, Mutti and Wathen), this portmanteau volume pre-empts the modern genre of tourist guidebook that evolved over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is not known whether it was commissioned by a commercial publisher for sale to

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**Figure 3.1** The Bombay compendium: Table of Contents. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

travellers, or whether the two surviving copies of which I am aware were produced for use by a private individual or individuals.

The leading work in the compendium is *A Vade-Mecum from India to Europe by way of Egypt* by John Barker, who was British Consul in Alexandria from 1826 to 1829. He was the father of William Burkhardt Barker, whose 1854 *Practical Grammar of the Turkish Language* was used as a model by al-Shidyāq (Shidiac 1856; Chapter 2). 'Vade Mecum' occurs in the title of several guidebooks and phrasebooks of this period. A Latin phrase meaning literally 'go with me', it was used to designate practical books intended to be carried with a person in a pocket or small bag, in contrast to heavier reference works which would be less practical on a long journey. The phrase is used in the title of Arabic phrasebooks by Nuñez de Taboada (1833) and later by Saman (1915) and Gabriel (1935).

The three sections on Arabic overlap with one another. The section from John Gardner Wilkinson's *Topography of Thebes* (taken from its reproduction in Waghorn's *Hints*) contains an alphabetical English–Arabic word list with minimal guidance on pronunciation and very little grammatical information. The dialect is Egyptian ('it is only intended for a person travelling in Egypt, to which the dialect I have followed particularly belongs': Wilkinson 1835, 569), more specifically, Upper Egyptian or Ṣaʿīdī. Wilkinson renders *jīm* with 'hard g', but also *qāf* as 'hard g', a more particularly southern feature. Phrases such as 'esmoo-ay?' for 'what is his name?', 'Ana owes' for 'I want' and 'Be kám dee?' for 'how much is this?' are all recognisably Egyptian Arabic. Wilkinson lived in Egypt for 12 years and seems to have had a good colloquial knowledge of the language, and a positive experience of learning it from conversation. His vocabulary concludes with the note:

> And in order to encourage beginners, and to do justice to the Arabs and Turks, I ought to observe that they never laugh at, or even notice, a mistake made by a foreigner in their language; and indeed they carry their indulgence so far, that, in conversing with Europeans, they frequently adopt the erroneous expressions accidentally made use of by them, with the same gravity that prompts their refusal to acknowledge a pun.
>
> (Wilkinson 1835, 584)

This suggests that Wilkinson's conversation partners were accommodating their speech to his, adopting a form of 'foreigner talk' or pidgin, which he was later able to recognise for what it was. It is also reminiscent of al-Shidyāq's observation (discussed in Chapter 2) that while Europeans

often made fun of foreigners speaking their languages, Arabs were kinder and more tolerant of learners' mistakes.

The section of the volume titled 'English and Arabic Vocabulary by Mr. Waghorn, and Signor Mutti' has its origins in a short word list previously published by Giuseppe Mutti as part of his *Itinerary of the Route from Suez to Alexandria, Cairo, &c* (Mutti 1830, 46–50). This was reproduced and credited to Mutti in Waghorn 1831 (pp. 38–40). Mutti was involved in silk production in the Deccan (Zanier 1984) and is described on the title page of his *Itinerary* as 'Honorary Member of the Bombay Auxiliary Brand of the Royal Asiatic Society; and Honorary Member of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Bombay, &c. &c.'. Whether, and if so, how, he learnt Arabic is unclear. Waghorn describes him as 'an intelligent traveller over the greater part of Egypt' (Waghorn 1831, 38). A key claim about pronunciation made in his 1830 vocabulary is untrue: that 'Under the persuasion, that a small Vocabulary of Arabic terms and phrases in common use might be serviceable to the traveller, the following has been prepared, which may lay claim at least to the merit of indicating the words as they are pronounced, with the greatest fidelity' (Mutti 1830, 45). Fortunately for the researcher, the sometimes misleading and eccentric orthography used (e.g. 'Subalkerr' for *ṣabāḥ al-khayr* 'Good morning') makes it possible to trace the line of descent from the 1830 Mutti word list to that contained in the compendium. This includes the material from Mutti (sometimes mistranscribed: 'Bàad el Dohre' becomes 'Band el Dohre' for *ba'd al-ẓuhr* 'afternoon') with a couple of pages of additional vocabulary, perhaps assembled by Waghorn during his residence in Alexandria in the late 1830s. I have not been able to find any evidence that this vocabulary was published in any other volume.

The author of the 'Arabic Grammar' with which the Bombay compendium concludes is given as W. H. Wathen – author of an 1836 grammar of Sindhi, also printed for the Government Press at Bombay – but the 'Grammar' is identical to a work usually attributed in library catalogues to Mutti, which I refer to by his name for the sake of convenience (Mutti 1834). Its true authorship is a puzzle. The title page does not carry the name of an author in the original book printed by Francisco de Ramos for the Government Gazette Press in Bombay in 1834, nor in the reprint (with different pagination) in the later compendium. It was published as a pair with a companion volume for Turkish. The 'compiler' states that:

> This Grammar adapted to the dialects of Egypt and Syria has been compiled for the use of Travellers proceeding overland from India by the way of the Red Sea &c. It is proper to mention that it has

no pretensions whatever to be a Grammar of the scientific Arabic, but merely of the vulgar tongue which differs in so many respects from the former, that a Moolla or learned person of Bagdad or Bussora, would be scarcely able to make himself understood by the inhabitants of those countries.

<div align="right">(Mutti 1834, no pagination)</div>

The Turkish volume – but not the Arabic – also contains the statement that it has been compiled 'under disadvantageous circumstances, from those sources which alone were available in India to the compiler' (Anonymous 1834). This indicates that Turkish books were more difficult to come by than Arabic books in Bombay, but may also hint that the author's command of the language was less strong.

The 1834 *Arabic Grammar*, in its original printing but not in the compendium, contains a 'Vocabulary of Arabic words in most general use, taken from Signor Muttis [sic] Itinerary' (Mutti 1834, 18–20). While the contents are the same, the orthography has been changed to conform to that in the *Grammar* (e.g. 'Aïsh' for 'bread' becomes 'eish' and 'Faràk' for 'fowls', 'foorookh') and the words are repeated in Arabic script. (Both transliteration and Arabic script are used in the *Grammar* itself.) If Mutti is the author, then he has changed his stance on transcribing Arabic, and refers to himself in the third person (which is not improbable, because Waghorn also does this). Wathen's Sindhi grammar of two years later was printed at the same press and is similar in format – and does not bear his name on the title page – but it is impossible to tell if he was the author of the Arabic and Turkish works.

A guidebook to the Levant and Mediterranean produced by Thomas Henry Usborne (1809–1869) in 1840 also nods to travellers on the overland route to India by adding an appendix on travel from Calcutta to Egypt. Usborne set out from England in 1837. Although he himself did not use Waghorn's services, he provides a lengthy quotation from the firm's own advertising materials (Usborne 1840, 103–106). Usborne states that the essential language for travel in the Levant is Italian – not French – but he also provides an Arabic vocabulary list. This is an edited version of Wilkinson, without attribution.

The influence of the 1834 Bombay *Arabic Grammar* can be seen in a later work produced by two East India Company officials, Robert Blair Munro Binning (1814–1891) and Fletcher Hayes (1818–1857). It was published by al-Shidyāq's friend James Madden. Binning compiled a grammar, phrases and vocabulary 'some years' before the book's eventual editing and publication by Hayes, who acknowledges the debt he owes to

the 1834 Bombay grammar (Binning and Hayes 1849, v–vi). Hayes notes, however, that 'it is now scarce, and very inferior to that of Mr Binning's'. The object of Hayes' and Binning's book is

> to enable our countrymen to converse with the natives of those countries in which Arabic is still a living tongue, a further insight into grammar may be postponed until the ability to speak Arabic fluently has been attained. ... No one who intends to visit Palestine or Egypt merely for pleasure, or on business, need burden his mind with the intricate and multiplied rules of Arabic grammar which have been collected, arranged, and elucidated by the erudite, laborious, and eminent grammarians above mentioned, but which are of little or no use in enabling a man *to converse* in Arabic.
>
> (Binning and Hayes 1849, vi, emphasis in original; the grammarians mentioned are Erpenius, Silvestre de Sacy and Lumsden.)

Binning's introduction states that he compiled the book 'with the assistance of a native of Syria' (Binning and Hayes 1849, xi), who is not named. I am tempted to identify this as either Assaad Kayat or Fāris al-Shidyāq (Chapter 2), who were both in England at the time and also knew Madden. Despite the role of a Syrian in preparing the book, and the mention of both Syrian and Egyptian dialectal features, the book is still clearly intended primarily for those on the overland route between India and Europe. Phrases include 'I came from Bombay to Juddah in the steamer / jeet mĭn medenet Boombaēe ila Jiddā, fil merkab ood-dookhanee' (Binning and Hayes 1849, 50). Two years after his death in the Indian Rebellion of 1857, a reprint of the book was published posthumously under Hayes' name alone, with the firm of Thacker, Spink and Co. in Calcutta (Hayes 1859). The grammar is identical to the 1849 book, but Hayes has borrowed liberally (and without attribution) from al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840 to supplement the dialogues. The phrase 'Do you wish the pantaloons to be made after the last fashion?' is a giveaway (al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 90 = Hayes 1859, 58). The book concludes with a long vocabulary list in Arabic, Turkish, Italian and English, which looks as though it has been lifted from an Ottoman polyglot vocabulary, like one of Nassif Mallouf's (see below). Perhaps Hayes would have credited his sources more generously if he had still been alive at the time of publication.

Some early tourist guides, such as the compendium printed in Bombay, recognise linguistic knowledge as one of the tools a traveller needed to be equipped with on their journey. Nolden's *Egyptian Travelling*

*Companion, for Overland Passengers between Europe and India* (Nolden 1844a), for example, was considered a 'useful little book' by reviewers, which inter alia included 'an Arabic Pronouncing Vocabulary, with an appendix of such Arabic works as have no proper name in English, – a small Arabic Grammar for travellers, and a description of the weights, measures, coins, rates of Exchange, a Mussulman's Almanack, and a list of familiar phrases' (*Western Courier*, 19 May 1847, 4). *Simond's Colonial Magazine and Foreign Miscellany* praised its 'excellent English and Arabic Vocabulary and Grammar, which will be found useful by those unacquainted with the latter language' (Vol. 5, May–August 1845, 364). I have not been able to locate any surviving copy of this book or find out anything more about its author, but it seems likely that it shares some content with Nolden's French–Arabic vocabulary of the same year (Nolden 1844b).

## The Arabic language in later guidebooks (1850s–)

In the early Middle East guidebooks of the 1830s and 1840s just discussed, we tend to find a balance between practical information on costs and transportation, language, and historical or geographical information. As the nineteenth century progresses, however, there is an increasing divide between guidebooks and phrasebooks. In part, this is for practical reasons. As mass tourism developed, and travellers spent more time in the Middle East, guidebooks needed to strike a compromise between providing thorough information on individual places and the practicalities of travel, and giving broader cultural and historical information. There was stiff competition among guidebooks: one estimate puts the number of guidebooks for Egypt alone produced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at 300 (Volkoff 1967, 103–120). If a guidebook was to be a useful vade mecum and not a desk reference, there was a limit to how much information could be crammed into it. Although improved printing technology may also be a factor, it is no coincidence that later nineteenth-century guidebooks tend to have small print in densely packed columns of text, in contrast to the larger print of earlier works. Language was frequently jettisoned to keep down the weight of guidebooks. Instead, grammars and phrasebooks – of which in the latter part of the nineteenth century there were many – could be listed in the recommendations for further reading, alongside archaeological reports or books of modern history. *Cairo of To-Day*, in the Black's guidebooks series, for example, recommends Marlborough's *Arabic Self-Taught* (Reynolds-Ball 1899, 19; this may refer to Hassam 1883 or Thimm 1897, both of which are discussed below).

This is not to say that language was therefore intended to be neglected – guidebooks insisted that the tourist undertake 'une sérieuse initiation livresque' (Volkoff 1967, 8) – but it was thereby made part of the study a tourist might do in preparation, or an optional extra for travel, not something they carried with them. A knowledge of Arabic was also, as companies like Thomas Cook began to offer conducted tours with multilingual guides, less likely to be needed by a tourist, even if to some it remained desirable. Guidebooks like Baedeker's sometimes recommended Arabic teachers, as in the Cairo section of its 1878 English guidebook. As well as advertising for himself, James Sanua – whom I will discuss further below – is named here as an Arabic teacher (alongside Qadrī and Spitta, see Chapter 1), although since the first edition appeared in 1878, the year he left for Paris, the advertisement cannot have done him much good:

> Teachers of Arabic. *James Sanua*, well known as a writer of Arabic comedies; *Gloward*, Derb el Denîneh; *Shekh Ḥusén el-Marsaji*; *Ḳadri Efendi*. – *Dr. Spitta*, the director of the Viceroyal Library in the Derb el-Gamâmîz, also kindly affords information to travellers.
>
> (Baedeker 1878, 232)

The Arabic language was treated only in passing in the most popular late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century guidebook series in English, German and French. Murray's guidebooks for the Middle East tended to include about twenty pages of Arabic vocabulary (e.g. 1847 and 1867 Egypt), although the 1868 guide to Syria and Palestine held up the Bible as the best guidebook, and offered only one page of Arabic words. Baedeker guides typically had about ten pages of Arabic vocabulary and conversational phrases (e.g. 1877 Ägypten and 1876 Palestine and Syria). The archaeologist W. M. Flinders Petrie suggested Murray's or Baedeker's word lists as a starting point for learning colloquial Arabic (Petrie 1892, 187–188). Sometimes, guidebooks devoted a few extra pages to Arabic, but never to the extent of including a full set of phrases for a range of eventualities. This was the case, for example, with the Arabic section contributed to the 1913 German-language Baedeker guide to Egypt and Sudan by Curt Prüfer (1881–1959), formerly dragoman at the German consulate in Cairo, who went on to run German intelligence operations in the Levant in the first part of the First World War. Hachette's Guides-Joanne series, too, had only short linguistic sections (for example, the 1900 Égypte guide has three pages of Arabic words, albeit in triple columns). The 1861 Joanne guide to the overland route to the 'Orient' has short sections on Greek and Turkish, and, in the Syria and Palestine section,

five pages of Arabic words and phrases. A 1907 Guides Nilsson guidebook to Alexandria and Cairo contains a 'Petit vocabulaire français-arabe', but supplies no vocabulary in the sections on hotels and guides, since French is spoken: 'il est donc inutile de parler arabe avec eux' (Nilsson 1907, 217–219). Cook's Tourist Handbooks for Egypt, Palestine and Syria, in contrast, contain no information on the Arabic language at all.

This relative or total absence of Arabic is significant. Guidebook publishers who were themselves in the tourist business in fact had an incentive *not* to include much on language: it was not in their interests to make travellers linguistically independent. As well as the practical considerations noted above (weight and price), their motive could be to sell their own phrasebooks, to steer readers towards lessons at their own establishments (Shepheard's 1895), or to encourage dependence on their own services (Cook's). The boundary between the related genres of guidebook and phrasebook thus became less porous.

In the following sections, I will consider two strands in the development of phrasebooks during the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. The first is a hybrid language book genre, derived from both Ottoman and European precursors: the polyglot phrasebook. The second is the rise of popular books for self-instruction, in languages and other subjects, in the European publishing industry. I will then survey the tourist experience of language learning in the Middle East, and examine some of the many Arabic phrasebooks produced for tourist use.

## The polyglot phrasebook: a hybrid genre

Not all of the phrasebooks at the disposal of tourists to the Middle East were designed specifically for Arabic. Polyglot phrasebooks and vocabularies had a long tradition in both Europe (Sumillera 2014, 63–64; Gallagher 2019, 70–72) and the Middle East. The Propaganda Fide in Rome published multilingual dictionaries which included Arabic in order to evangelise (e.g. Obizzino and Germanus 1636; Chadirji and Meniński 1832–1834). The tradition of Ottoman education in the *elsine-i selase* – the 'three languages' of Turkish, Arabic and Persian (İhsanoğlu 2011, 44–45) – also resulted in the publication of many trilingual dictionaries and language instruction books (e.g. Aynî 1826; Rida 1857; Anonymous 1889; Zıya 1889). This model was adapted in the second half of the nineteenth century to include European languages (e.g. Nuri 1875; Naci 1893; P'ap'azyan 1900). Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī's *Qalā'id al-jumān fī fawā'id al-tarjumān*, discussed in Chapter 1, belongs to this tradition.

The benefits of producing instruction books including multiple languages were that they could be sold in different markets (for example, for use by speakers of French, Dutch and English) and that they could be targeted at markets that required more than one language. British colonial officials and soldiers in India, for example, were a market for phrasebooks that covered more than one of the subcontinent's many languages (e.g. Price and Mohammed Saulih 1823; Roy 1854). During the First and Second World Wars, the British Army produced multilingual word lists for officers deployed in the Middle East and North Africa (Chapter 5). Tourists passing through the sea or overland routes from Europe to the Middle East also passed through places where different languages were spoken, and many tourists to the Middle East in the nineteenth century spent time in several different locations. The descendants of these books are modern backpackers' phrasebooks covering entire regions (e.g. Lonely Planet 2013).

Arabic makes its first appearance in European polyglot phrasebooks from the 1830s. This corresponds both to the period of the French occupation of Algeria and to the years, discussed above, when dedicated travel guidebooks for the Middle East were beginning to be published for British travellers on the overland route to India. A short list of Arabic phrases appears as an addendum to Nuñez de Taboada's *Guide de la conversation, ou vade-mecum du voyageur, en sept langues* (Nuñez de Taboada 1833). The book's main languages are English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian, and the addition of 20 pages of French–Arabic vocabulary and a page and a half of phrases in 'barbaresque ou moresque' – that is, North African Arabic – appears as an afterthought. Some of the correspondences between the French and Arabic phrases are inexact at best (p. 178: 'Je vous remercie de votre visite. / Ahhlan ou sehlan' – which means 'welcome, hello'). Given the date and the book's place of publication in Paris, it is likely that these additions were directed at French soldiers and colonists in Algeria.

A few years later, Letellier's polyglot *Vocabulaire oriental* is directed more expressly at 'notre Armée d'Afrique' (Letellier 1838) and aims to give enough vocabulary and information on pronunciation for a person to make themselves understood in everyday circumstances. Although Letellier was a former student at the École des langues orientales, and had studied Arabic, he was a specialist in the Caucasus and seems to have returned to Arabic only for this book, not in his working life (Letellier 1840, 113). A reviewer in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Vol. 3, 1849, 476) accused another multilingual vocabulary for colonists in North Africa, this time directed at both German and French speakers

(Seifarth 1849), of having been commissioned by the publisher 'bei irgend einem literarischen Tagelöhner', giving the named author the benefit of the doubt for having simply translated a shoddy French description of Arabic into German to cash in on a new colonial market. The first expansion of the European tradition of polyglot vocabularies to include Arabic can therefore be linked to both the growth of the 'overland' route and the French conquest of Algeria, an episode that provoked many adaptations and new publications of works for learning Arabic.

The linguistic consequences of the Expédition d'Alger and French colonisation of North Africa (1830s–) have been explored by Alain Messaoudi and others (Messaoudi 2009; Larzul and Messaoudi 2013; Messaoudi 2015). Speakers of Arabic and French learnt each others' languages formally in the colonial education system and in the army, and instruction books were produced for both these institutions as well as for independent use. The French conquest of Algeria can also be seen as the catalyst for a reorientation of language book publishing in France away from an exclusive focus on academic teaching materials, towards practical works for use by those who had neither the time nor inclination for scholarship. Letellier seeks explicitly to distance himself from the more academic works produced by Silvestre de Sacy, Savary and Caussin de Perceval, both in his focus on North-West Africa ('les États Barbaresques') and in his address 'au voyageur jaloux de converser, et non d'étudier les livres' (Letellier 1838, xiii).

Just like the European tradition of polyglot vocabularies, the Ottoman tradition also adapted during the nineteenth century to reach new audiences, including tourists. This can be seen most clearly in the many language books produced by Nassif Mallouf, who worked within both the *elsine-i selase* ('three languages': Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish) tradition and that of dragomanic practices. Mallouf (1823–1865), by origin a Lebanese Christian, began his career studying and teaching French, Turkish, Italian, English and Greek at the Collège de Propagande in Smyrna. In 1855, he left his teaching position to become an interpreter and language teacher to a series of British military and diplomatic bosses, including service in the Crimean War,[1] before becoming First Dragoman at the British consulate in Smyrna (on his life and career, see Samaha 2010). In the summer of 1848, Mallouf was employed as a dragoman by some Europeans for a visit to Lebanon, and this seems to have served as inspiration for his language books for European travellers (Samaha 2010, 20–22; the identity of his clients is unknown). He published his first language book for European travellers in the Ottoman Empire – a French–Turkish dictionary – in Smyrna in 1849 (Mallouf 1849).

Many of Mallouf's multilingual language instruction books are adaptations of books by other authors or of each other (for descriptive bibliographies, see Samaha 2010, 59–73, and Elhajhamed 2015). Although Mallouf published his first language book (a dictionary) before Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī, the organisation and topics covered in Mallouf's later phrasebooks suggest that he had at least seen a copy of the Egyptian author's *Qalā'id al-jumān fī fawā'id al-tarjumān* (1850), or the series of books by Hamonière which Khalīfa Effendi had taken as his model. Contemporary reviews praised Mallouf's use of Romanisation for making Turkish and Arabic more accessible to European readers, and his books' small, manageable size, which made them convenient for travellers (Samaha 2010, 68 and 121–123). Ellen Chennells, who was governess to two of Ismā'īl Pasha's children in the 1860s, used Mallouf's books to study Turkish, but was frustrated by the fact that 'no combination of letters in our European languages can adequately give the sound of some Turkish and Arabic words' (Chennells 1893, 147). When Chennells tried to talk to some Turkish women she met in Istanbul, she found that conversation was difficult 'when one's knowledge of the language is confined to declining the personal pronouns and counting up to a hundred' (Chennells 1893, 138). She had presumably learnt these via Mallouf.

My interest here is in those of Mallouf's many language books that included his native language, Arabic, in combination either with European languages or with Turkish. His 1851 Turkish and Arabic phrasebook includes reflections on the importance of a proper (he may mean grammatical) command of one's own language for learning another:

> Q: Is it true that those who try to learn a language other than their own, while not familiar with their mother tongue cannot master a second language?
> A: Without any doubt, especially if they were to translate from one to the other, for then their mistakes will taint their speech, similar to what we see today among the majority of Arab people, except a few.
> <div align="right">(Mallouf 1851, Lesson 10, trans. Samaha 2010, 135;<br>I have not been able to access a copy of the original work.)</div>

Two years later, in collaboration with one Aḥmad Kamāl Effendi, Mallouf produced a trilingual phrasebook on the *elsine-i selase* model, directed at learners of Persian (Kamāl Effendi and Mallouf 1853). This enlarges further on his language learning philosophy and emphasis on the spoken language:

As it is known to the experts, speaking in any language depends on conversing and chatting with those who know that language, such that, for instance, even if a person can read and teach Arabic and Persian, it is clear that he cannot speak as long as he does not gain experience by conversing with an expert and that even if he speaks with the force of his theoretical knowledge, he will not be in conformity with the conventions of speech. Though many books on Arabic and Persian have hitherto been written, a book dedicated solely to speaking is unseen of; for this reason, a conversation booklet, organized in the manner of question and answer and comprising of four sections, has been prepared as a humble gift for those who love Persian and with the intention of further extension and detailing in the future if time permits.

(Kamāl Effendi and Mallouf 1853, 3–4; trans. Samaha 2010, 144–145)

One of the benefits for the author and publisher of producing a polyglot phrasebook was that it could be sold in various editions containing different combinations of languages. The Parisian publisher Baudry brought out a series of works from the mid-1840s that covered most of the major European languages (e.g. Bellenger et al. 1846). Baudry's series did not include Middle Eastern languages, and from 1859 Mallouf published a copycat series with Maisonneuve which replicated the topics and format of the Baudry phrasebooks exactly. Like the Baudry books, Mallouf's were also available in different combinations of languages. All the texts were variations of the same phrasebook, sold as very small volumes (octodecimo) containing between two and four languages, and octavo or larger volumes with more languages. Maisonneuve, Mallouf's publisher, were not being entirely honest when they claimed that 'M. Mallouf, dans l'espace de dix-sept ans, a composé et publié, avec une persévérance remarquable, environ trente ouvrages' (Mallouf 1864, viii). Many of these were in fact excerpts from or variations of the same book, and they were copied – with the addition of Greek, Turkish and/or Arabic – from the Baudry books.

A few multilingual vocabularies produced for tourists later in the nineteenth century contained Arabic, although works for European languages remained much more common. George F. Chambers (1841–1915), a barrister, produced a *Tourist's Pocket-Book* with vocabulary and simple phrases in 16 languages (Chambers 1886). He commissioned some or all of the content from unnamed 'competent linguists', but seems to have received some complaints, since he requests those writing with corrections to write clearly and use ink, not pencil (Chambers 1886, ii).

The Arabic is indeed competent. Although dialect is not mentioned, spelling and word choice indicate that the author was a speaker of Egyptian Arabic. For those wishing to study the language more thoroughly, Chambers recommends works by Tien, Finch-Hatton, Thimm, Hassam, al-Shidyāq, Plunkett and Hartmann, all discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, as well as two of Nassif Mallouf's works for Turkish. In the same year, British Army Captain Charles Slack (1838–1925) issued a similar work for 22 languages (Slack 1886); he later published works on Burmese (1888) and Swahili (1891). Slack may have known some of these languages from his army service, but it seems that his knowledge of Arabic was either non-existent or elementary, since the Arabic section has a footnote stating that it was 'Revised by Professor H. A. Salmoné, of University College, London' (Slack 1886, 112b; Salmoné published his own Arabic–English dictionary in 1890).

The following sections explore how popular Arabic instruction books were sold to the public, in the context of the wider market for language learning books. I look at the popularity of the 'teach yourself' model; claims of new effective 'methods' or 'systems' for teaching languages; and the position of Arabic books in series of such language self-instruction books. As well as the dishonest practices sometimes employed by language book publishers, the story of 'Thimm's' *Arabic Self-Taught* also shows how books could pass between publishers and purported authors, and their contents be revised – or not revised – over long periods of time.

## The economics of publishing Arabic books and teaching Arabic

Book publishing and language teaching were businesses. Even those few organisations that could afford to operate outside the market, with the support of private capital, such as the missionary publishing endeavours in Malta and Beirut (Chapter 2), found difficulties in sustaining themselves. Most book publishers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries needed to make a return on an often considerable initial investment: payments to the author, raw materials, typesetting, printing and advertising. Publishing was a precarious enterprise, and firms frequently went under (Middle Eastern examples: Schwartz 2017; Auji 2016, 19; Ayalon 2008). Others might experiment with a new genre, successfully or unsuccessfully. Fāris al-Shidyāq's 1856 *Practical Grammar of the Arabic Language*, as we saw in Chapter 2, nearly bankrupted publisher Bernard Quaritch.

It is impossible to get a sense of how many individual copies of popular Arabic books circulated, worldwide, in the period covered by this study. It is still more difficult to get a sense of how many copies of works were printed by small presses. Weedon's study of the economics of Victorian mass market publishing in the United Kingdom and its empire gives an insight into changing economic strategies adopted by publishers, and the place of educational works within wider portfolios. Language books held a respectable share of all volumes printed, averaging 8% of titles and 14% of copies in the United Kingdom over the period 1836–1916 (Weedon 2003, 94–95). The peak was in 1856, when a remarkable 22% of all titles and 40% of all copies of books printed in the UK fall under the broad subject area of 'languages'. Educational books, in particular on languages and science, also had consistently higher than average print runs over this period. We cannot extrapolate directly from these figures to popular language books, still less popular language books for Arabic. Weedon's figures include Latin and Greek, for which there was a dependable market in schools. What these figures can do is set the context for the publication of popular Arabic instruction books: a highly competitive market, in which cheap books for teaching and learning held a significant share, in terms of both titles and copies printed (for a case study of the firm of W. & R. Chambers, see Fyfe 2012, 67–77).

The reading public and the economics of publishing in the nineteenth-century British Empire were radically different from anything that had come before: 'Between 1830 and 1939 publishers issued a greater number of cheap editions than ever before, retailing for pence rather than shillings those works for which there was proven and strong demand' (Weedon 2003, 60–61). This 'transformation of the printed text from artifact and cultural asset into a cheap and easily available consumer commodity' (Stark 2007, 4) took place on a global scale and was facilitated by industrial capitalism and colonialism. The appearance of cheap paperback Arabic books for self-instruction is part of this wider trend. These books, like other popular instructional works, were sometimes produced in collaboration between publishers, to share the financial risk (Weedon 2003, 18). Popular series were passed from hand to hand between publishers, and their stock was bought and sold as firms closed or went under (Weedon 2003, 118–119).

As in Europe and the European empires, the Middle East in the second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of mass market publishing and an expansion of distribution networks. Some of the major players in this market have already been discussed in Chapters 1 and 2: state-sponsored enterprises such as the Būlāq Press in Cairo, and

foreign missionary presses in Malta, Egypt and the Levant which acted as inadvertent vectors of the Nahḍa. Private printing enterprises begin to emerge in Egypt in the 1830s (Ayalon 2016, 24), but as in Europe the business was economically precarious and many presses and publishers lasted only long enough to issue a handful of titles (Ayalon 2016, 51–52). The tourist phrasebooks discussed in this chapter that were produced in the Middle East itself came mostly from small private publishers that did not enjoy long-term success. Arabic phrasebooks produced during the First and Second World Wars (see Chapter 5) were almost exclusively printed by small private publishers diversifying into the language book market because of short-term opportunities.

The private teaching of languages in the nineteenth century also needs to be seen from a commercial angle. As early as 1800, Indian traveller Mirza Abu Taleb Khan – who tried in vain to open a language school for Hindustani, Persian and Arabic – found that in London 'many individuals were so desirous of learning the Oriental languages, that they attended self-taught masters, ignorant of every principle of the science, and paid them half-a-guinea a lesson' (Abu Taleb Khan, trans. Stewart, 1810, 164). Many language book authors were also teachers, although this was a full-time profession for only a few, and – as census records reveal – most who taught Arabic outside universities held down other jobs as well. It is still more difficult to explore the economics of private tuition than private printing. We find occasional advertisements in British newspapers seeking, or offering, Arabic tuition; such advertisements for French and German are naturally much more numerous. The five shillings per hour charged by an anonymous advertiser in the *Manchester Evening News* in 1902 (16 June, 1) seems to have been about the going rate. In 1892, another Manchester Arabic teacher, Baghdad-born J. N. Farage, took a client to court over non-payment of fees. J. Crossley, a salesman who had hired Farage to teach his son, had agreed to pay two shillings and sixpence a lesson. In court, an Arabic teacher, Sharker Geohamy (originally from Mount Lebanon), testified that 'his usual charge was 10s a lesson when he went to the pupil, and 5s a lesson when the pupil came to him' ('What is a Reasonable Fee for Teaching Arabic?', *Manchester Courier*, 13 October 1892, 7). Farage won his case.

In a competitive teaching and learning market, where livelihoods were at stake, it is only natural that we find attempts to defraud or mislead. Plenty of publishers and teachers operated on a model we might today call predatory, both in terms of their treatment of authors, and of their readership or students. The business of publishing and teaching did not always work hand in hand with effective pedagogy.

## 'Methods' for learning Arabic

A very large number of Arabic phrasebooks and colloquial grammars lay emphasis in their titles on the 'method' used. We saw in Chapter 1 how Orientalists at the time of Napoleon's expedition and before showed a concern with correct and efficacious methods for teaching Arabic (Volney 1795). Advertising a new and painless method of learning a difficult foreign language quickly was also a powerful marketing ploy. Some such methods were advanced in a sincere (if sometimes self-deluded) belief that they were effective, and represented a genuine improvement on existing methods. Others were pure advertising spin, or downright fraudulent. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European publishers brought out numerous series of books that taught languages according to a specific 'method' in which Arabic is included (discussed further in Mairs forthcoming-g).

One of the most popular such systems was the Methode Toussaint-Langenscheidt (MeTouLa), developed by Charles Toussaint (1813–1877) and Gustav Langenscheidt (1832–1895) in the mid-1850s. Its key feature was use of interlinear translation. The *Metoula Sprachführer: Arabisch (Syrisch)* came out in 1913 (Lammeyer and Darian 1913), followed by an Egyptian version in 1916. At around the same time, the series Polyglott Kuntze, founded by John William Kuntze, also included Egyptian and Syrian Arabic in its series. These attractive and brightly coloured paperback booklets of only a few pages (the typical length is 24) were issued for dozens of languages (Figure 3.2). Hans Rudelsberger-Moltan was the author of the Egyptian Arabic and Persian editions (Rudelsberger-Moltan *c*.1904). He was the author of a 1902 travel book, *Streifzüge durch Nord-Afrika: Reisebilder aus Tunis, Algier und Marokko*, which I have been unable to consult, so that I am not in a position to say whether he was competent in Arabic, or reliant on books and informants to compose his phrasebook. The language in the phrasebook is good Egyptian (a shopkeeper asks 'Aís e, ja hawága?', 'What do you want, sir?': p. 20). Rudelsberger-Moltan states in his preface that the work is intended for both tourists and commercial travellers.

Meyer, in Leipzig, also published a Sprachführer series, from the 1880s to the 1930s. It accompanied their series of Reisebücher. The range of languages was vast, including English, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Modern Greek, Danish–Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, French, Polish and Dutch. The Arabic edition was one of the earliest (Hartmann 1881). It was written by Martin Hartmann (1852–1918), who trained as a Semitic philologist at the University of Leipzig, but also trained as a *jeune de langues*

**Figure 3.2** The front and back covers of the Egyptian Arabic book in the series Polyglott Kuntze. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

in Constantinople and then served for a time as dragoman at the German Consulate in Beirut. He later taught colloquial Arabic in Berlin and travelled extensively, as far as Chinese Turkestan (on Hartmann's life and career, see Kramer 1989; Wokoeck 2009, 170–179; Chaaya 2018). We are fortunate to also have native-speaker testimony on Hartmann's spoken Arabic, albeit from a friend who may have wished to flatter him. The Lebanese writer and consular dragoman Girgi Dimitri Sursock wrote to Hartmann of a mutual acquaintance whom he had encountered in Cairo, and with whom he spoke in Arabic. Sursock thought that their friend needed some years' practice to achieve 'votre pronunciation et vos connaissances grammaticales' (letter of 30 January 1889: Chaaya 2018, 76).

Meyer's Sprachführer were later translated/plagiarised by the English firm of David Nutt, who issued a series of 'Conversational Dictionaries' for many languages. Richard Jaeschke was the translator of the Arabic volume into English (Jaeschke 1909, from Hartmann 1881), as well

as of the Nutt books for Spanish, Italian and German. One useful (or annoying, depending upon one's perspective) feature of the Nutt Arabic 'Conversational Dictionary' is to emphasise the importance of correct pronunciation by bookending the pronunciation section with pages inscribed 'The traveller must on no account omit to read carefully the two following pages' and 'The traveller is again reminded of the importance of the two preceding pages.'

Arabic had a place in two other German phrasebook series of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the peak of the fashion for publishers to promote language books by their own 'method'. The fact that both were by publishers based solely or in part in Leipzig is no coincidence, since the city's university had a strong tradition of Oriental studies. Hartleben's Bibliothek der Sprachenkunde brought out three colloquial Arabic books in the self-instruction series Die Kunst der Polyglottie within a few years of each other (Dirr 1893; Seidel 1894b; Manassewitsch 1895). The illustrated frontispiece that appears in all the books in the Kunst der Polyglottie series indicates its intended breadth, covering European, Asian and African languages (Figure 3.3). The Arabic books follow a similar format, with short lessons introducing vocabulary, grammatical rules and exercises for translation from Arabic into German and vice versa, and come to the subject of practical conversation briefly and late in the book. They are in transliteration, except for the one by Manassewitsch (1895), which uses vowelled Arabic script. Koch's series of Sprachführer also contained two Arabic books (Wied 1887; Klippel 1913), which each follow the series' practice of using the target language in their title. Wied and Klippel both title their books *Betitkállim bi'l-'arabi? (Sprechen Sie arabisch?)*, although with varying orthography. Other books in the series include *Parlez-vous français?*, *Do you speak English?*, *Taler De Dansk?*, and *Türkdsche sjöler-misiniz?* The Koch Arabic books are each divided into three sections covering grammar, vocabulary and conversational phrases. Wied arranges his phrases by subject (going, coming, speaking and so on), and Klippel by occasion (arriving in Egypt, at the railway station and so on). Klippel, but not Wied, offers a short section of emergency vocabulary right at the beginning of the book. Of the two books, Klippel's therefore appears to be more oriented towards a tourist's needs. Wied, writing from Smyrna, may have been more attuned to commercial or diplomatic concerns.

Arabic books also formed part of another nineteenth-century language publishing phenomenon: series of 'Oriental Grammars'. These were used extensively by soldiers, administrators and other travellers in European colonies. Publishers could draw upon a pool of potential authors who had themselves worked in the colonies, sometimes although not always

**Figure 3.3** Frontispiece from the series Die Kunst der Polyglottie. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

as language teachers.[2] The market was, in turn, among people preparing to move to different parts of the European overseas empires. Luzac & Co. in London, for example, published from 1897 a series of grammars and phrasebooks of Asian and Middle Eastern languages (Syrian Arabic: Crow 1901). Duncan Forbes published an Arabic grammar for East India Company recruits, and self-instructing students, with W. H. Allen in 1863 (Forbes 1863). Forbes had by this time published works on Hindustani, Bengali and Persian. He is upfront about his motivations in publishing a work on Arabic, and about the originality of the work, to which he lays no claim. In the Preface, he states that his sources were Lumsden's *Arabic Grammar* (Calcutta, 1813) and Sacy's *Grammaire Arabe* (Paris, 1831). W. H. Allen frequently operated in collaboration with Crosby Lockwood & Co. in their language books, for example in Forbes' 1862 Bengali grammar. Crosby Lockwood issued a reprint of Forbes' Arabic grammar in 1874. Palmer's *Grammar of the Arabic Language* of the same year was a joint venture. W. H. Allen also published Anton Tien's *Manual of Colloquial Arabic* (Tien 1885), which is discussed in Chapter 4.

The Self-Taught series of language books were published by German émigré Franz Thimm (1820–1889) in England from 1853. The first Arabic book in the series, *Arabic Self-Taught, or the Dragoman for Travellers in Egypt*, appeared in 1883. The author is given as 'A. Hassam'. It may be, as I have suggested elsewhere (Mairs 2018), that this is a spelling mistake for Anton Hassan, whom we met in Chapter 1, but I am no longer convinced of this (Mairs forthcoming-h). Certainly, Thimm's *Arabic Self-Taught* shares no text with any of Hassan's works, and Hassan himself died in 1876. It is possible that the name was 'borrowed' to give credibility to the book, or that another 'A. Hassam' or 'Hassan' is responsible, but if so I have not been able to identify him.

*Arabic Self-Taught* contains short lists of vocabulary (in both Arabic script and transliteration) by topic ('The Spiritual World', 'The World and its Elements' and so on), a concise grammar, eight pages of 'Practical Phrases' and a longer English–Arabic vocabulary list, in transliteration only. The 'Practical Phrases' speak to a traveller's needs, starting not with the typical courtesies, but with useful interactions for the very beginning of a stay: making requests or orders to servants or hoteliers. The reader learns first to say 'Give me some bread' and 'Bring me some milk', even before greetings. Less immediate concerns, such as telling the time and talking about the weather, come later. We then proceed to more complex scenarios: giving directions, discussing prices, and language difficulties. As often in tourist phrasebooks, the user learns to tell someone to go away, in terms that escalate quickly from 'rûḥ bakâ' 'Be gone' to 'rûḥ lil-gehennum'

(literally 'Go to hell'), expressed with Victorian circumspection as 'Go to the d—l.' The phrases conclude with the tourist, ready to go out on a trip, giving orders to dragomans about starting times and horses.

Although it claims to be directed at travellers in Egypt and contains some Egyptian features (pronunciation of *jīm* as 'hard g'; negation in *ma-...-sh*), Egyptian dialect is mixed fairly indiscriminately with more formal Arabic. In the section on demonstrative pronouns, for example, 'this' is given as '*hatha,* fem. *hathih* or *tha, da, thi, di, dih*' (Hassam 1883, 36). The reader is not told when to use these forms, or why so many are listed. The failure to distinguish between regional dialects and literary Arabic suggests that the author is not a native speaker and has compiled the book from other published sources.

Subsequent editions of *Arabic Self-Taught* – of which there were many – were issued after Franz Thimm's death, when the business passed to his younger son, Carl Albert Thimm (1856–1932). Carl seems to have been a very different character from his industrious and intellectual father. He was not a scholar, and his concern was that the series make money, not that the quality of the books be maintained. Standards declined, as Carl Thimm himself used dictionaries to compose phrasebooks in languages he did not even know (see, for example, the review of *Dutch Self-Taught* in the *British Medical Journal* 1905, No. 2304, 420). In 1897, Carl published *Egyptian Self-Taught*, credited to him as sole author. The preface states that this is intended to be a 'companion volume' to *Arabic Self-Taught*, and claims, inaccurately, that the 'latter work is essential for studying the language in its classical form' (Thimm 1897, 3). Hassam's name is not mentioned, and *Arabic Self-Taught* is instead referred to as 'Thimm's'. Thimm thanks Professor Flinders Petrie 'for revising the proofs' and Sir Alfred Milner (1854–1925, previously under-secretary of finance in Egypt), Dr Andrew Watson (1834–1917, a Scottish-American missionary in Egypt) and unnamed others 'for useful suggestions made'. Petrie's hand can be seen most clearly in the section of archaeological vocabulary and phrases for directing workmen (Thimm 1897, 67–68). It is likely that Watson had some responsibility for the 'Religious Words for Missionary Workers' (pp. 68–69) and Milner for financial or administrative terms. Although his name appears as author, there is no evidence that Carl Thimm knew Arabic or had any hand in composing actual text for the book.

*Arabic Self-Taught* (1883) and *Egyptian Self-Taught* (1897) are visibly versions of the same book; some parts are identical. The major difference is that *Egyptian Self-Taught* does not include the Arabic script. Only transliteration is given, and this has been modified slightly from the

earlier book (*qāf* /q/ is changed from 'k' to 'q', *kāf* /k/ from 'ck' to 'k', and *jīm* is more uniformly rendered as 'hard g'). The dialect used is more overtly Egyptian. *Egyptian Self-Taught* expands the word lists offered in *Arabic Self-Taught*, and condenses the grammatical section to a couple of pages. There are new sections with vocabulary for archaeologists, missionaries and officials. 'Go to the d—l' becomes 'go to the devil': Carl clearly had fewer compunctions about using bad language than his father. As far as I can see, it would have been possible for a non-Arabic speaker (Carl Thimm) to assemble *Egyptian Self-Taught* on the basis of the other book and some other basic resources (whether books or information from informants).

The second edition, which was issued in 1898, retrospectively adds the names of Captain H. C. Prichard and D. A. Cameron to the text of the original preface, among those thanked 'for useful suggestions'. Cameron was the author of his own Egyptian Arabic vocabulary (Cameron 1892, discussed in Chapter 4). Prichard was an army officer posted in Egypt; he died in Alexandria in 1898.

A more wholesale revision of *Egyptian Self-Taught* was undertaken by Reginald Marriott in 1907, and went through many editions as the British military demand for Arabic manuals became more pronounced in the first half of the twentieth century. The editions of *Egyptian Self-Taught* from this date show a dramatic evolution from Hassam's original *Arabic Self-Taught* of 1883. Aside from the title and the place in Thimm's series, little is the same. The 1907 edition still has Carl Thimm's name as author, 'Revised and enlarged by Major R. A. Marriott, D.S.O.' Marriott (1857–1930) was born in India, and his father died in Egypt in 1879, which suggests he may have moved to Egypt at a young age. He had served with the Egyptian Army in the 1880s, including with the Camel Corps on the Gordon Relief Expedition in the Sudan in 1884–1885. Marriott's Preface shows him to be a competent Arabic speaker, with a nuanced under-standing of the differences between Egyptian dialect and Classical Arabic. In place of Hassam's reassuring words about mastering Arabic, Marriott opens with a defence of the Egyptian dialect, noting that 'it has been the fashion since the occupation of Egypt to speak slightingly of the colloquial form of Arabic in use there' (p. 2). He identifies teaching methods that favour the Classical language as the reason for this: 'the commoner forms of speech seem uncouth and unclassical to students who have learnt their Arabic either in universities, from *munshis* in India, or from Syrians (who are frequently in Egypt the professed instructors)' (p. 2).

Marriott correctly identifies characteristic features of the Egyptian dialect, such as preferential use of the diminutive (*ṣughayyar* for *ṣaghīr*

'small') and the derivation of Egyptian words like *mush* from Classical forms. Some of the text is produced verbatim from Thimm's 1897 and 1898 books, but modified in places to take account of specifically Egyptian forms. In the table of the Arabic alphabet (which, as in previous editions, is introduced but not used in the main text of the book), for example, Marriott changes the pronunciation given for *thā'* /θ/ from 'th' to 't' and for *ẓā'* /ðˤ/ from 'th' to 'z', and notes the frequent Egyptian pronunciation of *qāf* /q/ as 'g', as well as the Cairene use of the glottal stop in its place. Marriott completely revises Thimm's section on the pronunciation of Arabic, expanding it and making it more accurate with regard to Egyptian usage (Marriott in revised 1907 edition of Thimm 1897, 8–11). The pronunciation of the letters *khā'* /ħ/ and *'ayn* /ʕ/ is described slightly differently from in earlier editions. For *khā'* /x/, the same comparison is made with German and the Scottish word *loch*, but the (presumably bemused) reader is further told, 'In Egyptian it is rendered harder by placing the muscles of the throat as in clearing it.' For *'ayn*, the user is reassured that 'It can be attained by practice, and is a vowel-sound produced far back and down in the throat. Special throat muscles must be developed to produce it, so that a European can never imitate the sound at first attempt.' *'Ayn* is not a vowel, and it does not require 'special throat muscles', although it may give a learner a sore throat. Marriott provides a slightly longer section on grammar (five pages to Thimm's two), and, crucially, adds a short section on 'Polite Diction', explaining the appropriate way to address people and some courtesies. The text of the thematic vocabularies and phrases is more or less the same, with only some small changes in transcription (especially in short vowels). Marriott adds short sections of phrases on travel by boat and rail, an excursion to the pyramids and hunting.

A fourth edition followed in 1914, and a fifth in 1921 (Marriott and Hindié 1921). Both kept the same text, but the 1921 edition added some supplementary material on newly popular pursuits, such as photography, aviation and motoring, and some general vocabulary. These are credited to Negib Hindié, presumably a relation of the Cairo publisher Emin Hindié (who published, inter alia, Chagavat *c.*1900 and Bahoshy 1918: see Ayalon 2010, 73) and of the Alfred Hindié who authored French–Arabic and English–Arabic dictionaries in the 1910s and 1920s. In the 1880s, Negib Hindié published the journal *al-Qāhira al-ḥurra* with Salīm Fāris, son of Fāris al-Shidyāq. Hindié was living in London in the early 1920s, in keeping with the practice of the Self-Taught Arabic books of recruiting expertise not far from E. Marlborough's London base (Marriott wrote the third edition from Chelmsford in Essex).

Marriott's and then Hindié's involvement with the Self-Taught books for Egyptian Arabic shows the shift in the English–Arabic phrasebook market in the early twentieth century towards military users (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5). While both the fourth and fifth editions of *Egyptian Self-Taught* continue to be directed at tourists, military affairs become more prominent in these and other Arabic phrasebooks, especially from the First World War.

The 1897 and 1898 editions of *Egyptian Self-Taught* were paralleled with a new version for Syrian Arabic. The Arabic Self-Taught series bifurcates along regional, dialectal lines from this point on, finally making up for Hassam's and then Thimm's failure to adequately differentiate dialects. The title page of *Arabic Self-Taught (Syrian)* (1899) states that it is 'by C. A. Thimm, F.R.G.S. Edited by A. Hassam & Professor G. Hagopian'. Garabet Hagopian was an Armenian diplomat resident in London, who is also credited in Thimm's revised *Turkish Self-Taught*. The Preface is an edited and rearranged form of the preface to Hassam 1883, retaining much of the original phraseology, and mostly deals with the position of Arabic in the Semitic language family, as well as advice to the learner on practice and memorisation. Thimm's statement that he is 'greatly indebted to Professor G. Hagopian and Mr. A. Hassam for many suggestions and corrections in this new and revised edition' suggests that Hassam is still alive, and therefore not identical with Anton Hassan – unless Thimm is trying to maintain the fiction of an original Arab author. Aside from a few corrections ('hachr' to 'bakhr' on p. 33, for *baḥr* 'sea') and even fewer alternations in transliteration than Thimm 1897, the book is absolutely identical to Hassam 1883. Unlike Thimm's 1897 and 1898 *Egyptian Self-Taught*, it even retains the Arabic script.

In 1911 – again, within a few years of the publication of a revised edition of *Egyptian Self-Taught* – Marlborough issued a new version of *Arabic Self-Taught (Syrian)*. This was credited to A. Hassam, 'enlarged and revised by the Rev. N. Odeh'. Naser Odeh (1855–1932) was a Palestinian Church of England clergyman, who had previously worked in Cairo. He had been one of T. E. Lawrence's first Arabic teachers and at the time of the 1911 Census was living in Oxford (Mairs and Muratov 2015, 36–37, 52). We see the same pattern of recruitment of authors for Marlborough's Arabic Self-Taught books: people with some connection to the army or church, living within a relatively short distance of London. The job of revising the book for Syrian Arabic may have come about through professional networks, since both Hindié and Odeh were friends of Oxford professor David Margoliouth.

Odeh slightly modifies the section on pronunciation and the Arabic script, prepares completely new (and much expanded) lists of vocabulary and completely overhauls the grammar section. Unlike other authors in the series, Odeh introduces Arabic grammatical terminology, analysing the language on its own terms, rather than forcing it into an English or Latinate model. This section has much more in common with earlier grammars of colloquial Arabic than previous Thimm's or Marlborough's 'self-taught' books. Odeh provides 'exercises' with example sentences for the various tenses and forms of the verb, and makes it less dry by including phrases that travellers might actually need to use, such as 'The road to Jericho is dangerous', 'To drink beer in the heat is injurious to health', 'We cannot go out today on account of the heavy rain' or 'You should learn Arabic'. The 'Conversational Phrases', again, are significantly expanded from the earlier book. The leisure traveller's needs are catered for, from 'nārīd naṭla' lifauqi-l-nadīdh' 'We want to go up the minaret' to 'la tansa-l-nabīdh' 'Do not forget the wine'. Of all the books in the series, Odeh's strikes the best balance between thorough grammatical explanations and practical phrases that the tourist might actually need.

This extended case study of Thimm's Arabic Self-Taught books in their many editions has shown how a single title might be adapted over the years, with frequent plagiarism and fraudulent claims to 'authorship'. Language books like these, published in mass market series, often reveal more about the economics of publishing and the ways in which authors created and defended a reputation than they do about either the needs or the language learning experiences of travellers. I now turn more directly to the tourist experience of language learning in the Middle East, and the many phrasebooks produced expressly for this market.

## Colonial tourism and linguistic advice for travellers

Although there has been a significant body of scholarship on the visual aspect of the colonial-period tourist encounter with new places and people (the 'tourist gaze'; Urry 1990), less attention has so far been given to the aural aspect of this encounter. European tourists brought expectations of what they expected to see and experience in the Middle East, which were in part moulded by their consciousness of belonging to an imperial power, encountering a society considered not just different, but inferior to their own. Many travel accounts aim to give the impression of a dispassionate observer, describing what they see in a pseudoscientific, rationalist manner, while at the same time capturing this image through a lens which

distorts according to their own ideas of what they are seeing (Pratt 2008; Gregory 1995, 46; Mairs forthcoming-e). The same might be said of the way travellers experienced the soundscape of the Arab world.

Travel literature usually prioritises the visual, but the other senses are also used in a similar way to emphasise the encounter with the other or depict an Orientalist scene. For many tourists, especially in the period after the rise of mass package tourism, it was not just the sound of the Arabic language that was unfamiliar, but the sound of any language other than their own. Several of the accounts discussed below make it clear that even educated English speakers could be ill-equipped to manage in spoken French, never mind Arabic. Crowd scenes sketched by travel writers dwell on the perceived disorder of Middle Eastern streets compared to European ones, and on the costume and physical appearance of the people there, but also on sounds and smells. The term 'Babel' recurs. Such scenes are often similar to the point of cliché. Take, for example, Amelia Edwards and Douglas Sladen describing the Ḥajj procession leaving Cairo for Mecca, more than three decades apart. Edwards, along with 'all Shepheard's Hotel … and every stranger in Cairo', took up a position outside Bāb al-Naṣr, where there was a carnival atmosphere:

> Veiled women carrying little bronze Cupids of children astride upon the right shoulder, swarthy Egyptians, coal-black Abyssinians, Arabs and Nubians of every shade from golden-brown to chocolate, fellahs, dervishes, donkey-boys, street urchins, and beggars with every imaginable deformity, came and went; squeezed themselves in and out among the carriages; lined the road on each side of the great towered gateway; swarmed on the top of every wall; and filled the air with laughter, a Babel of dialects, and those odours of Araby that are inseparable from an Eastern crowd.
>
> (Edwards 1877, 24)

Sladen, similarly, describes:

> a babel of sound; the crowd shrilled in their happiness; the water-carriers struck notes as clear as a bell with their brazen saucers, and the drums and the hauboys, the bagpipes and the cymbals clashed out the noises of the Orient.
>
> (Sladen 1911, 256)

Scenes like this are commonplace in Middle Eastern travel literature; Charles Dudley Warner, to give another example, describes Khan

al-Khalili as 'a babel of traffic, jostling, pushing, clamoring' (Warner 1876). The 'Oriental' crowd is depicted as diverse, disordered, colourful, noisy. An important part of this disorder is its linguistic otherness and inaccessibility. Whether or not the authors knew any Arabic, this language encounter – or rather, language disconnect – is a key part of many travelogues.

In addition to the linguistic advice given in guidebooks (discussed below), many travel accounts offered recommendations to other travellers on how to deal with the linguistic divide. J. Ll. Thomas recommends that English-speaking visitors to the Middle East brush up on their French, but adds:

> As regards languages, my next advice to the reader who contemplates a visit to Egypt is, 'Get up a little Arabic'. Even French will not go everywhere. A slight acquaintance with Arabic will go far to make you feel at home in Egypt. It is very generally taken up by foreign residents in that country. General Grenfell is fast becoming a proficient in that language, and the subordinate English officers have also set themselves to learning it. There is a very useful handbook, written by an English officer, which makes the acquisition of conversational Arabic a comparatively simple matter.
>
> (Thomas 1890, 32)

This is also testimony to the increased British military interest in Arabic learning, discussed in Chapter 4 (the book Thomas refers to is probably Green 1883). R. Talbot Kelly, some years later, had similar advice:

> Here, then, is one of the difficulties which immediately confront the Englishman, who is seldom a good linguist. For the full enjoyment of Cairo a little French and rather more than a smattering of Arabic are essential, and the latter, at any rate, is not easily acquired. Consequently the tourist is at the mercy of his dragoman for any information, and misses those snatches of 'chaff' and repartee among the natives which often add so much to the day's amusement. With commendable energy travellers frequently, and after much labour, learn a few Arabic phrases, usually *questions*, forgetting that they cannot possibly understand the replies. Let me recommend them to confine their earlier efforts to the acquisition of such sentences only as give absolute instructions to servants, drivers, etc., and to which no response is required.
>
> (Kelly 1902, 13)

Kelly's description speaks to the difficulty of transferring material learnt from a phrasebook into practical use. The learner becomes an active user of the language before they are able to be a passive one. Kelly's advice, to learn orders rather than questions, is something that would have been possible using many of the phrasebooks available, which focus on precisely this. The phrases in Thimm's Self-Taught books for Arabic, it may be recalled, commence with the imperative.

Although my interest here is primarily in tourist experiences of using phrasebooks and learning Arabic, it is important to remember that these experiences were by no means universal. Mr and Mrs Frederic Eden (who also made the dubious decision to do without a dragoman) found it impossible to hire an English-speaking servant because of the influx of foreigners for the opening of the Suez Canal, and were asked by the European who hired them their boat: 'Could we learn some Arabic? No, that was scarcely possible, but Ibrahim [one of their servants] had some Italian, and would find it if we proved ourselves his masters' (Eden 1871, 14–15). Their inability or unwillingness to learn Arabic or to hire a dragoman made their journey difficult and uncomfortable.

Others described their attempts to make themselves understood and to mimic the languages they heard. Louis Pascal and his travelling companions attempted to speak to Nubians at Wadi Halfa with the aid of a pocket dictionary.[3] Their attempts were well received by their conversation partners:

> I don't know the slightest word of Nubian, but to entertain ourselves we sometimes left the dragoman in the boat and, equipped with a little pocket dictionary, my companion and I managed to scrape out a few words of the language. Nothing could be more amusing than to see us surrounded by fifteen to twenty people, necks stuck out, eyes wide, trying to make some sense of the baroque sounds issuing from our throats. And when we managed to make a few words understood, as best we could, the cries of joy and laughter would have raised the dead.
>
> (Pascal 1861, 201)

Charles Dudley Warner's account of Arabic conversation is written with humorous intent, but contains some valid observations, such as the contrast between *aywa* and *na'am* for 'yes':

> We have been learning the language. The language consists merely of *tyeb*. With *tyeb* in its various accents and inflections, you can carry

on an extended conversation. I have heard two Arabs talking for a half hour, in which one of them used no word for reply or response except *tyeb* 'good'. ...

'Tyeb?'

'Tyeb.'

'Tyeb!' (both together).

'Tyeb?' (showing something).

'Tyeb' (emphatically, in admiration).

'Tyeb' (in approval of the other's admiration).

'Tyeb Ketér' ('good, much').

'Tyeb Keter?'

'Tyeb.'

'Tyeb.' (together, in ratification of all that has been said).

... We can say *eiwa* ('yes')—or *nam*, when we wish to be elegant—and *la* ('no'). The universal negative in Nubia, however, is simpler than this—it is a cluck of the tongue in the left cheek and a slight upward jerk of the head. This cluck and jerk makes 'no,' from which there is no appeal. If you ask a Nubian the price of anything – *be-kam dee?* – and he should answer *khamsa* ('five'), and you should offer *thelata* ('three'), and he should *kch* and jerk up his head, you might know the trade was hopeless; because the *kch* expresses indifference as well as a negative. The best thing you could do would be to say *bookra* ('to-morrow'), and go away – meaning in fact to put off the purchase forever, as the Nubian very well knows when he politely adds, *tyeb*.

But there are two other words necessary to be mastered before the traveller can say he knows Arabic. To the constant call for 'backsheesh' and the obstructing rabble of beggars and children, you must be able to say *mafeesh* ('nothing'), and *im'shee* ('getaway,' 'clear out,' 'scat.') It is my experience that this *im'shee* is the most necessary word in Egypt.

(Warner 1876)

Words like *imshī* recur frequently in tourist accounts. As we will see below, some phrasebooks principally equipped tourists to give orders and to insult.

## General trends in tourist Arabic phrasebooks

In my survey of the more than fifty Arabic phrasebooks for European travellers (1850s–) examined in the rest of this chapter, my aim is to move

beyond examination of the language-learning methodologies employed and the methods of composition, to access something of the experience of language learning which I have just discussed. Since there were so many works for tourists (along with works for soldiers, they furnish the majority of the works in the Catalogue), there is also an opportunity for quantitative analysis or looking at general trends. First of all, as already noted, there were two main periods of growth in mass tourism in North Africa and the Middle East in the second half of the nineteenth century, and with this, growth in the publication of travel guidebooks and Arabic phrasebooks: around the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. Subsequent publication of tourist phrasebooks continued to be healthy, but the real boom came from wars (the 1884–1885 Nile Expedition, the First and Second World Wars), as will be discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

It is possible to say something in broad terms about the kinds of topics typically covered by tourist language books in the period from the 1850s to the Second World War. Most phrasebooks (43 out of 54 in the corpus I have reviewed) contain some grammatical information, some much more than others. It is common to have an alphabetical list of vocabulary in addition to topical sections: usually from the European language into Arabic, sometimes in the other direction, and more rarely both. The most popular topics covered are greetings (36 out of 54; it is surprising that not all phrasebooks even tell the traveller how to say hello and goodbye), transportation (34), numbers and food (both 30) and telling the time (29). Transport in earlier periods focuses on independent travel by horse or camel, with new phrases coming in with the spread of railways, steamships and ultimately automobiles. Words for hiring a donkey (which remained the usual mode of transport in the narrow streets of Cairo, and a popular tourist pastime) remain common throughout. Twenty-six of the books sampled include phrases for shopping, but only 13 cover bargaining. Health and the weather are covered in fewer than half of the books (23 and 24 respectively). Phrases for finding lodging (17 of the sample) become common only in the twentieth century, and in early periods (until the 1860s) tend to focus on finding accommodation in private houses rather than hotels, which were available only later. Phrases for ordering in a restaurant, likewise, are usual only in twentieth-century phrasebooks, and rare before this (7). Sixteen of the sample contain phrases for surmounting or describing language barriers ('Do you speak English?' 'I only speak a little Arabic' and so forth). These are quite evenly spread across time periods, as are phrases about antiquities and archaeological or historical topics (10). The fact that Middle Eastern travel remained the

preserve of relatively well-off Europeans can be seen in the fact that 13 of the phrasebooks contain words for hiring and giving orders to servants.

The most obvious difference between tourist phrasebooks of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries and their modern descendants is the amount and nature of grammatical information given. Even those that emphasise their practicality to the tourist, and their goal of enabling the user to speak and understand rather than read and write Arabic, nevertheless reveal their debt to more academic grammars of dialectal Arabic (notably Spitta 1880), or of other languages. This debt may be seen in the reproduction of material directly from grammars, in recommendations that the user consult them for reference or for further study, or simply in the tendency to lay Arabic verbs, nouns and other parts of speech out in tables in the manner long used for ancient and modern Indo-European languages. To the present-day reader, the long lists of paradigms and conjugations seem an obvious barrier to rapid progress in the spoken language, but it is important to remember that for those educated in Latin, Greek or modern languages along similar lines, these tables may instead have offered comforting familiarity. This is not to say that presenting Arabic like Greek or Latin enabled learners to grasp the language easily – my impression is that very few people ever successfully learnt Arabic from these books – but it is not the insurmountable barrier it may appear. Few phrasebook or self-instruction book authors of the period present Arabic according to its own grammatical traditions (Naser Odeh is among those who do).

Nineteen of the books in my sample include the Arabic script for all words and phrases in addition to transliteration, although more offer a short section on the Arabic alphabet at the beginning of the book, after which it is never used again. Arab authors are no more or less likely to use Arabic script than European authors. It is more common for books to include the Arabic script in earlier periods. In the peak of the tourist boom of the 1880s, it is hardly encountered at all. This is in contrast to the practice in academic Arabic studies in Europe, where the use of Romanised transcription existed only 'aux marges du milieu savant et universitaire, chez quelques autodidactes qui promeuvent de nouvelles méthodes d'apprentissage de la langue' (Messaoudi 2015, 318). Sophie Liet (1811–1891), for example, who resided in Egypt for most of the 1850s and was a follower of Jacotot's language-teaching methods, tried and failed to convince the French government to adopt Romanisation in the teaching of Arabic in Algeria (Liet 1861).

Although I have used the term 'phrasebook' for convenience, most colloquial Arabic books for tourists concentrate on words more than

phrases. These are usually grouped by topic, allowing the tourist, for example, at a train station to find the relevant section and hazard a pronunciation or point at the word they need. There tend to be fewer more developed phrases or sentences, although some books offer a wide repertoire of phrases for all occasions. All books emphasise practicality, although opinions differ on how best to offer this, whether through a brief, pared-down booklet or a more comprehensive work. Methods of learning are hyped, and unrealistic promises are routinely made – such as the assurance on the covers of early twentieth-century Marlborough's Self-Taught books that 'This system teaches you the essentials of a language (for travel and enjoyment) without the drudgery of prolonged study.' Phrasebooks consistently claim to be treading new ground and offering innovative methods and learning material, when they rarely are; many, in fact, copy material directly from one another. (Plagiarism in language books will be considered in more depth in Chapter 7; see also Graph 2.) Although the divide between tourist guidebooks and language books, as already discussed, is established early on, many phrasebooks contain small sections of useful information for travellers, such as notes on weights and measures, or pictures of coins.

## The Suez Canal as a catalyst for language book publication

As I have already noted, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 represents a watershed in the development of the tourist industry in the Middle East, and the publication of phrasebooks and guidebooks for tourists. The arrival of mass tourism in the region, notably with Thomas Cook's tours, dates to this period. Works before this period, as we have already seen with overland guides of the 1830s, tend to occupy a middle ground between the travel memoir and the guidebook: conscious of the need to offer practical advice to travellers, but still grounded in personal experience and description of what are to Europeans unfamiliar lands and scenes.

Not many Arabic phrasebooks for travellers were published in the 1840s and 1850s, leaving visitors to Arabic-speaking regions reliant on works produced decades previously. The American poet and travel writer Bayard Taylor (1825–1878), for example, who travelled in Egypt and Palestine in the early 1850s, used the relatively up-to-date Binning and Hayes 1849, but also the Vocabulary from Wilkinson 1835. In a later interview, he stated that these 'did me great service', but that practice with native speakers was invaluable:

After I had tried a number of words with Ibrahim, to get the pronunciation, I made bolder essays. One day, when the sailors were engaged in a most vociferous discussion, I broke upon them with: – 'What is all that noise about? Stop instantly!' The effect was instantaneous; the men were silent, and Sayd, turning up his eyes in wonder, cried out '*Wallah! wallah!* the Howadji talks Arabic!' The two copper-faced Fellahs thought it very amusing, and every new word I learned sufficed to set them laughing for half an hour. ... The construction of the sentences, so far as I have learned, is very simple, and the common colloquial arabic does not seem near so difficult as I had been led to expect.

(*Kentish Independent*, 3 January 1857, 3, quoting from a piece in the *New York Tribune*)

Some mid-nineteenth-century phrasebooks and vocabularies have their origin in works produced originally for the author's own use. Nolden's *Vocabulaire français arabe*, published in the same year as his English-language 'Travelling Companion' for the overland route (both at the apparently short-lived Imprimerie du Phare in Alexandria), is one such work. Based on his own experience, his aim is:

To enable the many foreigners who arrive in Egypt each year to learn, in a short time, the most requisite terms for the relations they would have with locals, such as servants, boatmen, guides, etc., and to shop in Arab markets.

(Nolden 1844b, i)

Nolden is aware of his work's limitations, and very conscious of the difficulties of representing Arabic accurately in Roman script with the typographic means available to him (he may mean lack of an Arabic type, or of a Roman one with sufficient diacritics). He has tried to give the pronunciation of words as best he can, but suggests that the user needs to start by asking a native speaker of Arabic to show them how to pronounce a dozen or so words, before working out the pronunciation of the rest on that basis. Nolden's transcription is in fact not quite consistent enough to permit the reader to do this, perhaps because – while his Arabic is competent – his own ear is not fully attuned to the language. For instance, *ḥāʾ* /ħ/ is represented sometimes by 'h' and sometimes by 'hh' – and on one occasion by 'hhh' ('Hhheúb' for 'aimer') – but *khāʾ* /x/ is also 'hh'. Emphatic consonants are not distinguished from their non-emphatic counterparts. '*Ayn* /ʕ/ is not represented at all. A copy of the book once owned

by Heinrich Thorbecke (editor of Michel Sabbagh's Arabic grammar: Chapter 1), later in the collection of the Deutsches Morgenländisches Gesellschaft, contains a number of pencil annotations in Arabic script (digitised on MENAdoc: https://menadoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de). These may be by Thorbecke himself. The annotations appear most often next to words whose true pronunciation is obscured by Nolden's transcription, or whose spelling is not obvious from their pronunciation in Egyptian dialect (e.g. *qarāfa* in Arabic script next to 'Arâfa, araffa, Cimitière').

Nolden's *Vocabulaire* is more than a simple word list. It contains some phrases in Egyptian dialect next to the relevant dictionary entries (e.g. p. 22, 'il n'y a personne comme toi, il n'y a pas tou semblable *màfish zéiak*'). He also supplies several separate lists of Arabic words for phenomena not commonly encountered in Europe (e.g. food items and forms of dress), a short grammar and sections on weights and measures. Nolden states that his major difficulty in the grammar has been presenting Arabic verbs in a manner which allows them to be easily conjugated by those who do not want to make an in-depth study of the language. 'Un petit ouvrage comme celui-ci', he concedes, is not going to teach someone to converse in Arabic, but should allow them to speak to Egyptians, who are patient with a learner's mistakes and clever at working out what they are trying to say even if it is badly pronounced: 'loin de rire des fautes qu'un étranger fait en leur parlant, ils adoptent même sa manière défectueuse de s'exprimer pour le mettre plus à son aise' (Nolden 1844b, iii). This is similar to Wilkinson's earlier advice to learners, and his experience with Egyptians adopting pidgin Arabic to help him converse – indeed, it is possible that Nolden has borrowed it from Wilkinson.

Nolden's work was copied directly, without credit, and published again by Julius Zenker in 1854, at a press in Leipzig ([Zenker] 1854, using the pseudonym Barthélémy). Another author who, like Nolden, published an Arabic phrasebook first compiled for his own use was Il'ya Berezin (1818–1896), who had studied under Aleksandr Kazem-Bek at Kazan University (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010, 106). From 1855 he was based in St Petersburg, where he is likely to have known Muḥammad 'Ayyād al-Ṭanṭāwī (Chapter 1). Berezin travelled in the Middle East in 1842–1845 and wrote his Arabic dialogues during this period. He was interested in comparing Arabic dialects, and gathers 'les phrases les plus necessaires pour le voyageur qui parcourt l'Orient' in the speech of Basra, Baghdad, Aleppo and Cairo. His intention is to accurately represent spoken Arabic, even if this is 'incorrect' compared to the Classical standard: 'Pour que le voyageur soit compris de tout le monde j'ai choisi pour les textes arabes le language usité par le bas peuple en conservant même quelquefois

les expressions incorrectes, mais qui sont admises dans la conversation quotidienne' (Berezin 1857, unpaginated).

Although Berezin's stated aim is to enable the visitor to communicate in colloquial Arabic, the layout of the book is not particularly convenient. It opens with 10 pages of dialogue entirely in French, followed by a few pages of grammar, then the French dialogue repeated (in both Arabic script and transliteration) in the various dialects. A user would need to keep flicking back and forth between the different sections of the book. Figure 3.4 shows Dialogue VI, on hiring a servant, in French (p. 9), Baghdad dialect (p. 39), Aleppo dialect (pp. 60–61) and Cairo dialect (pp. 84–85). Berezin's ear for phonological differences between dialects is good: he picks up on the otherwise rare 'ch' /t͡ʃ/ sound in Iraqi Arabic ('Tscham wakit?', 'what time?') and the pronunciation of *qāf* /q/ as a glottal stop in Cairo ('min abl' for *min qabl*, 'before'). As a phrasebook for travellers, however, the book was probably of limited utility.

The 1860s saw a growth in practical Arabic works for travellers, as Egypt and the Middle East gradually became a destination for tourists.



**Figure 3.4** Berezin's *Guide du voyageur en orient*: Dialogue VI, on hiring a servant. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

The German scholar Adolf Wahrmund (1827–1913), who taught Arabic at the Kaiserlich-königliche Orientalische Akademie in Vienna from 1871, where he was a colleague of Anton Hassan (Chapter 1), and was head of the institution from 1885 until 1897, published a collection of *Vulgär-arabische Gespräche und Sammlung der nöthigsten Wörter: zum Gebrauche für Reisende im Orient* as the second volume of his modern Arabic grammar. Wahrmund used the dictionaries of Bocthor, Marcel and Ruphy, and took his grammatical examples and conversational phrases from Vincent 1830, the volumes published by the Church Missionary Society on Malta, Delaporte 1837, al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848, Caussin de Perceval 1824, and several works published at the Būlāq Press (Wahrmund 1861, Volume I, xii). He also mentions works published at Smyrna and Calcutta, showing the breadth of works on colloquial and Classical Arabic available to him in Vienna. Wahrmund's works are essentially directed at a scholarly readership, and show how at this period colloquial Arabic was beginning to be considered an object of academic study in Europe in its own right, as European soldiers, tourists, merchants and colonial officials came into more direct contact with Arabic speakers. As the travails of 'Arabe vulgaire' at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes in Paris shows, this was a long and gradual process.

Increasingly, however, works for colloquial Arabic in the 1860s are directed expressly at travellers. Julius Winckler, who worked as a private secretary in Cairo between about 1856 and 1860 and published a book of poems in Prague in 1861 titled *In Egypten*, states in the foreword to his *Kurzgefasste arabische Sprachlehre zur schnellen Erlernung der vulgär-arabischen Sprache* that Egypt, once the land of fables, despotism and fanaticism, has become a popular travel destination, attracting scholars of antiquity, artists, traders, linguists, scientists, hunters and even invalids (Winckler 1862, vii). Winckler points out the difficulties of relying on an interpreter or dragoman – something frequently mentioned in phrasebooks – and claims that while speakers of French, English and Italian already have small, portable, more-or-less usable language books at their disposal for colloquial Arabic, there is nothing suitable in German. There were, of course, already works on colloquial Arabic in German, but he found Seifarth 1849 and Wolff 1857 not fit for purpose. Winckler states that he acquired his own Arabic through months of living and travelling in Egypt; he says he has consulted various French, English and German works in the preparation of his own work and has also had the support of unnamed (presumably native Arabic-speaking) friends. The bulk of his work is made up of a dictionary, followed by some phrases listed according to the verb used (*haben*, *sein* etc.). Despite his claims

that the work is intended for travellers, few of the phrases cover scenarios useful in travelling.

By the mid-1860s, anticipation of the opening of the Suez Canal was already spurring the creation of new resources for travellers. H. Bernard and Eugène Tissot, who both worked for the Compagnie de Suez, coauthored an 1865 *Vocabulaire français-égyptien* and an 1869 *Itinéraire pour l'Isthme de Suez*, which reproduces much material from the earlier work. Bernard and Tissot looked beyond Egypt and the traditional 'overland route' between Europe and India, and also aimed their work at those taking the maritime routes to the French colonies in Indochina. Although billed as a 'vocabulary', their 1865 book is really a much more comprehensive guidebook 'destiné aux voyageurs qui désirent profiter de la cérémonie d'inauguration du Canal de Suez pour visiter la vallée du Nil' (Bernard and Tissot 1865, v). Bernard is the one primarily responsible for the dictionary and the seven and a half pages of Egyptian Arabic dialogues it contains, restricted to greetings, telling the time, and eating and drinking. Historical information on Egypt is balanced by information about contemporary practicalities: steamship routes, modern hotels in Cairo and Alexandria, and railways. Developments in travel infrastructure since the guides of the 1830s are notable.

Bichara Soussa dedicated his *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre à parler l'arabe vulgaire en très-peu de temps et sans maitre* to Ferdinand de Lesseps, President of the Compagnie de Suez, as an 'amateur … de la langue arabe' (Soussa 1865a, no pagination). An Italian version of the book, published in the same year, was dedicated to an F. Basevi, possibly the Alexandria-based businessman Francesco Basevi (Soussa 1865b; on Basevi, see e.g. Santoni 1905, 167). The American folklorist Charles Leland recommended the book: 'After carefully examining a great number of grammars and systems for teaching vulgar Arabic, I have come to the conclusion that a somewhat despised, quite humble, and not at all phil-osophical-philological work by Bichara Soussa, a Copht of Alexandria, is certainly the most intelligent and practical' (Leland 1873, 307). Although Soussa's explanations are clear and simple to follow for an educated person used to learning a language through a grammar–translation method, he misrepresents many features of the Arabic language. It is described as having six case endings, like Latin, most of which are indicated by prepositions.

By the 1870s, the increase in European tourist traffic to the Middle East – and above all Egypt – was making itself felt in Arabic phrasebooks in multiple ways. First, there were simply more of them: the market had increased, and authors and publishers saw opportunities. Many more

phrasebooks were published in the Middle East itself, by local authors at private presses. Just as there was a glut of European travel accounts of highly variable quality, more European authors waded into the enterprise of phrasebook writing with few if any qualifications.

Murray Edward Finch-Hatton (1851–1898), later Earl of Winchilsea and Earl of Nottingham (and uncle of Denys Finch Hatton of the Happy Valley set), wrote his *Practical Hand-Book of Arabic for the Nile* aged 22, while still a student at Balliol College, Oxford. The book's preface veers back and forth between the modest and the over-ambitious, in its hopes that in 27 pages 'this little book' will enable the user to get to know the 'feelings, opinions, and character' of the Egyptians, and outwit potential cheats:

> The want which it is hoped this little book may in some measure supply is one which has been long felt by Englishmen and Americans on the Nile, that of a practical hand-book, from which enough Arabic may be acquired in a short time to enable travellers, not only to transact ordinary business with the Egyptians in their own language, but to discover the feelings, opinions, and character of a people who never fail to interest and attach all who take the trouble to make their acquaintance. The extortions often practised by the dragomans; the obstinacy and mendacity of the native captain and crew of a Nile boat; and the carelessness of the railway and other officials, are only to be kept in check by a knowledge of the language, which is thus rendered almost a necessity in Egypt. This book does not contain a perfect, or even a large vocabulary, but only such words as are likely to be of practical use, but if any one after using it wishes to pursue the study of Arabic further, it is hoped that he will at least have nothing to unlearn.
>
> <div align="right">(Finch-Hatton 1873, v)</div>

Finch-Hatton's phrases mostly concern hunting, visiting temples and sailing on the Nile, all popular tourist pastimes in Egypt. He gives little guidance on pronunciation (and what there is interestingly reflects his social origins: "'I' like the 'e' in Eton'), but his transcription is for the most part straightforward for an English speaker to follow. He marks word stress with a grave accent. Some of the spellings suggest a southern Egyptian source (e.g. with *qāf* /q/ rendered as 'hard g'). He ignores *'ayn* /ʕ/ and has trouble with *ghayn* /ɣ/: *ghālī* 'dear, expensive' becomes ''rràli', and *ṣughayyar* 'small' or 'young' is rendered 'zooaìr'. It is clear from the preface that Finch-Hatton regards the purpose of learning Arabic as keeping

Egyptians in check, rather than really getting to know them, but as far as the accuracy of the book goes, his hope that the reader 'will at least have nothing to unlearn' is reasonable.

Although he is named as sole author, Finch-Hatton's responsibility for the book is a shared one. He acknowledges 'my obligations to Ibrahim Ismail, who was my servant on the Nile – and a most excellent one – for his help in several parts of this book' (Finch-Hatton 1873, vi). As with many of the phrasebooks considered here, Finch-Hatton's seems to have been produced by an oral–aural method: a European preparing a list of vocabulary in phrases in their own language, asking an Arabic speaker for the equivalent in Arabic, and recording this by ear to the best of their abilities. Ibrahim Ismail is one of many who deserve but do not receive the credit of authorship in Arabic phrasebooks. It may well be his Ṣaʿīdī accent that we hear coming through in the book.

The majority of the Egyptian tourist phrasebooks for Arabic published in the 1870s were, in fact, by native speakers of Arabic resident in Egypt. These saw professional and financial opportunities in the tourism market. Some sought to adapt works designed for use in different contexts to the requirements of tourists, such as Yacoub Nakhlah (Yaʿqūb Nakhla Rūfayla Bey, 1847–1905). Nakhlah, a Copt, studied and then taught English, Italian and French in Cairo (Tadrus 1911, 24–25). He worked for a time at the Amīriyya Press, before being appointed to a position in the financial administration. Nakhlah's *New Manual of English and Arabic Conversation* is, like al-Shidyāq's early works on Malta, primarily intended to help Arabic speakers learn English: its Arabic title presents it more straightforwardly as a work for learning English. The bilingual Preface, however, also addresses itself to English speakers: 'The following work is intended to be a practical hand-book of Arabic for the use of English and American travellers on the Nile; and a useful manual of conversation for natives desirous of acquiring the English language' (Nakhlah 1874, unpaginated).

Nakhlah's *Manual* has been thoroughly analysed by Liesbeth Zack as a source for contemporary Cairo Arabic, so I will not discuss it in depth here (Zack 2016b, 2017). As Zack points out, Nakhlah presents both Romanised colloquial Egyptian Arabic and a form of mixed or middle Arabic in Arabic script (Zack 2017, 250) – the difference between the two being invisible to someone who does not read Arabic. This phenomenon is encountered in several other Arabic instruction books of the period, such as Qadrī's (Chapter 1). We find an interesting counterpoint to Finch-Hatton's suspicion of Egyptians in Nakhlah's contention (in his Arabic Preface) that 'whoever learns a nation's language is safe from their cunning, because with the knowledge of their language he can distinguish

between the good and the bad' (trans. Zack 2016b, 560). Nakhlah was probably aware of Cadri 1861. I also see influence from Mallouf's polyglot vocabularies in the book's organisation and choice of topics, although not to the point of plagiarism. In turn, Nakhlah helped to prepare Green 1883 (Chapter 4). Egyptian tourist and military phrasebooks of the latter part of the nineteenth century therefore continue to owe a debt to Arab and Ottoman traditions as well as European ones.

Nakhlah's *Manual* contains classic tourist fare, such as hiring a donkey boy to go to the Cairo citadel and bazaar (Nakhlah 1874, 258). Beyond this, there is evidence that it was actually used by tourists as well as Egyptian learners of English. Surviving annotated copies of the book, which I will discuss in Chapter 7, bear owner's inscriptions of Europeans, and notes they made to help them learn Arabic.

The Cairo publisher Paolo Cumbo, who was probably Maltese, issued two Arabic–English books in 1874. G. Malaty, 'English Professor in the Government Schools', authored *A New Guide of English and Arabic Conversations*. In the (Arabic-only) Preface, Malaty praises studying languages as one of the most useful means of acquiring knowledge, and states that Arabic and English are now the most useful languages for Egyptians; a contrast with Turkish is implied. The title seems to have been influenced by that of Nakhlah's work (I prefer to give Nakhlah credit for precedence because his version is more idiomatic). Malaty finds it more difficult to strike a balance between teaching English to Arabic speakers and Arabic to English speakers. He does not use transliteration, making the book inaccessible to someone who does not read Arabic, yet some of the content of the dialogues is directed explicitly at Europeans. This is because Malaty has copied most of his content directly from al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840 (Figure 3.5).
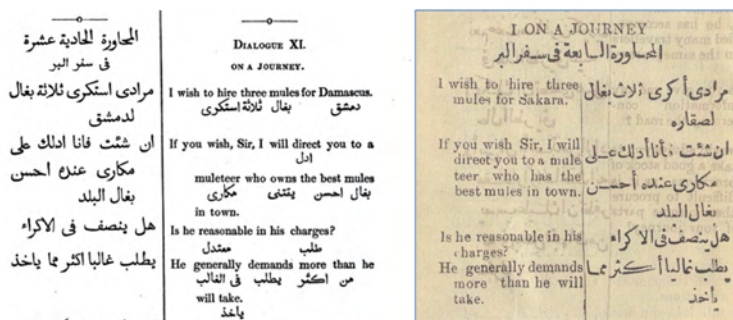


**Figure 3.5**  Al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840, 163 (left), and Malaty 1874, 132 (right), compared. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

The other work published by Cumbo in 1874 – Gabriel Sacroug's *Egyptian Travelling Interpreter, or Arabic without a Teacher for English Travellers Visiting Egypt* – is also plagiarised. Sacroug was a dragoman at the British Consulate in Cairo (see e.g. La Rue 2002) and came from a Greek Orthodox family originally from Acre (several members of the Sakrūj family are mentioned by Philipp 1985). His great-uncle had served as an interpreter for the French during the Expédition d'Égypte (Guémard and Ott 1925, 239–240; Zack 2023). In Acre, the Sakrūj family had been acquainted with the Ṣabbāghs (Philipp 2001, 156), providing – through Michel Sabbagh – another connection to interpreting and the teaching of Arabic earlier in the nineteenth century. Among those Gabriel interpreted for was Flinders Petrie (Griffith Institute, Petrie MSS 1.2.1–50 – Petrie Journal 1881 to 1882, 25 and 32). Some of the book is copied from Nolden 1844b (translated from French into English) and some from Kayat 1844. Ironically for a dragoman, Sacroug's intention 'in preparing this little book, is to supply the wants of English Travellers in the Arabic language, and to render them more independent of Couriers and Dragomans during their excursions in Egypt. With this object in view, I have only selected those common words and sentences which are required on a journey' (Sacroug 1874, 1). Among those who used his book was Frederick Burnaby, who died at the Battle of Abu Klea on the Nile Expedition of 1884–1885 (Solomon Negima, a Palestinian dragoman whom I have written about elsewhere, witnessed his death: Mairs 2016, 25–29). In a voyage on the Red Sea, a companion noted that 'Burnaby is the most industrious of our party, and may frequently be seen holding a conversation with one of the crew with the assistance of an Arabic vocabulary (Sacroug), and he is making rapid progress in their language' (Myers 1876, 10).

The year 1874, for reasons I cannot explain, was a bumper one for the publication of Arabic phrasebooks in Cairo, with four new works. The Cairo printers and booksellers Mourès and Granier published a *Vocabulaire français-arabe* by Michel Saleh. Saleh's name appears on his various works in different forms. The title page of his 1872 novel *The Story of Fū'ād and Rafqa* states that he is 'former translator [*mutarjim*] for the Egyptian Railways Authority' and gives his name as Nakhla Ṣāliḥ.[4] Later in life, he worked for the Public Works Department and achieved the rank of Bey (see below).

Saleh's book, too, shows signs of having been modelled on earlier phrasebooks and word lists, such as those of Mallouf, but not to the point of the plagiarism of Malaty's and Sacroug's works. Instead, with Saleh, we see the rules of a developing genre being defined. Saleh pitched his book 'soit aux touristes, soit aux européens établis dans le pays' (Saleh

1874, 5). In a refrain familiar from many of the series of language books on particular 'methods', discussed above, Saleh claims the book is 'rédigé sur un plan nouveau, tout à fait différent de celui des autres vocabulaires du même genre'. This is not quite accurate, in the sense that the book contains the mixture of vocabulary lists, grammar and phrases typical of almost all the works considered here. What Saleh has in mind, however, is the length and comprehensiveness of his work relative to other works which are 'trop abrégées pour être consultées avec fruit'. He may have Finch-Hatton's work in mind. Saleh seeks to occupy the middle ground between brevity and comprehensiveness sought by many authors. He hopes that 'ce sera le *vade mecum* obligé de toutes les personnes désireuses de parler promptement et couramment l'arabe, sans s'astreindre à une étude laborieuse de cette langue difficile' (Saleh 1874, 6). Summarising the book's merits, he claims that 'extrême modicité du prix, commmodité du format, sûreté dans les enseignements, tels sont les titres de ce petit livre à la faveur du public'.

As well as general vocabulary and phrases to describe the world, greet people and answer practical daily needs, Saleh's book provides insights into what tourists expected or were expected to see in Cairo in the 1870s (Figure 3.6). Phrases are given for visiting the pyramids and sphinx, the citadel, the site of the 1811 massacre of the Mamluks, the districts of Būlāq and Gezira, whirling dervishes, the mosque of Muḥammad 'Ali, and the Church of the Virgin at Maṭariyya. One of the previous owners of my copy of Saleh 1874 was Gottlieb Wild, a Swiss merchant resident in Cairo, who annotated the book in pencil as he used it. (It will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7.) Wild also pasted in some pages from Meadows' *New French and English Pronouncing Dictionary* (many editions from 1835). This, along with question marks next to some French words which Wild seems not to have known, shows that Wild needed help to use a French work of this sort for Arabic. This may indicate that works in his native German were not readily available in Egypt at this date.

## James Sanua and foreigners' Arabic

Like Fāris al-Shidyāq, discussed in Chapter 2, one of our Cairo phrasebook authors of the 1870s was a shrewd and witty observer of foreigners' Arabic. James Sanua (Ya'qūb b. Rafā'īl Ṣanū' or Ṣannū',[5] 1839–1912) had a multilingual childhood education, in Italian, Arabic, French, Hebrew and English. Modern treatments of Sanua have discussed his twin careers as a pioneer of Arabic theatre and as a satirical journalist, critical of both
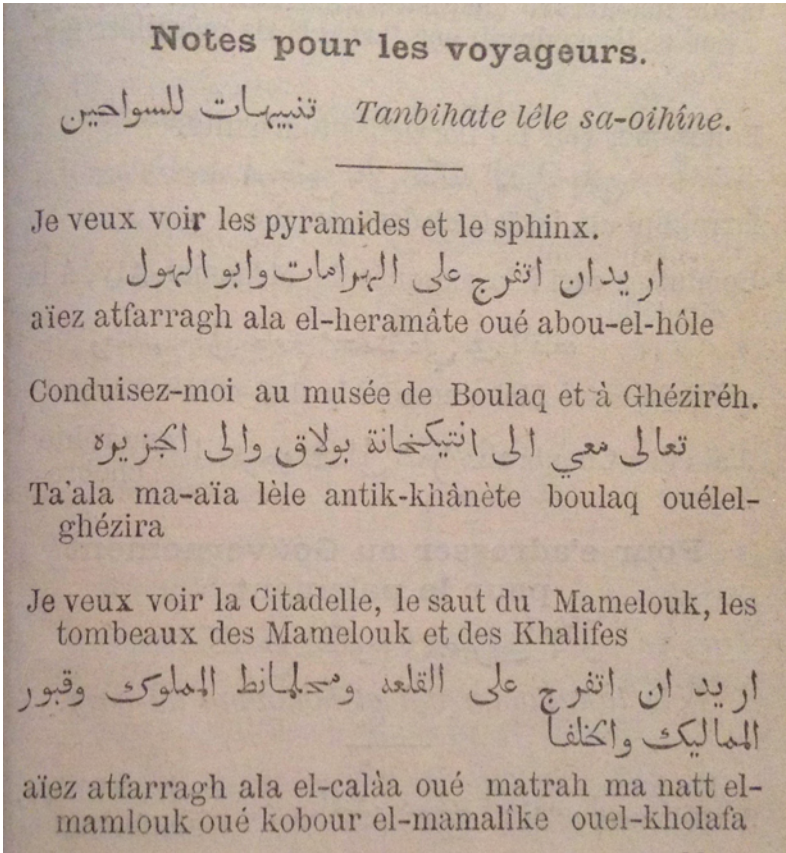
**Figure 3.6** 'Notes for Travellers' in Saleh's *Vocabulaire français-arabe* (1874), 273. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

the rule of the Khedive and British dominance in Egypt (Gendzier 1966; Louca 1970, 153–180; Moosa 1974; 'Awaḍ 1986, 68–72; Bagdadi 2010, 146–154; Fahmy 2011; Ettmüller 2012; Ettmueller 2013; Mestyán 2014), but my attention here is directed instead to Sanua as linguist and language teacher (for fuller discussion, see Mairs forthcoming-d).

Like many of the authors considered in this book, Sanua came to language teaching not out of an intellectual interest in pedagogy, but as a means to make ends meet. He taught languages throughout his life: as a young man returned from study in Italy to upper-class Egyptian families and at the École polytechnique; in the later 1870s, as a private teacher in his own home in Cairo; and after his political exile to Paris in 1878, once more to private clients at his residence. Given the regularity with which

he advertised his services as a language teacher, we should imagine that for much of this time teaching – not theatre or journalism – was his principal means of support.

In 1876, Sanua authored a 14-page booklet with the title *Petit Souvenir de James Sanua aux voyageurs européens en Égypte*. It appears to have been privately printed for Sanua by the printer and bookseller J. Barbier at Azbakiyya 'à côté du Café Passe' (Sanua 1876, title page). Under Sanua's name it reads 'Professeur de Langues et Auteur du Théâtre Arabe donne à domicile des Leçons particulières d'Arabe, d'Italien, d'Anglais et de Français' and gives his home address on the third floor of the Maison Bostros, opposite the bookshop of David Robertson (which was next to Shepheard's Hotel). Sanua's home life, theatrical activities, language teaching, publishing and interaction with tourists all took place around the Azbakiyya.

The book's brevity, the information given on the title page and its contents suggest that its principal purpose was to advertise Sanua's language lessons. Selling the book – if it was sold at all and not distributed for free – was a secondary consideration. Only a brief guide to pronunciation is offered, which omits most of the 'difficult' Arabic consonants for foreigners. 'HH' (*ḥāʾ* /ħ/) is described as 'fortement aspiré' and 'KH' (*khāʾ* /x/) as 'se prononcent comme ch allemand ... c'est-à-dire une forte aspiration du palais'. 'GG' (*ghayn* /ɣ/) is 'comme la lettre *gamma* grecque, qui a presque le son de l'r grasseyé des Marseillais'. *ʿAyn* /ʕ/ is represented by an apostrophe, and the reader is told that its 'son tout-à-fait guttural n'existe pas dans les langues Européennes'. *Hamza* /ʔ/ and the emphatic consonants are not mentioned. I read this in part as a deliberate strategy to encourage the reader to take Arabic lessons (with Sanua): it both makes the pronunciation seem easier than it is, and offers insufficient practical description, encouraging the reader to seek out a teacher. On the following page, we find a short notice that 'outre les langues qu'il enseigne, M. SANUA parle aussi, pour la commodité de ses élèves, l'Allemand, le Grec et l'Espagnol'. No explanation is given of grammar. The dialogues that follow are in colloquial Egyptian and are simple and practical: greetings, the time and numbers, days of the week, eating, drinking and shopping, travelling around Cairo ('Qui veut monter sur la pyramide / Min yarid yatl'el haram') and hiring a boat to sail up the Nile.

The final page of the phrasebook provides the most convincing evidence that this book was distributed as advertising, not sold ('Acceptez ce petit livre de sa part. / Ekbalou el keteb essogiar de men'andou': Sanua 1876, 14). The book concludes with encouragement to learn Arabic, and a statement that James Sanua can teach the reader to speak it in only a few

lessons, according to his own method. If we are to believe it and the figure is not inflated, Sanua had been using this method for 22 years, since his time in Italy as a teenager, although it does not say whether it is his method for learning languages or teaching them. As well as advertising for himself, Sanua was recommended as an Arabic teacher in the Baedeker guide (alongside Qadrī and Spitta; see Chapter 1; text quoted above), although since the first edition appeared in 1878, the year he left for Paris, the advertisement cannot have done him much good.

In 1878, Sanua went into exile in France because of his political activities. He arrived in Paris with letters of recommendation as a teacher: from a school where he had taught English for four years, from another where he had taught Italian and Arabic literature, and from hotels which certified that he had given useful lessons (presumably in Arabic) to travellers (Louca 1970, 156, drawing upon papers kept by Sanua's daughter). He seems to have been prevented from gaining steadier work at the École des langues orientales because of his political activism (Messaoudi 2015, 418). The newspapers Sanua edited in France contain frequent advertisements for his lessons; he offered results and a 'nouvelle méthode', and advertised times when he was at home to callers (see e.g. *Le Journal d'Abou Naddara*, 21 January 1891; see also Şannū' 1890, 14–15). A short polyglot play that he wrote in 1895, *Babel Hotel* (*Le Journal d'Abou Naddara*, 2 December 1895, unpaginated), also acts as publicity for his language teaching services, and concludes with an advertisement for his lessons.

## The age of the Veiled Protectorate

### Publications for Egypt

As tourism in Egypt increased further during the British 'Veiled Protectorate' from 1882 (a period when Britain effectively ruled a nominally independent Egypt through 'advisers'), a wealth of Arabic phrasebooks were issued by both European and Middle Eastern publishers, in a wider range of European languages – although Hartleben produced a self-instruction book for the international auxiliary language Volapük before they turned to Arabic. Some of these have already been discussed above, and represent European publishers expanding existing language book series to meet new markets in Middle Eastern travel (e.g. Hartmann 1881; Wied 1887). Self-instruction books aimed to allow a traveller to become 'his own Dragoman, and … not only add greatly to his knowledge, but enjoy his sojourn in the East with advantage and profit' (Hassam 1883, vi).

In works by Europeans, the contributions of native speakers of Arabic are commonly played down or obscured. Occasionally, as we have already seen with Finch-Hatton, an Arabic speaker is thanked briefly for their 'help', an example being the acknowledgement of one Faris Nadir by Wied (1887). Academic works are also commonly cited as sources of material, or as places for further study. Spitta Bey's *Grammatik des arabischen Vulgärdialectes von Aegypten* (Spitta 1880) is the most frequently referenced of these (for example, by Wied 1887).

By 1883, the preface to one language book was able to make the claim that faster modern communications had turned Egypt into 'une sorte de banlieue de l'Europe' (Vaujany and Radouan 1883/1884, no pagination; the book bears two different dates, 1883 and 1884). This is the *Vocabulaire français arabe* by Henry de Vaujany, revised by Moustapha-Bey Radouan. The preface was written by Antoine Mourès, the Cairo-based French publisher who also published Saleh 1874; the two books are very similar in size and format. Mourès was the director of the Būlāq Press, and the title page of the *Vocabulaire* states that Vaujany and Radouan both also held khedival appointments: Vaujany as 'Directeur des Études à l'École des Langues du Caire' and Radouan as 'Chef du Bureau de Traduction au Ministère de l'Instruction Publique'. Vaujany (1848–1893) was the author of several other books on Egypt, such as *Le Caire et ses environs* (1883). Radouan published books on law, grammar and rhetoric. Mourès (whose previous involvement with the publication of Saleh's phrasebook seems to have slipped his mind) asserts that tourists and other short-term visitors to Egypt are not well served by the academic works of Silvestre de Sacy, Bocthor, Marcel 'et autres orientalistes distingués'; hence the need for this book. Mourès and the authors are disingenuous in their claims that they are unaware of other colloquial Arabic phrasebooks, since the whole work is heavily plagiarised from Nolden 1844b. It has reworded and reordered portions, but its only real innovation is introducing Arabic script in the dictionary section.

A series which I have not yet mentioned, Manuali Hoepli, published in Milan, branched out in the 1880s from how-to manuals in a range of practical subjects and languages to include a colloquial Arabic book, by Rinaldo de Sterlich 'con la collaborazione di' Antonio Dib Khaddag (on the series, see Assirelli 1992). Sterlich was a prolific author under the pen name 'Fausto'; his output included an 1878 book about King Vittorio Emanuele of Italy, and a work on the Italian community of Cairo (Sterlich 1888). At the time of writing his Hoepli *Manuale di arabo volgare*, he had been resident in Cairo for at least a decade. Sterlich studied Arabic with 'mio egregio maestro Professor Dib Khaddag' for four years (Sterlich and

Dib Khaddag 1888, 5). Dib Khaggag was a teacher at the Italian school in Cairo. He appears as 'Antonio Kaddag' in the records of Cairo Masonic Lodge 'La Concordia' in 1869, aged 40, on the same page as James Sanua, whom he presumably knew, and a Nicola Sacroug, who may be a relation of Gabriel Sacroug.

Sterlich is scathing about existing Italian works for learning colloquial Arabic, although he does not mention them by name. There were only a few: Di Matelica 1868, published in Jerusalem for missionary use (see Chapter 2); the anonymous *La Lingua Araba imparata senza maestro. Grammatichetta Pratica per i Viaggiatori Italiani in Africa*, which is mostly grammar without much in the way of practical dialogues (Anonymous 1885); and Cesare Nahmias' *Manuale pratico di Italiano ed Arabo moderno, per uso dei viaggiatori italiani in Oriente* (Nahmias 1885). Nahmias was a scholar of Jewish history, and may have been connected in some way to the firm Nahmias and Modiano, who were engaged in a different aspect of the tourist trade in Egypt, selling 'Oriental curiosities' in Khan al-Khalili. (The Nahmias and Modiano families were both of Jewish origin from Salonica: several later members of the families are discussed by Meron 2011.) A work with a similar name published in 1912 by one Alessandro Nahmias may be a re-edition by Cesare Nahmias' son or another family member. Nahmias claims that his work has no literary pretensions 'ma bensì qualche cosa di praticamente utile per i Viaggiatori, affinchè, portandosi nelle lontane regioni dell'Oriente, non so trovino affatto stranieri alla lingua del paese' (Nahmias 1885, unpaginated Preface).

It is probably to the two 1885 Italian–Arabic works that Sterlich is referring when he mentions 'vari lavori si son pubblicati in Italia, da che si e manifestate una certa tendenza africanofila' (Sterlich and Dib Khaddag 1888, 7). This 'Africanophile tendency' is an oblique reference to the Italian occupation of Eritrea, and Italian Arabic works of this period are aimed at least in part at Italian soldiers in North-East Africa and the Red Sea region as well as at tourists. Even foreign newspapers noted the sudden Italian enthusiasm for learning Arabic in 1885, especially among soldiers. A correspondent in Rome described for a Jersey paper how 'the walls are placarded with announcements of "Courses of Arabic"; the bookshops are full of "guides" and "aids" and "vocabularies"; and "Arabic without a master, price one franc!" is advertised in all the daily papers' (*Jersey Weekly Press and Independent*, 2 May 1885, 2). Sterlich thought these works potentially useful for students working with a teacher, but useless to the point of being actively harmful if used by a student working independently. The *Jersey Weekly Press*'s correspondent was likewise

sceptical about the anonymous 1885 *La Lingua Araba imparata senza maestro*: 'I should like to live to behold the genius who should succeed in making himself understood on the shores of the Red Sea by its means.' Sterlich claims that without Dib Khaddag's involvement he would not have dared to publish his book, even though others had not hesitated to do so (Sterlich and Dib Khaddag 1888, 7). Although the book is aimed at Italians travelling to Egypt who do not have the time for more in-depth study of Arabic (Sterlich and Dib Khaddag 1888, 5), the hand of someone educated in the Arabic grammatical tradition is obvious: *ḍaraba* is used as the example verb. The work's two main innovations, as outlined in the preface and employed throughout the book, are in consistently providing the plural of nouns (which in Arabic is not obvious to a learner), and marking long and short vowels, which is of enormous help to someone reading transliterated Arabic. There are several nice touches, such as giving lists of Arabic personal names with Italian equivalents, and listing the 99 names of God.

## Tourism in the Maghreb and the Levant

The 1890s is a period of increasing geographical diversity in tourist phrasebooks for Arabic. Egypt, and to a lesser extent Palestine, was the first main focus of European tourism in the Arab world, but the same factors that encouraged tourism in Egypt – better transportation infrastructure, the arrival of package tour companies and European-style hotels and restaurants, ancient monuments, biblical associations and above all European colonial rule – brought mass tourism to other countries of the region as well. Although the bulk of French instruction books on the colloquial Arabic of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco are directed at soldiers and settlers, tourism increasingly features (e.g. in Frisch and David 1892).

French colonial rule did not just promote French tourism in North Africa, but also tourism from other European countries. Although many works were available for Algerian Arabic (mostly in French, but with exceptions such as Seifarth 1849), there was little at the disposal of tourists in Morocco. The English writer George Borrow (1803–1881), who spent several weeks in Tangier in 1839, compiled his own vocabulary of the local dialect of Arabic for personal use (Hopkins 2015). In 1860, Pedro María del Castillo y Olivas published a *Guía de la conversación mogharbi* (Castillo y Olivas 1860) plagiarised from Delaporte 1837 (Moscoso García 2012). José de Lerchundi's *Rudimentos del Árabe vulgar que se habla en el imperio de Marruecos* is concerned more with the grammar of the language than with phrases for practical communication (Lerchundi 1872).

James Meakin (1866–1906), who was the son of an English journalist in Morocco and had lived there since 1884, worked in a similar manner to Borrow when assembling his *Introduction to the Arabic of Morocco* (Meakin 1891). Aiming at 'meeting for others the need which I felt on my first coming to this country', he kept a notebook of words 'culled from the lips of the people' (Meakin 1891, iv). In the published book, he leaves spaces under the heading 'Supplementary Words' for readers to add their own vocabulary in the same way. Meakin states that he has published his work 'in the hope of supplying a long and much felt need of English visitors to, and settlers in, this country, who are desirous of becoming in some measure acquainted with its most important language' (Meakin 1891, 1). He was aware of Lerchundi's earlier work, but not apparently of others.

Meakin's advice to beginners echoes many of the similar passages in works discussed above, but also contains some new advice. He recommends practising pronunciation with a native speaker, preferably more than one. He emphasises the importance of learning vocabulary in context: forming a mental association between a word and its referent. He claims that the grammar included in the book has been condensed to its bare necessities – although it is still a lot compared to modern phrasebooks – and advises the user not to be too concerned about it, since the place of grammar 'for the student, as for the child, is after he is able to converse intelligibly' (Meakin 1891, 9). Like Wilkinson and Nolden before him, Meakin urges the learner not to be embarrassed about practising with native speakers: 'Far from ridiculing the mistakes of a beginner, the Moors are always pleased to help anyone to learn their language, and take it as a compliment that foreigners should trouble to do so' (Meakin 1891, 9). Meakin's work, while directed at English-speaking travellers in Morocco, also shows the lasting legacy of missionary practice on English works on Arabic (Chapter 2), since he thanks William Summers of the North African Mission for his assistance with the manuscript and proofs, and suggests that students practise reading Arabic from copies of the Gospels, which he says are readily available and cheap and have vowelled script and clear type.

More phrasebooks for Syria and Palestine, too, appear from the 1890s (see also below on Seidel 1894b). Joseph Harfouch (1847–1921), a professor at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, published two complementary books in 1893–1894. The first, *Le premier livre de l'arabisant ou méthodique courte et facile pour apprendre à lire l'arabe sans professeur et en peu de temps* is a self-instruction textbook for standard literary Arabic by a 'méthode court et facile', presented in transliteration (Harfouch 1893). It is much simpler and more accessible than many of the Arabic

grammar books considered here. The second, *Le drogman arabe*, is a tourist phrasebook, which both borrows the dragoman metaphor for its title and offers practical recommendations on how to actually hire one, among his other references to the 'besoins réels des étrangers' (Harfouch 1894, viii; Mairs and Muratov 2015, 37–40; Figure 3.7). Here, as elsewhere in the book, Harfouch shows an awareness of the practicalities and rituals of tourism, such as asking a dragoman to show his letters of reference from other travellers (on dragoman testimonials, see further Mairs 2016). The book, despite being more than 350 pages long, is small and compact; practical phrases take up well over half of its overall length. The dialect used is Syrian, with Egyptian equivalents sometimes supplied in brackets. Harfouch comments that 'Les étrangers, attirés dans notre pays par une large et cordiale hospitalité, n'ont pas ordinairement le temps d'étudier à fond la belle mais difficile langue arabe' (Harfouch 1894, v). He does not believe a work as detailed as this already exists for Syrian Arabic (and he is correct in this). He believes the work's 'unique selling points' are its relatively literal translation of Arabic terms (allowing the user to understand the Arabic phrase better) and his inclusion of useful terms for a traveller which are not commonly found in Arabic dictionaries, such as the names of Mediterranean fish (Harfouch 1894, viii–ix). A rather grumpy English review in the *Athenaeum* (8 June 1895, 735) was unable to find anything to object to in Harfouch's two books other than that the French-style transliteration of Arabic 'grates inharmoniously upon an English ear'.



**Figure 3.7** Dialogues with a seller of Oriental curiosities and a dragoman (Harfouch 1894, 299 and 237). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

## German-language works

By this period, it was increasingly difficult for Arabic instruction book authors to claim that their product was in any way novel. Karl Haggenmacher (1847–1910) opens his *Grammatik des Agyptisch-arabischen Vulgärdialektes* by expressing his hesitancy at publishing it at all. This seems to be more than mere modesty, since he states that he burnt a previous version of the book when the first pages had already been printed (Haggenmacher 1892, vii). It is a pity that little biographical information is available on Haggenmacher, who came from a large and prominent family from Winterthur in Switzerland (Wegmann 1957). It seems that he spent many years in Cairo some time before the publication of his grammar: Heinrich Suter, a professor at the Zürich Gymnasium, thanked him in an article of 1893 for his assistance with some Arabic terms, referring to Haggenmacher's 'langjährige[r] Aufenthalt in Kairo' (*Zeitschrift fur Mathematik und Physik* 38, 1893, 3). From a death notice, it can be gleaned that Haggenmacher taught at the Handelsschule in Zürich (*Zürcherische Freitagszeitung*, 14 January 1910, 3). It may be that, like Anton Hassan in Vienna some decades earlier, he taught Arabic to trade school students. It would be especially useful to know how long Haggenmacher spent in Egypt, and under what circumstances, because his book shows such an awareness of the realia of learning colloquial Arabic. Although he was aware that, by 1892, the Arabic instruction book market was becoming a crowded one, he states that he has been encouraged to publish it by the many Germans, Austrians and Swiss resident in Egypt, who found some books (such as Spitta's) too academic, and others either too lax in their grammatical explanations or better suited to Syria.

Like many before him, Haggenmacher claims that his own book is practical and based on the method he has himself used successfully in Arabic lessons (whether as a teacher or student, he does not say). He insists that a teacher or helper who knows both Arabic and a European language is essential for success. Throughout the book, he gives occasional instructions to consult a competent speaker of Arabic for help, especially with pronunciation. Towards the end of the book, Haggenmacher gives some practical dialogues, including banter with a donkey-driver who insists that his donkey goes as fast as a locomotive.

Adolf Dirr (1867–1930), whose book in the Hartleben series *Die Kunst der Polyglottie* was mentioned above, was likewise in no position to claim that his work was novel, although his book conforms more to the standard model of the language instruction book than

does Haggenmacher's. He noted in 1893 that 'Es fehlt gewiss nicht an Hilfsmitteln zur Erlernung des Vulgär-Arabischen und speziell des egyptischen Dialekts' (Dirr 1893, v). Given the large number of grammars, phrasebooks and vocabularies for colloquial Arabic, many of which he names, Dirr feels the need to justify why he has undertaken yet another. Dirr claims that he is adding to their number to provide the non-philologist with a book which presupposes no knowledge of Classical Arabic and reduces the difficulties of the language for speakers of Indo-European languages as much as possible. The book is intended to be practical (a common refrain) and he recommends that the student learn pronunciation from a native speaker. Dirr encourages the learner by saying that in his view Russian and Hungarian are much more difficult to learn than Arabic, and that if the learner has the good fortune to visit an Arabic-speaking country, they will make rapid progress. In an interesting contrast to Wilkinson, Nolden and Meakin, Dirr warns that native speakers look down on the Arabic spoken by Europeans and Copts: he knows this from reading Spitta, but also from personal experience (Dirr 1893, vii).

Dirr's book concentrates on grammar–translation, with only a short list of phrases at the end, covering such topics as greetings, health and the weather. He refers the reader to the phrasebooks of Probst and Hartmann. Dirr (interestingly, like Letellier) became a specialist in the languages of the Caucasus. Arabic was not his main focus; the year after his Arabic book, he published another in the same Hartleben series on Annamite (Vietnamese). What authority he lacks as an Arabist he makes up for as a practised language learner, familiar with being in the position of his book's readership. His book reached new audiences in 1904, when it was translated from German into English by William Hearle Lyall (1826–1900) expressly 'for the use of tourists' (Dirr and Lyall 1904).

Other Hartleben authors were in a similar position to Dirr. Boris Manassewitsch (about whom I have been unable to find any further information) contributed books to the Hartleben series on Polish, Russian and Hebrew, in addition to his Arabic work for self-instruction (Manassewitsch 1895). August Seidel (1863–1916) was a specialist in African and Asian languages who also contributed the volumes on Swahili and Japanese to Die Kunst der Polyglottie (both 1890; on his work on Dualla, see Constantine 2013). Seidel was General Secretary of the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft in Berlin from December 1889 to December 1903. None of his many language books seems to have been written 'in the field', but some show evidence that he did consult with native speakers in Germany. Seidel's works are second-hand. In the view of Antony Grant, primarily discussing his work for Urdu, 'the linguistic quality of these

works is variable but the least good are not dreadful and the best of the books are excellent' (Grant 2018, 93).

Seidel's two works on colloquial Arabic both appeared in 1894, and show evidence of the same process of composition he employed for other languages. His work on the Egyptian dialect (Seidel 1894a) is directed explicitly at travellers, and Seidel – like so many other authors – lists some of the many previous works on colloquial Arabic and justifies his publication of yet another on the grounds that it is 'practical'. He contrasts his own work to the more theoretical work of Spitta Bey ('ein streng wissenschaftliches Buch'), yet by page six of the text he is listing the forms of the verb *fa'ala* – hardly the easiest route to practical communication. *Fa'ala* 'to do, act' is commonly used as the example verb in modern works on Arabic grammar, but the disadvantage for learners is that it contains the consonant *'ayn* /ʕ/, which many find the most difficult to pronounce. Another less than user-friendly feature for the beginner is his listing of vocabulary by Arabic root. Seidel acknowledges that most of the grammatical examples are taken from works such as Spitta, as well as Vollers 1890, Probst 1892, Hartmann 1881 and al-Ṭanṭāwī 1848. Because of its derivative nature, Seidel's work reproduces the grammar–translation method employed in such works. Seidel's second book, on Syrian Arabic (Seidel 1894b), is very similar to his first, but with some material abbreviated or omitted to fit it into the format of the Hartleben series. It is dedicated to Martin Hartmann, and as well as the works already consulted for his Egyptian book, Seidel acknowledges Heury 1867, Harfouch 1894 and Hartmann's role as corrector of the manuscript. An annotation on the digitised copy on MENAdoc, by Caspar René Gregory writing in Jerusalem on 2 July 1906, indicates one user's difficulty with the book's lack of geographical specificity other than 'Syrian': 'dieses Buch muss beirut-isch sein'.

Other works that jumped on the bandwagon of Hartleben and similar series were less successful in cobbling together an accurate and usable phrasebook from the resources available to them in Europe. A good example is Friedrich Probst's *Arabischer Sprachführer in ägyptischem Dialect* (I have only been able to consult the second edition, Probst 1892). Probst had been a student of Adolf Wahrmund (see above) at the Kaiserlich-königliche Orientalische Akademie in Vienna; he was probably too young to have also been taught by Anton Hassan. Probst's book was reviewed by Karl Vollers, author of a well-respected *Lehrbuch der aegypto-arabischen Umgangssprache* (Vollers 1890) which was often used as a resource by authors of less academic phrasebooks (Vollers in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 6, 1892, 166–173). Vollers considers that Probst's book rises above the mediocrity of the many recent

works produced for the colonial market in England and Italy, but that the author has been bold to publish such a work when he does not know the 'Orient' from his own experience and has only been able to consult with Egyptians here and there. This is why there are so many problems with the book's representation of Arabic pronunciation. Many pages of criticism of individual words and phrases follow, as well as of conversations which are not adapted to actual conditions in Egypt, describing, for example, typical weather in Germany. Most damning, Vollers recognises that Probst has taken his vocabulary from his own book.

As Vollers pointed out, it is difficult to produce a successful work for learning conversational, colloquial language without having spent time in a country where it is spoken. This lack of practical experience could derail the best intentions. Another 'method' adapted to colloquial Arabic was the Gaspey-Otto-Sauer Method, published by the Julius Groos Verlag in Heidelberg, which followed a familiar grammar–translation format. The Groos firm, operated for much of the relevant period by the Wolff family (Kemmler and Corvo Sánchez 2020, 122–125), published its first 'conversation grammars' of English and French in 1851. Ernst Harder (1854–1927), brother-in-law and student of Martin Hartmann, contributed *Methode Gaspey-Otto-Sauer: Arabische Konversations-Grammatik* to Groos' series in 1898, with an introduction by Hartmann. Harder was a teacher of Spanish and Portuguese, and does not seem to have travelled in the Middle East or North Africa. Duncan Black Macdonald, of Hartford Theological Seminary, praised Harder's application of the Gaspey-Otto-Sauer Method to Arabic:

> At last we have an elementary Arabic grammar which follows a rational method. The writers of such books seem to find it strangely hard to accept the simple principles which must govern the learning of a language. The fact that it is a matter of memory almost purely, and a very mechanical memory – indeed, the more mechanical the better – at that, wins its way slowly. Yet it is one of the open secrets of language teaching; every teacher who knows anything at all, and who does not simply follow a blind round of rules and tables, knows that on exercises and drill in them he must depend for success.
>
> (Macdonald 1899, 251)

The one problem with the book was that 'there is no conversation in it. That follows from the nature of the idiom which it gives; no one converses in it but a stranger or a pedant' (Macdonald 1899, 252). Harder may have succeeded, in the view of at least one Arabist, in producing a successful

book for self-instruction, but the register of formal literary Arabic he had chosen made it impossible for the book to fulfil its series' central purpose of helping people speak the language.

This was remedied in a later Groos/Gaspey-Otto-Sauer book for colloquial Arabic, *Der neue Reisebegleiter Aegyptisch-Arabisch*. The author's name on the cover is Motti, but inside the book it is stated that the Arabic part was written by Harder, 'der alle Sätze mit dem arabischen scheikh Ali Ahmed Al-Enani aus Kairo durchgesprochen hat' (Motti 1912, inside front cover). The consultation with the Cairene shaykh (whom I have not been able to identify further) and new format of the book may be a response to reviews such as Macdonald's. Pietro Motti was the author of phrasebooks in many languages for Groos, and it seems to be his model which has been adapted to Arabic with material supplied by Harder and Al-Enani. But it may be that another, French–Arabic, work lies uncredited behind some of the book, since 'Sprechen sie Deutsch?' is rendered 'titkal'lam bilfransāwi?', 'do you speak French?' (Motti 1912, 8). Compared to Harder's earlier, more grammatical work, this is a phrasebook adapted to a traveller's needs, including up-to-date subjects for tourists such as photography.

## Practicalities and innovations

The Groos/Gaspey-Otto-Sauer idea of the 'conversation grammar' was later adopted by Macdonald's former student, the missionary W. H. T. Gairdner, for his 1917 *Egyptian Colloquial Arabic: A Conversation Grammar* (Gairdner and Sallām 1917; 1926, revised and mostly rewritten edition). Gairdner (1873–1928) worked for the Church Missionary Society in Cairo and was 'assisted' in his book by Sheikh Kurayyim Sallām. Four years' experience allowed him to see 'what was, and what was not, important in teaching Arabic to adults' (Gairdner and Sallām 1917, xi). As usual, Gairdner notes the number of existing Arabic instruction books:

> This being so, it is incumbent on the newcomer to justify his entrance into that field, by indicating the special need which he is attempting to meet. That need in the present case can be summed up by the word *presentation*. It seemed to the writer that an effort should be made to apply to Egyptian Arabic some of the modern methods now used in teaching living languages; that a book needed to be compiled which should have constantly in view the *ensemble* of teacher-and-pupil, and the oral conversational work in which they are supposed to be engaged.
>
> (Gairdner and Sallām 1917, xi)

Modern the book certainly is: it uses the International Phonetic Alphabet, has a phonemic chart of the Arabic sounds, and uses linguistic terminology (e.g. 'plosive'). As a work for someone who has committed to thorough study of Arabic, it is successful, but it would really not have been suitable for casual use by tourists.

Works such as those (predominantly German) books I have just discussed, which suffered from the authors' lack of first-hand familiarity with spoken Arabic, were not well received by tourists and residents in the Arab world who tried to use them. I have included them in this chapter on tourism precisely because so many did try. Frederick Ewart Robertson (1847–1912), a railway engineer who spent most of his career in India before moving to Egypt as President of the Egyptian Railway Board in 1897, consulted a number of the existing works on colloquial Egyptian Arabic, but found them all lacking; this was his justification for offering his own:

> It may seem extraordinary that one who is not a scholar in a language should attempt to write a vocabulary of it but in this case there is a reason. The writer, desiring to learn colloquial Arabic for use in Egypt, purchased, one after another, five books, none of which answered the purpose. Some were too classical and Syrian, using words and forms that are not intelligible in Egypt, in others the English was unintelligible. There may be a suitable book, but this writer has not been able to hear of it. He therefore got an educated Egyptian who knew Arabic, classical as well as colloquial, English, and French, and subjected him to a cross-examination on the points that one wants to know in learning a language; and, having written them down for his own use, thought that, if printed, the book would be useful to the constantly increasing numbers who visit Egypt.
>
> (Robertson and Ayrût 1898, 3)

It appears that Robertson (who seems to have been sole author of the book's introductory pages) was familiar with the notorious Portuguese–English phrasebook *English As She Is Spoke* and contemporary satire of phrasebooks (Fonseca and Carolino, ed. Millington, 1884; Monteiro 2004), since he uses the same phraseology (Robertson and Ayrût 1898, 4: 'Some sounds, indeed, as the gutturals, are scarcely attainable by the European, and a sore throat will be found an advantage in pronouncing "Arabic as she is spoke" among the vulgar').

The 'educated Egyptian' with whom Robertson collaborated was his secretary at the Egyptian Railway Board, Lûtfi Yûssef Ayrût. Tellingly,

Ayrût is credited on the title page, but not the cover of the book. The book is essentially an English–Arabic vocabulary, with a short grammar section. There are very few phrases, although the authors add some blank pages with the heading 'Useful Phrases' for the user to add their own, with the same expectation that the book is to be constantly added to that we have seen in other books. In Robertson's view, 'a few cuss words are always useful' (Robertson and Ayrût 1898, 27). He intends this as 'a book to be carried about', the scope of which 'is strictly limited to providing the easiest means of learning enough of the colloquial language to be able to get about in Egypt' (Robertson and Ayrût 1898, 4).

Into the twentieth century, phrasebooks continued to combine plagiarism with modest innovation. In 1900, Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938), a scholar of Classical Arabic, produced what was billed on the title page as a new edition of Sterlich and Dib Khaddag 1888 in the series Manuali Hoepli. In the preface, Nallino claims instead to have started from scratch and prepared a new book, although this involved 'in parte non piccola, un plagio dei dialoghi di Cadri Bey' (Nallino 1900, iii). Nallino is sensitive to variations in Arabic dialects and to the difference between the standard literary language and the colloquial, comparing it to the situation in Italy with the educated standard and regional spoken dialects. The first section of the book is a grammar of colloquial Egyptian, with dialogues on pages 99–164, covering a comprehensive range of situations with which a traveller would be faced. It seems likely that Nallino's knowledge of colloquial Egyptian dates back to the time he spent in Cairo in 1894–1896.[6] After the book's publication, he was invited by Fuad I to teach at the university in Cairo, where one of his students was Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, but he had to leave after only three years because of the Italo-Turkish War of 1911–1912. Nallino was complimented in an Egyptian newspaper for lecturing in Arabic (presumably *fuṣḥā*) as though it were his native language (Messaoudi 2015, Annexes, 361; Reid 1987, 51, 61).

Michel Bey Saleh Chagavat's *Vocabulaire français-italien-arabe* is most commonly dated in library catalogues to 'circa 1900', although a copy in the National Library of Israel is inscribed by Chagavat himself to Arab nationalist Negib Azoury, with a date of 22 December 1914, suggesting that its publication may have been later. It was printed by Emin Hindié, who also published his translation of a French history of the caliphs in the 1910s. This was the author's second such book, the first (for French and Arabic only) having been published in 1874 (Saleh 1874; see above). Chagavat (Nakhla Ṣāliḥ Shaghawāt) is billed on the title page as a former senior official in the Public Works Department. He claims that his book is the most complete vocabulary published to date, with almost ten

thousand words (Chagavat *c*.1900, unpaginated) – referring, naturally, to tourist vocabularies rather than dictionaries such as Lane's or Badger's. He follows a four-column layout, with (from left to right) French, literary Arabic in Arabic script, Italian and colloquial Egyptian Arabic in Latin script. The first two parts of the book (pp. 5–304) cover nouns, adjectives, verbs and pronouns. The third part (pp. 305–319) is a section of 'Phrases familières / Gomal saïera' which includes an essential tourist itinerary of Cairo: 'Avez-vous vu les pyramides, le Sphinx, Gheziréh, le musée, le citadelle, les tombeaux des khalifes, les tombeaux des mamelouks, l'arbre de la Vierge, l'obélisque, les derwiches tournants, Héliopolis, les bazars de la ville et les couvents du Vieux-Caire?' (Chagavat *c*.1900, 317–318). This is similar to the basic tour outlined in earlier phrasebooks, including his own, but Chagavat brings it into the twentieth century with mention of the Heliopolis tram. He engages in minimal self-plagiarism.

## The twentieth century

Tourist Arabic phrasebooks for Egypt continued in the 1900s to be more common than for other regions, because it received the bulk of the region's tourist traffic. Frederick Edward Crow wrote a 'colloquial handbook in the Syrian dialect for the use of visitors to Syria and Palestine' in Luzac's series of Oriental Grammars. Crow had been British Vice-Consul at Tehran and Beirut and was later Consul at Basra. He wrote his handbook in Damascus and its dialogues are in the Damascene dialect. His motivations for writing a language instruction book are typical. He hopes that:

> the present work will supply a want, which has long been felt by those, who, for purposes of business or recreation, have been led to visit Syria and Palestine. The extensive scope of English and American missionary development, and the yearly increase in the influx of tourists to this country may, perhaps, render both useful and acceptable any means, which facilitate the acquisition of colloquial Arabic. This manual has no classical pretensions and is, by no means exhaustive. It is intended, merely, as a practical guide to the spoken language, which may serve to enable those, who wish to deal directly with the natives, to do so, without being obliged to have recourse to the medium of an interpreter.
>
> (Crow 1901, v)

Crow thanks several residents of Beirut and Damascus for their assistance, including Dr Wortabet, who worked with American missionaries in

Lebanon. Occasions covered by the dialogues include hiring a dragoman, visiting a shop of curiosities, travelling across the desert to Palmyra, and hunting gazelle. Phrases include 'I want to find a family with whom I can pass the winter in order to learn Arabic' (Crow 1901, 322): as we have seen, a common strategy of missionaries and other longer-term foreign residents in Syria-Lebanon (Chapter 2).

In the early 1900s, the number of European languages for which there are colloquial Arabic instruction books increases. A Portuguese conversation guide for travellers and merchants was published posthumously by Jose Pereira Leite Netto, an employee of the municipal library in Porto and teacher of Portuguese, French, Latin and Arabic (Leite Netto 1902). Leite Netto died in 1883 aged 45, and 20 years later his book, the manuscript of which had been kept by his widow, was published. During his lifetime, Neite Letto had published a catalogue of Arab coins in the Porto museum and an Arabic translation of part of Camões' *Lusiads*. The diplomat José de Esaguy (1899–1944) produced another Portuguese–Arabic vocabulary, principally intended for use in Morocco, in 1935 (Esaguy 1935).

The Armenian historian Mélik Serge David-Bey (1870–1938), who also wrote under the name Serge d'Herminy, published phrasebooks for various languages, including the undated *La langue arabe en 30 leçons, suivie d'un Manuel de conversation courante appliquée aux règles* (David-Bey *c*.1910–1920). The language is fairly literary, with linguistic features and contents of the dialogues showing that it was intended for use in Algeria. During the First World War, he adapted some of his earlier touristic phrasebooks for use by soldiers.

Missionaries continued to produce works intended both for missionary purposes (whether this was proselytisation, education, medical practice or simply taking care of everyday matters) and for wider use by travellers. Gabriele Maria da Aleppo, a Syrian Capuchin monk in Sicily, published an Italian–Arabic dictionary (Aleppo 1878) and, with his pupil G. M. Calvaruso, a self-instruction book entitled *La lingua araba senza maestro* (Aleppo and Calvaruso 1912). The two had previously collaborated on a 1910 study of Arabic elements in the Sicilian dialect of Italian. The immediate impetus for the book came from recent Italian commercial and colonial interests in Libya, and a lack among the many Arabic grammars available in Europe of anything simple, modern and reasonably priced in Italian (Aleppo and Calvaruso 1912, 4–5). The book is a typical grammar with written exercises. The Egyptian scholar Muḥammad ʿAbduh met Gabriele Maria da Aleppo in Palermo in 1902. ʿAbduh had faced numerous linguistic difficulties during his travels in Europe.

Although he had always been told that French functioned as a lingua franca, he found that it did not get him very far either in Sicilian libraries or at the Grosvenor Hotel in London. English and American tourism meant that English was better understood in France than French was in England. From his experiences, 'Abduh thought that a year of a potential traveller's time and teacher's fees was a good investment in preparation for foreign travel ('Abduh 1993, Volume II, 183–186). 'Abduh discussed with Gabriele da Aleppo his methods of explaining Arabic grammar to Italian speakers, and observed him teaching, noting that his students progressed well with reading Arabic, but lacked practice in speaking and listening ('Abduh 1993, Volume II, 178).

Another 'missionary' Arabic instruction book was that of Robert Sterling (1859–1917), a British medical missionary in Gaza. *Arabic and English Idiom: Conversational and Literary* (Sterling 1912), published in Jerusalem, is a companion to Sterling's earlier grammar of the language (Sterling 1904). It is a self-contradictory book. Sterling, who had experience as a teacher and examiner of Arabic, claims that the language employed is 'that in every day use in conversation, in newspapers, and in standard works; moreover the sentences and expressions are to a very large extent of a conversational nature' (Sterling 1912, vii). Sterling gives some good advice: the student should memorise key phrases, and no system of transliteration is capable of accurately representing the sound of Arabic (Sterling 1912, ix). The latter is true enough, but Sterling's decision on this basis not to offer any transliteration at all is not helpful to the beginning student. Sterling thought that the best route to the colloquial was through the Classical and 'once the correct form of expression has been acquired, it is an easy matter to glide into the looser forms of speech characteristic of the spoken language' (Sterling 1912, x). This is still a commonly encountered sentiment – that students should start with *fuṣḥā* before the colloquial, because it is easier to neglect grammatical rules than to learn to apply new ones – but it is based on an erroneous premise. The dialects are not just simplified or 'corrupt' versions of literary Arabic, but are sophisticated idioms with their own rules and structures, and sometimes influence from other languages (e.g. Berber, Coptic, Aramaic, Turkish). The resulting book is very heavy on grammar – Sterling even uses case endings, which are rarely used even in formal Arabic when spoken – and lacks any dictionary or phrases. Sterling thanks Muallim Habeeb Al Chury, 'particularly in the elucidation of idiomatic difficulties and in the final revision of the work' (Sterling 1912, x). In all, someone purchasing this book because of the word 'conversational' in the title would have been disappointed.

This precise scenario is addressed in a near-contemporary work, Paul Baur and Abdesselam Aboubekr's *Mon Interprète* (Baur and Aboubekr 1913). Baur was a French colonial official in Oran in Algeria, and Aboubekr (1876–?) was a professor of law at the Madrasa of Tlemcen and author of a number of works in French on Islamic law (Messaoudi in Renucci 2012, 28–32). Baur and Aboubekr contrast the quick disillusionment of the new arrival in Algeria who has bought an Arabic grammar with the success of the immigrant who learns Arabic through speaking to locals:

> The first book that a newly-landed Frenchman nearly always buys is an Arabic grammar. He applies himself to study and after a longer or shorter period of time has elapsed ... abandons the exercises, which he has found too difficult. A foreign immigrant, however, makes rapid progress: soon he is able to converse with locals. The former has studied from books, the latter has learned *by practice*.
>
> (Baur and Aboubekr 1913, 1)

Ironically, my 1913 copy of the book is in mint condition. Baur and Aboubekr, like Sterling, give good advice, but unlike Sterling they actually apply it. They advise that the best method is to learn by heart quite a large number of phrases for all occasions, and only then focus on grammar. For pronunciation 'le concours d'un indigène lui serait utile pour surmonter ces premières difficultés' (Baur and Aboubekr 1913, 1). Much of the book is composed of dialogues for administrative and military use, allowing French officials to communicate with Algerians in various circumstances without an interpreter. The book would have been of less use to a tourist, but still – despite its dominant subject matter – more useful than Sterling's.

Books from 'series' and 'methods' were increasingly better adapted to local conditions during the 1910s. The architect Ernst Klippel (1872–1953), who worked for the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe in Cairo and on other projects in Palestine and Egypt, produced a new version of Wied 1887 in the Koch's Sprachführer series. The title page advertises that the book was on sale at F. Diemer's bookshop in Cairo 'Unter Shepheards Hotel'. Diemer's shop is visible in contemporary photographs of Shepheard's (e.g. the 1906 postcard reproduced in Ibrahim 2019, 34, Fig. 17). Klippel used the previous edition of *Betitkállim bil-árabi?* as a model, but wished to put greater emphasis on the practical aspects of language use and the modern speech of the Egyptian people. He hoped that it would enable travellers in Egypt to maintain their independence and dispense with the expensive (and not always reliable) services of an interpreter or dragoman. The order of the book has been changed to

start with the traveller's immediate needs on arriving in Egypt (such as dealing with porters and getting the train from Alexandria to Cairo) before moving on to greetings and so forth.

As noted earlier, the MeTouLa Sprachführer series brought out new books for Syria (Lammeyer and Darian 1913) and Egypt (Vavrina 1916) in the 1910s. I have not been able to find much information about any of the authors, other than that Lammeyer (1870–?) was engaged in Egyptological research and wrote a work on the victory monument of Sheshonk at Karnak. In contrast to earlier practices, where publishers recruited scholars in Europe with little or no direct experience of colloquial spoken Arabic to assemble or translate their instruction books, it seems that by the 1910s a different practice prevailed: engaging Europeans resident in the Middle East to complete a phrasebook according to a set template, from their own knowledge or sources of knowledge on colloquial Arabic. The 1910s MeTouLa guides contain an interesting new section, 'Regeln für den Verkehr mit den Eingeborenen' (Lammeyer and Darian 1913, 33–34), which advises on (perceived) differences in habits and world views between Europeans and Arabs. The topics covered include customs such as giving *bakhshīsh* ('tips'), traditions of hospitality and formulaic greetings.

Civilian tourism in the Middle East was disrupted by the First World War, but a new type of tourist – the soldier on leave – emerged as a customer for tourist businesses, especially in Cairo and Alexandria. The experience of the 'soldier tourist' will be considered in Chapters 4 and 5. Earlier tourist phrasebooks and self-instruction books, of course, continued to be used by soldiers, and might be issued in new editions especially for the military market. This is the case, for example, with Naguib El-Mandarawi (1890–?) and his *Méthode ultra … à l'usage des étrangers installés ou de passage en Orient* (Mandarawi 1930s?), which was reissued in English versions during the Second World War.

The 1920s and 1930s were decades of peak tourism in Egypt and the Middle East, now further supported by technology such as the motor car and – for some – even air travel. There were relatively few new tourist Arabic phrasebooks produced in this period, perhaps because earlier works, especially the many new ones issued during the war, made them redundant. In 1926, for example, an article in the British illustrated newspaper *The Sphere* described the experiences of the novelist Tennyson Jesse on her travels in Egypt in using an Arabic phrasebook that is identifiable from the phrases quoted as Alec Cury's wartime *Arabic Without a Teacher* (Khoori 1915; Chapter 5). Existing self-instruction books were commonly advertised in foreign-language newspapers in Egypt, such as the tourist-oriented *The Sphinx*, published in Cairo from around the 1890s to

the early 1940s. Marlborough's Self-Taught series was heavily advertised in the paper from the 1900s through into the 1920s: not just the various editions of the Marlborough works for Syrian and Egyptian Arabic, but equally frequently works in the series for French, Italian, Greek, Turkish and even Esperanto (Figure 3.8; readers curious about the ancient language of Egypt might even find a teacher for Ancient Egyptian). For a short period in the mid-1900s, *The Sphinx* included its own short list of Arabic vocabulary on its regular page of 'Information for Visitors' (Figure 3.9), which also included the times of church services, times of trains and trams, and addresses of banks and post offices. This did not last long.

Numerous articles and mentions in *The Sphinx*, nevertheless, presuppose some curiosity about or exposure to Arabic on the part of its readership. It carried a review of Spiro Bey's Arabic–English Dictionary (No. 506, 14 April 1923, 699; the same issue had an advertisement for Hassam and Odeh 1915, fifth edition). In 1923 a series of limericks appeared in the paper which included passages in Egyptian Arabic (for example: 'A "fellah" of Gurnet Murrai/To Paris once went as a "sai"./



**Figure 3.8** Marlborough's Self-Taught Series, as advertised in *The Sphinx*, No. 239, 26 December 1908, 13. Public domain. Available at https://bit.ly/3Cm8quo

# ARABIC VOCABULARY.

## WSEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

| | |
|---|---|
| Good morning | Neharak said. |
| Good evening | Leltak saidah. |
| Bring | Hat. Gib. |
| Show me | Warræeni |
| Give me | Iddeeni |
| Be quick | Igri. |
| Be quiet ! | Iskut ! |
| Go away ! | Imshi ! |
| Go, go on | Rooh, yallah. |
| I want | Ana auz. |
| I do not want | Moosh auz. |
| If I want anything I will tell you | Izakan auz haga, ana 'oolak. |
| What do you want ? | Awz eh ? |
| Come here. | Taala hena |
| What is the time ? | Es saa kam ? |
| Open the door, the window | Iftah el bab, esh shibbak. |
| Shut. | Ikfil. |
| Listen to me. | Esma. |
| How much is this ? | Kam di ? |
| It is too dear | Ghali, awi. |
| I have no money | Ma andeesh feloos. |
| Never mind | Malaish. |
| When ? (interrogative) | Emta ? |
| When | Lamma. |

## IN A CARRIAGE

| | |
|---|---|
| Carriage | Arabeah. |
| Are you disengaged driver ? | Inta fadi ya arbagi ? |
| Drive on. | Soog. |
| Straight | Doghri |
| To the right | Yemeenak. |
| To the left | Shemaalak. |
| Turn round | Dawar. |
| Stop | Erboot. |
| Go to the station, hotel. | Rooh fil mahattah, locanda. |
| I will not give you any more | Ana ma deelaksh kaman. |
| Do not hit your horse | Ma tidrapsh el hosanak. |
| Put the hood down | Nazzil el capoot. |
| Put the hood up | Tal-la el capoot. |

N. B.   The general rule for the pronunciation of Arabic word is to place the accent on the penultimate syllable.

**Figure 3.9** 'Arabic Vocabulary', *The Sphinx*, No. 182, 2 December 1905, 24. Public domain. Available at https://bit.ly/43xtdXy

When they asked "was it nice?"/He said "aiwa, qwais!/Lakin ahsan el balad betai'": No. 516, 23 June 1923, 8; the final phrase means 'Yes, good! But my own country is better'). A satirical column on 'Arabic Made Easy' offered phrases such as '*Antika*: Egypt's largest re-export' (Figure 3.10).

As ever, phrasebook authors continued to have to justify their entrance into a crowded market, with less and less credibility. Georges Hug and Guirguis Habachi, for example, argued that with their 1928 manual of Egyptian Arabic, 'nous avons cru combler une lacune et répondre à une nécessité':

> There is no practical conversation manual for colloquial Arabic – at least in French. Those that can be found in bookshops are thick 'handbücher' composed by European Orientalists, or else simple leaflets drawn up by Egyptians, and contain only a short list of English words translated into Arabic.
>
> (Hug, Avant-Propos, in Hug and Habachi 1928, i)

Hug and Habachi were both teachers in Cairo (on Hug's work on the rural geography of Egypt, see El Shakry 2007, 109–110). They make reasonable points: most works for Egyptian Arabic were indeed either simple word lists or Orientalist 'handbooks', but there were plenty of books, as we have already seen, that steered a middle course. Hug (in French) and Habachi (in French and Arabic) each contributed their own preface, outlining their aims in the book: to offer tourists 'les mots nécessaires pour se faire comprendre des guides, des vendeurs de la rue, des petits boutiquiers' and to offer a guide to the spoken language without the off-putting complexities of literary Arabic. The book is divided into a grammar and a phrasebook that starts with arriving in Egypt by sea. Some novel contents suggest a work aimed at longer-term residents in Egypt, such as a significant component of phrases to be used with servants, including a nursemaid, and a section on discussing rental of an apartment with a *bawāb* ('doorman, concierge').

## Pilgrimage

There is a subgenre of tourist Arabic phrasebooks directed at the needs of foreign Christian pilgrims, for whom the Arabic-speaking world held several major pilgrimage sites: most importantly Jerusalem (Cohen-Hattab and Shoval 2015), but also the sites of key events in the Old and New

# ARABIC MADE EASY.
## FIRST STEPS FOR BEGINNERS.

Dictionaries of the Arabic tongue are as plentiful as commission agents in Egypt. They all fall short, however, as regards a full and proper definition of many words, the exact meanings of which are known... only... to a select... (dots by kind permission of H.G. Wells)... few.   Here are some :

*Antika* :  Egypt's largest re-export.

*Bakal* :  A daylight robber.

*Gaffir* :  A moonlight ditto.

*Bukra* :  The Egyptian "do it now."

*Dago* :  Our landlord. An epithet cast at many and deserved by few.

*Gornal* :  A triumph of scissors over pen.

*Sharia* :  The motor-repairer's friend.  A succession of heterogeneous holes connected by stretches of newly-laid stones.

*Telefon* :  The Shoubra girl's revenge.

*Sofragi* :  A capitalist in milliemes. What the ex-Peckham girl swanks about in her letters home.

*Cocktail* :  The result of a mixed marriage.

*Wiskisoda* :  A successful mixed marriage. See handbook by same author — "Tropical Medicines."

*Barghout* :  A harbinger of Spring.

*Mishmish* :  See Bukra.

*Malesh* :  A washout.  Much used by home politicians in discussing the position of fellow countrymen in the East.

T.O.

**Figure 3.10**  'Arabic Made Easy', *The Sphinx*, No. 518, 7 July 1923, 8. Public domain. Available at https://bit.ly/3oNgKQJ

Testament, such as Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee and the Jordan River.[7] Many Europeans and Americans who were travelling primarily for leisure still saw an element of pilgrimage in their travels in the Middle East. Travel books frequently contain reflections on particular places in Palestine, Egypt and Syria as the location of events in the Bible – even if there was little to actually see. The monotonous journey from Cairo to Port Said or Suez, for example, could be reimagined as a journey through the desert traversed by the Children of Israel as they fled Egypt (Roberts 1841, 154; Miller 1891, 124). Tourist guides found even the least pious travellers keen to see the places where biblical events had supposedly taken place, although some were wearied by the repetitiveness and tenuous logic of it all (Mairs 2016, 84–85). Mark Twain recounted his own 'New Pilgrims' Progress' in *Innocents Abroad* (Twain 1869). He tells the story of St Helena, who

> travelled all over Palestine, and was always fortunate. Whenever the good old enthusiast found a thing mentioned in her Bible, Old or New, she would go and search for that thing, and never stop until she found it. If it was Adam, she would find Adam; if it was Goliath, or Joshua, she would find *them*.
>
> (Twain 1869, 339)

The context of this passage within Twain's work makes his satirical intent very clear. He has already described many instances where he and his fellow travellers visited sites which were identified to them as the location of events in the Bible, or which they identified for themselves as such. Religious tourists, like St Helena, tended to find what they wanted to find.

There is no firm divide between 'tourists' and 'pilgrims', but rather a spectrum, on which individual travellers could occupy different positions at different moments during their trip (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003, 131–132; see also Kark 2001). Pilgrims, and religiously-minded travellers more broadly, will naturally have used the full range of guidebooks and phrasebooks available, but some works catered more specifically to the Christian market. Some phrasebook authors paid lip-service to religious motivations for travel, such as Johann Baptist Hofstetter and the Aleppan dragoman Georg Hudaj in their German–Italian *Handbuch der arabischen Volkssprache* (Hofstetter and Hudaj 1846). The book is a hodgepodge of vocabulary listed without organisation by topic or alphabetical order, and tables of verb forms. It notes some differences between the 'Arabische Landessprache/Arabo volgare' and 'Arabische Schriftsprache/Arabo letterario', but the book is not the comprehensive and practical guide to colloquial Arabic that it claims to be. Dialect is mentioned rarely, such as in

the listing of different words for 'pipe' used in Cairo, Jerusalem, Baghdad and Aleppo and by the Bedouin (see Hofstetter and Hudaj 1846, 47).

The *Handbuch der arabischen Volkssprache* received very bad reviews. The reviewer in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* thought its poor organisation and repetition were 'kaum eines gewöhnlichen Dragomans würdig' (Anonymous 1847, 214), and hardly worth a single thaler, when its price was four. This was a gibe at Hudaj, who was a dragoman from Aleppo. Decades later, a scholar interested in it as a potential source on the dialect of Aleppo found that the book 'regorge des fautes les plus grossières et de toutes sortes d'imperfections' (Kampffmeyer 1901, 202). Little information is available on the authors. Hofstetter taught French and Polish in Vienna, and claimed in the book's preface to have been interested in Arabic since his youth. He and Hudaj, the dragoman, had accompanied the nobleman Joseph Graf Wratislaw von Mitrowitz on a tour of the Middle East. A report on the schools in the Archdiocese of Vienna of 1847 states that Hudaj had been given permission to open an Arabic *Sprachschule*, but I have found no evidence that this ever operated (Kaiser 1847, 210).

Although little of its content is expressly religious, or directed to the specific needs of pilgrims, the *Handbuch der arabischen Volkssprache* announces in its fuller title that it is directed to pilgrims (although also to travellers, merchants and seafarers) and makes much of the authors' association with the Graf Wratislaw von Mitrowitz, who was a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The first texts in the book are the Pater Noster and Ave Maria (Kaiser 1847, 14), but aside from the occasional resonant place name (*qabr al-masīḥ* 'das heilige Grab zu Jerusalem, il San sepolcro di Gerusalemme', p. 37), the content is mostly secular. It contains the usual wishful thinking about the user's potential to progress in Arabic (p. 53: 'Ich will arabisch lernen, so daß ich es wie ein Araber spreche / voglio imparare l'arabo, per parlarlo come un Arabo').

The categories of pilgrim and tourist overlapped, and so too did the categories of pilgrim and scholarly Orientalist. Philipp Wolff (1810–1894) studied Oriental languages with Emil Rödiger in Halle and with Silvestre de Sacy in Paris, before becoming a Protestant minister. He had already written a book on the Druze when he first visited Palestine in 1847. Wolff published a volume of his travels not long after returning (Wolff 1849), which was followed by an *Arabischer Dragoman für Besucher des Heiligen Landes* (Wolff 1857). Wolff could already read literary Arabic before visiting Palestine, but had had no previous exposure to the spoken language. He recounts in both his travelogue and his phrasebook that he was assisted in assembling his word list for travellers by his late friend

Dr Schultz, who spoke Arabic, and by two dragomans: Daûd of the Prussian Consulate in Jerusalem, and Joseph Catafago of the Prussian Consulate in Beirut. Catafago (1821–1884) was from Aleppo, but moved to London in 1855 and became a naturalised British subject. The 1861 Census records his occupation as 'Professor of Arabic'. He published an Arabic–English dictionary with Bernard Quaritch a couple of years after the same firm had published al-Shidyāq's Arabic grammar (Catafago 1858). Catafago's naturalisation papers record that he arrived in England in 1855, and was employed 'giving Arabic lessons to the candidates of the Civil Service for India' (UK National Archives HO 1/144/5595). The bookseller James Madden wrote in support of his application, just as he did for al-Shidyāq. Catafago was therefore well connected in the London Arabist networks. Wolff's book is a compact set of word lists in functional categories, with a few pages of phrases. It seems likely that it is the kind of tool he himself, previously an armchair Arabist, will have found useful in converting his theoretical knowledge into a practical one.

Other books spoke more directly and exclusively to a pilgrim audience. A polyglot vocabulary of 1911, published in Jerusalem, offered Russian-speaking Christian pilgrims assistance with Greek, Turkish and Arabic (Anonymous 1911; discussed by Mairs 2023b). One of its users could, in theory, have been Rasputin, who went on pilgrimage to Palestine that year. There were few other resources available to Russian speakers. Al-Ḥalabī 1863 is a notable exception, but other Russia-based authors such as Berezin and al-Ṭanṭāwī had published their Arabic books in French. Russian Orthodox pilgrims were a very different market from European or American leisure tourists. They came to Jerusalem in vast numbers, and most of them were of humble socioeconomic status. They were not a promising market for grammars of Arabic. An observer-participant in the Russian pilgrimage at around the time of the anonymous 1911 phrasebook noted that 'the pilgrims have no *Baedeker*, indeed no such thing exists in the Russian language, though even if there did, the 60 per cent of the pilgrims who are illiterate could not profit by it' (Graham 1913, 112). Russian pilgrims tended to travel in groups and to make use of services specifically for them, as well as local Arab guides who could speak Russian. The shop of the Katanov brothers, where the 1911 phrasebook was sold in Jerusalem, must have been one of these businesses (I have been unable to find any further information about its proprietors; the name 'Katanov' is probably a Russified version of the Arabic name Qaṭṭān).

The 1911 phrasebook, entitled *Kratkie razgovory dlya palomnikov'* ('Brief Conversations for Pilgrims'), is a paperback booklet of only 17 pages, reminiscent of the multi-column format of other polyglot

phrasebooks, on which it may have been modelled. The numbers are given inside the front cover for easy consultation, and the intended audience – and the season at which they were most likely to be travelling – can be seen in the fact that the Easter story then follows. The word list covers the basics – nouns for family members and professions, geographical terms, essential adjectives, adverbs and prepositions – followed by phrases for greeting, shopping, eating, staying at a hotel, asking for directions and so forth. The booklet concludes with prayers in the four languages. Although Graham's caution about low literacy rates among Russian pilgrims should be borne in mind, it is possible that other pamphlets such as this were produced, but that they have not survived well because of their flimsiness and small print runs.

English-speaking pilgrims or pilgrim-tourists to Palestine were served by *The Pilgrim's Vocabulary of Holy Sites*, by C. A. Gabriel, who gives his address, evocatively, as 'Street of the Prophets, Jerusalem' on its title page (Gabriel 1935). The book also boasts an introduction by 'Rev. Canon Hanauer, The oldest Palestinian Authority on Archæology'. It may have been distributed by the Nile Mission Press (although it was printed at the Syrian Orphanage), since it carries an advertisement for their bookshop on Jaffa Road inside the cover, mentioning Upson's *Arabic Simplified* (see Chapter 5). A review in the *Palestine Post* considered it 'of slight or doubtful value to the tourist', and imagined the confusion that would result if a tourist tried to give their driver directions using it (3 February 1935, 7).

Gabriel published a trilingual Arabic–Hebrew–English phrasebook a few years later, discussed in Chapter 5. The 1935 book, in contrast, is intended not to enable users to speak or read Arabic, but to 'read' the landscape through which they are travelling through the lens of the Bible. Gabriel addresses his work as follows:

> DEAR FELLOW PILGRIM
> You have come to the Holy Land to worship, not only where Prophets, Priests and Kings have knelt, nor solely where they fought and shed their blood for the truth, but more so where they actually lived those sacred Bible stories, which you and I revere and adore.
>
> It has been my constant desire, when reading my Bible and when visiting, to have someone tell me in which part of present Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Greece or Egypt, these Bible Characters had their spiritual experiences.
>
> I did not want to spend much money on getting a bulky Bible Dictionary and could not find a handy book to meet my need.

> Here you have an up to date reporter cheap and handy that will give you any information you require while touring over these sacred hills and while reading your Bible.
>
> (Gabriel 1935, 5)

It is notable that Gabriel identifies himself with the 'pilgrims', as a fellow Christian. The book consists of the place names given in English, Hebrew and Arabic (in their own scripts) with references to Bible passages where they are mentioned, and the modern name, in transliteration, with a letter code for its location (S for Syria, etc.).

It is important to bear in mind that Gabriel's *Pilgrim's Vocabulary* is no more a specialised work than any of the phrasebooks or guidebooks his target audience will also have carried. Foreign Christian visitors to Palestine in the period covered in the present work, as contemporary travel accounts make very clear, were highly Bible-literate, familiar with place names mentioned in the Bible, and keen to recognise them on the ground. They also visited places with Christian associations which were not mentioned in the Bible but had become part of later tradition, such as the 'Tree of the Virgin' in the neighbourhood of Maṭariyya in Heliopolis, under which the Holy Family was supposed to have sheltered during their flight to Egypt. The tree is often mentioned in Arabic phrasebooks, such as Saleh 1874, and a tree in Maṭariyya is still visited and claimed as such today, although it can only be a successor of whatever tree was first venerated there. Mark Twain makes it clear that, even if the 'original' tree had still been there, it would not have survived the predations of the souvenir-hungry pilgrims in his company:

> The same tree they [the Holy Family] rested under when they first arrived, was there a short time ago, but the Viceroy of Egypt sent it to the Empress Eugenie lately. He was just in time, otherwise our pilgrims would have had it.
>
> (Twain 1869, 620)

Twain is an appropriate person with whom to conclude this chapter. Arabic phrasebooks for tourists in the Middle East developed in a complex symbiosis with the genres of guidebook, travelogue and (self-)educational textbook, and their users could be at the same time tourists, pilgrims, armchair travellers and those seeking to better themselves. Twain was a satirist and package tourist, but also someone whose education and cultural milieu had conditioned him to approach the Middle East through the Bible. This picture becomes still more complex as we move into the

following chapters and explore phrasebooks produced for military use. Soldiers, too, could be tourists, pilgrims and writers. We increasingly also find phrasebooks for specific constituencies (leisure tourists, soldiers) being used 'against the grain', by those forced to adapt available resources to the circumstances in which they found themselves.

## Notes

1  In the Crimea, he knew Richard Francis Burton, who thought him 'a half-witted Syrian, educated at some Jesuit college, strong at languages, uncommonly weak in intellect, and provided with a mouth open for anything which may be put into it' (Samaha 2010, 80) – but note that the context is Burton trying to discredit Mallouf's testimony in an official enquiry.

2  Grammars and other teaching materials for Asian and African languages also circulated in manuscript form among former and future colonial officials and settlers. Professor David Liston (1799–1881) of Edinburgh University, who had spent 20 years as a planter in India, 'during his intercourse with the various native populations acquired a thorough mastery of Hindostani, Arabic, Syrian, and other languages'. Drawing on this experience, he wrote 'several Oriental grammars, which, however, were never published, but were used principally in teaching' (Liston's obituary in *The Scotsman,* Thursday, 27 January 1881, 4).

3  Although Pascal uses the term 'nubien', it seems much more likely that he was trying to speak the local dialect of Arabic, since there was no dictionary ('de poche' or otherwise) of any of the Nubian languages at this date. Richard Lepsius published a Nobiin version of the Gospel of St Mark in 1860, but his *Nubische Grammatik* did not appear until 1880.

4  I am grateful to Liesbeth Zack for making me aware of this book, and for confirming that Michel Saleh and Michel Bey Saleh Chagavat/Nakhla Ṣāliḥ Shaghawāt are one and the same.

5  'Awaḍ (1986, 68), discusses the variant spellings of Sanua's name, with and without *shadda*. It is commonly spelled Ṣannū' 'by the cultured class of the Arabic-speaking world' (this is, for example, the spelling used by Najm) but the family and those close to them appear to have pronounced the name with a single 'n'. When not using his *nom de plume* Abū Naẓẓāra or Abou Naddara, he always called himself 'James Sanua', including in Arabic (Mestyán 2014, 123–125). In the bilingual Arabic–French heading of the papers he published in Paris, he names himself as 'J. Sanua– *Jims Sānuwā*'. Since 'Sanua' is the name used on the title page of his phrasebook, it is also the version of the name I use here.

6  See the obituary for Nallino by Enno Littmann in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938). I am grateful to Liesbeth Zack for this reference.

7  Jewish tourists also often found religious resonance in their travels. Bendix Hallenstein, from New Zealand, 'did not care to reach Palestine by the circuitous route taken by our forefathers' when he and his family travelled from Egypt to Palestine in 1894 (Mairs 2016, 144–152). Language books used by Jewish immigrants to Palestine are discussed in Chapter 6. A special issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* (2020, 78) discusses Jerusalem as a location of pilgrimage in the Abrahamic religions.

# 4

# Arabic in war and occupation I: the Veiled Protectorate to the First World War (1882–1914)

## Language, war and colonialism

The influence of war and colonialism can already be seen in trends in language book publication for leisure travellers, as discussed in Chapter 3. The British 'Veiled Protectorate' over Egypt (from the 1880s) and French colonisation in the Maghreb (from the 1830s) both brought an increase in European tourism to these regions, and with this an increase in the publication of guidebooks and phrasebooks. There are noticeably more Arabic phrasebooks, even for tourists, from countries which had colonial interests in the Middle East than for those whose countries did not have colonies in the region. For countries like Italy and Germany, which made intermittent attempts to invade or establish colonies in parts of the Middle East and North Africa, phrasebook production for both civilians and the military also, naturally, tended to wax and wane in line with this (on Italian colonial Arabic learning for Libya, see Guardi 2003 and Airò 2003; works like Levi 1933, 5, situate themselves explicitly with regard to 'l'espansione italiana in Africa').

The following two chapters survey tools for, and approaches to, the learning of colloquial Arabic by British military and official personnel in the Middle East, from the 1880s to the Second World War. In this chapter, I cover the period before the world wars and address some common themes in British military language learning in the Middle East. Chapter 5 resumes discussion of the material from 1914 onwards. As well as Arabic learning in individual conflicts (such as the Nile Expedition and First and Second World Wars), I look at the place of Arabic in the training of British civilian administrators and other personnel in Egypt, Sudan, Aden, Palestine and Iraq. English–Arabic materials for

Indian, Australian, New Zealand and United States armed forces are also considered. There are several features that distinguish these military Arabic books from those used by tourists and leisure learners, considered in Chapter 3. The topics covered naturally differ, as does the vocabulary, which for military phrasebooks usually contains technical terms of use to soldiers and to specialist occupations within the armed forces, such as engineers and surveyors. Scenarios that crop up in military phrasebooks but not in their tourist counterparts include interrogating prisoners, and gaining information about topography and enemy movements from the inhabitants of a locality.

In Chapter 1, we have already explored how the French engaged with Arabic during their occupation of Egypt in 1798. This provided the foundation for later French ventures in the Maghreb, starting with the Expédition d'Alger of 1830, as a kind of 'Expédition d'Égypte redux'. Some of the same personnel were even involved (Marcel, the Pharaon family) in language mediation and the publishing of Arabic teaching materials on both expeditions. Decades of experience in teaching both literary and colloquial Arabic at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes also had an influence on how the French used, learnt and taught Arabic in North Africa.

French and British experiences of military language learning in the Middle East were very different. Unlike France, with its occupation of Algeria in the 1830s, Britain did not become a major colonial presence in the Arab world until the 1880s. It did not have the substantial Arab immigrant population that had been present in France since the aftermath of the Expédition d'Égypte (Coller 2011). Although Arabic (mostly Classical Arabic) was taught in some British institutions of higher learning, there was nothing like the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes. Cultural attitudes may also have held the British back in language learning. Footitt and Tobia discuss how language skills in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were subject to a gendered and xenophobic discourse (Footitt and Tobia 2013, 21–23). The prevailing ideological model of taciturn British masculinity did not allow for the prioritisation of foreign language skills, especially in speaking.

Armed forces and administrators of occupied territories have different language needs from the scholars, missionaries, tourists and settlers discussed in the other chapters of this book. Although, as we will see, these distinctions could become blurred (soldiers were also tourists; both could be pilgrims), armies and officials needed to communicate on highly technical matters which could be a matter of life or death. Most of the best recent scholarship on languages in war draws on material from

the First and Second World Wars in Europe (Footitt and Tobia 2013; Declercq and Walker 2016; Walker and Declercq 2016, 2021) and the Yugoslavian conflicts of the 1990s (Footitt and Kelly 2012a, 2012b). These studies have informed my own approach in several ways. First, on a methodological note, they show how crucial it is to use sources of evidence on language use beyond official records, in particular oral history or interviews, where these are available. Footitt and Kelly, for example, discuss how British military training in Serbo-Croat in the 1990s used 'teach yourself' manuals intended for leisure travellers, in the absence of other teaching materials. An interview with an intelligence linguist revealed how the teachers then had to produce their own vocabulary lists 'very much geared, not to your holidays in Dubrovnik, but very much to what was happening in Banja Luka' (Footitt and Kelly 2012b, 100). Obviously it has not been possible for me to interview anyone who used Arabic in the British armed forces during the period 1882–1945, but a wonderful resource is available in the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, which has tens of thousands of interviews with both service personnel and non-combatants (https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/sound, accessed 21 May 2023). These recordings allow us to add the testimony of learners of Arabic and users of Arabic phrasebooks to the books themselves, and to official documents.

Something else my approach here has in common with recent scholarship on languages and the military is in highlighting the role of interpreters who, as we will see, were the acknowledged or unacknowledged authors of many Arabic instruction books. As in the other chapters in this book, I have tried to include the names of informants and interpreters who worked on language books, where they are known, and to credit their authorship. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done on granting interpreters and native-speaker informants the central place they deserve in both linguistic and military history (e.g. Messaoudi 2010; Heimburger 2010; Fernández-Ocampo and Wolf 2014; Wolf, trans. Sturge, 2015; Mairs 2020).

Most of the existing scholarship specifically on Arabic language training in the British (and American) military deals with the period after the Second World War, a period when intelligence rather than operational needs were of primary concern (as may be seen, for example, in the resources devoted to the study of Russian: Elliott and Shukman 2002). The British Army established the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies (MECAS) in Jerusalem in 1944; in 1947 it moved to Shemlan in Mount Lebanon, where it operated under the auspices of the British Foreign Office until 1978. Teachers at MECAS included Elias Nasrallah

Haddad, whose works for teaching Palestinian Arabic are discussed in Chapter 5. A number of former students have published memoirs of their time at MECAS, which tend to devote a lot of space to refuting allegations that it was a 'spy school' (see e.g. Tempest 2006). Instruction books produced in the period before the war were used in the early years of MECAS in Jerusalem and after the move to Shemlan, and some formed the basis for the development of the centre's own materials (Craig 1998, 60–61). Diplomat and Arabist Sir James Craig (1924–2017), who taught at MECAS in the mid-1950s, found when writing his history of the centre that students' recollections of the books used during the Jerusalem years were 'surprisingly vague', but that they included works by Thatcher and Kapliwatzky and that the focus was on grammar and the written language, rather than colloquial spoken Arabic (Craig 1998, 22). Craig's own view was that Tritton's *Teach Yourself Arabic* (Tritton 1943) – with which Chapter 5 concludes – 'deserves prosecution under the Trades Description Act' (Craig 1998, 59).

It is important not to project back onto the pre-Second World War period, but experiences from the late 1940s onwards shed light on the inadequacies of language instruction provision before that date. This is a topic to which I will return in the conclusion to Chapter 5. During the period considered here, the British military, and British admin-istration of occupied territories such as Mandate Palestine, demon-strated a consistent failure to adequately assess their language needs (for language competence among service personnel, for interpreting and for the correct dialect of Arabic) and to provide teaching and testing that was fit for purpose. Aside from operational needs, British soldiers needed or wanted to learn Arabic for recreational purposes. This market was catered to by commercial publishers in the Middle East, who in many ways provided a product that was better suited to the needs of the typical soldier than any resource produced by the military or administration itself.

After my introductory section on British priorities and competence in military Arabic, Chapters 4 and 5 follow a roughly chronological and regional structure. Chapter 4 explores Egypt from 1882 through to the 1910s, as well as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (1890s–1940s) and Aden (1910s–1940s). Chapter 5 opens with the First World War in Egypt, Iraq and Palestine. It continues with British Mandate Palestine (1920s–1940s) and the Second World War, again with coverage of materials produced for use in Egypt, Iraq and Palestine. It concludes by looking at how wartime language materials influenced the publication of Arabic instruction books after the war.

# British priorities and competence in military Arabic

## Overview

While the strategic importance of Arabic for France remained consistent throughout the nineteenth century, because of the French colonial empire in North Africa, Britain's military need (or perceived need) for Arabic waxed and waned. As with the tourist language books discussed in Chapter 3, the rate of publication of colloquial Arabic books for the British military follows a very clear pattern connected with political events. There are relatively few in the first eight decades of the nineteenth century. The first major peak comes in the early 1880s, with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the Nile Expedition of 1884–1885. A few works specifically for the Sudan began to be produced after the Anglo-Egyptian conquest in the mid- to late 1890s, with more in the 1920s, after Egyptian independence and the removal of most Egyptian administrative and military personnel from the Sudan. The world wars are responsible for the greatest number of Arabic instruction books for British (and other English-speaking) forces.

From the 1880s, the vast majority of Arabic phrasebooks and other instruction books for the British military are intended for use in Egypt, the Sudan and the Red Sea region.[1] With the First World War, this widens to include Palestine and Iraq. In the period of the British Mandate in Palestine between the world wars, there are a number of works specifically for British officials and soldiers there. Egypt, however, remains the main focus, since Cairo was both an important centre of the Middle East publishing industry and the place where soldiers fighting in Palestine and Syria spent their leave. As well as troops from the United Kingdom, there were soldiers from Australia and New Zealand in Egypt and Palestine, and from India in Iraq. War acted as a catalyst for the development of language teaching methods and materials, in much the same way as it did for technological development. In the First World War, British authorities were slow to realise the importance of producing language learning materials, but in the Second, a large number of phrasebooks for soldiers were issued both by military authorities and by private publishers in Europe and the Middle East.

## Arabic teaching and examinations

Arabic was among the languages taught to East India Company recruits at Duncan Forbes' London Oriental Institution in the early 1800s, as

well as at institutions such as the East India College at Haileybury (on language learning under the East India Company, see Cohn 1985). It seems to have been taught, however, essentially as a classical language, and East India Company employees will certainly have had little occasion to use spoken Arabic in India. One Arabic textbook published for use at Haileybury regards Arabic not as a tool in itself, but as a useful auxiliary language, without which the student's 'knowledge of Persian and Hindūstānī, so indispensably requisite in India, must ever be limited and defective' (Schalch 1830, 43). When British forces did come into extensive contact with Arabic speakers later in the nineteenth century, there was a serious deficit of expertise. The situation was still worse for other languages of northeast Africa and the Red Sea region. Writing in advance of the 1868 British Expedition to Abyssinia, an anonymous author in the *Pall Mall Gazette* was concerned about the lack of knowledge of Amharic in the British Army, leaving them reliant on 'foreigners and clergymen' for

> mutual intercourse between our army and the people amongst whom we are going to carry civilization and progress. If we cannot speak to them in their own tongue, it is manifest that we cannot give them civilization and progress, except perhaps in minor matters, such as the cooking of raw meat, where example will do as well as precept.
> (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 December 1867, 10)

Never mind that people in Africa had been cooking meat for hundreds of thousands of years. The writer wondered whether Arabic might be used as a lingua franca in Abyssinia, but here the problem was just as great:

> Last, and not least, comes the inquiry how far the great Arabic language itself is treated as a vernacular tongue by the educational authorities in India, and, if not so treated, why not? Is there anybody in Western India acquainted with vulgar spoken Arabic at all, except waifs and strays from Aden and the Gulf, or the surviving officers of the late Indian navy, to a man well versed in it, yet versed through experience only and not through teaching? If such there be, why is there, literally, no such thing in the English language as a good or even an indifferent practical handbook to vernacular Arabic – literally none – while the French count them by the score? Two or three books claim to be such, but are curiously worthless and erroneous, except Captain Fletcher Hayes's little book in a sixpenny wrapper; quite unpretending, and good as far as it goes, but much

too small for any real use. We suspect the time has come to make a special question of this, and to take it in hand forthwith.

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 December 1867, 10)

It is interesting to see a reference either to Hayes 1859, or perhaps even to Binning and Hayes 1849, a book directed primarily at those taking the overland route between India and Europe, years after they were published (see Chapter 3).

The Crimean War (1853–1856), in which Britain, France and semi-independent Egypt were allied with the Ottoman Empire, was the first event to provoke serious consideration of Middle Eastern languages in the British Army. The Oxford-based Orientalist Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) published some *Suggestions for the Assistance of Officers in Learning the Languages of the Seat of War in the East* (Müller 1854). This was at the request of Sir Charles Trevelyan (1807–1886), at the time a Treasury official, who had spent his early career with the East India Company and was to return to India as Governor of Madras in 1859. In Müller's view:

> It is undoubtedly high time that something should be done to encourage the study of Oriental languages in England. At the very outset of this war, it has been felt how much this branch of studies – in emergencies like the present so requisite – has been neglected in the system of our education.
>
> (Müller 1854, x)

He contrasts this situation with the attention given to 'Oriental Philology' in Russia, France and Austria, making special mention of the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes. As well as a lack of governmental and institutional support, there was also the problem that few works existed in English to help people learn the languages of the Ottoman Empire and Middle East. Müller does not have much to say specifically about Arabic, since:

> the English army will hardly come into contact with Semitic dialects, except on its outward passage at Malta, where a corrupt Arabic dialect is spoken, greatly mixed with Italian. It will not have to fight in countries where the inhabitants speak a Semitic dialect, though it may possibly have to charge side by side with Egyptians who speak Arabic.
>
> (Müller 1854, 27)

For learning Arabic, he recommends works by al-Ṭanṭāwī and Silvestre de Sacy (Müller 1854, 131–132).

Max Müller's recommendations do not appear to have had much immediate effect, but the Crimean War acted, in the longer term, as a catalyst for greater British military attention to languages. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the firm of Bernard Quaritch brought out their 'practical grammars' of Turkish and Arabic in direct response to the war, although these at first sold poorly (Barker 1854; Shidiac 1856). Thomas Bryon (*c.*1802–1863), who stated on the title page of his book that he was 'formerly an officer in the Russian Civil Service, continental agent, translator and interpreter to the law courts of London', published a *Military, Naval & Commercial Interpreter* for English, French, Turkish, Russian, Tartar, Circassian, Arabic and Persian in 1856 (Bryon 1856). Bryon's coverage of the languages is uneven. He spent much of his career in France as a commercial agent, where he was involved in horse racing and breeding (there is an annual race named after him at Saint-Cloud), and I have found no evidence that he travelled in the Arabic-speaking world or knew the language first-hand. According to his preface, he had spent eight years in the area 'between St. Petersburg and the Persian Gulf, where the inhabitants are superstitious, and live in a state of comparative ignorance, their knowledge rarely extending beyond the districts in which they reside'. Arabic is one of the less well-covered languages in the book, and it seems probable that Bryon took down the words from an informant. His familiarity with French is visible in the way he transcribes the Arabic *ghayn* /ɣ/ as the letter 'r', reflecting the perception of some contemporaries that *ghayn* resembled the French 'guttural r'.

An interpreter who served in the Crimean War, the Rev. Anton Tien (1834–1920) – a Maronite-turned-Protestant like Asʿad and (in theory) Fāris al-Shidyāq – later published a *Levant Interpreter* along similar lines to Nassif Mallouf's polyglot vocabularies (Chapter 3), intended to help Britons dealing with the Ottoman Empire manage in Turkish, Greek and Italian (Tien 1879). Tien went on to author a number of works on Arabic for British forces in the Middle East, which are discussed below. Experiences during the Crimean War continued to inform Tien's approach in these. In 1885, he recalled: 'During the Crimean war and since that time I have had the privilege of conversing with Russian officers of all ranks, and have discovered with surprise and pleasure, not only their perfect knowledge of the language [Arabic] and its accent, but also the freedom and ease of their idiomatic expression' (Tien 1885, vi). The Arabic of British officers could not compare.[2]

Thirty-four years after Müller's book, Habib Anthony Salmoné (whom we have encountered in Chapter 2 as an acquaintance of George Percy Badger, and in Chapter 3 as the author of the Arabic section of Slack 1886) reported a not dissimilar situation with regard to Arabic studies in England, in an article in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Salmoné states that 'the study of Arabic is almost wholly neglected in this country' (Salmoné 1884, 38), although he notes that more Arabic teaching materials had been produced in the past few years. He argues for more widespread teaching of Arabic in both military and civilian institutions of learning. Like Max Müller, he refers to Russia, France and Austria as leaders in the teaching of Oriental languages, and places Germany and Denmark, too, ahead of England. Alongside other inducements to study Arabic (as the religious language of the Muslim inhabitants of the British Empire, or as intellectual training), Salmoné places greatest emphasis on the strategic importance of the language for the British Army in the field:

> Military triumph alone seldom succeeds in securing what is an important element in *perfect* success; I mean friendliness, on the part of the population, towards an army of occupation. But what more effectual means to secure this – what more potent means to conciliate national prejudices, and, in addition thereto, to remove misconceptions, and obtain security against treachery – than a free communication with the subdued inhabitants by intelligent officers, able to converse with them in their own language?
>
> (Salmoné 1884, 39)

It is clear what Salmoné – writing in the early years of the British occupation of Egypt – is thinking of. The following sections will discuss Arabic teaching materials produced to meet this challenge.

Despite the arguments made by scholars and teachers such as Müller and Salmoné, and despite the books produced to help them learn Arabic, major challenges stood in the way of British soldiers and officials posted to Egypt during the British occupation acquiring a good command of spoken Arabic for everyday personal and professional use. Lord Randolph Churchill, a critic of British government policy in Egypt, gave a speech in Edinburgh in 1883 in which he ridiculed the British occupation for giving Egypt the useless 'gift' of 'a dozen Dutch judges, who at the present moment are all on leave, wandering about Europe endeavouring to learn the language from an elementary Arabic conversation book – (laughter) – and waiting for their Law Courts to be built. (Laughter and cheers.)' (*The Scotsman*, 19 December 1883, 8). Not all judges, as we will

see, were such incompetent Arabists. The British Army and Egyptian Civil Service developed their own systems of examinations in languages, and a whole industry existed around preparing candidates to take them. Salmoné himself was among the teachers who advertised in the *Army and Navy Gazette*, boasting of a large number of successful candidates among his former pupils and offering – ambitiously – 'fluency attained in four months' by his 'special method' (Figure 4.1). Garabet Hagopian, one of the authors of the 1899 edition of *Syrian Self-Taught*, and Negib Hindié, who worked on *Egyptian Self-Taught* (Chapter 3), both tutored students for these examinations, which focused on written translation. As we will see, however, many British officials in Egypt found that the examinations did not adequately prepare candidates to actually communicate in Arabic.

The examination system was overhauled in the early 1900s. In October 1903, Professor E. G. Browne (1862–1926) of Cambridge drafted a set of guidelines for Arabic teaching and examination of 'Candidates Selected for Service under the Governments of Egypt and the Soudan' (British Library, IOR/L/MIL/7/7314). Candidates were required to pass a test in Arabic at the end of their first year of probation, which was spent in the United Kingdom before going out to Egypt. 'They will not be absolutely required to pass their year of probation at Oxford or Cambridge; but it may be pointed out that, except in London, such instruction in Arabic as is almost essential to the attainment of the required standard is hardly to be obtained elsewhere in England.' Teaching would be provided without charge at Cambridge by Browne, who was Professor of Arabic, and 'an Egyptian Shaykh (lent for that purpose to the University by the Egyptian Ministry of Public Instruction)'. The syllabus specifies that the goal is competence in reading and writing literary Arabic, not speaking the vernacular, which was considered a desirable extra, not essential:

> III The Arabic Test. Having regard to the unity of the Literary Language throughout all Arabic-speaking (and, indeed, all Muhammadan) countries, and its general employment in the former in the Press, the Law Courts, the Schools, and for correspondence, a knowledge of this, and not of any colloquial dialect, will be required of the Selected Candidates. Due credit will, however, be given for any knowledge of the Egyptian vernacular which a candidate may possess in addition to a sound knowledge of the Literary Language.
>
> In the final examination the knowledge of candidates will be tested in –
> 1.  Reading and translation of
>     (a)  specified printed texts, pointed and unpointed;

**Figure 4.1** Language teaching advertisements in the *Army and Navy Gazette*, 18 June 1898, 603. Public domain. Held at the Bodleian Library. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

 (b) easy unspecified printed texts, pointed and unpointed;

 (c) easy manuscript in the hand ordinarily employed in correspondence in Egypt.

2. Ability to write a legible hand

 (d) in copying a printed or manuscript document;

 (e) in writing from dictation.

3. Translation (f) oral or (g) written, of simple English sentences or short and easy prose passages into Literary Arabic.

Additional credit and marks of distinction will also be given for –

 (h) good pronunciation;

 (i) good handwriting;

 (j) ability to converse in Arabic;

 (l) and, as remarked above, any knowledge which a candidate may have been able to acquire of the Egyptian Vernacular.

Every candidate will be expected to shew a respectable knowledge of the Principles of Arabic Grammar.

The Examination will take place at Cambridge, probably during the first fortnight of June, and will be to a large extent conducted orally by the Professor of Arabic and the Shaykh who assists him.

(British Library, IOR/L/MIL/7/7314)

In the report, Browne recommends a number of books on literary Arabic for candidates:

> For reasons already stated, Selected Candidates are not recommended to devote much attention to the Vernacular until they have arrived in Egypt and know in what district their work will lie. For those, however, who may desire to obtain some insight into the peculiarities of Colloquial Egyptian Arabic, the Grammars of Willmore or Vollers (English translation by F. C. Burkitt: Cambridge University Press), and Spitta Bey's *Contes arabes* are the most useful books.
>
> (British Library, IOR/L/MIL/7/7314)

Willmore's work is discussed below. Browne has reservations about one of the other books discussed in this chapter, Green's 1883 *Practical Arabic Grammar*, which 'must be used with great caution, since in it forms peculiar to the literary and colloquial dialects respectively are constantly combined in a single sentence as no Arabic-speaking or Arabic-writing people has ever combined them'. Private tutors continued to play an important – and freely acknowledged – role in preparing candidates

for these examinations, even after the new system was brought into practice. Browne and Hindié wrote to one another with news about the performance of their students (some of these letters are preserved at the British Library: IOR/L/PS/11/193, P 501/1921).

In 1905, a new test was brought in specifically for Arabic interpreters under the remit of the India Office, but with the same focus on the literary language. The India Office also had responsibility for the Red Sea region, Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf. William St. John Brodrick, Secretary of State for India, voiced his reservations about the exercise because of its focus on literary Arabic at the expense of the colloquial (British Library, IOR/L/MIL/7/7314, draft despatch from the India Office, 8 December 1905). Brodrick proposed instead that the would-be interpreter should be tested on his ability to hold a conversation, not just with an educated Arabic-speaking official, but 'also with Natives of Arabia speaking the ordinary dialect of the country'. While he recognised part of the problem with training interpreters to speak standard Arabic rather than a vernacular, Brodrick – who did not himself know Arabic – seems to have been unaware of the additional problems brought by the regional variety of Arabic dialects. I will return to the topic of British language examinations for soldiers, civil servants and police serving in the Middle East in several places below, especially in the section on the Palestine Police under the British Mandate in Chapter 5.

## How well did British soldiers and officials in the Middle East speak Arabic?

It is easy to find testimony of the failure of Britons in Egypt to communicate in Arabic; the opposite is more difficult to come by. Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer (Consul-General in Egypt from 1883 to 1907), notoriously never learnt Arabic: 'When he retired in 1907 he knew as little of Egyptian thought outside the range of his official experience as he did of Arabic grammar' (Weigall 1915, 175). A writer in the *Morning Post* in 1889 complained that 'during the Egyptian campaign, two years or so back, it was impossible to obtain a supply of English interpreters acquainted with spoken Arabic, and the British staff had to content itself with dragomans of French nationality for the most part' (*Morning Post*, 26 June 1889, 7). The reason, he claimed, was not any inherent linguistic deficiency among the British, but lack of instruction in colloquial Arabic in British universities, which concerned themselves exclusively with the literary language.

By 1904, little progress had been made, although the Arabic-teaching initiatives discussed above raised high hopes in some quarters that they would promote a better standard of Arabic among British recruits to Egyptian civil and military positions. A British official in the Egyptian administration (again, writing in the *Morning Post*) announced a new scheme for the training of recruits to the Egyptian and Sudanese Civil Service. Candidates 'probably chosen entirely from the two great English universities' would spend a year at Oxford or Cambridge studying Egyptian Arabic under 'Sheikhs who are being sent to England by the Ministry of Public Instruction'. His ideal candidate was 'an intelligent young man who could ride and pick up Arabic quickly and, above all, possessed *savoir-faire*, some knowledge of human nature, and a certain capacity to command' (*Morning Post*, 28 January 1904, 9).

The desired results were apparently never widely achieved. In 1908, English-language Cairo newspaper *The Sphinx* included a humorous article spoofing interviews for government officials in Egypt, including lines such as the following:

Q. Have you any knowledge of Government office work?
A. None whatever.
Q. Have you any acquaintance with Egypt or the Egyptians?
A. None worth mentioning.
Q. Where is Egypt?
A. I am not quite sure but I fancy it is a small piece of land situated in the right-hand corner of one of the maps, Africa, I think.
Q. Are you familiar with Arabic?
A. I have a small vocabulary.
Q. In what does it consist?
A. In three words: Imshi, Iskut, and Malesch. ['Go away', 'Shut up', and 'Never mind'.]
Q. Do you consider these words sufficient?
A. Quite sufficient for ordinary purposes.
Q. And which of these three words do you think it probable you will find the most useful?
A. Undoubtedly 'Malesch,' for it will be my stock reply to all complaints.
...
Q. Do you consider yourself qualified to become a Government official in Egypt?
A. I do.
Q. On what ground do you base this assertion?

A. On my well-known objection to hard work of any kind, my pronounced predilection for cigarettes and Turkish coffee and my colossal superiority over everybody else.

EXAMINER: That will do. You may consider yourself elected.

(*The Sphinx*, 18 January 1908, 7)

## Instruction books for Arabic after the British occupation of Egypt (1882)

### Egypt and India

One of the most striking features of the 'Veiled Protectorate' over Egypt in its earliest phases is how much British control over Egypt owed in ideology, personnel, and mechanisms of dominance and administration to British rule in India (Tignor 1963; Owen 1965; for imperial careers between multiple locations within the British Empire, see the case studies in Lambert and Lester 2006). In the early 1880s, for example, British engineers trained in India were brought in to manage the very different hydrological regime of the Nile (Derr 2019, 25–27). In language learning, too, ways of doing things developed in or for India were transferred to Egypt, whether or not this was appropriate. We have already seen in Chapter 3 that Arabic was studied by some British who intended to work for the East India Company – at Haileybury, at establishments such as that run by Duncan Forbes, or with private tutors such as Joseph Catafago – but experiences of learning Indian languages were also imposed onto Arabic.

The British experience of language learning in India had stimulated a great deal of reflection on the process of language acquisition, and on the efficacy or otherwise of commonly used methods of instruction. Such reflection was particularly profound among British learners of Telugu, Tamil and other languages of the Dravidian family, which have rich consonant inventories and very different grammatical structures from Indo-European languages. As well as numerous grammars and instruction books for Indian languages (see e.g. Safadi 2012 on Hindustani), British residents in India produced a number of more theoretical works on language learning. These show a particular interest in the primary acquisition of language in childhood, asking how the child's apparently easy acquisition of their mother tongue can be applied to learning another language in later life. The 'methods' and 'systems' developed by British language book authors with experience of India put a greater emphasis on pronunciation and spoken command of the language than do the

authors of more literary or scholastic 'systems' considered in Chapter 3. The East India Company civil servant Thomas Prendergast (1806–1886), who spoke Tamil, Telugu and Hindustani, developed his 'mastery system' in retirement in England. Prendergast had gone blind, which may have contributed to his emphasis on speaking and listening. He carefully analysed a child's process of learning their first language, and concluded that a small core vocabulary and constant repetition of conversational sentences were important (Prendergast 1864; see also Atherton 2010).

The irrigation engineer General Sir Arthur Cotton (1803–1899) outlined a similar 'vocal system' on the principle that 'the language must be learnt by the ear and not by the eye' (Cotton 1857, 10). Like Prendergast, he insisted that the learner start with short sentences and a small vocabulary of key words. He was sceptical about self-instruction methods, and emphasised the importance of learning good pronunciation and idiomatic use from a native speaker. Cotton thought that 'the learning of the living languages of foreign, semi-civilised, and savage people' (Preface to 1875 edition of Cotton 1857, i) had to be conducted along different lines from the learning of 'dead' languages or modern European languages. Learning a language from a grammar book taught one only to read and write literary works:

> On one occasion he met with a young man who had given his whole time to Arabic for 3 years, and could not then produce a sentence in conversation, and soon after he was intimate with another who in about 8 months and while loaded with other duties, had obtained, if not an accurate yet such an *effective*, colloquial use of the same tongue, that he regularly transacted extensive business in it with strangers of all sorts without the least difficulty.
>
> (Preface to 1875 edition of Cotton 1857, iv; Cotton is speaking of himself in the third person.)

Cotton applied his own system to Telugu (Cotton 1860) and later to Arabic (Cotton 1876). His books are relatively short (the Arabic one is 36 pages long) and repeat the same basic vocabulary in short, simple sentences (Figure 4.2). His Arabic book uses a simple form of the standard literary language (going somewhat against his own principles), with few obvious dialectal features.

Arabic instruction books produced by and for British officials and soldiers in Egypt in the early 1880s bear the mark of the Indian linguistic experience. First, many of their authors had previously written similar books for Indian languages. They sought to apply the same principles to

FIRST SET.

### FIRST THIRTY WORDS.

| | |
|---|---|
| All, كُلّ, kull. | In, فِي, fī. |
| And, وَ, we. | Near, قَرِيب, karīb. |
| Bad, رَدِّي, radī. | Not, مَا, ma. |
| Book, كِتَاب, kitāb. | New, جَدِيد, zhadīd. |
| Bread, خُبْز, chubz. | Said, قَال, ḳāl. |
| Called, نَادَى, nạdu. | Table, مَايِدَة, māidah. |
| Chair, كُرْسِي, kirsi | This, هَذَا, hāṭha. |
| Come, جَاء, zhạ. | That, ذَلِك, thālik. |
| Did, عَمَل, ạmal. | To, إِلَى, ila. |
| Drank, شَرِب, sharib. | Wanted, أَرَاد, arād. |
| Eat, أَكَل, akal. | Was, كَان, kạn. |
| From, مِن, min. | Went, رَاح, rāḥ. |
| Good, مَلِيح, melīḥ. | Who, مَن, man. |
| House, بَيْت, beit. | Word, كَلِمَة, kalimah. |
| I, أَنَا, ana. | You, أَنْت, ạnt. |

**All, kull كُلّ (1)**

كُلّ كَلِمَة
kalimah kull
word all
every word.

كُلّ ذَلِك
thālik kull
that all
all that.

كُلّ هَذَا
hāṭha kull
this all
all this.

**And, we وَ (2)**

أَنْت وَ أَنَا
ạna we ạnt
I and you
you and I.

رَاح وَ جَاء
zhạ we rāḥ
he came and he went
he went and came back.

نَادَى وَ قَال
ḳāl we nạda
he said and he called
he called out and said.

**Bad, radī رَدِّي (3)**

كَلِمَة رَدِّيَة
radiyah kalimah
bad (f.) word
a bad word.

خُبْز رَدِي
radi chubz
bad bread
bad bread.

كِتَاب رَدِي
radi kitāb
bad book
a bad book.

**Bread, chubz خُبْز (4)**

أَكَل خُبْز
chubz akal
bread he eat
he eat some bread.

أَرَاد الخُبْز
elchubz arād
the bread he desired
he wanted the bread.

خُبْز مَلِيح
melīḥ chubz
good bread
good bread.

**Figure 4.2** Examples from Cotton's *Arabic Primer* (1876), 22–23. Public domain. Available at https://bit.ly/3NoMuVy

teaching and learning Arabic as they had to Telugu or Hindustani, with varying results. The same dissatisfaction with British official attitudes to language learning is also evident. Prendergast, Cotton and their contemporaries had seen the poor results when new arrivals in India tried to use the languages they had studied from grammar books in England. Cotton gives the example of a young man who had 'passed a splendid examination' after months of intensive study, but nevertheless got lost while out riding in India and could not find his way home because he was incapable of asking for directions in the local language (Cotton 1857, 3). Language book authors coming from India also knew the importance of a strong command of the local language for commanding Indian troops and managing workforces.

## British officers and the Egyptian Army

After the Egyptian defeat at Tell el-Kebir in September 1882 and the subsequent British occupation of Egypt, Britain set about reorganising the Egyptian Army. This involved importing large numbers of British officers, who required linguistic retraining. The language situation within

the Egyptian Army was complex: Egyptian Arabic was needed for communicating with regular soldiers, literary Arabic for written communication, Turkish vocabulary for military terms and giving orders; and of course British officers used English among themselves (Zack 2016, 4). French seems initially to have been used as a lingua franca between British and Egyptian officers:

> Each English officer on his appointment must have a fair knowledge of French, and must be prepared to pass an examination in colloquial Arabic after six months, and a second examination in colloquial and written Arabic in twelve months. To-day (Wednesday) selections will be made of native officers for the new army, and it is believed it will be possible to find a sufficient number among those who are able to speak French.
>
> (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 January 1883)

While educated Egyptian officers may well have spoken good French, however, the majority of incoming British officers are likely to have found it difficult to dredge up their schoolboy French and communicate in it effectively. As we have seen in Chapter 3, English-speaking tourists in the Middle East were sometimes advised that it would be a better use of their time to brush up their French rather than attempt Arabic.

The British press reported that:

> the salaries to be granted to these officers [going to Egypt] are extremely liberal, ranging from £2,400 to the chief of the staff to £400 to the guides. The applications for these snug appointments are sure to be numerous, but there is one qualification required that is not generally possessed, and that is knowledge of Arabic. This, however, is a surmountable difficulty, and as the Council of Ministers have adopted Baker Pasha's scheme there is likely to be a brisk demand for Arabic grammars.
>
> (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 21 October 1882, 2)

Enterprising publishers, such as W. H. Allen (which specialised in the colonial market), placed advertisements for Arabic language books in British newspapers in the summer of 1882, including works by Kayat and Forbes, as well as more formal Arabic grammars that can have been of little use to a soldier needing Arabic for active duty (Figure 4.3).

W. H. Allen also rushed to get their own Arabic book onto the market, by Anton Tien, former interpreter in the Crimean War. Tien was

**THE EXPEDITION TO EGYPT.**

*WORKS IN ARABIC FOR THE USE OF OFFICERS.*

THE ARABIC MANUAL. Comprising a condensed Grammar of both Classical and Modern Arabic; Reading Lessons and Exercises, with Analyses, and a Vocabulary of Useful Words. By Professor E. H. PALMER, M.A., Reader and Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge, &c. Fcap. 7s. 6d.

THE EASTERN TRAVELLER'S INTERPRETER; or, Arabic Without a Teacher. Dialogues in English and Arabic. By ASSAAD YAKOOB KAYAT. Oblong. 2s. 6d.

A GRAMMAR OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE. By E. H. PALMER, M.A., Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge. 8vo, 18s.

A GRAMMAR OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE, for the Use of Self-Instructing Students. By DUNCAN FORBES, LL.D. 8vo, 18s.

ARABIC READING LESSONS. Consisting of Easy Extracts from the be t Authors, together with a Vocabulary of all the Words occurring in the Text, and Explanatory Annotations, &c. By DUNCAN FORBES, LL.D., &c. 8vo, 15s.

AN ENGLISH-ARABIC DICTIONARY. By Dr. STEINGASS. [*Nearly ready.*]

London: W. H. ALLEN and CO., 13, WATERLOO-PLACE.

**Figure 4.3** Advertisements for Arabic books in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 July 1882, 13. Public domain. Held at the Bodleian Library. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

at that time a minister in Gravesend in Kent (on his life, see Mairs 2018; on his 1882 book, Zack 2016). Tien's *Egyptian, Syrian and North-African Handbook* was billed as 'a simple phrasebook in English and Arabic for the use of the armed forces and civilians' (Tien 1882). It contains listings of vocabulary by category, phrases and a dictionary with transcribed Arabic. There is no grammar. Information on phonology or dialect goes only so far as a short note explaining that 'the great difference between the Syrian and Egyptian Arabic' is that the latter pronounces *jīm* as 'hard g'. Tien also explains that 'an apostrophe placed before a vowel indicates that it is pronounced gutturally' (Tien 1882, no pagination). Examination of the vocabulary reveals that this is the way in which Tien indicates *'ayn* /ʕ/. Tien's transcription does not clearly distinguish between consonants such as *ḥā'* /h/ and *ḫā'* /ħ/ or *'ayn* /ʕ/ and *hamza* /ʔ/. The language is a mixture of Syrian (Tien's own native dialect) and standard Arabic, with occasional Egyptian features (Zack 2016, 7–8). Given Tien's military experience, there is a lot of material in the dialogues of specific use to soldiers, such as 'We assure you that no harm will happen to you if you surrender / nahaqiq

lak in laisa 'alaik khatar iza sallamt' or 'The enemy's cavalry is advancing on our right flank / khayalah al-'adoo moqaddamah 'ala yamina' (Tien 1882, 87). Some of the material in the dialogues is, however, taken directly from al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840.

Positive reviews of Tien's phrasebook, such as that in the *Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, thought it 'one of those handy little books which are always in demand when circumstances compel foreigners to reside for a time in distant lands' (13 March 1883, 2). Its deficiencies – no explanation of grammar or phonology, confusing transcription, mixture of dialects, plagiarism – are the result of rushing a volume into print to coincide with the British occupation of Egypt. The volume may have been produced at the initiative of the publisher. If so, then Tien was an obvious choice for author: close to London, a native speaker of Arabic (neglecting the question of dialect), a military veteran and a respectable minister of the Church of England. If the initiative was Tien's, then the British campaign in Egypt of 1882 was an obvious opportunity to capitalise on his previous military service and linguistic expertise, or engage in an act of linguistic altruism.

Another of the earliest military Arabic books of the British occupation was that produced by Arthur Octavius Green (1847–1924). Two years after joining the Royal Engineers at the age of 19, Green was posted to Bengal, where he remained until 1878. In 1882, he was posted to Egypt. He fought at Tell el-Kebir, where he was severely wounded, perhaps using his convalescence to work on his Arabic book. He later served on the Nile Expedition (on which see further below). Green's *Practical Arabic Grammar*, printed at Būlāq in 1883/1884,[3] seems to have initially been produced in response to the immediate linguistic demands of the occupation. In the Preface, Green records how it was first distributed 'sheet by sheet, to the Officers and Men of the Army of Occupation, to the English Officer serving in the Egyptian Army, the Gendarmerie, and the Police'. This is similar to the circumstances under which Reginald Campbell Thompson's *List of Words and Phrases in the Basrah Dialect of Arabic* was produced during the First World War: initially as locally produced copies for the army's immediate needs on arriving in Iraq, then printed and distributed in book form (Chapter 5).

Green lays no claim to originality; he does not even claim to know Arabic. He lists the systems and books which he has used in the compilation of his own. He applied 'the system of teaching European languages adopted by Dr. Otto in his French, German and Italian Grammars', and states that 'the very excellent German-Arabic Grammar by Professor Wahrmund has been largely copied from, as well as the works of Fâris [al-Shidyāq], Forbes,

Wright, and Yacoub Nakhlah' (Green 1883/1884, unpaginated Preface). Green also thanks Shaker el-Khowri, 'Interpreter to the Chief Paymaster of the Army of Occupation'; Yacoub Nakhlah; and Hassan Pasha Husni, Director of the Būlāq Press. Shaker el-Khowri appears on the same page of the Nile Expedition medal rolls as his fellow interpreter Getzel Zelikovits (Chapter 6); in Graph 1 I therefore make the assumption that they knew one another. As Liesbeth Zack has discussed, Green's freely admitted copying from these disparate works on both dialectal and standard Arabic makes the resulting book a curious jumble of different registers, sometimes even within a single phrase (Zack 2016, 9–10; this problem was also noted by E. G. Browne, in the 1903 report discussed above).

Green's book uses the Arabic script, with transliteration. The focus is on grammar–translation; more conversational phrases (greetings, enquiring after someone's health) are not introduced until page 39. It would not have been effective as a phrasebook for simple everyday communication, and is unlikely to have been comprehensible to someone who did not have a good knowledge of grammatical terminology and past experience of learning another language in a similar style. The very first lesson contains the sentence 'In simple sentences in which the subject is a substantive, and the predicate an adjective, the subject is preceded by the definite article, followed by the simple adjective.' This is a very convoluted way of explaining that Arabic does not mark the verb 'to be' in the present tense, so that 'the father is good' is rendered *al-āb ṭayyib* – literally 'the father good'. Green could have got his point across much more effectively by using simpler language.

Contemporary opinions of Green's book varied. The book's deficiencies and inconsistencies – and the existence of many competing volumes – must have been obvious to anyone who knew Arabic well, but many reviewers were not in a position to assess the quality of the Arabic. The *Army and Navy Gazette* thought that for an officer to have produced such a book while on service 'speaks highly for his capacity and industry'. The reviewer claimed to have consulted 'an excellent scholar, who says he considers it sound and scientific as grammar, and excellently adapted for the object indicated by the author' and concluded that it 'may be recommended with confidence as one of the best, if not the very best, Arabic grammars in existence' (*Army and Navy Gazette*, 26 July 1884, 2). Other reviews of the first and later editions (second edition 1887, third 1893, fourth 1901, revised fourth edition 1909) were complimentary if not quite so enthusiastic (e.g. *Western Morning News*, 29 November 1887, 7; *Army and Navy Gazette*, 10 April 1909, 7). In 1893, Green also published a collection of Arabic stories and poems, to be used by those studying the language (Green 1893).

Green's army records show that he was in Egypt from 1882 to 1887, and again from 1893 to 1898. He did not return to India, but did publish a *Practical Hindūstānī Grammar* in England in 1895 (Green 1895; Safadi 2012, 40–41). He is one of several authors of Arabic books for the British military who also published works on Indian languages. Green's Hindustani grammar provides some much-needed context for the Arabic work which preceded it. In the Preface, Green explains how it had long been his ambition to write a Hindustani grammar, since his time as an interpreter for the Bengal Sappers and Miners in the Punjab in the 1870s. He collected 'much material for the purpose' but lent it to someone who was revising for a military examination in Hindustani, who then lost it (Green 1895, v). Back in England in the early 1890s, between postings in Egypt, Green set up a Hindustani class at the Royal Engineers' training institute at Chatham. This inspired him to start writing his Hindustani grammar again, although he faced a further hurdle when part of the new manuscript was lost in the post between England and Egypt. As in his Arabic work, he states that 'no claim is laid to originality' and cites other Hindustani grammars and instruction books as his sources.

Other sources also suggest that Green's less-than-successful Arabic grammar was borne out of his frustrated ambitions as a South Asian linguist. The *Army and Navy Gazette*, reviewing one of the many editions of his Arabic book, describes him as 'a linguist of rare accomplishments', and notes – on what authority I do not know – that Green had also 'worked in India at Pushtu and Persian for seven years, but his services were not accepted for Afghanistan' (*Army and Navy Gazette*, 10 April 1909, 7). Green's books did not find much official favour from British adminis-trators and military command (see Chatterjee 2006, 320, for Sir Alfred Lyall's unfavourable view of Green's works). His Hindustani book was recommended for use at the Royal Miliary Academy at Sandhurst by the Hindustani professor there, Faiz Ali Khan, without success. The *Army and Navy Gazette* noted with dismay that the 'old-fashioned Forbes' Manual, practically condemned 30 years ago by every one in India, is still used at Sandhurst' (*Army and Navy Gazette*, 12 October 1901, 1001).

Green is representative of the kind of author who produced Arabic works for the British military in Egypt in the early 1880s: trained in India, relatively new to Egypt and to Arabic, used to working in a technical field within the army that required precise communication, and bringing experience (and sometimes frustrated ambition) as an Indian linguist to a language and context in which this experience may or may not have been applicable. Alfred Montgomery Mantell (1860–1946), like Green, joined the Royal Engineers in his late teens. He was born in India and,

after training at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich, his first overseas posting was in Palestine, where he undertook surveying work in 1881–1882. Mantell served in Egypt from 1882 to 1887 and again from 1902 to 1906. His English–Arabic and Arabic–English *Dictionary of Military Technical Terms* was published in Cairo, and assembled from 'the various military works translated from English into Arabic from 1883 to 1886 ... Some have also been taken from Army Forms now in use, and others given by Egyptian officers serving in the Egyptian Army' (Mantell 1886, 3). This suggests to me that Mantell – if he is honest in not naming any assistants – could read and write Arabic. Mantell distinguishes between the literary Arabic pronunciation of certain words and that commonly used by Egyptian officers, and also points out that there are many Turkish terms in use in the Egyptian Army, which are not pronounced as they would be in Turkish. As well as words used for ranks, equipment and the enforcement of military discipline, there are many terms that reflect Mantell's own engineering background (Figure 4.4).

Several military Arabic books published in the mid-1880s were directly connected with the Nile Expedition or 'Gordon Relief Expedition' of 1884–1885 (Green and el-Khowri also served on this, but Mantell did not). With new troop movements, once again, W. H. Allen placed newspaper advertisements for 'officers and others proceeding to Egypt' for Arabic works such as those of Kayat, Forbes and Tien (e.g. *Army and Navy Gazette*, 14 February 1885, 139). Reginald Marriott (1857–1930), who was born in India and whose revision of Thimm's *Arabic Self-Taught* was discussed in Chapter 3, was in Alexandria in 1882 and was Commanding Officer of the Camel Corps on the Nile Expedition. Like el-Khowri and Zelikovits, Demetrius Mosconas (1839–1895) was an interpreter on the Nile Expedition (on interpreters on the Nile Expedition, see Mairs 2016, 30–33); he had also been an interpreter for the British Army during its 1882 campaign in Egypt. He had studied hieroglyphs with Heinrich Brugsch and had written a book on obelisks (Mosconas 1877). Billing himself as 'Professor' Mosconas, he was later concessionaire of the 'Egyptian Temple' exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago (World's Columbian Exposition 1893). (It would be interesting to know if he was acquainted with Zelikovits, another interpreter on the Nile Expedition who enjoyed a brief career as an Egyptologist in the United States: Chapter 6 and Mairs 2023a.) Mosconas' *English & Arabic Dictionary: Accompanied by Dialogues & Useful Notes for the Use of the British Army of Occupation* (Mosconas 1884) is copied directly from Nakhlah 1874. The only original part is a section of 'Reconnaissance Questions', asking for information and intelligence about the local area; this is full

I

| English. | Arabic. | Transliteration. |
|---|---|---|
| ILLEGAL absence. | غياب غير قانوني | Ghiyâb gheyr qânûni. |
| ILL-TREATING his horse | سوء معاملته لحصانه | Sû- mu'âmalatuh li hu-sânuh. |
| IMPRISONMENT. | حبس | Habs. |
|   » with hard labour. | حبس مع الاشغال الشاقه | Habs ma' el ashghâl esh shâqqah. |
| IMPROPERLY dressed in bazaars (or streets or on guard). | اللبس على وجه غير لائق بالسوق (اوبالشارع او بالقره قول) | El libs 'ala wagh gheyr lâyiq bis sûq (aw bish shâri' aw bil qaraqôl). |
| INCENDIARY ball. | كله محرقه | Gullah muhriqah. |
| INCLINE (B.S.) | نوبة مائلا | Nôbet mâilan. |
| INCLINING. | المشى بالميل | El mashy bil meyl. |
| INDEPENDENT firing. | ضرب التار بالمناوبه | Darb en nâr bil munâwa-bah. |
| INDICATOR ring (Art.) | اسوره | Iswirah. |
|   » of rifle. | مرشد | Murshid. |
| INDIVIDUAL firing. | ضرب التار منفردا | Darb en nâr munfaridan. |
| INFANTRY. | ياده | Biyâdah. |
|   » , Mounted. | ياده راكبه | Biyâdah râkibah. |
| INITIAL Velocity. | السرعه الاصليه | Es sur'ah el aslîyah. |
| INQUIRY, Court of. | مجلس التحقيق | Meglis et tahqîq. |
| INSPECTION. | تفتيش | Teftish. |
| INSPECTOR. | مفتش | Mufettish. |
|   » General. | مفتش عوم | Mufettish 'umûm. |
| INSTRUCTOR. | تعليمجى | Ta'limgi. |
| INSUBORDINATION. | عدم الانقياد | 'Adam el inqiyâd. |

**Figure 4.4** Sample page from Mantell's *Dictionary of Military Technical Terms* (1886). Public domain. Available via Google Books at https://bit.ly/42vA6Y5

of grammatical errors and inconsistencies in dialect, which are in part a product of Mosconas' basic command of Arabic, and in part of his having lived in areas where several different dialects of Arabic were spoken (Zack 2016, 11–14).

Dublin-born Charles Moore Watson (1844–1916), another Royal Engineer, had perhaps the greatest experience with Arabic of any of the British officers who produced instruction books during the first phase of the British occupation in the 1880s. He had served with General Gordon in the Sudan in 1874–1875, and after being invalided home, worked in the War Office and India Office in London. He hoped to return to the Sudan, and so he studied Arabic with Rizqallāh Ḥassūn (1825–1878), whom we met in Chapter 2 as a friend of George Percy Badger and rival of Fāris al-Shidyāq. Watson was able to return to Egypt in 1882 and wrote to his wife that 'It is a great comfort my being able to talk Arabic a little – in

fact, without it one could not get on at all' (September 1882: Lane-Poole 1919, 109). References in his letters show that he was able to do little more than get by in spoken Arabic, despite his study of the literary language in England. Nevertheless, he found that:

> my services have been called into use as a teacher of Arabic. I gave a lecture on the grammar and pronunciation this morning of over an hour to a large party, including [the Duke of] Teck, who is very eager and works as hard as anybody. The idea of poor me coming out in this line is rather amusing, but, as you know, 'among the blind the one-eyed man is a prophet'.
>
> (8 August 1882: Lane-Poole 1919, 106–107)

This would have been at around the same time as Green was circulating the loose pages of the first version of his Arabic grammar.

Watson served in the Egyptian campaign of 1882 and received the surrender of the Cairo Citadel, but he remained in Cairo during the Nile Expedition and did not fulfil his wish to return to the Sudan. He retained his interest in the Sudan and its languages, publishing a short comparative vocabulary of eastern Sudanese Arabic, Hadendoa and Beni-Amer (Watson 1888). The cover page states that it was 'compiled by direction' of Watson, and it seems that he either wrote it from informants in Cairo, or during a relatively short stay in Suakin on the Red Sea coast. He was later involved with the Palestine Exploration Fund and wrote a number of works on the history and monuments of Palestine.

Watson published his *English-Arabic Vocabulary and Dialogues for the Use of the Army and Navy* during the Nile Expedition, and perhaps with it specifically in mind. It is visibly the product of his Arabic education: first exposure to the spoken language in the Sudan; book study of the literary language in England, with a Syrian-Armenian teacher; and practice in speaking and teaching in Egypt (Zack 2016, 14–18). His book therefore displays a similar mixture of the colloquial and the literary, and of different dialects, as Mosconas' does. Unfortunately, he also takes his 'Reconnaissance Questions' directly from Mosconas, and was therefore either unable to recognise the errors in grammar and inconsistencies in register or too trusting of Mosconas as a superior authority. Wisely, and perhaps drawing upon his own experience of teaching Arabic to British soldiers, he does not provide the grammatical onslaught of works like Green's: 'the following few remarks on the Arabic Grammar can only be considered as giving the barest outline. To attempt more than this would render the Manual too bulky' (Watson 1885, 10). He presents the same

grammatical issue that Green made so convoluted, as noted above, in a style that is much easier to understand: 'the verb "to be" is rarely used in the present tense, and is usually understood, as – *huwa 'askarī*, "he is a soldier" – literally, "he a soldier"' (Watson 1885, 14; he would have done even better to drop the indefinite article in the translation).

George Tindall Plunkett (1842–1922) was another talented military linguist. He fits the pattern of British military Arabic book authors in the 1880s perfectly: he joined the Royal Engineers aged 19, served in India from 1867 to 1876 and in Egypt from 1884 to 1887. He was on the Nile Expedition and his *Vocabulary English-Arabic* was first printed by the Field Printing Press in Aswan in 1886, shortly after the withdrawal of the British expedition from the Sudan, at a time when the southern frontier held particular strategic importance. A second printing was undertaken in Cairo shortly thereafter (with 'sold by Awad Hanna and Compy., opposite Shepheard's Hotel, Cairo' on the title page), and the book was advertised as 'specially adapted for Military and Navy men' (*Army and Navy Gazette*, 3 August 1889, 619). I have consulted copies of the 1886 Cairo printing and of the 1903 second edition.

Plunkett's linguistic career began in India, where he published a 'conversation manual' for Hindustani, Persian and Pashto. He thought that knowledge of Persian – a useful lingua franca across large parts of South and Central Asia – 'should be more generally diffused among British Officers; and that this knowledge should embrace a practical acquaintance with the colloquial idioms, as well as proficiency in the text-books used for the Examinations' (Plunkett 1875, vii). He modelled his work – which he wrote in Peshawar with the assistance of an official in the Military Works department, Saiyad Khādim Alī, and language teacher Ḳāzī Mahmūd Khān Khatak – on existing Hindustani manuals.

Despite Plunkett's dissatisfaction with the inability of military examinations to prepare officers to communicate effectively in the spoken, colloquial language, he was himself a successful linguist by the military's own standards. He passed the military Arabic examination and received the £10 grant that came with it in 1886 (*Army and Navy Gazette*, 6 February 1886, 113), and further qualified as an Arabic interpreter in 1890 (*Glasgow Evening News*, 9 May 1890, 3). He went on to pass an Italian examination in 1894 (*The Standard*, 18 May 1894, 6). He continued to concern himself with Arabic teaching and learning long after he left Egypt. In 1892, he read a paper at the International Congress of Orientalists in London on 'The Study of Arabic by Europeans'; this was the same congress attended by Aḥmad Zakī Pasha and described in *al-Safar ilā al-mu'tamar* (Zakī 1894; see Introduction). In his paper,

Plunkett argued for the British government to provide financial support for the study of modern Arabic, and proposed that a school should be set up in Egypt to train Egyptians in teaching Arabic to Europeans (Morgan 1893, xxxviii). Regrettably, this school was never established.

In later life, after he had retired from the army and become a museum curator in Dublin, Plunkett maintained his interest in Egypt and in Arabic. He published a book of 'Walks in Cairo', described by one guidebook as a 'slight but charming little brochure' (Reynolds-Ball 1899, 64). A second edition of his Arabic vocabulary was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1903. Plunkett added more vocabulary, and revised the spelling to reflect the transliteration scheme adopted by the Oriental Congress and Royal Asiatic Society. Plunkett describes the language used as 'the common dialect spoken in Cairo and on the Nile' (Plunkett 1886, Preface to 1903 second edition). There are indeed some typically Egyptian features, such as where he notes that in Cairo *qāf* is 'omitted and a slight pause or catch in the voice made in place of it', and that *jīm* is pronounced as 'hard g'. 'Where?' is rendered 'fain' in the 1886 edition and 'fen' in the 1903 one. Nevertheless, in many places in the book, Cairene and standard literary Arabic pronunciations are given side by side, such as 'itnen, ithnen' and 'talatah, thalāthah' for 'two' and 'three'.

Anton Tien's second Arabic handbook, also issued by W. H. Allen and Co., appeared in 1885. Despite his previous experience in writing phrasebooks, Tien takes his model for this book from manuals for Hindi and Urdu: he thanks Professor Selim Kassab, Dr Reinhold Rost, Chief Librarian of India House, and Frederic Pincott, author of Hindi and Urdu books. Unlike his 1882 handbook, which seems to have been produced quite quickly, his *Manual of Colloquial Arabic* gave him more space for reflection on the linguistic needs of the British Army (Tien 1885). His military service and qualifications are mentioned prominently on the title page: 'Formerly Oriental Secretary on Lord Raglan's staff during the Crimean campaign'. The book is dedicated to Prince George, Duke of Cambridge (cousin of Queen Victoria), 'in remembrance of Crimean days'. Like other critics of British official policy towards language teaching at the time, Tien thought that:

> there is no country in Western Europe to which the encouragement of the study of Arabic should be a matter of more vital interest than England. Yet, although opportunities for the study of the classical language are afforded by our Universities, comparatively few students have been able to attain colloquial Arabic.
>
> (Tien 1885, vi)

In support of his position, he cites reports in the British press about both the support granted to the study of Arabic in Russia and Italy, and occasions on which the British military had been let down by its lack of competent Arabists. Tien explains the existence of Arabic dialects and gives examples of a few phrases (e.g. 'how do you do?') in Syrian, Egyptian, North African, Ḥijāzī and Yemenite. His focus is, however, on Syrian and Egyptian.

Although Tien uses some Arabic grammatical terminology, the 'unique selling point' of the book is that 'an attempt has been made for the first time to adapt the construction of Arabic Grammar to the Western mind, with the object of removing what has hitherto been the greatest stumbling-block to the acquisition of the Arabic language by European students' (Tien 1885, x). What this means, in part, is that Tien has aimed to make his Arabic manual look like language textbooks which learners might previously have encountered for ancient and modern European or Indian languages. This leads to some curious features, such as a Latin-style nominal declension table for *walad* ('boy' or 'child') in the nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative and ablative (Figure 4.5). Classical Arabic does have equivalents to Indo-European nominative (*al-marfū'*), genitive (*al-majrūr*) and accusative (*al-manṣūb*) noun case endings, but these are not regularly used in the spoken dialects, and are not, in any case, what Tien has given here. Instead, the reader is either told that the noun does not modify in a particular case or given a 'case' created with a preposition. While this may have been comfortingly familiar to a learner raised on the study of Latin and other languages in this way, it adds little to the comprehension and active use of Arabic.

Tien's *Manual of Colloquial Arabic* ran through at least six editions, into the 1900s. It was commonly advertised together with his Turkish and Greek ('Neo-Hellenic') instruction books in publications such as the *Army and Navy Gazette* (e.g. 7 April 1906, 320). Reviewers did appear to find his Latin-style presentation of Arabic helpful: 'With remarkable skill he has recast all the forbidding Oriental technicalities into Western moulds; and, behold, simplicity reigns where complication hitherto held sway!' (*Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 14 July 1885, 2). On a less practical note, Tien's local paper reported that:

> The Rev. Dr. Anton Tien having forwarded a copy of his 'Manual of Colloquial Arabic' to the King of the Belgians, has received a letter of thanks from his Majesty, who has ordered a number of copies of the

**Figure 4.5** 'Declension' in Tien's *Manual of Colloquial Arabic* (1885), 21. Public domain. Held at the Bodleian Library. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

work for the Congo. A similar communication has also been received from the King of Italy.

> (*Gravesend Reporter, North Kent and South Essex Advertiser*,
> 1 August 1885, 5)

Arabic is not widely spoken in the Congo.

## The 1890s to the outbreak of the First World War

After the initial 'rush' of the occupation of Egypt in 1882 and Nile Expedition of 1884–1885, there was a lull in the publication of Arabic books specifically for the British military in Egypt. Donald Andreas Cameron (1856–1936) published an *Arabic-English Vocabulary* with the firm of Bernard Quaritch (Cameron 1892), which had previously

published al-Shidyāq's Arabic grammar (Shidiac 1856) and Catafago's dictionary. Cameron was born in India and began his career as a student interpreter in Constantinople for the Levant Consular Service (1879–1881), before going on to a series of diplomatic and judicial posts in the Arab world: Consul at Suakin 1885–1888, Consul at Benghazi 1888–1889, Judge at the Native Court of Appeal in Cairo 1889–1897, Consul-General at Port Said 1905–1909 and Consul-General at Alexandria 1909–1919. He wrote a review of Thimm's *Egyptian Self-Taught* for the *Egyptian Gazette*, which was used in preparing the second edition of 1898 (see Chapter 3). He is likely to have been aware of the works of James Sanua, since he lists '*aboo n-naddára*, the man who wears spectacles' (Sanua's nom de plume) in his vocabulary (Cameron 1892, 2). He knew another Arabic book author, J. Selden Willmore (see below), since they were both student interpreters in Constantinople and were appointed to the Native Court of Appeal at the same time. The London *Morning Post* was of the view that 'Both gentlemen are competent Arabic scholars, and will doubtless prove an acquisition to the native Courts, which require such "stiffening" as an Englishman alone can give them' (15 October 1889, 5).

Writing in Cairo in November 1891, Cameron reflects that his book 'contains the result of twelve years' study and experience of Arabic in Syria, Egypt, the Soudan, and Tripoli' (Cameron 1892, vii). He had originally put it together for his own use and provides a detailed account of how it was assembled:

> The following plan has been adopted in its compilation: –
>
> 1st. Taking Freytag's 'Arabic-Latin Lexicon' as a guide, I went through the volume, selected what I wanted, and drew up a skeleton list of the most important verbal roots and their derivatives.
>
> 2nd. I then read carefully through the Arabic text of the Egyptian codes of law, line by line, adding words with their modern meanings to the skeleton list. This task supplied me with hundreds of terms relating not merely to law, but also to public and social life, government, commerce, crime, &c.; moreover, it showed how the best Egyptian authorities translate good French into good modern Arabic. The phraseology of a code forms a high standard of the common language of educated natives; it is unpedantic, simple, accurate and concise.
>
> 3rd. I collected numerous words by a systematic course of reading of official MSS., decrees, circulars, annual budgets, reports and

journals. I also added some colloquialisms, and a few military and scientific terms.

The entire draft was then revised with the aid of native clerks. I would read out an Arabic word, and ask them to explain it; I would then translate my own explanation, and thus verify or correct it. The MS. was then submitted to the scrutiny of my native colleagues of the Court of Appeal, and it is to their never-failing kindness and assistance that I am most deeply indebted for all that is of value in this book. While, therefore, I alone am responsible for any defects or shortcomings, the student may feel confident that this is a serious professional attempt to furnish him with a concise abridgment, a coherent synopsis, of the vocabulary which is daily used by native officials of the Egyptian Government.

(Cameron 1892, v–vi)

Cameron's methodology bears comparison to that of Mantell, who also used recent translations from English and French into Arabic, and official documents, in assembling his word list (on Cameron's approach, see further Mairs forthcoming-a). Cameron reflects in passing on difficulties and methods in learning to speak colloquial Arabic. The majority of servants in Cairo were Nubian, speaking their own language and a form of Arabic which Cameron dismisses as a 'grossly inaccurate *patois*'. Foreigners therefore could not rely on learning Arabic from or practising it with their servants, who were probably the locals with whom they came into most sustained daily contact. Cameron notes that:

those among us who speak the best Arabic are invariably men who have had to deal with fellaheen (soldiers, policemen, or peasants), and with junior native officials. Not only is the pronunciation of these Englishmen good, but they can speak Arabic intelligibly, and in connected sentences, upon matters which require a little thought to explain or to understand, even in English.

(Cameron 1892, vii)

Further insight into what Cameron believed to be his qualifications for writing about Arabic and about Egypt can be gleaned from his historical survey *Egypt in the Nineteenth Century*, published a few years later. To do justice to the history of Egypt under the dynasty of Muḥammad ʿAlī, Cameron states that the historian needs 'a certain amount of training in Oriental languages, familiarity with the manners and customs of the East; one should have lived not only in Egypt, but also, if possible, on the shores

of the Bosphorus, in Asia Minor, Syria, Arabia, and the Soudan' (Cameron 1898, 1–2). He can only have been thinking of his own career.

Cameron's book is essentially a dictionary, but also contains a short guide to pronunciation and to weights, measures and calendars used in Egypt. As well a describing the pronunciation of each Arabic letter separately, he also groups together sounds which are similar to an English ear, listing minimal pairs – or near minimal pairs – but without explicitly making the essential point that these sounds must be clearly distinguished (Cameron 1892, ix). There are therefore considerable barriers to using the book for help in speaking Arabic – but this is not of course what Cameron intended it for.

In the same year as Cameron's work appeared, Ibrahim Gad, who worked as an interpreter for the Mixed Court of Appeal and Mixed Tribunal in Alexandria, published a *Dictionnaire français-arabe des termes judiciaires, administratifs et commerciaux / Qāmūs Faransāwī-ʿArabī lil-iṣṭilāḥāt al-qānūniyya wa-al-idāriyya wa-al-tijāriyya* (Gad 1892). The linguistic practicalities of the courts in Egypt did not, of course, solely revolve around English speakers working in Arabic, but also involved Arabic speakers working in English and French, and navigating through multiple languages in a single case. Gad gives us a sense of the difficulties involved in such work, referring to 'la pénible fonction de traducteur / hādhihi al-waẓīfa ṣaʿbat al-mirās' in his bilingual preface (Gad 1892, unpaginated). The Arabic – though not the French – refers to translation as an art: *fann al-tarjima*.

Quaritch published another Arabic vocabulary by a consular official the following year: *An English-Arabic Vocabulary for the Use of Students of the Colloquial* by Edward Vincent Stace (1841–1903). Badger 1881 and the 1889 edition of Shidiac 1856 are advertised on the back cover. Stace was born in Ireland and had served in the army in India. He seems to have had some familiarity with Hindustani, since he marks the occasional Hindustani word in use in Aden Arabic. The title page of his vocabulary describes him as 'First Assistant Political Resident Aden and Political Agent and Consul, Somali Coast Protectorate'. He thanks 'my friend, Mr. Ali Jaffer, Head Clerk of the Somali Coast Political Agency' for his 'willing and patient aid' in compiling his book (Stace 1893, viii). In contrast to Cameron's work, the dictionary is English–Arabic, and so intended for active use of the target language, not primarily for reading Arabic. Stace stresses that he is not a scholar: 'All that I have done has been to collect some of the words and phrases which I have actually heard used in conversation or found in letters and petitions addressed to me' (Stace 1893, vii). The language 'is that of the streets, the bazaar, trading ports,

and the caravans from Yemen' and 'I have not hesitated to introduce some rather coarse expressions; but to be able to converse with people such as the lower classes of Arabs one *must* understand even such words' (Stace 1893, vii–viii).

A review in *The Homeward Mail from India, China and the East* thought the dictionary format was more useful than a phrasebook: 'the customary method of arranging imaginary conversations on particular subjects has always proved a source of disappointment, for it involves an expenditure of time in tracing the use of a word which few have the patience to endure' (15 August 1893, 1086). Instead, Stace lists some phrases under the principal item of vocabulary or type of clause involved, as in Figure 4.6 where a number of conditional phrases are given under the entry for 'If'.

The reviewer notes 'the strangeness of some of the expressions, and the irregularity of much of the grammar'. European Arabists in this period often treated dialectal Arabic as incorrect or degenerate. Insufficient distinction was made between the genuinely incorrect (e.g. by someone with a poor command of the language) and the merely non-classical. In this case, the reviewer seems to be referring to dialect and register, not Stace's competence, since they conclude:

> It is, however, of great importance that people who hold daily intercourse with the people, whether as officials, tradesmen, or travellers, should possess this very knowledge. The tall talk of literature is very good for the student; but the curt expressions of daily life are wanted by the practical man.

John Selden Willmore (1856–1931) followed a similar career trajectory to D. A. Cameron (on his life, writings and promotion of colloquial Egyptian as the language of written and spoken communication in Egypt, see Ghobrial 2004, 5–19, and Zack 2014, 12–13). He was born in France, and may therefore have been exposed to both French and English as a child. After education in England, he studied Oriental languages at Cambridge and took some time out during his degree to train as a student interpreter in Constantinople (1879). Willmore was appointed British Vice-Consul in Angora (Ankara) in 1885 and in Alexandria in 1887, and became Acting Consul in Alexandria in 1889. Like Cameron, he was appointed to the Native Court of Appeal in 1889. In 1917, he published *The Welfare of Egypt*, a pamphlet arguing that Egypt had benefited from the British occupation. He married Edith Mabel Caillard (1870–1958), daughter of the Director-General of Egyptian Customs, in 1890. Edith wrote the

Hurt (p.p.). مَرْمَع · مَعْوِر

Husband. بَعْل · زوج pl. ازواج

Husk, coffee. قِشر

Hut. pl. عَريش · عُشّة pl. عُرشان · عرش

Hyena. pl. ضَبّة · ضَبّ pl. عَرْجة · ضباع · عرجات

Hypocrisy. نِفَاق · رِياء

Hypocrite. كاهِن · مُرائي · مُنَافِق

### I.

I (pron.). أَنا

— myself. نَفْسي · أَنا لوحدي

Ibex. وِعْل · أَوْعَال pl. وعول

Idea, a good. رَأي صَايِب

Id est. أَعْني · يَعْني

Idiom. اصطلاح

Idle. أكسل ;more idle, كسلان

— (in vain). عاطِل

Idleness. كَسَل

If. إنْكَان · إذا · لَو

— we had known it was from you, we would have accepted it. لو كُنّا عَالمين إنّه مِنّك كنا قَبِلناه

— I would have given it to you if I had thought it fit. كُنت بأعطيك إيّاه إذا كُنت اظن إنه لايق

If you had advanced, they would have run away. إنكان كُنت قَدّمت لكانوا هَربوا

— I had known this, I would have done, &c. انكان كُنت داري بهذا لكنت فَعلت

— he had told me before, it is possible that the affair might have turned out differently. لو كان أَخبَرني مِن قَبل يُمكِن أَن يكون الأَمر بِخلاف ذلك

— you had told me so, I would not have insisted on your going. إنكان كُنت قُلت لي انا ما كُنت لَزِمتك في المسير

— you had told me that he was in the bazaar, I would not have made you go. لو كُنت قلت لي انه في السوق لما كُنت غصبتك تروح

— you had gone, you would not have fallen sick. لو كُنت سِرت لما كُنت مَرِضت

— he had mentioned that, it is possible that he might have been fortunate and would have recovered, but it is too late now. لو كان ذَكر ذلك يُمكِن أنه كَان معه نَصيب ويَتبَاخر لكن الآن الوقت فَات



**Figure 4.6** Conditional clauses in Stace's *English-Arabic Vocabulary* (1893), 85. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

libretto for an opera, *Sesostris*, performed at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo (on the south side of Azbakiyya) in 1899, in which tourists at an Egyptian temple encounter figures from Egypt's Pharaonic past. A chorus of dragomans rhymes two of the Arabic words best known by tourists: 'Welcome Ladies, we should be mafeesh / But for your compassionate backsheesh' (E. M. S. Willmore 1899, 2).

Willmore published two Arabic books. *The Spoken Arabic of Egypt* (J. S. Willmore 1901) is a comprehensive scholarly survey of Egyptian colloquial Arabic (394 pages long in its first edition). An introduction by Archibald Sayce praises it for treating Cairene Arabic as a 'living organism' and building on the pioneering work of Spitta. Willmore opens his work by pointing out the major problems (mixture of dialect and confusing orthography) of existing works on 'vulgar' Arabic:

> We find a confusion between two spoken dialects, such as Egyptian and Syrian, or a hopeless mixture of forms and expressions used only in conversation with those which are peculiar to the written language. In some of these grammars the Arabic words are written in Roman characters without any method; in others the Arabic letters are employed.
>
> (J. S. Willmore 1901, vii)

Above and beyond teaching colloquial Cairene Arabic to foreigners, Willmore's concern is to establish the position of the dialect as a respected standard language for use in Egypt, in place of Classical or literary Arabic. In contrast to authors who denigrate the spoken language of Egypt, Willmore views it as 'vulgar only in the sense that it is popular and universal' (J. S. Willmore 1901, x). Willmore argues that adopting it as the written and spoken standard would benefit the mass of the Egyptian people, who have not been educated in the literary language, and contribute to 'the progress of the nation' (J. S. Willmore 1901, xi). He quotes with approval the American scholar Willard Fiske's arguments for the adoption of a Romanised writing system for Egyptian Arabic (on Fiske's project, see Zack 2014, and below on his collaboration with Socrates Spiro). Willmore's observations on Egyptian Arabic show an unusual sensitivity to pronunciation for works by an English speaker of this date. He picks up on small but important features that might have been missed by the casual learner and would only have been evident to someone who had been immersed in the spoken language, such as the use of 'helping vowels' and the effects of emphatic consonants on the quality of the vowels that follow them.

Willmore's other major innovation in teaching Egyptian Arabic was to publish not one, but two instruction books. *The Spoken Arabic of Egypt* is designed for thorough study. The companion volume, called *Handbook of Spoken Egyptian Arabic* on the title page and *A Manual of the Spoken Arabic of Egypt* on the front cover, is a pocket-sized book of around a hundred pages in its various editions. It came out in 1903, with the fourth and final revised edition in 1927. The *Army and Navy Gazette*, which had praised *The Spoken Arabic of Egypt* as having 'completed what Spitta Bey began' (28 December 1901, 1265), also thought well of the new 'thin pocket volume', but advised students to acquire the larger book (11 June 1904, 560). Writing from the perspective of 'Egyptian excursionists' rather than soldiers, a reviewer in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* noted with approval that 'The book occupies a minimum of space, and is adapted, by its rounded edges, to the possible confinement of a breast pocket' (18 March 1903, 7). The shorter book comprises a condensed grammar and vocabulary. Willmore advises that 'If a careful study is made of the few pages comprising the former [the grammar], it will be found possible to so use the vocabulary as to obtain a store of expressions sufficient for all ordinary needs' (J. S. Willmore, 1903, v). Willmore advises the learner to ask a native speaker to help them with pronunciation of the emphatic consonants. Aside from a short section of 'polite expressions in general use', the work is restricted to a descriptive grammar and alphabetical English–Arabic vocabulary. It is left to the initiative of the learner to construct their own sentences; it could not be used for everyday purposes by a tourist.

In Chapter 3, I quoted an excerpt from the 1878 Baedeker guide to Lower Egypt, which recommended that travellers interested in learning Arabic consult one of several recommended teachers, and also that they might receive helpful information from Dr Spitta at the Viceregal Library. The philologist Daniel Willard Fiske (1831–1904), arriving in Cairo in the winter of 1880–1881, did precisely this. Fiske, also a librarian, visited Spitta at the library and became interested in modern Arabic from conversation with him. He was staying at Shepheard's Hotel, and approached the nearby American Mission for an Arabic teacher. Socrates Spiro (1863–?), then a student at the American College, was recommended by the missionaries (White 1925, 159–160; on Fiske and Spiro's project, see Zack 2014). In 1888 Fiske returned to Egypt and again sought out Spiro as his teacher. Spiro worked with Fiske on his project of developing a Romanised form of Arabic during stays in Italy and Switzerland in the early 1890s, and when Fiske was again in Egypt in the winters of 1896–1897 and 1897–1898. Fiske did not author an Arabic grammar or phrasebook, but I am interested in his working relationship with Spiro

because it may suggest how other European or American scholars worked with their Arabic-speaking collaborators. Spiro, writing in 1922 to Fiske's biographer H. S. White, recalled their work in Cairo in the later 1890s as follows:

> As I was free in the afternoons, I was with him every day about 4 P.M. and we worked together, he devising and I putting into Arabic all he wrote or suggested. The list of post offices in Egypt, the pamphlets, the leaflets and the thousand and one other publications of the sort were all prepared and translated at that time [Spiro is referring to the pamphlets in Romanised Egyptian Arabic which Fiske published as proof-of-concept for their project, listed by Zack 2014, 4]. He also wrote an article in English, which I got published for him in the Arabic press, after having put it into Arabic, and I invited intelligent Egyptians, litterateurs, journalists and others to meet him, and he spoke to them of his views on their language and the manner in which it should be written. I also brought him into contact with printers with whom he discussed the printing of Arabic in Arabic characters and the advantage of replacing these characters by the Latin.
>
> (Spiro in White 1925, 161)

Spiro is assertive in claiming credit for his own considerable role in Fiske's project, writing after Fiske's death, with pride and affection for their working relationship and what they achieved together. Fiske did not write about their collaboration. In *An Egyptian Alphabet for the Egyptian People* (1897) he pays lengthy tribute to Spitta's work, but does not mention Spiro at all. The collaborative work described by Spiro – the daily intellectual labour and the sharing of his own personal connections among the Egyptian intelligentsia – made a project like Fiske's possible. Similar scenarios most probably lie, uncredited or only partially credited, behind the Arabic instruction books discussed above.

Spiro was of Syrian and Greek descent. After his education at the American Mission College in Cairo, he went on to an illustrious career as a civil servant, but his career was cut short in 1907 by allegations of corruption (see e.g. the report in the *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 4 October 1907). Spiro was in Europe at the time, teaching at the University of Geneva, and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in absentia. He was arrested in Switzerland in 1910 and returned to Alexandria for trial, where he was acquitted (*Daily Telegraph*, 22 August 1910, 5). Subsequently, Spiro made his living as a journalist and author.

In his letter to White, Spiro noted, 'In the days of Professor Fiske and during all the time I was in government service, my articles were not signed by me' (White 1925, 167). The works for which he did receive credit include his Arabic–English and English–Arabic dictionaries for colloquial Egyptian (Spiro 1895 and 1897; he mentions Fiske only in passing in the introductions to these), which became standard works and went through several editions separately and as a single volume; *A New Practical Grammar of the Modern Arabic of Egypt* in Luzac's series of Oriental Grammars in 1912; and a 1919 *Pocket Grammar and Vocabulary of the Modern Arabic of Egypt* (Spiro 1919). Spiro also revised a student's English–Arabic and Arabic–English dictionary published by Alfred Hindié in 1927.

The opening chapter of Spiro's 1912 *New Practical Grammar* extols colloquial Egyptian Arabic as 'not a mere dialect unfit to employ in refined society, but a rich language more capable of expressing clearly and distinctly all modern ideas and shades of thought than the dead and buried classical' (Spiro 1912, viii). Spiro traces the development of a modern European tradition of teaching colloquial Arabic, in much the same way as the present book, to teachers like Bocthor at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes and al-Ṭanṭāwī in St Petersburg (Spiro 1912, ix–xi). He is aware of being part of this long tradition, as well as the more recent tradition, since the British occupation, of a proliferation of Arabic grammars for foreigners of varying quality. He uses the system 'of European grammars with which the student is familiar' (Spiro 1912, iii): that is, a grammar–translation approach, with short lessons introducing new vocabulary and grammar, and exercises for translation from and into Arabic. There are no phrases or dialogues, with the exception of a few commonly used greetings and polite formulae.

A review in *The Moslem World* (signed only 'T', but probably by William St. Clair Tisdall, one of the journal's editors) places Spiro's book in context, and accuses it of the same mixture of the classical and the colloquial which characterises many other books:

It is not from want of help that students of the Egyptian colloquial suffer, if they do suffer. Almost every year something new appears in this line, and the book before us is the latest. … The sentences are, for the most part, very short and scanty, and lack the living interest with which Willmore contrived to invest his, which is the less excusable because to Spiro Bey the Egyptian colloquial is a native tongue. … [The reviewer criticises Spiro's system of transliteration, and the fact that the final exercises are given in unvowelled Arabic script only.] …

> In scores of instances the author has had the *form of the classical*, not the *sound of the colloquial* in his mind. But how futile is this in a book, the whole object of which is to enable us to talk correctly!
>
> (*The Moslem World* 3.4, 1913, 432)

In 1919, Spiro published a more condensed version of this grammar and vocabulary at the Nile Mission Press in Cairo. Although he does not mention the war, it seems more than likely that its publication was intended to serve this new expanded military market for Arabic instruction books (considered in Chapter 5).

## The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Aden

### Sudan

The Al-Mokattam Printing Office in Cairo, which printed Spiro's Arabic–English and English–Arabic vocabularies, in collaboration with Quaritch in London, also printed Harold François Saphir Amery's *English-Arabic Vocabulary for the Use of Officials in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Amery 1905). After the conquest of the Sudan in 1896–1899, new demand was created for Arabic instruction books for British soldiers there, just as the initial British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the Nile Expedition of 1884–1885 had acted as catalysts for the publication of instruction books. During and after the campaign itself, booksellers took advantage of the opportunity to advertise existing Arabic works to travellers to the Sudan. Quaritch's catalogue for September 1898 (the month of the Mahdist defeat at Omdurman) included the 1891 edition of Fāris al-Shidyāq's decades-old *Practical Grammar of the Arabic Language*, revised by Henry Williams, as well as Cameron 1892, pitched at 'the thoughtful travellers who will be tempted by Sir Herbert Kitchener's signal victory to proceed up the Nile to Khartoum' (*Penny Illustrated Paper*, 10 September 1898, 4). The *Aberdeen Press and Journal* reported that 'Messrs Cook and Son are already making arrangements to run steamers to Khartoum next season' and recommended Thimm's *Egyptian Self-Taught* (30 September 1898, 5). The conquest also brought opportunities for linguists. One Andrew W. McKay of Glasgow, who had served on the earlier Nile Expedition of 1884–1885, advertised in the *Army and Navy Gazette* for a position 'as attendant and interpreter to an officer or other gentleman going to the Soudan; has a thorough knowledge of colloquial Arabic' (12 September 1896, 776).

Most of the works produced specifically for use in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan presuppose that the user already knows some Arabic: they are more along the lines of 'conversion courses' to enable British officials who are taking or have already taken military Arabic exams, or used Arabic in Egypt, to adapt to the Sudan. Amery (1877–1914) worked in military intelligence. He had been in the army in India, which is also where two of his elder siblings were born, while his father was working for the Indian forestry service. His mother, born in Hungary, was the sister of the Orientalist Gottlieb Leitner, who studied to be an interpreter in Constantinople and served in that capacity in the Crimean War. Among Leitner's published works was an 1871 Arabic grammar in Urdu (on Amery's family, see Rubinstein 2000). Amery passed the examination to qualify as a military Arabic interpreter in 1906, after he had been in Egypt and the Sudan for some time (*Army and Navy Gazette*, 8 December 1906, 7). His 1905 *Vocabulary* is directed at 'British Officers and Officials serving in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan', although he hoped that it might also be of some use to travellers and to linguists (Amery 1905, i). In addition to the vocabulary itself, Amery includes a short description of the ways in which Sudanese Arabic differs from Classical Arabic, a list of technical military and administrative terms, and some samples of stories and songs in Sudanese Arabic, in Arabic script and transliteration. The situation with which Amery was confronted and the solution he proposed were as follows:

> The British Official on arrival in the Sudan, has immediately to direct his attention to the acquisition of an extremely difficult language. His difficulties have hitherto been enormously increased by the lack of proficient teachers and the practical absence of any printed assistance. Each new comer has to pick up a large number of most necessary words as best he can, with the result that he is often content with learning just sufficient to enable him to make his meaning intelligible, or to pass the various Government examinations, and even this minimum he acquires more slowly than necessary. ... The object therefore of this Vocabulary is to enable an official on entering the Sudan to find the particular technical terms which are in use in the Egyptian Army, or the Department to which he is attached; and also the Arabic for such words as he is likely to require to carry on a simple conversation.
>
> (Amery 1905, iv)

The specific professional use to which one copy of Amery's book was put will be examined in Chapter 7. Reginald Campbell Thompson (author

of his own Arabic vocabulary; see ), thought it 'excellent' and 'typical of the work that is being quietly done in one of the latest additions to the Empire' (*Man* 6, 1906, 46). He was particularly interested in comparing Sudanese and Mesopotamian Arabic, the dialect he himself knew best.

Despite Amery's intimation that the military Arabic examinations did not equip candidates to live and work in Arabic (a contention made by several of the authors discussed here), they were a fact of life. Amery subsequently published an *Aid to Arabic* in Khartoum (Amery 1911), by which point he was Assistant Director of Intelligence to the Sudan Government, in collaboration with Samuel Atiyah, also of the Intelligence Department. This includes excerpts from examination papers, and consists largely of passages in Arabic, with English translation and a thorough grammatical analysis of the Arabic, with a particular focus on words sharing a common Arabic root. Amery directs it in particular at officials and officers 'in "out stations" where good teachers are not to be found' (Amery 1911, unpaginated Preface). The passages included in the book are typical of those also included in examination papers (Figure 4.7), so Amery's book would have served well for examination preparation.

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APPENDIX.

A few of the papers set up at recent "Intermediate" examinations.

PART I.

Military examinations in Arabic.

1st April, 1907.

1. Translate into Arabic.

(a). No further news has been received regarding Dervish movements, but reports have been brought in to the effect that they also suffered severely in the late storms. Five boats, laden with supplies, were lost, and the disaster has caused the enemy considerable inconvenience. Wad Bishara, the Commander at Dongola, announced publicly in the Mosque that, although it was true the Dervishes had lost boats, yet he had received information from the best sources that the Egyptian Army had during the last storm lost twenty-seven boats full of ammunition.

(b). The force marched to Kederma yesterday through a much better country than we have yet seen.

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Date palms are plentiful and there is a broad belt of green grass and fields of Dura on the river bank. The local population is considerable, with many refugees who avoided the recent Dervish raid and conscription. They stood in crowds watching the large force, which including transport, numbers 16,000 men, going by, the soldiers singing as they marched, while the steamers with the British Regiment steamed up the river abreast of us.

2. Translate into English :—

(a.) For Officers serving with the Army.

١ دورية المجانة اليومية التي تقوم من المعسكر بدري في الصباح وتعسكر في الصحرا، على مسافة اربعة اميال من جهة قبلي نظرت صباح اليوم اربعة رجال من مواري الدراويش الذين رجعوا في الحال عند ما نظروا الدورية

٢ المهاجرون والاسراء الذين حضروا من معسكر الدراويش اخبرونا بانت ولد بشاره عازم على التقدم بجيشه الى كرمة ولذلك قد ارسلنا بعض الخبيرين ليتأكدوا من صحة هذا الخبر ومنفيدكم عنه رجوعهم

٣ قامت الواورات الحربية اليوم من هنا وعليها بعض عساكر من الجيش الانكليزي قاصدة جهة دلجو اما اورطة السواري فتسافر بالبر يوم باكر وما خبرك تلغرافيا عند قيامها لاجل ارسال حملة لمقابلتها في الطريق

**Figure 4.7** Sample military examination papers from Amery's *Aid to Arabic* (1911), 158–159. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

In the 1920s, the position of Sudan in relation to Egypt and to the United Kingdom changed, and new language books appeared to meet new circumstances. Sudan remained under British rule after Egyptian independence in 1922, and in 1925 the Sudan Defence Force was formed to replace Egyptian troops in the country. The earliest of the new wave of Sudan Arabic books was by Herbert Ernest Pease (1889–1959), who was born in New Zealand and educated in England. He joined the army during the First World War and remained in it after the war. He was posted to Egypt in 1919 and was Commandant of the Military School in Khartoum from 1923–1924. One of his sons, born in 1926, received the Arabic middle name Melik. After retiring from the Sudan Defence Force, he remained in Sudan as a civil servant. He spent the final years of his life in Kenya. Unfortunately I have not been able to access a copy of Pease's *Guide to the Spoken Arabic of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Pease 1923).

Sigmar Hillelson (1883–1960), who was born in Berlin and studied Arabic at University College London, worked for the Sudan Civil Service between 1911 and 1933, in education and intelligence. While in the Sudan, he published widely on the country's language, folklore and history (Mustafa 2013). Hillelson's *Sudan Arabic* was written as a replacement for Amery's volume, which 'for many years has been the vade-mecum of British officers and officials in the Sudan' but which had fallen out of print. As well as the original work, Hillelson was able to draw on manuscript notes and corrections by Amery held in the Intelligence Department in Khartoum. Hillelson also used a collection of notes and phrases assembled by G. E. Iles of the Sudan Political Service, scholarly journals, and an Arabic study by Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'Abd al Rahmān al Amīn of the Sudanese Education Department. Hillelson records his 'obligation to many native pupils and friends', in particular Shaykh Bābikr Badrī (autobiography: Badrī 1969) and Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'Omar el Bannā, both of the Education Department (Hillelson 1925, vi). Like Amery's book, Hillelson's is essentially an English–Arabic dictionary, with some notes on grammar. He omits Amery's sample texts of Sudanese Arabic. Hillelson notes that the great diversity of Sudanese Arabic dialects makes it impossible to write a single comprehensive grammar, and that pronunciation and word choice differ from place to place (on Hillelson's representation of Sudanese Arabic phonology, see Kaye 1976, 41–45). Hillelson went on to publish a book of *Hints for the Guidance of Officers and Officials of the Sudan Government in the Study of the Arabic Language* (1925, which I have not been able to consult) and *Sudan Arabic Texts* (1935). His vocabulary was still being reprinted into the

1950s. Reviews were positive. The Orientalist and civil servant G. L. M. Clauson (1891–1974), writing in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, called it a 'useful and unpretentious little book' (58.2, April 1926, 331), but thought that:

> its utility would be greatly increased if its learned author would add to the next edition of the work an appendix showing what words of abuse may, and what may not, properly be used in addressing delinquents in various grades of native society. Too many young officers' careers have been blighted by the use of the wrong word in a moment of stress.

It would be interesting to know whom he had in mind.

In the same year that Hillelson's book appeared, Allan Worsley, medical officer at the Church Missionary Society Hospital in Omdurman, published a *Sudanese Grammar* (Worsley 1925). He wrote his Preface in Solihull, Warwickshire, presumably while on leave. Worsley was aware of Hillelson's work, but does not seem to have had the opportunity to consult it before his own was issued. Worsley is unusual among language book authors in having worked primarily with female Arabic speakers, and intending his book to be used especially by those who would also work with women: 'In my hospital work among Sudanese women I have had unrivalled opportunities of studying Sudanese in its purest form.' He describes his book as 'a first attempt to record and classify the rules of spoken Sudanese Arabic' (Worsley 1925, v). As well as thanking W. H. T. Gairdner (discussed in Chapter 3) for 'the framing and phrasing of most of the rules, from my collected raw materials', Worsley offers thanks to:

> Sadiq Effendi Shawki, who taught me my first Arabic and later rendered me much help in unravelling idioms. Also to Sitt Esther Bassini, who gave me most valuable help in the later stages, when I was collating the material I had collected. Her help was invaluable in verifying some of the rules, and providing better illustrative examples.
>
> (Worsley 1925, vi)

The work, as described, is a grammar, written in a fairly scholarly style, and does not introduce phrases or conversation.

Another book sponsored by the Church Missionary Society and based on Gairdner's grammar is J. Spencer Trimingham's *'Da Kita:b': A Sudanese Colloquial Grammar* (Trimingham 1939). Neither it nor

Worsley's book uses the Arabic script. Trimingham also worked for the Church Missionary Society in Omdurman. His motivation in preparing the book was that 'Good teachers are rare in the Sudan, and even if the student should discover that rarity he will find that the teacher still needs to have a method planned out for him. This book is an attempt to satisfy that need' (Trimingham 1939, a). The genesis of the book, as Trimingham explains it in the Preface, was that in 1929 Gairdner suggested that his *Egyptian Colloquial Grammar* be altered for use in the Sudan. The task was started by the Rev. R. S. Macdonald, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭayyib 'Alī Ṭāhā (on whom see further below) and Dr Mary Wright. The grammar circulated for 10 years in the mission station on loose sheets, during which time it became known as *da kitāb* ('this is a book'). Trimingham thanks the American University in Cairo and Oxford University Press 'for their courtesy in allowing us to use Gairdner's Grammar with such freedom' – an unusual direct acknowledgement of a book's source. The book is in two volumes. Initial lessons with grammatical explanation and sample sentences are followed in Volume II by dialogues, stories and vocabularies. Interestingly, a section on the history of the Sudan includes terms such as 'Mahdi', 'slave trade', 'emancipation', 'follower' (i.e. of the Mahdi) and 'conquest'.

A Sudan Defence Force officer, G. S. M. Burton, published a *Sudan Arabic Note-Book* (Burton 1934), later reissued in condensed form during the Second World War (Burton 1942). An anonymous reviewer in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution* (80, 1935, 458) seemed to write from personal experience, noting that the author's mastery of his subject:

> used to be the exception rather than the rule with the average British Bimbashi [officer], who often found himself placed in command of an Arabic-speaking unit with little or no assistance as to how to pick up a language which is anything but easy to learn. This book will greatly shorten the tedious hours spent with the local or unit interpreter.

Burton is frank about his 'boldness' in producing a book on Arabic, but offers the justification that as an elementary speaker he is closer to and more familiar with the challenges faced by beginners than an expert would be. He provides an account of his own journey in learning Arabic:

> When I was first ordered out to the Sudan I was told that it would be useless to attempt to learn any Arabic at home on account of the wide differences in local dialect.

On landing at Port Sudan I knew not a single word of Arabic and on joining my Battalion was given a Somali Batman who remained with me throughout my tour and proved himself a very faithful and excellent servant. From the point of view of learning the language, however, the appointment was unfortunate for, being a Somali, his Arabic was of the scantiest! Less than one month later I was called upon to take over the sole charge of the Corps, involving my presiding over several company offices at which a number of native women had to be interviewed – somewhat of an ordeal under the circumstances!

This note-book is the outcome of having kept a careful diary of my tribulation and my progress.

(Burton 1934, v–vi)

Burton uses both Arabic script and transliteration. After an initial chapter devoted to the basics of pronunciation, grammar and numbers, Chapter II has the heading 'First 200 Words'. Burton instructs the learner that 'the following 200 words, if learnt before leaving the boat, will enable the beginner to face his new adventure with confidence and at least with the knowledge that he will be able to ensure his personal comforts!' (Burton 1934, 15). Chapter III moves on to 'First 100 Words Written', with the advice to practise by writing short notes to Sudanese officials and colleagues. Most of the rest of the book consists of lists of words by category, such as 'Kitchen Utensils' and 'Post Office', with some grammatical and cultural explanation. It would have been difficult to use this book without a teacher, but then it was not designed to be used in this way.

A work of a rather different character was produced by Vincent Llewellyn Griffiths (1902–1984) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṭayyib ʿAlī Ṭāhā (1901–1969) (Griffiths and ʿAlī Ṭāhā 1936; G. C. Scott, Hasan Effendi Zahir, Mohammed Effendi Saleh Behairi and Shaykh Hasan Ahmed are thanked for their 'suggestions and criticisms'; note that ʿAlī Ṭāhā also assisted Trimingham, discussed above). Griffiths was principal of the Institute of Education in Khartoum from 1934 to 1950; ʿAlī Ṭāhā was vice-principal from 1939 to 1948, and became Sudan's first Minister of Education in 1948, a position he held until 1953. The two co-operated on several educational handbooks and were friends as well as colleagues (see Seri-Hersch 2017, 299, 301, on this and more generally on co-operation between Sudanese and British in Sudanese education of the period). *Sudan Courtesy Customs* was intended to provide British officials with 'some of the commoner and safer phrases for most of the situations likely to arise in which one wants to say the right thing' (Griffiths and

'Alī Ṭāhā 1936, vii). The authors emphasise the problems caused by cultural misunderstandings:

> An attempt has been made to explain customs which the foreigner will not necessarily want to follow but which if not appreciated may easily lead to misunderstandings. A lack of knowledge of their respective courtesy customs is often an unrecognised but most fruitful cause of misunderstanding between races. Ungrateful, flattering, cold are accusations which may, when made against an individual of another race, be entirely unjustified, the bad impression being due to difference in language courtesy customs rather than to the individual's lack of feeling or sincerity.
>
> (Griffiths and 'Alī Ṭāhā 1936, vii)

In contrast to other phrasebooks, Griffiths and 'Alī Ṭāhā offer a short explanation alongside each phrase, indicating how and when it is to be used, and the social norms involved. For example, one should say 'please' when making a request of someone else's servant, but not one's own, and it is normal to freely discuss topics a foreigner might consider personal when chatting to a stranger. The authors give the many set responses to greetings and other courtesy phrases. Blank pages are left at the end for notes 'which the reader may wish to make on local variations of Sudan Arabic courtesy customs' (Griffiths and 'Alī Ṭāhā 1936, 88). The book would not have equipped a learner to travel or manage their daily life in Arabic, and thus would have functioned best as a supplement to a grammar or fuller phrasebook.

A review by 'G.C.S.' – presumably the 'G. C. Scott' thanked in the book itself – in the journal *Sudan Notes and Records* (20.1, 1937, 180–181) published in Khartoum found it a useful guide to linguistic and cultural subtleties, but did not fully absorb the book's wider messages about cross-cultural understanding and collaboration: 'Even if they are the bumpkins and not we, the book at least shows us how not to be considered bumpkins by bumpkins.'

The final Arabic work produced for the use of British officials in Sudan perhaps reflects their everyday linguistic reality best of all: Paul James Sandison's *Pidjin Arabic for Sudan Defence Force* (Sandison 1944). Sandison (1906–1974) occupied a series of district commissioner and resident positions and assistantships in the Sudan from 1928 until 1942, when he entered war service with the Sudan Defence Force: exactly the kind of 'out station' roles mentioned by Amery. In 1929 in Mongalla, now in South Sudan, he studied Classical Arabic for an hour every day with an

Egyptian book-keeper, but found it both hard going and relatively useless in his present location:

> Classical Arabic differs from the colloquial about as much as Chaucer from the Daily Mail. To make it worse, even the colloquial was only spoken in Mongalla by people from the North. Locals, in so far as they spoke anything except their vernacular, had a pidgin of the pidgins, allegedly based on Arabic and called by us, Mongallese. ... It was tiresome having to learn three words for everything – but my Bank's solvency depended upon it. So we struggled with Thatcher's Arabic Grammar and Tales from the Arabian Nights.
>
> (Coray 1984, 57, quoting from Sandison's unpublished memoirs; see also Frost 1984, 8)

The point of continuing to struggle with Classical Arabic was, of course, to pass the necessary examination, which Sandison did in 1930. The experience seems to have stayed with Sandison throughout a series of postings to Darfur, Juba and Kassala. During the Second World War, when soldiers newly posted to the Sudan did not have the leisure of studying Arabic as he had done, he saw the necessity for teaching 'Mongallese' – also known as 'Bimbashi Arabic' – as a register in its own right. Sandison makes it clear that:

> What follows is NOT Arabic. It is a jargon based on Arabic, which makes possible the communication of simple commands and ideas to Arab speakers. No one who has the opportunity should rest content with it. No one should use it in preference to English when speaking to an English-speaking Arab. It offends the Arab ear as much as pidjin English offends our ear. But it works.
>
> (Sandison 1944, 2)

The pidgin described by Sandison contains only 'English' sounds, has no verbal conjugation (using 'halás', 'bi' and 'rah' as auxiliaries to indicate past, present and future tenses respectively, and subject pronouns to mark person), and uses only the singular form of nouns (adding 'kateer' 'many' for the plural). It is a much reduced form of Arabic. It is not apparent how much it reflects the pidgin already in use by British officials in the Sudan, and to what extent Sandison has further simplified the existing lingua franca (on Arabic pidgins on the Nile, see Nakao 2017). Over half of the 34-page book is made up of an English–Arabic vocabulary, and there are lists of military terms and orders. Sandison remedies the deficiency Clauson saw in

Hillelson's earlier book when he warns that 'Arabs intensely dislike being sworn at in a foreign language. Expletives should be employed as sparingly as the circumstances permit. … Insult is a criminal offence under Arab law, and in any case it does no good' (Sandison 1944, 11). It continued to be the case into the 1940s that British troops and officials posted to Sudan had usually spent considerable time in Egypt first. This is borne out by Sandison's statement that readers can find the books they need in bookstores in Cairo, but also by the fact that I bought one of my own copies of *Pidjin Arabic* along with, and presumably from the same original owner as, a copy of Alec Cury's *Arabic Without A Teacher*, for use in Egypt (Chapter 5). Both books are in flimsy paper covers, but the book for Egypt is considerably more battered and heavily used than the book for Sudan.

The Imperial War Museum Sound Archive has a number of interviews with former members of the Sudan Defence Force in which they reflect on Arabic learning. Officers arriving in Khartoum had first to learn some colloquial Arabic before they were posted elsewhere in the country. Some who had served in Arabic-speaking regions before moving to Sudan were allowed to bypass this stage, and differences in dialect do not appear to have been taken into account. For example, Henry Porter Wolseley Hutson, to whom I will return in Chapter 5, stated that:

> Nobody wanted to stay in Khartoum longer than they could help. But you had to stay in when you first joined until you learnt Arabic and learnt the ropes a bit, and you might stay six months there. I didn't have to because I knew Arabic and so that hurdle was passed over, and I think I was only a week or two in there when I was posted to the Blue Nile.
>
> (IWM 4465)

Several interviewees mention language books, but do not specify which one they used. Usually they had some assistance from an English-speaking Sudanese clerk or soldier, but there is no mention of formal teaching. Within the first year, they had to take a colloquial, spoken Arabic exam, with an examination in written standard Arabic a year or two later. More succeeded at the first than the second, and the bonus for passing the exam was a major incentive. Overall, most officers interviewed seem to have developed a basic colloquial command of the spoken language, for use in the professional contexts most relevant to them (see, for example, the interview with medical officer William Hamilton Scriven, IWM 4295).

John Basil Ready, who was with the Sudan Defence Force from 1934 to 1943, recalled that:

The first thing a British officer had to do was learn Arabic. There were a certain number of Arabic grammar books which one could use, and one usually employed a company translator. Each company had a clerk who was English-speaking, and he would instruct or help the British officer with his Arabic. [The interviewer asks how long it took to achieve 'a reasonable fluency'.] I think because one was amongst people speaking the language every day, one could get by fairly well in about three months. Probably not very grammatically, but ... One had to take the Sudan Defence Force British officers' exam in the first year, the oral part of it, and the written part in the second year. [Interviewer asks if most people passed this.] The oral yes. The written was more difficult. But if you missed it one time, well you had to have another go, and do it again.

(IWM 3997)

Reginald Laurence Scoones (Sudan Defence Force 1927–1933) found financial incentives a pressing reason to learn Arabic. Like Ready, he notes that on arriving in Sudan:

Well the first thing one had to do of course was to get a vocabulary and be able to talk a bit, and this I did very quickly because I was anxious to take over the running of the mess, because I thought we were paying the most ridiculous sums of money. And so I got sufficient Arabic fairly quickly to be able to do that. The first exam you took was an oral one, which was very simple, really. And having passed that I decided I was going to go for the intermediate exam because this was something that you had to pass within three years, and if you could pass it in your first tour, it had a great incentive that you were given a bonus of thirty pounds, which was a good deal more than a month's pay in the British Army. And this involved learning to write the language – which of course, as you may or may not know, you write from right to left instead of left to right. And one had to have a crammer for this, and I and another Bim [Bimbashi, 'officer'] who was an ex-Royal Marine, we engaged a chap to teach us, but he was a very indifferent teacher, and he was far more keen to learn the English language off us. However by a good deal of sweat and blood we managed to learn enough to defeat the examiners, and I duly passed this exam and got my thirty pounds.

(IWM 4297)

Sydney Hugh Curwen Stotherd, who was seconded to the Sudan Defence Force in 1936–1938, was asked by the interviewer how proficient he became at Arabic, and outlined some of the difficulties he found in grammar, social context and register:

> Well, I went there to learn Arabic. It was my ambition to be an Arabic speaker. It's a very difficult language, because the written word is almost impossible: they write from right to left and in a different script. I tried to get people to speak to me, and very often they were too shy to do so. It was difficult to be an accurate Arabic speaker. It's a very rich language. All the – there are feminine endings, in fact colours have also got feminine endings too. My subjects of conversation, speaking Arabic, were very limited. You weren't allowed to mention their wives. You could speak and congratulate them on their families. You couldn't admire anything. If you admired anything it meant that you had to be given it. … But if you ran into someone who was erudite in Arabic, like the postman – postmaster, rather – he would fox you by different words, rich words, and that finished me off altogether. I could only speak the simple stuff. But at orders, and the general camp duties, I think I was fairly good.
>
> <div align="right">(IWM 4294)</div>

I will consider British military colloquial and written language examinations further in the section on Mandate Palestine in Chapter 5.

## Aden

Aden was administered by the British under the Government of India until 1937, when it became a crown colony until 1963 (for a longer-*durée* perspective on European colonialism in the southern Red Sea region, see Smith 2021). Stace's 1893 *English-Arabic Vocabulary*, discussed above, was written at Aden, but does not advertise itself as principally for Yemeni Arabic. A few works specifically for the Arabic spoken at Aden were, however, produced.

Major Paul Fitzgerald Norbury (1879–1943) was among those who had passed the official Arabic examinations. The cover of his *Abridged Arabic Grammar* states that he is an 'Arabic Interpreter 1st class' and commanded the Aden Troop of the Poona Horse regiment. Like many British military men in the Middle East, he had previously been based in India. His use of the term 'oblique case' for the Arabic case *al-manṣūb*

suggests to me that he had previously studied Hindustani. Classically educated authors of Arabic phrasebooks tend to call *al-manṣūb* the 'accusative', on the model of Latin and Greek, but Hindustani has a noun case that English-language grammars call the 'oblique'. Norbury addresses his work to those in Aden who need 'to acquire, as rapidly as possible, a fair working knowledge of the language', and especially to disappointed students of Arabic who discover 'that a great deal of what they have learnt, while being indeed Arabic, cannot be applied, and is not understood, in Aden' (Norbury 1917, i).

Norbury provides a simplified grammar of the language and some phrases for army use ('Have you seen any enemy?', 'My camel is wounded and sick'). As well as Roman script and unvowelled Arabic, he gives an intermediate form: capital Roman letters, corresponding to the Arabic letters, with *tashkīl* (phonetic diacritic marks). This, he states, is to help with correct pronunciation, avoiding some of the pitfalls of transliteration. For someone who knows Arabic, this is quite intuitive to read, but it is unclear how much it will have aided complete beginners. The *Abridged Grammar* was intended to be accompanied by a vocabulary, but a slip enclosed with the first edition informs the reader that 'Owing to pressure of work at the Press, it has not been possible to publish the vocabulary with the grammar. It is now in preparation, and will be published shortly as a separate book. A free copy will be forwarded to each purchaser of the grammar.' I have not been able to locate any surviving copy of the vocabulary, but the grammar is extremely rare (I know of only two copies, one in the British Library and one for sale by an antiquarian book dealer) and so it would not be surprising if the vocabulary were rarer still.

Khan Saheb Hamood Hason (al-sayyid Ḥamūd b. Ḥasan al-Hāshimī, 1867–1939) was Headmaster of the Government Anglo-Vernacular Schools in Crater, Aden, and an important local figure in the arts. He was a pioneer in local theatre, introduced the cinema to Aden in 1911, and translated Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* into Arabic for performance (https://www.alayyam.info/news/368D9MO0-8TOA5M, accessed 21 May 2023). His books include *Gems of Arabic Literature* (1916), an English translation of the textbook for the higher standard examination in Arabic. He dedicates it 'with best wishes for their success to English students of Arabic and Oriental students of English in the East and West'. Hason's *Arabic Simplified* was first published in Aden in 1919 (Hamood Hason 1919). The third edition (Cairo, 1954) contains testimonials from users and a new Preface by Hason reflecting on the book's success over the years. Hason notes that the outbreak of war (i.e. the Second World War) and the introduction of a new Colloquial Arabic Field Test have brought

a new demand for 'a handy book' on the colloquial Arabic of Aden. In addition, the book is intended to be of use to Arabic speakers learning English. 'Being very old', Hason has entrusted the task of preparing a new printing to his son, Haj Mohammad Hamood. Since Hason died in 1939, this Preface must have been written for the second edition of the book, in the autumn of 1939. Hason, or his son, considers that:

> It is needless to state here how useful the phrases and sentences contained in this hand book have proved in the past, especially during the Great War 1914–1918, when it had the honour of being introduced as a text book for military examinations in colloquial Arabic.
>
> (Hamood Hason 1919, third edition 1954, iv)

Testimonials follow from British and Indian officers, giving their own positive experiences of using the book, and appraisal of its benefits.

As in several other books, Hason provides literary Arabic in the Arabic script, and a more colloquial form in transliteration (for example, 'what?' questions have *mā* in Arabic script and 'aish' in transliteration). There is no grammatical explanation. The focus in the phrases, which are arranged by topic, is on giving orders, with lengthy sections on military, medical and judicial affairs.

Nigel Prior Hansen Tapp, who served with the Royal Artillery and as Aide-de-Camp to the British Residence in Aden between 1930 and 1932, was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum oral history project in 1979. He gives an account of learning Arabic that is worth quoting at length for the way in which it shows him coming to terms with (and sometimes misunderstanding) the distinction between standard written Arabic and spoken dialects:

> [The interviewer asks: Did you find it easy to learn Arabic?] It's very easy – well, I'm a very bad linguist, but it's easy to learn to speak Arabic if you pay attention. It's much more difficult to learn to write, because of course, there are no, in the written script there are no vowels, and you assume the vowels, so it's, you know, almost like a series of shorthand. So that's one thing. The other thing is that although the Arabic which one used in Aden – written Arabic – it's all right, it was understood by Arabs, when they write to each other they will use this very formal script, which contain all sorts of signs which don't, I don't think, make a bit of difference, but it's rather like reading Old English or an illuminated thing done by a monk. There's all sorts of things in which make the basic study difficult, for instance

if you pick up a paper in Cairo or you did, very little of it is written in straight Arabic. An awful lot of it is written in this very ceremonial stuff, which they all understand. But the only way to do it is to work at your basic Arabic and then later on go on to the ceremonial stuff. It's a thing I never could do. Well I didn't really do, because when I got to the Sudan I used to write messages to my native staff officer and he'd write them back. But he'd write in ordinary plain language. It's rather, I suppose, as if one tried to write in Old English. One could make it very difficult to read. [Interviewer asks: What degree of proficiency did you have to achieve?] I had to achieve nothing in Aden. It was purely a voluntary thing. But, of course, when I went to the Sudan, I had to achieve an efficiency both speaking and writing, which was known as a – which was a special Sudan exam, but was about the scale of a British Army preliminary interpretership, which meant that you got thirty quid for passing these exams, so it wasn't chicken feed, because the British government before the war, the War Office, didn't just give out thirty quid for nothing. Then of course, after that there was a second class interpretership, which you got no money for. There was a first class interpretership which you got a hundred and twenty pounds, which was a lot of money in the thirties. I didn't go on. I think, really, if I assess my efficiency, at the height of my efficiency in the Sudan, I was probably equivalent to a second class interpreter. But I didn't take the exam because there was no money attached to it and I knew that I'd have to work far too hard to – and I didn't have the time, nor any object, for a first class interpretership.

<div align="right">(IWM 4448)</div>

Tapp, like many learners, perceived the difference between everyday colloquial Arabic and 'the ceremonial stuff' as a real barrier to progressing in the language. As for the officers in Sudan from whom I quoted above, the financial reward for passing Arabic exams was a major motivation for him in persisting.

In the 1940s, two educationalists, L. H. S. Emerson and Muhammad Abduh Ghanem, produced an *Aden Arabic Grammar* for beginners (Emerson and Ghanem 1943). Ghanem (1912–1994), a poet with a BA from Beirut (perhaps from the American University), worked at the time as Assistant Education Officer in Aden. He was awarded the MBE for his services to education in 1961, and studied for an MA and PhD at the University of London in the 1960s, before concluding his career at the University of Ṣanʿāʾ. Leonard Harold Sidney Emerson (1908–1988) had

a degree from the University of Cambridge and seems, from shipping records, to have spent part of his earlier career in India, working in education. He was in the Royal Tank Regiment during the earlier part of the Second World War. At the time the book was published, he was Director of the British Institute (i.e. British Council) in Aden; he may have been invalided out of the army, or been doing other war work there. He later worked for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). I have found no evidence that Emerson knew Arabic, so it would seem that his contribution to the book was primarily in the format and pedagogical approach, and that Ghanem supplied most or all of the Arabic content.

Ghanem and Emerson set out to teach 'the colloquial form of Arabic used in normal conversation in Aden' (Emerson and Ghanem 1943, v). They explain that they do not use the Arabic script because the colloquial language is seldom written, with the literary form used instead. As the title implies, the book is a descriptive grammar, with plentiful example phrases and sentences, but little in the way of conversational practice.

The continuing British presence in Aden meant that works for colloquial Yemeni Arabic were produced for military purposes into the 1950s and 1960s (e.g. [Command Arabic Language School] 1967, with tapes). One student at the Command Arabic School in this period recalled that a 12-week course took participants to 'military colloquial level' (Robert Ian Hywel-Jones, IWM 9187). Ghanem produced a second instruction book, *Aden Arabic for Beginners*, in 1955 (Ghanem 1955, second edition 1958). This is quite different from his earlier collaboration with Emerson. Ghanem notes that the transliteration system used 'is almost the same as that used in *Aden Arabic Grammar* written by Mr. L. H. S. Emerson, M.A., and myself and published by the British Council in 1943' (Ghanem 1955, no pagination). Ghanem's explanations of the phonology of Arabic are fuller and more accurate than those in the earlier book, although they will still have been difficult for a learner to replicate without the help of a native speaker. Emerson and Ghanem, for example, stated that the letter ṣād /sˤ/, an emphatic, pharyngealised sibilant, is 'said with the tongue against the top of the teeth'. In Ghanem's later book, however, we find that ṣād is to be 'pronounced harder and deeper than the English *s* with the tongue curved slightly upwards at the edge and almost touching the palate and the upper gum'. Ghanem's 1955 book consists of a series of lessons which each open with a short conversation in Arabic and English translation, followed by some notes on grammar, a list of vocabulary and exercises. As I will discuss towards the end of Chapter 5, Arabic instruction books of the latter half of the 1940s and into the 1950s begin to look

familiar to modern learners of the language. It is striking, however, that Ghanem and his book continued to be judged in some quarters according to outdated Orientalist standards. Writing in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (18.2, 1956, 401), R. B. Serjeant complained that in introducing grammar inductively, through dialogues, Ghanem was not teaching it in a 'logical manner'. Serjeant also pointed out that Ghanem had not had the benefit of being able to consult the latest academic works on Yemeni Arabic written in Europe, and claimed that he found himself 'occasionally a little doubtful of the meanings given for colloquial words'. Surely Ghanem, born and raised in Aden, was a better judge of this.

## Notes

1   There are a small number of Arabic instruction books for regions of the British Empire where Arabic was spoken by minority groups, such as Lethem 1920 for Bornu in Nigeria.
2   Many years earlier, Sir John Bowring had similarly observed, 'No government has done so much as the Russian in choosing for its functionaries persons who are masters of the idioms of the country in which they are placed, and to this circumstance much of Russian influence may be traced. A Russian functionary is never at the mercy of a native interpreter, a British functionary almost always' (Bowring 1840, 118). He recommended the establishment of 'a special school of languages for the diplomatic and consular services'.
3   The title page bears the date 1883, but the Preface, which precedes this in my bound copy, is dated 4 April 1884.

5

# Arabic in war and occupation II:
# the First and Second World Wars
# and Mandate Palestine (1914–1945)

## The First World War

### Overview: official publications

This chapter continues directly from the previous one, and explores the extent to which linguistic mobilisation accompanied military mobilisation in the British Army in the First and Second World Wars, and in Britain's colonial occupation of Palestine in the interwar period. Soldiers from the United Kingdom, British Empire and Dominions (including India, Australia and New Zealand) were deployed in three principal Arabic-speaking theatres in the First World War: Egypt; Mesopotamia; and, from 1917, Palestine and Syria. Egypt served as a base of operations for troops in Palestine, and was where they took their leave. Operations in Mesopotamia were supported from Simla, New Delhi and Cairo, as the official documents discussed below reveal.

The war years brought a massive increase in the annual rate of publication of Arabic phrasebooks, as Graph 3 shows (on phrasebooks for other fields of combat in the First World War, see Walker 2021 and Kuldkepp 2021). The year 1915 was a particularly bumper one, with at least eight new or reissued books. Although, as discussed in Chapter 7, this chart is an imprecise tool, it gives a rough idea of trends in the number of books for colloquial Arabic published each year from 1798 to 1945. The two peaks for the First and Second World Wars are obvious. Alongside the new publications represented in this chart, there was also an acceleration in the rate of publication of new editions of existing phrasebooks (e.g. Hassam and Odeh 1915, fifth edition), and increased advertising of both old and new editions to military markets (see, for example, a new and

expanded edition of Slack 1886 advertised in the *Army and Navy Gazette*, Saturday, 14 August 1915, 12).

The war also brought an increased interest in Arabic language learning in Germany. In 1916, British papers noted with concern that 'Bilingual Huns are apparently to be trained for what has in recent months been grandiloquently described as "the Army of Egypt"' by attending free daily Arabic courses at the University of Berlin, taught by convalescing soldiers from the army of Germany's Ottoman allies (*Evening Express*, 13 May 1916, 2). I have found no evidence that anything similar was attempted by the British Army, which may perhaps have considered its existing expertise in Arabic sufficient, even though it certainly was not.

The nature of the phrasebooks issued during the two world wars is rather different. In the First World War, few were produced under official military or governmental auspices. The majority were produced under private initiative, and Cairo was the main centre of publication. About half are by native speakers of Arabic and half by foreigners. In the Second World War, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the British (and American, and German) armed forces made better provision for the linguistic needs of their troops, particularly those occupying captured enemy territory.

A small number of official military publications during and immediately after the First World War provided information on local languages in the Middle East. The Geographical Section of the Naval Intelligence Division produced multi-volume 'Handbooks' for Mesopotamia (Intelligence Division 1916) and Arabia (Naval Intelligence Division 1916–1917), among other regions. These contain vocabularies of Arabic, Turkish and Persian (Mesopotamia has in addition Armenian, Kurdish and Syriac), in parallel columns, with items of vocabulary arranged in English alphabetical order, and followed by useful phrases for military use (Figure 5.1). These linguistic sections are lengthy: 170 pages in the Mesopotamia *Handbook*. The vocabularies were republished as a separate book in 1920 (Geographical Section of the Naval Intelligence Division 1920), and further supplemented with a volume for Libya in which vocabulary is given in Italian, Arabic and Berber (Great Britain Naval Intelligence Division 1920). The Arabic remains the same in the 1920 republication as in the original handbooks, both in the words and phrases, and in the descriptions of pronunciation (e.g. 'sea-eagle' for *hamza*, the glottal stop).

These official publications do not name their authors or give the sources of any linguistic information they contain. In the case of the

### 11. BILLETS, LODGING AND STABLING

**I want quarters for 50 men.**
*Arabic.* Arīd maḥall yasi'khamsīn nafar.
*Persian.* Az barāyi panjāh ādam manzil mī-khāham.
*Turkish.* Élli néfér ichun yér istérim.

**Give me better quarters.**
*Arabic.* A'ṭini maḥall aḥsan.
*Persian.* Manzilī bihtar az īn bi-man bi-dih.
*Turkish.* Bana būndan iyi bir yér vér.

**Have you found me quarters yet ?**
*Arabic.* Hal wajadta-li maḥall ?
*Persian.* Manzilī az barāyi man hanūz paidā kardeh-īd ?
*Turkish.* Bizim ichun yér daha buldun mu ?

**Where is the owner of the house ?**
*Arabic.* Ain ṣāḥib al-bait ?
*Persian.* Ṣāḥib-i-īnkhāneh kujāst?
*Turkish.* Év sāhibi nérédé ?

**Light the fire, please.**
*Arabic.* Arjūk ish'al an-nār.
*Persian.* Luṭfan ātash-rā biafrūz.
*Turkish.* Kérém ét, atéshi yaq.

**I want stabling for 16 horses.**
*Arabic.* Arīd akhūr li-sittatah-'ashar ḥiṣān.
*Persian.* Az barāyi shūnzdeh asp ṭawīleh mī-khāham.
*Turkish.* On alte āt ichun akhur istérim.

**Thanks, we want nothing more.**
*Arabic.* Ashkurak, hādha kull mā aradnā.
*Persian.* Luṭf-i-shumā ziyād, dīgar chīzī lāzim nadārīm.
*Turkish.* Téshékkür édérim, bashqa bir shei istéméyiz.

**Tell all people not to be afraid.**
*Arabic.* Qul li-jamī' an-nās lā yakhāfū.
*Persian.* Bi-mardum bi-gū na-tarsand.
*Turkish.* Bitün éhāliyé söilé qorq-mazsenlar.

**Where is there some clean water ?**
*Arabic.* Ain najid mā ṣāfi ?
*Persian.* Āb-i-pāk kujāst ?
*Turkish.* Témiz sū nérédé bulunur?

**Clear those houses ; we are going to quarter our men in them.**
*Arabic.* Farrigh tilk al-buyūt ; narīd nusakkin rijālnā fīhā.
*Persian.* Ān khāne-hā-rā khālī kun : mī-khāhīm ādam-hā-yi khud-rā ānjā manzil bi-dihīm.
*Turkish.* Shu évlérdén éhāliyi chiqār, néfératemeze orada oturtajaghez.

**Have you small-pox in this village ?**
*Arabic.* Hal jidri fi hādhihi'l-qaryah ?
*Persian.* Dar īn deh ābileh dā-rad ?
*Turkish.* Bū köidé chichék khasta-leghe vār mi ?

**Figure 5.1** 'Billets, Lodging and Stabling' in the 1916–1917 British Naval Intelligence *Handbook of Arabia*, 460. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

*Handbook of Arabia*, however, it can be established that the author was the former archaeologist D. G. Hogarth (1862–1927), who worked for the Geographical Section and became acting Director of the Arab Bureau in Cairo (Brown 2005, 285–286). It seems likely that Hogarth was responsible either for compiling the vocabularies or directing their compilation by other officers of the Geographical Section in London or the Arab Bureau in Cairo (whose staff at the time included T. E. Lawrence).

The Naval Intelligence handbooks were intended for officers. The *Handbook of Arabia*, for example, carried the warning 'Confidential' inside the front cover. While the language materials provided in these handbooks may have been useful for soldiers on active duty in Arabic-speaking regions, it is therefore unlikely that they achieved wide circulation. In the First World War, we do not find official military Arabic phrasebooks of the kind later published during the Second World War. Other military publications intended for wider circulation among soldiers in the Middle East, such as the *Military Handbook on Palestine* (Egyptian Expeditionary Force 1917), did not include information on the Arabic language.

A publication that was obviously intended for still more restricted circulation was a small book with the title *Interrogation of Prisoners of War*. The only copy that I have located is now held in the Imperial War Museum. It was printed in Calcutta by the Baptist Mission Press and seems to have been produced for use by Indian Expeditionary Force D (on which see further below) in Mesopotamia at some point during the war. It was designed to be used in conjunction with other official publications such as the handbooks already discussed, and contains a note to 'compare appendices A. B. C. and D. of "Notes on Intelligence Work in Mesopotamia"' – presumably an official military publication, which I have been unable to trace (Anonymous, n.d. [First World War], *Interrogation*, 1). The book gives Arabic and Turkish in both Roman and Arabic script. There is no explanation of either of the languages, but there is a key to how the Romanised text should be pronounced. There is some overlap with Naoum Seresser's book (discussed in the section on Iraq, below) in this section on pronunciation, but not in the phrases themselves (for example the curious instruction that *ghayn* /ɣ/ 'can be exactly made by merely reading W for GH and pronouncing the word with the mouth open and the tongue pressed down'). Either Seresser had access to this book in his work as an interpreter (he may even have played a part in composing it), or the compiler of this book had a copy of Seresser's grammar and phrasebook.

The phrases in the book are designed to elicit information from Ottoman prisoners about troop movements and morale. No anticipated answers are given. This suggests that it was intended for use by an intelligence officer who already had some command of Arabic or Turkish, or one who did not know either language but needed to check that his interpreter was getting the message across precisely. This is supported by the comments on the transliteration of Turkish:

> The following remarks are not designed to instruct officers or men who have no knowledge of the language how to pronounce it, an

end which can hardly be obtained by the most elaborate written explanation. They are merely designed to explain the system of transliteration employed (a strictly practical and non-scientific one) enough to make it possible for officers who have to preside at the examination of prisoners without knowing the language –

(1) to check to a certain extent the questions asked by their interpreters.

(2) to help their interpreters out, when they are at a loss for a word or insist on using a wrong one (they frequently confuse 'Battalion', 'Regiment', and 'Division' for instance) by producing some sound sufficiently near the real pronunciation of the word to be recognizable.

(Anonymous, n.d. [First World War], *Interrogation*, 4–5)

The text in Arabic script also meant that it could have been used to interrogate literate prisoners by pointing at the relevant phrase, although the problem of understanding the response would remain.

During the First World War, aircraft were used by British forces in the Middle East, which created another specialist niche where Arabic materials were needed. A rare example survives in the collections of the Australian War Memorial of a leaflet which British pilots carried in case they were shot down or forced to make an emergency landing in the desert. It comprises a single folding sheet with the title *Vocabulary of Beduin Dialect*. It does not bear a date or specify which field of operations it was used in. Mention of Turkish troops indicates that it dates to the First World War, not the Second, for most of which Turkey was neutral. The fact that Syrian dialect forms are bracketed further suggests that it was for use in Mesopotamia. The cover states: 'To be carried in the coat pocket by all pilots and observers on desert reconnaissance'. The user is instructed to memorise the first two phrases, a greeting and 'Kindly take me to the British lines and I will give you fifty pounds'. More such materials were produced for airmen in the Second World War.

In the European theatre of war, a similar situation prevailed to the Middle East. There was little official provision of lessons or books for soldiers to learn the languages of their allies or enemies (although see Heimburger 2010 on dictionaries produced by interpreters). Commercial publications, however, filled a gap in the market – which, as we will see, was also the case for the Middle East. Vast numbers of phrasebooks were printed for both the German and the British armies on the Western Front. The firm of Coleman and Co. took the initiative of sending 15,000 copies of one such book to the British War Office in 1915 (Cowman 2016, 30).

But publishers frequently displayed a 'basic insensitivity to real circumstance' in producing works in an overly formal linguistic register, rigidly adapting works in one language to another and even reprinting outdated books (Constantine 2011, 516–517). Publishers of existing series, such as Marlborough, produced new editions of their phrasebooks and advertised them widely in the press. Popular magazines also included language lessons, such as *Country Life*'s 'French Lessons for Soldiers' which followed the comic adventures of 'Corporal Atkins' (Cowman 2014, 8; on 'Trench French', see further Cowman 2016).

As Simon Constantine has pointed out in his study of the language divide in the First World War, it is difficult to infer actual communication practices from these phrasebooks and other publications, since authors did not always accurately predict and provide for the kinds of situations that soldiers would actually encounter. Even when they did, communication was often insufficient: an Australian soldier exhumed from a mass grave at Fromelles in northern France in the 2000s had been carrying a French phrasebook with the words 'Don't shoot' underlined when he was killed (Constantine 2011, 515–516). Something that may get us closer to what soldiers actually wanted to learn is a notebook kept by the Pashtun soldier Jemadar Mir Mast on the Western Front as he was trying to learn English (National Archives of India, Delhi, Foreign and Political, War B (Secret), February 1916, 32–34). Next to the Urdu, Mir Mast lists some basic English vocabulary, including terms for genitalia and having sex. As Santanu Das notes, it brings us into touch with 'what these young soldiers actually talked about in the trenches; or, maybe, it is a basic fact of language learning that we are always interested in concealed body-parts' (Das 2018a, 9). Soldiers' annotations on Arabic phrasebooks, discussed in Chapter 7, give a similar impression.

There was therefore clearly a gap in the market for publications for soldiers of all ranks who wanted or needed to learn some Arabic, and their requirements were not necessarily what their officers might have wanted. This need was fulfilled by publishers in the Middle East and Europe. Most of these Arabic phrasebooks were directed primarily at the soldier on leave, not the soldier in the field (on soldier tourism in the Middle East during the First World War, see Fantauzzo 2020, 50–92, and Atia 2012, and more generally the contributions to Clarke and Horne 2018b). They show some concern for military affairs, but the intended audience is the soldier off duty in Cairo or Alexandria, with time on his hands and money in his pocket. Later in the war, the soldier-tourist's range expanded to include Jerusalem and Palestine. The routes followed by soldiers on leave, the places visited and the picture postcards sent home

are in many ways similar to those of peacetime tourists (Nicholson and Mills 2017, 206). Guidebooks were produced specifically for soldiers, sometimes updated for war conditions, such as E. S. Thomas's guide to the Cairo Museum in its rearranged wartime state (Thomas 1915). For Australasian soldiers, C. E. W. Bean authored *What to Know in Egypt*, which inter alia warned that Egypt was a 'hot-bed of both gonorrhea and syphilis' and that soldiers should be careful about waterborne diseases in food and drink (Bean 1915, 14). The guide gives extensive historical information about the tourist sites in and around Cairo, but only a few words of Arabic, to do with numbers and asking directions. It advises that 'most educated people in Egypt speak French and everyone speaks Arabic' (Bean 1915, 31).

Few soldiers seem to have developed a good command of Arabic, either from books or from interaction with Arabic speakers. A typical account by a soldier writing home, published in his local newspaper, described a conversation with an Egyptian laundryman:

> Thinking that here was a good opportunity of removing a few Arabic sentences off my chest, I begin to 'strafe' the washerman, so far as my knowledge of Arabic would permit, and naturally he retaliated by an attempted explanation in pidgin English. After a few minutes heated argument the gas began to give out on both sides, and we had both exhausted our vocabulary, and yet neither of us knew what we had been talking about.
>
> (*Leicester Daily Post*, 29 May 1916, 3)

He compared the sound of Arabic to 'the yells of a small boy being chastised, with his mouth full of pudding'.

Unfortunately, because most of the Imperial War Museum Sound Archive interviews took place only from the late 1970s onwards, there are fewer oral history records of language learning in the Middle East during the First World War than for later periods. John Walter Chitty (1894–1991) was interviewed in 1989, and recalled:

> A friend of mine in Cairo recommended a munshi [language teacher, secretary] who would teach me Arabic, and I spent – he used to come up for an hour or two perhaps twice or three times a week, and he would get on teaching me. He owned a small boys' school – there were three- and four-year-olds, up to that high – in Cairo, and he didn't know a word of English, but he started to teach me like he'd teach children. The result was, at least, I got a pretty good accent and

by the time I would finish in Cairo I could definitely explain what I wanted, if necessary in fairly powerful terms.

<div align="right">(IWM 11114)</div>

This level of Arabic – ability to make requests or give orders, not necessarily in the politest language – was probably common.

Arabic words and phrases did, nevertheless, enter into soldiers' everyday language. (On Arabic in French military slang of the nineteenth century, derived mostly from troops in North Africa, see Christ 1991.) The armed forces developed their own slang: a common language, inaccessible to outsiders, which reinforced camaraderie and acted as a source of humour in grim circumstances. In other theatres of war, local languages were used in a similar way (see e.g. Duché and de Saint Léger 2016 on code-switching into French in the Australian army magazine *Aussie*; and on Australian war slang in general, Laugesen and Duché 2021). Soldiers took a delight in the creative potential of new words, as they were borrowed, adapted to new pronunciations and meanings, and carried into new theatres of war. An American troop newspaper, *The Stars and Stripes* (Paris, June 28 1918, 7), reported:

> The Aussies have a lot of good slang. If you drink too much *vin blanc*, you get shickered; if you court a young lady assiduously, you are smoodging her. And on their way up through the Orient they picked up the Arabic (or whatever it is) *backsheesh*, turned it into buckshee, and apply it to anything issued free, such as tobacco.

After the war, nostalgia for this common language led returning soldiers to create phrasebooks or collections of slang from these new wartime argots. Arabic words given by W. H. Downing in his *Digger Dialects* of 1919 include the following, although Hindi and French are more frequent sources of the words in his book:

> ABBASSIEH (n.), (Arab.) – A place of humiliation. (Military prison and dermatological hospital near Cairo.)
> ABBASSIEH BUKRA – Retribution on the morning after the night before.
> ABDUL (n.), (Arab.) – Generic name for a Turkish soldier; the Turkish Army on Gallipoli.
> ABDULLAH-with-the-CONDIES (n.) – An Egyptian menial employed by the Cairenes.

ANDY McNOON (n.) – An unqualified idiot. (Arab., inta machnoon – 'a damned fool').

BINT (n.), (Arab.) – Girl.

BUCKSHEE (n. or adj.), (Arab., Bakshish) – (1) A gratuity or dole; (2) unclaimed goods; (3) free, gratuitous; (4) superfluous; (5) unnecessary.

BUCKSHEE – (1) An acting non-commissioned officer drawing the pay of a private; (2) a lance-corporal.

BUKRA (adv.), (Arab.) – To-morrow.

DISASTER – A piastre (Egyptian coin).

ETNEEN (Arab.) – Two.

FERUCHUL (n.), (Arab.) – (1) chicken; (2) girl.

FILOOSH (n.), (Arab.) – Money.

GABBARY (Arab.) – (1) A military prison near Alexandria; (2) gaol.

GIPPO (n.) – An Egyptian native.

IMSHY (vb.), (Arab.) – Run away.

ISMA (Arab.) – I say! Hello!

KAMSEEN (n.), (Arab.) – Sand or dust storm.

MACNOON (Arab.) – Mad. See ANDY McNOON.

MAFISH (n. or adj.), (Arab.) – Finish; finished.

MALEESH (Arab.) – It doesn't matter.

MISQUIES (adj), (Arab.) – Bad.

QUIES (Arab.) – Good.

QUIES-KITEER (Arab.) – Very good.

SABA (Arab.) – Five.

SA-IDA (Arab.) – Good day; form of salutation.

SA-IDA (Arab.) – (2) An Egyptian.

TALAATA (Arab.) – Three.

TALAHEENA (Arab.) – Come here!

WALLAH (n)., (Arab.) – (1) Boy; (2) person.

WAZZEH (n.), (Arab.) – (1) One of the native quarters of Cairo; (2) the slum area of any city; (3) a dirty or untidy house or room.

YALLAH (Arab.) – Quickly.

(Downing 1919)

The list is full of errors (e.g. *sab'a* is seven, not five; *wallah* is Hindustani, not Arabic), and the spelling has only a loose correspondence to actual Arabic pronunciation. Rather than acting as a means of connection between Australian troops and Egyptians, the slang is a vehicle for casual racism. In this published glossary, there is also some euphemism: 'Wazzeh' is al-Wāsi'a,

the red-light and entertainment district to the north of the Azbakiyya Gardens, site of a notorious riot by Anzac soldiers in April 1915 (Biancani 2018).

War slang held a lasting interest, even among non-combatants. English journalist Walter Gallichan, author of a 1914 French phrasebook for troops (Cowman 2016, 33–34) but too old to have served himself, collected the following Arabic or Middle Eastern terms in his dictionary of war slang:

> BELLUM (Arabic). A canoe-shaped boat.
> BINTING (GO). To go on leave to Cairo to seek female society. (*Bint*, a girl, Arabic.)
> BUSKSHEE. Extras; a gift; something for nothing. (Corruption of *baksheesh*.)
> BUKRA. To-morrow. Arabic.
> CALABOOSE. Prison. Arabic.
> CALM LAYLAS. Egyptian Labour Corps – from their song 'Kam Layla, Kam Yom?' (How many nights, how many days?)
> ESMA. Listen. Arabic.
> GYPO. An Egyptian.
> IGGRI. Quickly. Arabic. (Cf. 'Iggri corner,' near Bullecourt, so named by the Australian troops.)
> IMSHI (Ar.). Go; get out.
> JUDY. A Palestine Jew. (*Yahudi*: Arabic.)
> KELLEK (Ar.). A large skin raft.
> KWAYESS. Good, all right. Arabic.
> MALEESH. It doesn't matter. (Arabic.)
> MESOPOLONICA. Any unknown destination in the East. In phrase 'Drafted to Mesopolonica.'
> SAIDA! Good day! Arabic.
>
> (Gallichan 1939)

## Egypt and Sudan

Although existing books, especially those produced during the preceding British occupation, continued to be used, the war provoked a flurry of new Arabic phrasebooks published by private enterprises in Egypt. I discuss Arabic learning and mediation in Palestine and Iraq separately from Egypt, but it is probable that many of the works produced for and in Egypt were also used by soldiers throughout the Middle East – despite differences in dialect. As discussed above, this market was all the more open to private enterprise because the British Army did not produce its own mass-market

phrasebooks, and issued word lists and other information for Arabic only relatively late in the war, and in formats directed principally at officers, not at regular serving soldiers. An exception is Reginald Campbell Thompson's *List of Words and Phrases in the Basrah Dialect of Arabic*, which was printed by the Government of India in 1915, but only after Thompson had produced and circulated his own copies in Basra (see below). It was still, therefore, a matter of individual initiative rather than of government or army action.

The Arabic phrasebooks produced in Egypt which I will discuss are those by Alexander Khoori, also known as Alec Cury (Khoori 1915), Guirguis Skarous (Skarous 1915), Frank Scudamore (Scudamore 1915a), Abd al Hamid Zaki (Zaki 1915), Mohamed Hammam (Hammam 1915), 'Saman' (Saman 1915), Arthur T. Upson (Upson 1916), Muḥammad Chawky (Chawky 1915, third edition 1916), Socrates Spiro (Spiro 1919), and 'A.M. and B.M.' (M. and M., n.d. [First World War]), as well as an anonymous publication by the Sailors' and Soldiers' Institute in Alexandria (Anonymous, n.d. [First World War], *List*). Most of these books have a similar physical format: thin paperbacks of a few dozen pages at most, in the region of 11 × 14 cm. They are deliberately designed to fit comfortably in a uniform breast pocket.

Probably the most successful of the phrasebook authors of the First World War in Egypt was Alexander Khoori, who later went by an anglicised version of his name, 'Alec Cury'.[1] If he is the same 'Alexander R. Cury' who, according to shipping records, visited New York on several occasions in the late 1920s and early 1930s, then he was born in Egypt around 1896–1898, and described himself as 'Syrian' in origin and a journalist by profession. He was therefore a very young man when he produced his first Arabic phrasebook in 1915. If the cover of his *Baghdad: How to See It* (1930) is to be believed, Khoori at some point worked for the Antiquities Department in Egypt. Khoori's journalism included occasional romantic Oriental stories for *The Sphinx* (e.g. 4 March 1922, 618).

Khoori/Cury built a long and prolific career as author of the How to See It series of guidebooks. The first, *Cairo: How to See It*, appeared in 1918 and was in its 24th edition by 1942. He also produced titles for Cyprus (1922), Luxor (1924), Alexandria (1925), Jerusalem (1926), Baghdad (1930), Merseh Matruh (1936), Athens (date unknown) and other places. These appeared in new editions into the 1960s, mostly issued by Khoori/Cury's own publishing house, World-Wide Publications. They are pocket-sized paperback books, and appear to have sold well. A 1919 review of *Cairo: How to See It* indicates how the book found a useful niche in a crowded market:

Cairo abounds in guides, more so than any other city! I suppose it also possesses a library of guide books. But to the Western mind a short, concise directory which will enable you to get an idea of the place into your head, so as to be free from guides, is what seems to be wanted. This is rather what this booklet attempts to be and do. It avoids history generally and strives to give a bird's-eye view of the place as it is. There is not a vast variety of sights in Cairo, and once the glamour and romance of the city wears off, one naturally turns to deeper books, but these handbooks are useful though shallow in their composition. To the present-day visitors, who are mostly military, it is a help. There is a map included and information about churches, clubs, and all the institutions that you might wish to know about. It is published by the Anglo-Egyptian Supply Association, Alexandria, at P.T. 12, – a large sum, but everything appears to be dear to-day.

(*The Sphinx*, 8 February 1919, 140)

This nicely summarises what guidebooks and phrasebooks needed in order to be successful in the wartime market: they needed to be short, with only basic necessary information, compact and available at an affordable price. Despite what the reviewer said, 12 piastres was not excessive: as will be discussed below, Cairo booksellers marketed books at twice that price to soldiers, although some phrasebooks were much cheaper, at two or three piastres. For a soldier with limited time on leave in the city, and with accumulated pay that he had not been able to spend in the desert, it was a realistic price. A review in the same paper of the third edition of *Cairo: How to See It* (priced at 15 piastres) also emphasised its 'convenient pocket size' and brief and concise manner (*The Sphinx*, 20 January 1923, 317). Khoori's guidebooks should also be contextualised within the tourist industry publications discussed in Chapter 3. Advertisements inside Khoori's books show that World-Wide Publications also sold souvenir maps and pincushions of Allied campaigns in Cyrenaica and at El Alamein during the Second World War.

Khoori's *Arabic without a Teacher* was first published by Luzac and Company, an established publisher of language books (see Chapter 3), in London in 1915. The following year, a second edition was issued by the Anglo-Egyptian Supply Company in Alexandria. By 1924, Luzac had issued a fifth edition of the book. Many new editions appeared during the Second World War (at least eight in 1941–1942 alone); the latest edition I have found is the 33rd in 1962. The book's title page bears the words 'Officially approved by General Sir John Maxwell', who was

General Officer Commanding of the British troops in Egypt. Maxwell had compiled his own notes for an Arabic–English primer (now held in the Special Collections of Princeton University Library). The trade paper *The Bookseller* describes it as 'a useful little book' which has been received by soldiers in Egypt 'with much favour', and notes that a second edition is already in preparation (March 1916, 100). This same issue of *The Bookseller* contains several advertisements from publishers promoting their own existing series of phrasebooks to new wartime markets. Two similar titles, *French without a Teacher* and *Italian without a Teacher*, both authored by Cury and one Elena Tellini, are advertised inside some editions of *Arabic without a Teacher*, but I have not been able to trace any surviving copies. Sadly, I have also been unable to find a copy of *Arabic Effective with Riff-Raff*, advertised as containing 'lists of curses, abuses, names, swearing, some very improper and filthy' (Figure 5.2).

Khoori's Arabic book includes 40 or so pages of vocabulary or phrases, on topics such as going to the post office or dealing with a cabman. Some of the phrasing of the English suggests that he may have consulted a copy of Nakhlah 1874 (for example, both write 'I like to' for 'I would like to'), but there is no direct plagiarism. The remaining 110 pages provide an Arabic vocabulary. There is minimal explanation of pronunciation and grammar, although the classic 'Scotch "ch" in loch' appears for *khā'* /x/ (Khoori 1915, 6; on this description, see Mairs forthcoming-f). The orthography is fairly intuitive for an English speaker. Khoori uses a dash to indicate *'ayn* /ʕ/, which, if the user pronounces this as a short pause or glottal stop, will bring them close enough to the word's pronunciation to be understood (e.g. 'Sa-eeda' for *sa'īda*, 'sa-ahh' for *sā'a*). The dialect is colloquial northern Egyptian: for example, 'Eih?' for 'what?', 'Ma feesh' for 'there is not', *jīm* written as 'g' and *qāf* omitted (since it is produced as a glottal stop). The book is professionally produced, and seems to have been a model of sorts for the flimsier, often much poorer quality, booklets which followed during the war years. Khoori's 1915 Foreword, written in Alexandria, reads:

> It has been noticed that Britishers studying the Arabic colloquial language, find difficulties in their studies on account of the books they use, which are full of matters they do not require at all or are written in such a way that they perplex the students and render their work difficult and unpleasant instead of facilitating it. This Manual is intended to meet the difficulties in question and to enable those who are interested in the Arabic language, as spoken in Egypt, to acquire it easily without a teacher. This manual contains all

**Figure 5.2** 'Arabic Effective with Riff-Raff', advertised in Cury's *Arabic Without A Teacher* (date unknown). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

sentences, phrases and a vocabulary of words that are in common use throughout Egypt and which are needed mostly by military men. So I hope it will be received with appreciation and that it will fully render the service for which it was written.

(Khoori 1915, unpaginated)

The words 'without a teacher' are in bold type. Although Khoori may be optimistic in his view that the book will help the student to learn unaided, his assessment of previous Arabic instruction books is fair.

In July 1917, Khoori wrote a new preface for the third edition of the book, which addresses criticism of the original. 'A friend of mine', he writes, 'has asked me to give the reason why I did not use the Arabic characters in addition to the transliteration used in this Manual. He thinks that the introduction of Arabic characters into this book will help the students who are learning to read and write.' Khoori justifies his position. He points out that his target audience are those who want 'to master the language used in conversation in Egypt and so be able to talk to the inhabitants'. He notes that any who 'intend to enter the Government Service or to settle in Egypt for commercial purposes' can then move on to study Classical Arabic. He is against the writing of colloquial Arabic in Arabic script because 'the spoken language has no grammar'. Khoori, then, is on the side of those who argued against making colloquial Arabic a written language.

Also involved in writing both guidebooks and phrasebooks was Guirguis Skarous, whose 1915 *New English-Arabic Manuel* [*sic*] bills him as 'Interpreter to the British Army in Cairo' – although I have not been able to find any military records of him in that capacity. It is a combined phrasebook and guidebook, with the language section on ordinary paper and the guidebook – which is attractively illustrated with black and white photographs of landscapes and monuments – on higher-quality glossy paper.[2] It was priced at seven piastres. The title page announces that this edition was produced 'specially for the use of British troops serving in Egypt', which suggests that Skarous was adapting an existing tourist guide–phrasebook. The phrase 'I have positive news that H.H. Prince Hussein will ascend the throne of Egypt as Sultan' (Skarous 1915, 32) also suggests that the original work was composed before Ḥusayn Kāmil became Sultan of Egypt in 1914. Following the precedent of authors such as Nakhlah, 'Classical expressions are given in Arabic characters, and colloquialisms in English print' (Skarous 1915, 2). Skarous is unusual in stating this directly (a few years later Hamood Hason also did so). The Romanised Arabic is Cairene, with features such as the pronunciation of *qāf* as a glottal stop.

Most of the vocabulary and phrases are concerned with sightseeing and socialising in Cairo, but there is a military section, including phrases such as 'The enemy has been repulsed with a grave loss / Riga il-aado bikharasa kibeera' and 'The remainder were taken as prisoners / Wilba-ey khadooh asseer' (Skarous 1915, 22–23). On Arabic learning, Skarous includes the following:

> Is it easy for me to learn Arabic? Momkim at-aallim Arabi awam?
>     How long does it take me to talk Arabic? Fi udd aih aa-der atkallim aarabi?
> Six months only. Sittosh-hor.
> Please find a teacher for me. Shofli mo-aalim.
>
> <div align="right">(Skarous 1915, 24)</div>

The war correspondent Frank Scudamore (1859–1939; see *Encyclopedia of War Journalism*, second edition, 330) brought out a series of phrasebooks with the military publisher Forster Groom & Co. in 1915. Scudamore's father, Frank Ives Scudamore, lived and worked in Constantinople from the second half of the 1870s until his death in 1884. This may have led Frank Junior to go to the Middle East as a young man: his first journalistic experience was covering the Russo-Turkish War, when he was still in his teens. He learnt some of his Arabic in Alexandria. In his memoirs, he describes his Arabic teacher – whom he refers to as his 'hodja' ('master') – taking him on a late-night 'tour of inspection of the hashish and opium-smoking dens that formed numerous ugly blots on the ugliest and lowest native quarter of the Arab town' of Alexandria in June 1882 (Scudamore 1925, 57). He does not say who instigated this tour, but presumably it was not the hodja's idea. Scudamore reported on the Nile Expedition of 1884–1885 and was at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898.

Scudamore's French and German phrasebooks for soldiers (*Sprechen Sie deutsch* and *Parley voo*) are coauthored with Colonel F. N. Maude. He is the sole author of his Turkish and Arabic phrasebooks, probably because of his greater experience in those languages. Forster Groom & Co. advertised all of these books along with their other military publications in outlets such as the *Army and Navy Gazette* (e.g. Saturday, 14 August 1915, 12). *Turkish for Tommy and Tar* (i.e. 'Tommy Atkins' and 'Jack Tar', personifications of the British soldier and sailor respectively: Scudamore 1915b) and *Arabic for our Armies* (Scudamore 1915a) are marked with the individual price of threepence, and wholesale price of 2 shillings and sixpence per dozen, or 17 shillings and sixpence for a hundred. *Arabic for*

*Our Armies* describes itself on its title page as 'words and phrases with their equivalent in colloquial Arabic (phonetic pronunciation) in daily requirement by H.M. Forces serving in the Near East', but the Foreword makes it clear that Egyptian dialect is intended, and is realistic about the results it expects:

> There are several forms of the Arabic language, and of them 'Egyptian Arabic' has been termed 'bastard'. In this booklet the purpose of the compiler is merely to provide for the use of those called thither by duty a clue that may help them to achieve some at least of their daily requirements in dealing with the common people of Egypt and maybe some of the adjacent lands.
>
> The matter of pronunciation is extremely difficult. There are many complicated vowel sounds, which cannot be rendered by any possible combination of English letters, and such endeavour to explain them as could be given in a tiny manual would confuse without helping the reader.
>
> (Scudamore 1915a, 3–4)

The only pronunciation guidelines Scudamore gives are that words 'are to be pronounced as written' and that 'g' is always 'hard, as in *give, garden*'. *'Ayn* and *hamza* are not indicated in the transliteration, nor are the emphatic consonants distinguished from their non-emphatic counter-parts. *Khā'* is transliterated 'kh', 'h' or 'k' according to the individual word. The spelling used conforms to English orthography, for example with 'oo' for the long ū, 'ee' for long ī and 'igh' for the diphthong 'ai', as in the English word 'high'. In places, a non-rhotacising pronunciation of English is assumed (e.g. a superfluous 'r' written at the end of words).[3] Words such as 'gib' for 'give' indicate the Egyptian 'hard g' pronunciation of *jīm*. The frequency with which *qāf* is represented by 'g' or 'gh' rather than omitted altogether may suggest that Scudamore is more familiar with Ṣa'īdī or Sudanese Arabic rather than Cairene, which would accord with his time in the south (Figure 5.3). Note 'Gib' for *jīb*, which is written with a *jīm* but pronounced with a hard 'g' in Egyptian Arabic; 'Es mak ay?', with the Egyptian *ayh* for 'what'; 'Hă-lās' for *khalāṣ*; the hyphen in the place of *'ayn* in 'sā-ā'; 'Gh'abb ler' for *qabl* (Cairene *'abl*) with an additional 'r' at the end, presuming a non-rhotic dialect of English; 'God-dam' for *quddām* (Cairene Egyptian *'uddām*) and similarly 'gā-wam' for *qawām/'awām*; 'Wak-rĕ' for *wakhrī*; and so on.

The book's 18 pages of vocabulary are divided into the sections Food and Drink, General Wants, Travel by River or Sea, Travel by

| ENGLISH. | ARABIC. | ENGLISH. | ARABIC. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bring breakfast | Gib foo tŭr | Bad | Rā-dĕ (or) băt tal |
| Bring dinner | Gib rudder | Very (extremely) | Hă-lās |
| Light the lamp | Nā-weer as-sess aj | Up (or) above | Fōk |
| Light the candle | Nā-weer ash-shamma | Down (or) below | Tăh-ht |
|  |  | Before (of time) | Gh'abb ler |
| Put out (extinguish) | At-fē | Before (in front of) | God-dam |
|  |  | Behind (in rear) | Warra |
| Come here | Ta alĕ henneh | Early | Bād-rĕ |
| What is your name ? | Es mak ay ? | Late | Wak rĕ |
|  |  | Behind hand | Moos teh keer |
| What is the time ? | Kām ass sā-ā ? | Look ! | Shooff ! |
| Open the door | If tak el bab | Listen ! | Ess māh ! |
| Shut the door | Sekk'r el bab | Be silent (shut up) ! | Ess kŭt ! |
| Go quickly | Rŭh gā-wam |  |  |
| Good | Tā-yib (or) quices | Speak | Tĕh kallīm |
|  |  | Quickly | Ga-wamm |

**Figure 5.3** Phrases from Scudamore's *Arabic for our Armies* (1915), 20. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

Land, Red Cross, Camp Terms and Phrases, Sentences and Words, and Numerals. The lack of attention to grammar and phonology actually makes this book easier to use for an average soldier than many of the others considered here. For speakers of a non-rhotic dialect of English (such as soldiers from southern England, Australia or New Zealand, but not parts of northern England, Ireland, Scotland or India), the orthography is quite intuitive and seems likely to have led to passable results. For soldier users of the book, especially those without the background in learning Greek and Latin which many more formal Arabic instruction books seems to have assumed, the absence of grammatical explanations may also have built confidence in using it. Nevertheless, the book is full of grammatical and typographical errors and will not have been much use to someone who aspired to stammer more than a few words (Zack 2016, 18–20).

The phrasebook of Muḥammad Chawky (Shawqī), who worked in the Medical Department of the Ministry of Waqfs, was sold by the bookseller Moustafa Mohammad, who usually carried a much more intellectual list of Arabic literary and scholarly works (Chawky 1915, third edition 1916). Chawky's *Your Interpreter of the Colloquial Arabic and English Tongues* was priced at six piastres, and went through at least three editions in 1915–1916. It is 62 pages long. Like Hammam's book, which

I will go on to consider, Chawky's was printed by Mohamed M. Matar. It has the Egyptian, British and French flags on the cover.

Chawky's book has both an English title page, opening from the front of the book European-style, and an Arabic title page, opening from the front of the book Arabic-style. It is designed to be used by both English and Arabic speakers. In the Preface, Chawky writes:

> This book which I took the care of editing, is intended to help the foreigners in Egypt, especially the English troops, and for the natives of this country; to communicate intelligibly with each other; it therefore, of necessity included the most useful words and sentences of both colloquial Arabic and English tongues as they may require.

The words and phrases are given in four columns: from left to right, English, Arabic in Roman script, English in Arabic script and Arabic. The Arabic is Egyptian dialect, but with occasional more formal features (e.g. p. 30, 'Ma ism hazihi el-Saraya el-kibira?' 'What is the name of this big palace?' with *mā* instead of *ayh* for 'what' and *hādhihi* before the noun instead of *di* after it, although with the letter *dhāl* realised as 'z' according to Egyptian pronunciation). It does not mark out any of the 'difficult' consonants in transliteration and has no pronunciation guide. Chawky has a strong (though not perfect) command of English, and a good ear. In the list of Cairo police stations, for example, he transcribes Egyptian names the way a foreigner would likely pronounce them, without emphatic and aspirated consonants, e.g. *Būlāk* for *Būlāq* and *Darb al-Ahmār* for *Darb al-Aḥmar* (Figure 5.4).

The terms and phrases contained in the book allow the user to talk about everyday topics and to complete tasks such as asking for directions, hiring a donkey or carriage, consulting a doctor, going to the post office and buying tickets at the train station. It includes lists of police stations and government departments. As with Scudamore's book, the absence of detailed guidance on pronunciation and grammar is likely to have made it more attractive and usable for a soldier on leave. With both languages in their own scripts and in transliteration, a user will also have been able to point to a word (English or Arabic) and be understood if his pronunciation let him down.

Mohamed Hammam's *The British Soldier's Colloquial Arabic Pocket Guide* was also printed by Mohamed M. Matar, which is significant. It was issued in at least two editions of two separate versions. An English–Arabic version cost two piastres, and one also including French, three piastres. My discussion here is based on the second edition of the Arabic–English version (Hammam 1915). It contains 35 pages of words and expressions

CAIRO POLICE STATIONS قره قولات بوليس القاهرة

Karakolat police el-Kahira كَرَكُوپُولِيس الـٰقَاهِرِين

| Abdin district | Kism Abdin | أَبْدِين دِسْتِركْت | ,, | قسم عابدين |
| Mousky ,, | ,, El-Mousky | مُوسكى | ,, | الموسكى ,, |
| Azbakieh ,, | ,,el-Azbakieh | أَزْبَاكِيَا | ,, | الازبكيه ,, |
| Boulak ,, | ,, Boulac | بُولَاكْ | ,, | بولاق ,, |
| Old Cairo ,, | . Masr el Kadima | أُولَذكَابْرُو | ,, | مصر القديمه ,, |
| Saida Zenab,, | . Saida Zenab | سَيِدَازِيْنَبْ | ,, | السيده زينب ,, |
| Al-Wayly ,, | ,, El-Wayly | الوَايْلِى | ,, | الوبلى ,, |
| Darb el-Ahmar ,, | ,, Darb el Ahmar | دَرْبِ إلْأَهْمَارِ | ,, | الدرب الاحمر ,, |
| Gamalieh ,, | ,, Gamalieh | جَامَالِيَّة | ,, | الجماليه ,, |
| Heliopolis ,, | ,, Masr el Gedida | مَصْرِ الجَدِيدَه هِلْيُوبُولِيس، | ,, | مصر الجديده ,, |
| Kobba ,, | ,, el-Kobba | كُوبًّا | ,, | القبه ,, |

**Figure 5.4** List of Cairo police stations from Chawky's *Interpreter of the Colloquial Arabic and English Tongues* (1915), 11. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

to do with a soldier's leave in Cairo: eating, drinking, hiring a carriage, shopping, flirting. The majority of it is copied directly from Chawky. Not only are the words and phrases the same, but there are the same variations in font size, showing that the same plates were used to produce the book at the printer's, who must therefore have been complicit in the plagiarism. Hammam omits much of the general vocabulary and more reputable activities outlined by Chawky (the soldier no longer learns how to go to the post office or police station). The Arabic script columns are also omitted. Hammam's innovation is to add some new material on activities which he clearly thought better represented the average soldier's real goals in Cairo: drinking, picking up women and swearing.

Hammam's additions are visible not only from their content but from the quality of their English. There are a number of spelling mistakes (p. 15, 'lier' for 'liar'; several times, 'bear' for 'beer') and some unidiomatic English (p. 3, 'Endak aih kaman / What have you too?' for 'What else do you have?';

p. 14 'Enti hilwa wilateefa / You are a pretty and gentile' for 'You are pretty and gentle'; p. 16, 'Why you spend all you money'). The book cuts to the chase with what many soldiers will have wanted on their leave in Cairo (drinking, eating, sightseeing, meeting women) and correctly identifies the nature of the people with whom they will come into contact: waiters, carriage drivers, shopkeepers, sex workers and beggars (on sex work and its regulation in British-occupied Egypt, see Hammad 2014). The tone is sometimes aggressive and some of the material could have got a soldier into considerable trouble: whether through using obscenities or approaching a woman who was not a sex worker with over-familiar language (Figure 5.5).

Hammam's phrasebook (its plagiarism from the more respectable Chawky going unnoticed) served as a light-relief human interest story in the British press in the spring of 1916. The longest account, by the Press Association's special correspondent, appeared in several papers:

> By way of intellectual relaxation, the Army is endeavouring to become proficient in Arabic. In this matter the British soldier aims at quality rather than quantity – a few words, but well chosen, and warranted to take effect. With 'Mafeesh,' which is used in the sense of a general negative, 'Imshi' (go away), 'Isma' (listen, or, you there), 'talah hennah' (come here) one can go far in Egypt.
>
> About a dozen more words are sufficient for almost all ordinary purposes of life, and with fifty one can take command of an Egyptian

14

**IN AZBACIA**
Feel Azbakiah

| | |
|---|---|
| Come here girl | Taali hina ya bint |
| Yes, sir | Na'am ya seedi |
| What is your name | Ismik aih |
| My name is Hanem | Ismy Hanem |
| You are a pretty and gentile | Enti hilwa wilateefa |
| And sympathe-tic too | Wikafeefa kaman |
| I love you so much | Ana ahibbik kiteer |

36

| | |
|---|---|
| Go on | Imshy yalla |
| Get away donkey | Rooh min hina ya homar |
| Piss off | Rooh shukh |
| Up to shit | Roh ikhra |
| Get a hell | Rooh fi dahia |

END

**Figure 5.5** 'Feel Azbakiah', from Hammam's *British Soldier's Colloquial Arabic Pocket Guide* (1915), 14 and 36. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

labour corps. Already the hospitable English tongue has absorbed these stray morsels of the language of the Koran. The Australians brought them with them to Anzac beach, and now everybody uses them. Years after the war they will be heard in the streets of inland manufacturing towns at home.

## HOW TO TALK ARABIC.

Naturally, with these restricted vocabularies all is lost save honour if the native addressed replies, and it must not be thought that there are among us ambitious spirits for whom the staccato method of conversation, which alone is possible, with such a modicum of Arabic is not enough. For these a number of thoughtful Egyptians have compiled little phrase books for the use of our soldiers, the study of which is more refreshing than palm trees or brooks of water in the desert. The most instructive of these are the 'British Soldiers' Colloquial Arabic Pocket Guide,' by Mohammed Hamman [*sic*], and the 'Pocket Book of English-Arabic-French self-study for the British Soldiers in Egypt' by A. H. Zeki.

Mohammed Hamman sells his book for a piastre less than A. H. Zeki sells his, but I set more store by him. He has set about his work in a spirit of 'Gruendlichkeit' that would do credit to the Prussian General Staff. He follows the British soldier into every conceivable place, including some apparently that he would be well advised to keep away from, and provides him with conversational material for every possible emergency. ...

There follow a number of vocabularies, days of weeks, numbers, money, etc., and then Mohammed plunges the British soldier head over heels into a love affair, and one marked by all the impetuous fury which is supposed to characterise the passion in these climes. He begins haughtily, 'Come here, girl.' The lady replies politely, 'Yes, sir.' 'What is your name?' 'My name is Hanem.' That is enough beating about the bush for Mohammed Hamman. 'You are pretty, and gentle, and sympathetic, too. I love you so much,' says the soldier.

## LOVERS' BRIEF QUARREL

'I love you, too, sir,' replies the maid. But the underlying cynicism of the author rudely breaks the course of dalliance. He gives us a lovers' quarrel in three hurried vindictive sentences. 'You are liar.' 'You are cunning,' 'You love me for my money.' Here the soldier's passion

overcomes his anger. 'Your cheek is rosy,' he cries – sheer Oriental hyperbole, of course; cheeks are never rosy in Egypt – and he pleads for a kiss, being rude enough, I regret to say, to offer humorously half a millime (about half a farthing) for that which should be priceless.

Visits to the bar and the restaurant are less instructive, although at the latter place the British soldier is taught to call for 'a cup of tea with butter,' and when the waiter says 'You are gentleman,' to reply 'You have that baksheesh,' doubtless with the emphasis on the verb. ... A. H. Zeki is a kindlier soul than Mohammed Hammam. He, too, gives us a love scene, but his British soldier is a kinder as well as a more polite lover than his fellow-philologist's. Thus his soldier begins. 'You are pretty girl. Give me a kiss.' Then comes the declaration, 'I love you very much,' and then tender, long-drawn farewells. 'Good-bye, my darling.' 'I hope to see you again,' says (presumably) the lady. There follow a few broken-hearted adjurations. 'Give me your address.' 'Write me always.' 'Forget me not.' 'I never forget you.' 'My heart is always for you.' He winds up very prettily with 'God keeps you,' let us hope, uttered by the lady. I should like to wind up, too, with this assurance, but candour compels me to add that the cynical Mohammed Hammam has the same English words with quite a different Arabic rendering, and he uses the phrase in a connection that seems to imply that the person addressed does very little to keep himself.

(*Belfast Telegraph*, Saturday, 11 March 1916, 3)

It is notable that this report censors the franker language that appears on page 36 of the phrasebook and (with perhaps deliberate naïveté) reads the encounter with the sex worker as a more innocent flirtation. A shorter report, under the headline 'An Amusing Letter from Egypt', was contributed by Lieutenant W. B. Johnson to the *Northampton Daily Echo* (Saturday, 13 May, 1916, 3). Johnson reports, 'A good many soldiers out here are picking up a bit of Arabic: and to help them in these quite laudable linguistic ventures several "Guides" have been published of the type to which visitors to France will be fairly accustomed.' Johnson thinks that Hammam contains 'the most useless, though I admit typical "conversations" that could well be imagined' and, like the Press Association's correspondent, summarises the dialogues (again censored, with even 'hell' written as 'h–').

The phrasebook by ʿAbd al Ḥamīd Zakī, also discussed by the Press Association's correspondent, is the *Pocket Book of Arabic Self-Study for the*

*British Soldiers in Egypt*, published under the alternative title *Pocket Book of English-Arabic-French Self-Study for the British Soldiers in Egypt* (Zaki 1915). This cost three piastres, and was published by the author on his own account. Like Hammam, Zaki also appears to have taken inspiration from Chawky, although a little more indirectly. The section title 'In the Way' (for 'on the way') is used in both works, so it seems that Zaki used a copy of Chawky in preparing his work, although it does not have the direct plagiarism of Hammam. It is also possible that Zaki's influence from Chawky came via Hammam, since Hammam also uses the phrase 'In the Way', and both spell 'hallo' or 'hello' as 'hallow'. The conversational scenarios with which Zaki's soldier is faced include buying cigarettes, renting a furnished room and ordering beer, wine and cognac at a bar. The book also includes tables of verb conjugations in English, transliterated Arabic and French. The dialect is Egyptian (for example with 'Ehna' for 'we').

The cover bears British, Egyptian and French flags (as did that of Chawky 1915), with weapons and obelisks (Figure 5.6). This is ironic – or cynical. Zaki was a former army officer who started the satirical anti-imperialist newspaper *The Cairo Punch / al-Siyāsa al-Muṣawwara* in 1907 (Booth 2013; Makki 2016, 122; Cannon 2019, 51–62). In 1908, the paper was forced to move to Bologna, presumably because of British censorship or harassment, much as James Sanua (Chapter 3) had been forced into exile some decades earlier. Certainly, the paper and its 'Egypt for the Egyptians' message had not gone unnoticed. Its publication was covered in the British and French press, and one paper reproduced a cartoon of the Sphinx kicking Cromer out of Egypt (Figure 5.7). The paper also produced large coloured posters of patriotic topics and the Hajj (some may be seen in the British Museum's collection online, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG7867, accession numbers 1948, 1214, 0.4–25).

Zaki's phrasebook reveals the sound commercial reasons for which authors published phrasebooks, whatever protestations of support for the British they may have made. His entire English–Arabic–French book was plagiarised by an Australian soldier, Sergeant C. T. O'Neill, who published a *Soldiers' Guide on English, Arabic, French & German* in Melbourne during or shortly after the war (O'Neill, n.d. [1914–1918]). The first half of the book is a trilingual word list in English, French and German. I have not traced the source, but I presume it was copied from another phrasebook. The second half of the book is an exact copy of Zaki's. O'Neill had the cheek to print 'Copyrighted throughout the Commonwealth' on the title page, beneath a photograph of himself in uniform.

**Figure 5.6** Cover page of Zaki's *Pocket Book of Arabic Self-Study* (1915).
Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

The remaining member of this group of phrasebooks published in 1915 is trilingual: *Saman's Practical Manual of Conversation with Military Terms: Britannic and French Soldier's 'Vade-Mecum' in Egypt* (Saman 1915). It is designed to be used by both French and English speakers to learn the others' language as well as Arabic, and therefore also includes short explanations of English phonology and grammar in French, and vice versa. Saman (whom I have not been able to identify further) has a novel explanation of the emphatic consonants: 'pr. comme *d*, *s*, *t*, *z* dans *don*, *son*, *ton*, *horizon*. Must be pronounced as if they were followed by *n* ex: *don't*' (Saman 1915, 6). This is not quite true, but pedagogically Saman may be working along sensible lines: some modern studies indicate that it is easier for learners of Arabic to pick up the emphatic consonants by focusing on how they modify the quality of the vowel that follows (see e.g. Hayes-Harb and Durham 2016). Saman's summary of Arabic grammar covers four pages. The first two

**Figure 5.7** Cartoon from *The Cairo Punch / al-Siyāsa al-Muṣawwara*, as reproduced in the *Evening Telegraph*, Saturday, 21 March 1908, 5. Held at the Bodleian Library. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

give some basic rules on word formation, pronouns and demonstratives. The second double-page spread (Figure 5.8) provides a table of verb forms. The rest of the book consists of topical vocabulary lists similar to those in the other phrasebooks discussed here. There are only a few pages of phrases, some of them indicating a classier clientele than Hammam's book ('Waiter bring two bottles of french [*sic*] good wine': Saman 1915, 63).

The phrasebook credited only to 'A. M. & B. M.' is a more original work (M. and M., n.d. [First World War]), although it borrows the title *Arabic Self-Taught* from pre-war works such as Thimm's and Marlborough's series. Its contents are practical, and other than drinking alcohol and smoking, the activities represented are fairly decorous. The transliteration of Arabic words is, as commonly for these

**RÉSUMÉ OF THE ARABIC GRAMMAR.**

N.B.— . = Consonant  ✠ Means á - é - o

## TABLE OF CONJUGATION OF VERBS.

| Past tense. | Aorist. | Imperative M. | | Exemples. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| He ... . a . a . ___ | ie . . ✠ . | ___ | Fataḥ° | ieftaḥ° | iftah | (open) |
| She ___ et | te . . ✠ . | ___ | Nazal | ienzel | inzel | (descend) |
| They ___ oo | ie . . ✠ . oo | ___ | Katab | iektob | iktob | (write) |

**PAST — Passé**

| | | Opened | Descended | Wrote |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I ___ t | e . . ✠ . | | | |
| Thou (m. / f.) ___ ti | fe . . ✠ . / te . . ✠ . i | i . . ✠ . / i . . ✠ . i | He..... | Fataḥ° | Nazal | Katab |
| You ___ too | te . . ✠ . oo | i . . ✠ . oo | She ... | Fataḥ°et | Nazalet | Katabet |
| We ___ na | ne . . ✠ . | | They.. | Fataḥ°oo | Nazaloo | Kataboo |

| | Opened | Descended | Wrote |
|---|---|---|---|
| I ........ | Fataḥ°t | Nazalt | Katabt |
| Thou { m. / f. | Fataḥ°ti | Nazalti | Katabti |
| You ... | Fataḥ°too | Nazaltoo | Katabtoo |
| We.... | Fataḥ°na | Nazalna | Katabna |

| He | She | They | I | Thou (m.) | Thou (f.) | You | We |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| hoo-a | hel-ia | hom-ma | ana | enta | enti | entoo | eḥ°na |
| Il | Elle | Ils-Elles | Je | Tu (m.) | Tu (f.) | Vous | Nous |
| | | | | Fataḥ° Ouvrit | Nazal Descendit | Katab Ecrivit | |

| PRESENT or Aorist | | | FUTURE | Imperative M. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Opens Will open Ouvrira | Descends Will descend Descendra | Writes Will write Ecrira | Open Ouvre | Descend Descends | Write Ecris |
| He ..... | ieftaḥ° | ienzel | iektob | | | |
| She .... | teftaḥ° | tenzel | tektob | | | |
| They .. | ieftaḥ°oo | ienzeloo | iektoboo | | | |
| I........ | eftaḥ° | enzel | ektob | | | |
| Thou { m. / f. | teftaḥ° / teftaḥ°i | tenzel / tenzeli | tektob / tektobi | Thou { m. iftaḥ° / f. iftaḥ°i | inzel / inzeli | iktob / iktobi |
| You.... | teftaḥ°oo | tenzeloo | tektoboo | You.... iftaḥ°oo | inzeloo | iktoboo |
| We .... | neftaḥ° | nenzel | nektob | | | |

**Figure 5.8** Conjugation of verbs in *Saman's Practical Manual of Conversation with Military Terms* (1915), 12–13. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

wartime phrasebooks for English-speaking soldiers, based on English orthography rather than scholarly conventions (e.g. 'oo' for long ū and 'ee' for long ī, with 'e' at the end of a word acting to lengthen the preceding vowel).

Missionary organisations also published Arabic phrasebooks during the First World War, and naturally these are of a rather more wholesome character than the drinking-and-whoring guides. The Sailors' and Soldiers' Institute in Alexandria offered accommodation and home comforts to

troops on leave, at five piastres a night for bed only, or three hot meals, bed and bath for 18 piastres. There was a library, writing room and billiards, and the institute would also store parcels and baggage free of charge. The catch (for some soldiers at least) was that the institute had been founded by temperance campaigner Sarah Robinson (1834–1921) and existed to keep British forces out of Alexandria's bars and brothels. It advertised heavily in soldiers' publications such as the *Palestine News* (e.g. No. 4, 28 March 1918, 13). The undated *List of Useful Arabic & French Words & Phrases* which the institute published during the First World War contains useful information on practical matters such as cab fares, and the back cover has life-size drawings of Egyptian coins to help the user tell them apart (Anonymous, n.d. [First World War], *List*; these drawings of coins are common in Egyptian guidebooks and phrasebooks of the period, such as Saman 1915). The words in English, French and Arabic include numbers, days of the week, food, animals, and common adjectives and verbs (in the imperative). Some of the Arabic transliteration is eccentric ('yoom el hadt' for *yawm al-ḥad* 'Sunday') or misleading ('kalb' for *qalb* 'heart', which is pronounced *'alb* in Cairo Arabic; *kalb* means 'dog'). All the activities covered fall within the institute's notion of respectability. Curiously, the 10 pages of the book devoted to military affairs are headed 'Additional Words in French' and give no Arabic equivalents. It may be that the author's Arabic did not go beyond the simple vocabulary given in the first part of the book, or that French was considered more useful for communicating with Egyptian officers than Arabic for communicating with regular troops.

Two titles were printed by the Nile Mission Press. Arthur T. Upson (who also went by the name 'Abdul-Fady al-Qahirany; 1874–1958) authored *Arabic Simplified* (Upson 1916), which I have only been able to access in its revised edition of 1921. Upson sets himself to teach 'Modern *Written* Arabic', not a colloquial dialect (Foreword to First Edition), but the work is still of interest in the present context because of his attitudes to literary versus dialectal Arabic, and the method he employs.

Upson was one of the parties in a debate among Christian missionaries about the appropriate form of Arabic to use for translating scripture and publishing missionary texts (see Chapter 2). He characterised the Egyptian dialect as 'patois', 'slang' and 'Mush-mush language - i.e. that in which the negative is rendered by "mush"' (Upson 1918, 285). He argued for the use of a simple form of Classical Arabic in missionary publications, in large part because *fuṣḥā* was the register most widely used and respected by Arabs in their own publications and used in Arab schools. He claimed that any books that were published in Egyptian 'are (a) indecent,

(b) "comic" in a way, (c) not to be obtained from any respectable bookshop!' (Upson 1918, 288). This was certainly true of some of the Egyptian phrasebooks discussed here.

Upson studied Arabic first as a theology student in England; then, on arrival in Alexandria as a missionary, he spent four months studying and living his daily life in colloquial Arabic. He then studied written composition with a shaykh. At this point, he was spending eight to ten hours a day on his Arabic (Upson 1936, 21–22). Upson suffered severe damage to his hearing after an illness while he was in Egypt in 1899 (Stiles 2015), which may be another reason why his later publications concentrated on the written rather than the spoken language[4] – and an added reason for his insistence in *Arabic Simplified* on learning pronunciation from a native speaker. During the First World War, he was particularly concerned about the prevalence of prostitution and spread of drunkenness and venereal disease among the troops (Mak 2012, 172–173), something that many of the publications considered in this chapter did not exactly discourage.

Upson's inspiration for *Arabic Simplified* came from his study of Hebrew in 1908 with the Rev. John C. Wilcox, who was using a new, 'interrogative' method. Upson began to write a version of the method for written Arabic in spare moments on trains as he travelled around Egypt to supervise other missionaries (Upson 1936, 60). In mid-1915 he was sent back from Egypt to England on convalescent leave after a fall, where he worked on the book with Wilcox's encouragement: 'That gave me something interesting to do, and so greatly helped me to make a rapid recovery' (Upson 1936, 65; Upson 1916, Foreword). The book, he states, is dedicated to modern written Arabic, and he leaves 'the differing colloquials to those who have made a special study of *spoken* dialects, but all words given in the text or in the exercises will be found in practical use to-day: this is a strong point. Our aim is to teach the Student, whether missionary, military, educational, or commercial, to read, e.g., a daily newspaper' (Upson 1916, Foreword).

The second book published by the Nile Mission Press was by Socrates Spiro, whose works were discussed in Chapter 4. During the war, Spiro – using only his initials, but identifiable by his description as 'the author of a standard Arabic dictionary' – contributed to the Australian and New Zealand troop newspaper *The Kia-Ora Coo-ee*. In a piece on 'Cairo Street Cries', Spiro points out that 'the language used by street hawkers is, of course, the spoken or modern Arabic of Egypt. While the natives write one language, the classical, they speak another, the modern' (S. S. = Spiro 1918b). Spiro gives some samples of street vendors' patter

in Arabic, Italian and English. In October 1918, in response to requests from subscribers that the Arabic words and phrases occasionally used in the paper be translated for readers at 'Home', Spiro contributed a column on 'Arabic Made Easy' (S. S. = Spiro 1918a). He points out that, while Australians and New Zealanders in Egypt and Palestine hear Arabic around them all the time, 'it is as strange to them as Chinese', and that they do not pronounce correctly or properly understand the phrases they do pick up. Sometimes their usage is inappropriate. Spiro cautions that words commonly used to get someone to go away – the same we have seen in several of the phrasebooks here – are offensive. 'Imshi' 'should not be addressed to any but the lowest classes.' 'Rûh fi dahya' (one of the phrases added by Hammam in his crib of Chawky) 'is the worst of all, as it is stronger than the English expression "Go to the devil"'. One wonders how many soldiers took Spiro's advice.

Spiro's 1919 *Pocket Grammar and Vocabulary of the Modern Arabic of Egypt* is essentially a condensed version of his 1912 *New Practical Grammar*, which was discussed in Chapter 4. The Preface is dated November 1919, but it should be recalled that many soldiers remained in the Middle East long after the Armistice in Europe. (The *Palestine News* in 1919 is full of letters from soldiers asking when they will be demobilised.) Spiro has reduced the grammar to 37 pages, but 'hardly any rule necessary to enable the reader to express himself has been left out' (Spiro 1919, iii). As with his previous work, there is little in the way of conversational material. The book is essentially a grammar with vocabulary.

## Iraq/Mesopotamia

The linguistic situation with which the British were faced in Iraq differed considerably from that in Egypt and Palestine. Not only were the local Arabic dialect(s) again different, but the majority of the troops on the British side were from India (Indian Expeditionary Force D; on their experiences in Mesopotamia, see Das 2011, 2018b; Fawaz 2014, 205–232). A lieutenant with the Army Service Corps at Basra wrote home to his family in Belfast about the 'motley mass of humans' along the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab 'that has turned the lonely banks of this great stream into a cosmopolitan hive' (letter from Alfred W. Johnson, *Ballymena Weekly Telegraph*, 1 July 1916, 3). He commented, 'We are provided with interpreters – both Arabic and Hindustani, but "a little knowledge" of these lingos is soon picked up, and it is amusing to hear Tommy urging his bare-footed, bedraped, bronze brother to "juldi," the Arabic equivalent for "buck-up".'

The British Army seems to have recognised the enormity of the challenge posed by the triple linguistic divide – Arabic, English, Indian languages – only once Indian troops were already on the ground in the Middle East. On 27 October 1914, the commander of the Army of Occupation in Egypt sent an urgent telegraph to the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India in New Delhi, asking for 24 Urdu–Arabic interpreters (National Archives of India, Foreign and Political Department, Internal-B, March 1915, No. 257–340: 'Arabic-Urdu Interpreters for service with Imperial Service Troops at the front'). At that time, there were only seven available in the entire Indian Army. Over the next two months, a voluminous correspondence ensued between the Foreign and Political Department and officials all over India, as they tried – with little success – to find suitable interpreters between Arabic and Indian languages. The search was complicated by limited knowledge of what was actually required in an interpreter. The Resident at Hyderabad wrote to the Foreign and Political Department on 16 November to ask for an important clarification: 'As language differs materially in different countries where Arabic is spoken we would like to know whether the interpreters are required for Southern Arabia, Egypt or elsewhere.' By mid-December, they had found and despatched only five interpreters to Egypt, one of whom was a Baghdadi Jew. Many candidates had been dismissed because their knowledge of Arabic was insufficient, or they were too old or infirm.

Existing works for learning Arabic in Indian languages are unlikely to have been accessible to the average soldier. Arabic was not widely taught in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India. Even the Islamic madrasa system tended not to teach the language in any depth, and certainly did not teach conversational, dialectal Arabic: 'the symbolic value of Arabic clashed with its utilitarian value and, in order to empower themselves, the Muslims generally learned English and Urdu while genuflecting piously in the direction of Arabic' (Rahman 2002, 90). There were therefore few Indian textbooks for Arabic as a spoken language. In 1872, Sayed Abdul Fattah (also known as Saiyad Ashraf Ali), an Indian scholar who taught Arabic and Persian at Elphinstone College in Bombay, published *Tohfatul Makal*. The book comprises about three hundred sentences, almost all taken from al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840. They are arranged in columns in English, Arabic, Persian and Hindustani, covering a range of topics, including learning English ('I understand the orthography is very irregular': 'Abd al-Fattāh 1872, 185). Although some of the phrases may have been useful to soldiers, this book, like its source of inspiration, is designed for classroom instruction.

In his account of his travels in the Ottoman Empire in 1892, Shiblī Nuʿmānī comments on the difference of modern colloquial Arabic dialects from Classical Arabic – in which he was able to converse with scholars – and provides a short word list of terms used in modern educated speech ('museum', 'hotel' and so forth). He notes some typical features of the Egyptian and Levantine dialects, such as the *bi*-imperfect, the negative in -*sh* and the Egyptian pronunciation of *qāf* as *hamza* and *jīm* as 'hard g' (Nuʿmānī, trans. Bruce, 2020, 191–201). But, again, this is hardly likely to have been accessible or useful to the typical Indian soldier. Shiblī Nuʿmānī does mention finding speakers of Urdu at Port Said and Suez (one a Jewish employee of Thomas Cook & Son, the other an Egyptian who had never even visited India), suggesting that Indian troops in the Middle East during the war may occasionally have encountered someone who spoke one of their languages.

In Lahore in 1904, Abdurrahman Amritsari published ʿ*Arabī bol cāl* 'Spoken Arabic' (Amritsari 1904). This contains many phrases (in quite literary, vowelled Arabic) which would have been useful to Indian soldiers in Mesopotamia, on topics such as travel and socialising, and contains an English–Urdu–Arabic word list, by category. Whether any Indian soldiers actually had access to this book, however, is impossible to know. The Indian Army did produce an Arabic phrasebook during the Second World War (Indian Army 1940: discussed below) but, as with all the theatres of war discussed in this chapter, Arabic phrasebooks for soldiers in Mesopotamia were mostly produced later in the war and under private initiative.

The British took Basra in November 1914, and entered Baghdad in March 1917. After the war, Iraq became a British Mandate, and 'for those serving in Iraq the war, for all practical purposes, dragged on three years or more after the Armistice' (Edmonds 1938, 650). The dates of publication of Arabic phrasebooks coincide with these events, and with the (perceived or actual) need for new language resources brought by each. The authors of Arabic phrasebooks for English speakers in the Mesopotamian theatre of war included British, Iraqis, an American and at least one Indian. Only one was printed in Iraq itself; the others were issued by publishers in India, Egypt and England. The first, *A List of Words and Phrases in the Basrah Dialect of Arabic*, was written in Basra in 1915 and circulated in locally made copies, before being properly printed in Simla, India, at the Government Central Branch Press (Thompson 1915a). The title page states that it was 'compiled by Captain R. Campbell Thompson, M.A., F.S.A., Special Service Officer, Indian Expeditionary Force "D," in co-operation with Elias Georges and the other interpreters employed

with Headquarters, Indian Expeditionary Force "D"' – giving an unusual, but still smaller, share of the credit of authorship to the British author's informants.

Reginald Campbell Thompson (1876–1941) was an archaeologist who had excavated at Mesopotamian and Syrian sites such as Nineveh and Carchemish before the war, and continued to do so after it (Thornton 2018, 191–196). His knowledge of ancient Semitic languages is likely to have helped him considerably with Arabic, although he does not reflect upon this in his surviving writings. Another ancient-linguist-turned-author of a colloquial Arabic phrasebook, G. R. Driver (author of Driver 1925; see section on Mandate Palestine, below), notes only in passing in his obituary of Thompson that the latter's knowledge of Arabic and Turkish made him an asset to military intelligence in the war, and concentrates on his ancient philological accomplishments without mentioning his Arabic phrasebook, of which he may well have been unaware given its exclusively wartime circulation (Driver 1944). Intelligence operatives were often discreet about their wartime activities in later life.

In his memoir *A Pilgrim's Scrip*, published during the war, Thompson describes improving his Arabic around the campfire in the Sinai, where bedouin would 'play willingly at schoolmaster to increase the Inglizi's Arabic with the recital of simple folk-tales' (Thompson 1915b, 168–169). He did not, however, find this an effective learning method at the end of a long day and found himself 'lulled to drowsiness by the gentle river of the Arab babble'. Thompson worked in intelligence during the war, and has left an unpublished memoir of this period, now in the Imperial War Museum in London (Thompson 1935). He departed India for Mesopotamia in January 1915, 'after having badgered various offices to be sent where Arabic was spoken' (Thompson 1935, 6–7). He knew the American missionary John Van Ess in Basra, and mentions his 'excellent grammar of local Arabic' (Thompson 1935, 29). Van Ess's grammar (see below) was not published until 1917, and it is unclear how much inspiration or assistance Thompson received from him. Thompson marvelled at the ability of his batman, Private Robert Collins, to communicate in Iraq even without Arabic: 'when we were on our way to Ctesiphon he would secure eggs at threepence a dozen from the local Arabs, or a fowl at eightpence, not knowing one word of the language, and how he did it I know not' (Thompson 1935, 28). But this was clearly insufficient. Thompson compiled his phrasebook very shortly after arriving in Basra, in February 1915. It seems to have been popular, or at least widely distributed: 'I had cyclostyled it myself twice, and both impressions ran out of print soon, and so we sent it to India to be printed.

My recollection is that we had to have a second edition of that too'
(Thompson 1935, 145; I have found no evidence of the possible second
Indian edition).

Information on Thompson's colleagues in compiling the
phrasebook is more difficult to come by. Elias Georges has two very
common Christian Arab names. He may or may not be the 'interpreter
Elias' who told Thompson after an earthquake in 1916 that 'the common
people say that it is caused by a buffalo of the Jinn under the earth shaking
himself' (Thompson 1935, 132). Unlike some other interpreters on the
Mesopotamia Campaign, Georges does not appear in the British Army
Medal and Award Rolls, which suggests that he was a civilian. The India
Office Records in the British Library contain several lists of interpreters
with the Indian Expeditionary Force D who had received advances on their
salaries, but he does not appear in these either (IOR/L/F/7/2762; these
interpreters seem mostly to have been recruited from Egypt and Palestine).
From the names, most appear to have been Arab Christians or Armenians.
For his part, Thompson later recalled that he wrote his 'grammar of local
Arabic for the use of the British soldier-man' with the assistance of all the
interpreters, in particular one Elijah, whose second name he does not give
(there is no Elijah in the Medal and Award Rolls or India Office lists).
But Elijah is mostly mentioned for comic relief, and Thompson gives no
information on his linguistic background or abilities:

> Elijah was a wondrous fat gentleman, who rode in a hireling carriage
> daily from Basra to G.H.Q., and even then came in perspiring with
> the words 'Ay 'm too faht.' I told him that it would be good for him
> to walk in daily, and his stare at my madness was magnificent – 'Sir!!
> I cannot!!!'
>
> (Thompson 1935, 145)[5]

Interpreters are rarely if ever alluded to in memoirs by soldiers who took
part in the campaign in Mesopotamia, nor is the Arabic language often
mentioned. The same is true of the four-volume official history of the
campaign (Moberly 1923–1927).

The phrasebook produced by Thompson and the interpreters is
modest in size and scope. It runs to 19 pages and does not include any
detailed grammatical information. The 'Scheme of Pronunciation' given
is basic and presumes that the reader speaks a non-rhotic dialect of
English ('ER as in *her*'). Thompson transcribes and describes *ḥā'* /ħ/ as
'HH a vigorously sounded *h*', and describes *ṣād* /sˤ/ (transcribed SS) and
*ṭā'* /tˤ/ (TT) as 'sharp sounded'. These are inconsistently applied in the

text (for example, page 15 has 'harr' for *ḥārr* 'hot', 'wahad' for *wāḥid* 'one' and 'issmak' for *ismak* 'your (m) name'). There is no description of other difficult letters for English speakers, such as *'ayn* /ʕ/ (omitted in transcription) or *khā'* /x/ (transcribed 'kh'). There is one page of grammatical notes, which assume a reader who is accustomed to English orthography (ī is rendered as 'ee' and ū as 'oo') and familiar with terminology such as the perfect and imperfect tenses. The table of personal pronouns and possessive suffixes is reminiscent of the format that Thompson and other educated Britons of his generation would have used in the study of Latin or Greek ('I, thou, he, she, we, you, they'). The verb, however, is conjugated in the Arabic order, beginning with the third person. Thompson also seems to assume a reader who has studied written languages grammatically in his occasional footnotes, such as his brief – and to a non-Arabic-speaker, likely mystifying – note on the 'construct state' (*iḍāfa*).

Most of the book consists of word lists, arranged thematically and covering topics such as the family, weather, animals, food, clothing, the time and countries. Some lists and the shorter sections of phrases have more specific relevance to soldiers in the field or in hospital ('I was wounded in the arm by a bullet', 'Don't put your dirty fingers in and poison the wound', 'Did you vomit?', 'He deserted'). Given Thompson's work in intelligence, the reader is equipped with a large number of phrases which would be useful in interrogating an Arabic speaker ('Did you see any troops there?', 'Had they any guns?', 'Tell me first what you saw with your eyes', 'Make enquiries about him and watch him'). There are relatively few courtesy phrases. Two and a half pages are taken up with military terms.

The fact that Thompson cyclostyled two editions of the book even before the first Simla printing indicates that it circulated in a fairly large number of copies. Nevertheless, Thompson found himself disappointed by the standard of Arabic reached by British soldiers. When a field test was instituted for potential interpreters from within the army, results were disappointing. One candidate, told to ask a man how to cross the river, was only able to repeat the word 'Shuf!' ('look!': Thompson 1935, 159). Thompson also received some negative feedback on the book, which he took on the chin. An American woman was detained at Basra in 1915 on suspicion of smuggling opium:

> The police held her in durance comfortably on a ship, and she spent her time learning Arabic out of my grammar (doubtless with the view of complimenting at least one of her gaolers), but commenting adversely on it to the Chief: 'Captain Thompson puts in his grammar

a phrase "he killed me" – how silly! How can anyone say "he killed me"?' Hamlet and the ghost, I suppose, might do it, perhaps, but it was ingenious of her.

<div style="text-align: right">(Thompson 1935, 31)</div>

She was deported.

Thompson (writing in 1935) was aware of John Van Ess's *The Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia* (Mairs and Muratov 2015, 65–66), a work which enjoyed great longevity and went through several editions and reprints (some under the title *The Spoken Arabic of Iraq*). It is one of the phrasebooks that survives in the greatest number of copies today (Chapter 7). Van Ess (1879–1949) was an American missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church. He studied Semitic languages at Princeton Theological Seminary, and later spent a period studying Arabic in Bahrain before moving to Basra. During the First World War, he conducted Arabic classes for the troops, 'which proved very popular and successful' (Wilson 1930, 77–78). The title page of *The Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia* states that it was 'compiled for the Administration of the Territories of Iraq in British Occupation'. Like Thompson's earlier phrasebook, it is possible that it circulated in locally produced copies in Basra before being printed at Oxford in 1917. Van Ess himself recorded that he had written it in 1916 (Van Ess 1943, 55). A second edition was published in 1938, in which Van Ess recognised the changes which Iraqi Arabic had undergone in the meantime by replacing most of the foreign loanwords with Arabic equivalents (Van Ess 1943, 55–56; see the entertaining review of this by Edmonds 1938, who served as Political Officer in Mesopotamia and Persia between 1915 and 1921, in which he reflects on the trials and pleasures of learning Arabic).

Part of the reason for the book's longevity, and the relative (and I do mean relative) frequency with which it is to be found in second-hand bookshops today, is that it was the prescribed textbook for the Field Service Test in Arabic, which soldiers had an incentive to take, since they received a cash bonus for passing it (Edmonds 1938, 650; Wilson 1930, 77–78). (This is the same test in which Thompson encountered a candidate whose only word of Arabic was 'Shuf!') My own copies of the book show evidence of this in the fact that they are more frequently annotated than other phrasebooks, sometimes in ways that suggest the owner was not completely devoted to the study of Arabic. R. M. Thompson's copy of the 1918 edition bears his name in several places, an address (in Limerick) inside the cover and several sketches: two faces in profile (one wearing a *ṭarbūsh* 'fez'), a horse and a scene with palm trees (I have been unable to find out

anything more about Thompson). He has also, however, corrected several items of vocabulary and marked the section on irregular verbs with a large asterisk (on annotations as evidence for language learning, see Chapter 7).

Van Ess's work focuses on the colloquial spoken language of Iraq (he published a later work on written Arabic: Van Ess 1920). He was aware of the importance of a work specifically for the Iraqi dialect from personal experience: 'I was once in Port Said and said to an Egyptian policeman in Iraqi Arabic – Arabic in fact: "When does the next train leave for Cairo?" He replied in French: "I don't understand English"' (Van Ess 1943, 12). Van Ess was ambivalent about the use of transliteration – arguably, 'a concession to weakness' – 'but its justification lies in the fact that this book has been written to meet the special needs of those to whom the element of time is of prime importance, and who desire chiefly a working knowledge of the colloquial' (Van Ess 1917, iii). His notes on pronunciation are more detailed than Thompson's and have more in common with those of previous Arabic phrasebooks. *Ghayn* /ɣ/ is 'a gargling sound', *ḥā'* /ħ/ 'a dry, sharp *h*', *khā'* /x/ 'as in *loch*, as pronounced by the Scotch', *qāf* /q/ 'as in *struck*, a heavy *k*', *ṣād* /sˤ/ 'a heavy *s*, as in *buzz-saw*', *ṭā'* /tˤ/ 'a heavy *t*, as in *but then*', and *'ayn* /ʕ/ 'indicates the heavy consonant *ain* and is pronounced with a choking sound'.

The work has a much more academic flavour than many other phrasebooks of the period. It teaches the Arabic script (including literary features such as nunation) and uses it throughout in parallel with transliteration. As we have seen in some other phrasebooks, Van Ess's transliterated Arabic gives the dialect, and the Arabic script the standard literary equivalent. Grammar is introduced gradually in each chapter, and there are also sections on Arab etiquette. Word lists (starting with simple commands and the words for bread and water) are followed by simple translation exercises, both English into Arabic and Arabic into English. Terms useful to the military, such as 'bridge' and 'horse', are introduced early. There may be some concession to Indian readers, or British soldiers who had spent time in India, in the description of *'and* plus the pronominal suffix ('have') as being 'like Hindustani *-pas*' (Van Ess 1917, 13). Some of the translation exercises contain phrases of particular use to soldiers with the Indian Expeditionary Force D and learners of Arabic ('You cannot live in Basrah without knowing Arabic', 'Why do you laugh when I speak with you?', 'Do you understand when I talk Arabic?', 'The first time I saw you was in Bombay', 'Any one can learn Arabic'). Just as Thompson's American smuggler acquaintance had complained of his word list, Van Ess illustrates the passive with the verb 'I was killed' (Van Ess 1917, 119).

The book has much more in common with language textbooks of the grammar–translation model than with the more basic phrasebooks typically designed for soldiers. It includes 120 pages of grammar and exercises, with a dictionary of 136 pages. There are many pages of tables of irregular verbs. The grammar–translation method was the one with which educated soldiers would have been most familiar from their schooling, although as we saw in Chapter 3, other language-learning methods had been promoted for some decades. Van Ess was sceptical about the direct method:

> I once attended a lecture in the Normal College in Baghdad, given by an English professor of pedagogy who knew no Arabic. With all the assurance in the world he undertook to show us how to teach English to Arabs by the direct method. He took up a book from the table and said: 'It is a book.' But when he asked me to translate this sentence I had to point out to him that since Arabic has no 'it' and no 'is' and no 'a,' I should have to compromise by saying 'He book.'
>
> (Van Ess 1943, 54)

Van Ess had a point. With a language like French, whose grammar and sentence structure are relatively similar to those of English, the direct method has a head start. With Arabic, the student is likely to fall at the first hurdle if it is not explained that Arabic grammar differs in some very basic features from English. Edmonds thought that 'to the mind used to Aryan languages the syntax seems halting and clumsy' (Edmonds 1938, 650).

The long period for which Van Ess's *Spoken Arabic* remained in print, as well as its status as a textbook, mean that we have more reflections from users than for other books. It is mentioned in passing in a number of memoirs of soldiers and travellers in Iraq of the period, and was also used by archaeologists. Max Mallowan (1904–1978) used it at Ur in 1925 (Mallowan 1977, 40). Van Ess's book was also used at Nineveh in the 1930s where, appropriately, Mallowan and his wife Agatha Christie excavated with Reginald Campbell Thompson. The archaeologist Robin Macartney seems to have found it a less effective tool than did Mallowan:

> Hamoudi says sadly to Max that he has talked long and earnestly to the Khwaja Macartney last night, but alas, not even now, after two months, does the Khwaja Mac understand a word of Arabic! Max asks Mac how he is getting on with Van Ess's *Spoken Arabic*. Mac replies that he seems to have mislaid it.
>
> (Christie Mallowan 1946, 59)

The local workforce at Chagar Bazar in Syria were frustrated at Macartney's continued failure to improve his Arabic, as Christie recorded during their second season there in 1936:

> Rapturous greeting of Mac by the foremen. They shout out Arabic and Mac, as usual, responds in English. 'Ah, the Khwaja Mac!' sighs Alawi. 'Still will it be necessary for him to whistle for all he wants!'
>
> (Christie Mallowan 1946, 155)

Although one might suspect that Van Ess's grammar–translation method of teaching was not best suited to all learners, even those who had learnt several other, ancient Semitic languages via similar methods sometimes failed to make progress with spoken Arabic (Mallowan 1977, 39; for more on Mallowan, Christie, Macartney and their Arabic, see Mairs and Muratov 2015, 64–71).

Edward Hayden Tinker, an officer with the Transjordan Frontier Force in Transjordan and Palestine in 1937–1939, also used Van Ess's book while serving in the Rosh Pinna area:

> I was forced at that time to rely on my clerk, who was the only person in the squadron who could speak any English. And he was a very good person, but I was determined to get out of this situation as quickly as I could so as at least to be able to converse adequately with my Arab officers and not to have the clerk as an intermediary. And that took, I suppose, about two months, before one could make one's way gradually. But on the other hand one never heard anything spoken except Arabic and so it was a very quick, easy way of learning. [The interviewer asks if he just learnt by listening to people and using the language, or did he have a teacher, or a textbook?] Well, I used the clerk actually as a teacher too. And so otherwise I think that one would have taken longer. [Interviewer: So you didn't use a textbook?] Oh, well, yes, we used – the best textbook at the time was *The Spoken Arabic of Iraq* which was not really quite the same as we were speaking, but it was probably the best book to use for that purpose.
>
> (IWM 4492)

Van Ess's book was therefore used for a long time by the British military, even in regions for which it was not suitable.

Four Arabic–English phrasebooks for Iraq were published in 1918; as noted above, the continued deployment of British troops in Iraq after the end of the war meant that these continued to have an audience. In each

case, I have had only limited success in tracking down any information on the authors. One (P. and Moses 1918) has eluded me altogether. It is not to be found in any library catalogue, and the sole copy I have been able to find was listed for sale in a rare book dealer's catalogue in 2018 (https://www.peterharrington.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Abu-Dhabi-lo-res-singles.pdf, accessed 21 May 2023). The catalogue description and images indicate that it was printed at Dar-es-Salam Press in Baghdad, and its authors were Jamil N. Moses and someone known only by the initials 'E. R. C. P.' I have not been able to find any further information on either of them. The text on the reverse of the title page is faintly visible in the photograph: it consisted of a 'Guide to Pronunciation', with descriptions of sounds such as 'kh' and 'dh'. Of the others, two were printed in India and one in Egypt.

M. Singara Devi Chenapa's *Colloquial Arabic in Romanised Characters* (Chenapa 1918) is exceedingly rare, indicating that it was not published in many copies, or distributed widely. The only copy other than my own which I have been able to locate is the India Office copy in the British Library, where it is bound along with several works on Sanskrit and a copy of the fifth edition (1921) of Marriott's *Egyptian Self-Taught*. Chenapa is one of the very few women authors of Arabic phrasebooks for the period and languages considered in this book. 'Singara Devi' is a pen name. The author is Mersha Chinnappa, a teacher, born in Bangalore or Mysore in the 1860s–1870s (on her life, career and linguistic background, see Mairs forthcoming-i). She had had a very small amount of previous exposure to spoken and written Arabic, but nevertheless sought to publish a phrasebook out of altruistic motives. As she outlines it:

> The principal motive which has induced me to prepare this book treating of Arabic conversation in Roman was the desire of placing it in the hands of those soldiers and sailors who are fighting in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Africa, as a small help towards any difficulty in conversing in Arabic.
>
> It has not been my object to compile an Arabic Grammar, for it would be entirely out of place, and waste of time in the fighting line, as well as in the several centres which are now under British rule and authority. I have, therefore, been sparing of precept and mindful that I am writing for our British soldiers, as well as for the English-speaking Indians in the fighting line, who need to rapidly acquire the Arabic conversation.
>
> (Chenapa 1918, unpaginated Preface)

The book contains 66 pages of words and phrases in transliterated Arabic, with no grammatical explanation. Alongside basic phrases to do with greeting, eating, drinking and travel, the focus is on military terms and scenarios ('They have fled from the guards', 'The General Commanding wishes to see you', 'We have captured the fort, sir!', 'Leave the wounded here', 'He will be court-martialled to-morrow'). There is a concluding section 'As Spoken by the Fellahs and Country Folks', but it is not explained how the phrases in this are different from those elsewhere in the book. The place names mentioned – Baghdad, Beirut, Aleppo – indicate that the book is for use in Syria and Mesopotamia, and the dialect, such as it may be discerned, is consistent with this. The user learns to say, 'I come from India ... Ana jath min Belad al Hindh' (Chenapa 1918, 10).

Internal evidence within the book strongly suggests that it was compiled from other sources. The parts where Chenapa herself offers explanations indicate that she does not have a strong command of Arabic. The word division is often strange (e.g. p. 8, 'I will speak ... Sa tha kalam' for *satakallam*, where *sa-* is the future prefix, *-a-* the first person marker and *takallam* the verb stem). The word 'uncle' is given as 'Ameh-khal', combining versions of the words for paternal uncle (*'amm*) and maternal uncle (*khāl*) into one. Misleadingly, under 'Verbs' we find constructions using the verb 'to be' in the present tense ('I am, Thou art'), which in Arabic is not expressed with a verb at all. The section on pronunciation is confusing and misleading, and looks as though it has been compiled by a non-Arabic speaker from the many – often poorly explained – sections on pronunciation in other Arabic books. For example:

> The 'k' sound is largely used in Arabic words –
> There are two sounds, the one which corresponds to the English letter 'k', as in Kebir (Kebeer).
> The hard sound as in 'kh' corresponding to the English sound as in Cuthbert.
> Cāthîr=for you. Câthira Cheirak. Cheirak=Kh, as in kite; kind; kine. Sometimes the 'ch' sound does not correspond to the 'k' sound, but it is used as the English sound 'ch,' as in catch, fetch, etc. Thus Atschan meaning thirsty, and Chidab meaning lie, have a hard sound.
>
> (Chenapa 1918, 1)

Chenapa seems to have been tripped up by several things. First, there are the different transcription systems used for Arabic in European languages.

The 'sch' of 'Atschan' is actually a *shīn* /ʃ/ (*'aṭshān*), and the initial letter of 'Chidab' is a *kāf* /k/ (*kidhb*). Both words contain other letters difficult for a speaker of European or Indian languages, which it would have been relevant to indicate, but which this transcription conceals. There is no phonemic distinction between the 'k' sounds in the English words *Cuthbert*, *kite*, *kind* and *kine*, although their spelling is different. It is possible that Chenapa has also been misled by the much richer consonantal inventories of Indian languages, especially the Dravidian languages of her own home state, into splitting the English 'k' sound. What this produces is a section on pronunciation which is unusable, especially when we find that the transliteration system used throughout the book is inconsistent, and does not have a straightforward correspondence to actual Arabic letters or phonemes.

The very specific military phrases given by Chenapa look as though they come from an existing military Arabic phrasebook, perhaps along similar lines to Watson 1885 or Tien 1882 (although it is neither of these). I have not been able to identify precisely which book or books she used.

Naoum B. Seresser, author of *Mesopotamian Arabic* (Seresser 1918), was from Mosul and records his position as 'First Class Interpreter, Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force' on the title page. He seems to have served mostly or entirely in southern Kurdistan, as indicated in the Medal Rolls (WO 100/G47/457; WO100/G53/463). No further information is available on him; the name 'Seresser' does not occur elsewhere that I can find, and must be a corruption of an Arabic, Kurdish or Syriac name. The publisher is Thacker, Spink & Co. of Bombay, and it was printed by the British India Press in Mazgaon. The 500-page volume is advertised as only the 'First Part', and Seresser concludes by inviting readers to submit their suggestions for a further edition, but no other seems to have appeared.

The work is dedicated to 'the General Officer commanding Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force', and some books (such as the copy in the Albright Institute Library, Jerusalem) have a page tipped in with letters of acknowledgement from senior officers to whom Seresser sent copies. Seresser states that he wishes 'to be of assistance to officers and men of the British Army, who wish to learn the colloquial Arabic language of Mesopotamia … If the contents of this are first thoroughly grasped, it will assist the student in studying Arabic'. As the size of the book alone indicates, Seresser conceives this task on a much grander scale than the authors of most of the other books discussed in this section. He divides the book into two sections: 'a grammatical summary of the Arabic language as spoken by the natives of Mesopotamia and a short vocabulary

of English words in common use, with their Arabic equivalents' (Seresser 1918, vi). The grammatical 'summary' is 100 pages long, and the 'short vocabulary' another 450. He recommends that the reader make 'a careful study of the few pages [*sic*!]' of the grammar and use the vocabulary to construct the expressions they need. To add insult to injury, he adds that 'those who wish to make a deeper study of the Arabic language are recommended to use my second manual which will be published shortly'. 'Useful expressions' and greetings begin only on page 87, after the user has already been put through quadriliteral verbs. Given that Seresser did not tailor his book to the needs of soldiers in the field (a short, light, portable book which would enable them to quickly digest the Arabic phrases and grammar they needed for practical purposes), it is unsurprising that the second part never appeared.

Seresser introduces the Arabic script and uses it alongside transliteration. His transcriptions are closer to scholarly standards, indicating long vowels with a macron and dotting emphatic consonants, without the eccentricities (such as HH) of other phrasebooks. He employs this consistently throughout. His description of Arabic phonology is also more academic: *ḥā'* is 'a strong guttural aspirate', *khā'* is our old friend 'like ch in "Loch" as pronounced in Scotland' and *'ayn* 'is a guttural, peculiar to the semitic languages, and can only be learned by ear' (Seresser 1918, 3). Descriptions of emphatic consonants are less helpful: *ṣād* is 'like a hard s as in "toss"', *qāf* 'like a broad k as in "call"', and he recommends that the learner trying to pronounce *ghayn* should 'read a "w" and pronounce the word with the tongue pressed down as in "wrong"'.

He begins with cardinal and ordinal numbers, but immediately returns to an approach more reminiscent of a scholarly grammar: explaining sun and moon letters, the *iḍāfa* (genitival construction), grammatical cases, plural formation and *tā' marbūṭa* ('-a' or '-at' at the end of feminine words), before covering possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, reflexive and relative pronouns in short order. A small number of example sentences are given, such as 'Do you wish that I give you the book' and 'The man who was here, has gone away' (Seresser 1918, 24). By page 26, we are already at the verb and Seresser focuses on structure over function. He provides tables of the past and present tenses and the imperative, and on page 27 all 10 forms of the verb, using the typical – but for a beginner, difficult to pronounce – root *f-'-l* 'to do'. He does not explain what these forms are for. All this comes before he even explains to the learner the very basic and essential piece of information that the verb 'to be' is not expressed in the present tense (which he gets around to on page 36). A few phrases are given to illustrate how these forms are used in context, but they include 'They

want my new gloves' and 'Is not the hospital famous in the Orient?' The reader is at least taught to say, 'I have drunk beer this morning', which if he had picked up Seresser hoping for a simple introduction to Arabic, he might well have needed to do. A list of the 'most necessary verbs' occupies 33 pages.

The 'useful expressions' – if the learner has persevered this far – are indeed useful. They include language learning staples like 'I speak it a little' and 'Say it again, please',[6] as well as phrases for talking about the weather, ordering food and drink, discussing ailments and telling the time. There a few cryptic ones: 'It is just like the thing I saw in Germany, last year' (p. 101). The 'short vocabulary' begins on page 103; it is divided by theme, and along with conjugation tables for a number of verbs, occupies the rest of the book. Seresser's book would have served best as an English–Arabic dictionary and reference guide to verb conjugations. The *Baghdad Times* carried advertisements which presented it as a suitable book for self-study: 'No teacher required for Field & Proficiency tests in colloquial & classical Arabic' (e.g. 30 August 1921, 5; it was sold by R. M. Mizrahi & Karim on River Street in Baghdad, or was available from Thacker & Co. in Bombay, presumably by mail order). I am sceptical about its suitability as such. In these advertisements, the book's size is given a positive, perhaps slightly ironic spin: 'a modern, up-to-date Grammar with a collection of useful expressions and a short vocabulary of over 10,000 words; approximately 560 pages'.

Like Naoum Seresser, the Joseph N. Bahoshy who authored *A Practical System of Learning Colloquial Arabic as spoken in Mesopotamia* in 1918 is enigmatic. His name and comments within the book suggest that he was a Baghdadi Christian, and he may be some connection of the Baghdad engineering contractors J. P. Bahoshy Brothers. The book was printed by the firm of Emin Hindié in Cairo (which also published Chagavat *c*.1900), but advertised on the title page as available in Baghdad either from the author or at the Carmelite Mission. Bahoshy was well aware of the linguistic and bibliographic challenges facing British soldiers in Iraq, although his estimation of the degree to which they applied themselves to Arabic study owes more to flattery than to reality:

> From the very day of the occupation of Baghdad by the British troops, we have had the satisfaction to remark the magnificent animation with which the military of all ranks have given themselves to the study of the Arabic language, especially to our Mesopotamian dialect.

Unfortunately, our booksellers could not sufficiently help them in their task, only being able to supply them with books of literary Arabic or of Syrian and Egyptian dialects.

So it occurred to us to try and fill the gap and, at the same time, to render a service to our English guests in general and to the Army of occupation in particular by writing a manual for their use.

(Bahoshy 1918, 3)

Bahoshy aims 'to help the student acquire a good selection of words and phrases most in use in daily life and, at the same time, to initiate him gradually to the principal rules of the Arabic grammar' (Bahoshy 1918, 3). He emphasises the importance of correct pronunciation since 'while listening to Englishmen speaking Arabic, we have so often to request them to repeat a word more than once until we could understand it' (Bahoshy 1918, 4). This must often have been the outcome of English speakers using the books discussed in this chapter to communicate. He notes the problem of speakers of non-rhotic dialects of English dropping their 'r's, when the consonant is always pronounced in Arabic: a sentence underlined in my copy of the book (see Chapter 7). Unfortunately, Bahoshy does not distinguish between emphatic consonants and their non-emphatic equivalents in his transliteration system. Although he insists that *darb* 'way, street' and *ḍarb* 'striking, hitting' should be pronounced differently, he transliterates both as 'darb'.

Bahoshy's book is more successful at distilling the essence of Arabic grammar and communicating it in a straightforward way than Seresser's. He begins by pointing out some basic features: the subject precedes the verb, adjectives follow nouns, the verb 'to be' is omitted in the present tense, purpose is indicated with the present tense, not the infinitive as in English ('I go to eat; *Arooh âkul*'). There follow some basic items of vocabulary and prepositions, the numbers and how to say 'I have' in the present and past tense. The lessons are quite short. Each opens with a list of vocabulary relating to a single theme (animals, items of clothing etc.); there is then a brief, simple grammatical section with some examples, and an exercise for translation from Arabic into English. The Arabic script is never used. In all, the book comprises 36 lessons in just under two hundred pages. Although Bahoshy does dwell on irregular verbs for longer than some users may have found practical, the book as a whole is successful in communicating the basics of spoken Arabic in an approachable manner. Some sections include comments on local idioms, and on Muslim versus Christian pronunciations of Arabic words in Iraq, which will have been useful.

There were few guidebooks produced for soldiers in Mesopotamia during the First World War, but Christian organisations were also active in trying to both advise soldiers and keep them on the straight and narrow, as they were for Cairo and Alexandria. The Army Y.M.C.A. of India printed a booklet with the title *The Land of the Two Rivers* (third edition, 1918). The Foreword explains that the book derives from lectures given by the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) on the geography, history and religions of Mesopotamia and, unusually, gives print runs. The third edition states that the first and second editions each consisted of 30,000 copies. The fact that there is no price on the cover, and that it was printed by a religious organisation, suggests that it was distributed free to soldiers. We should probably imagine that booklets such as the one published by the Sailors' and Soldiers' Institute in Alexandria, discussed above, circulated in as many, if not more, copies. Similarly to the latter, *The Land of the Two Rivers* contains useful information and advice, but also exhorts the reader to 'Think clean thoughts, eat clean foods, drink clean drinks. The result will be health of mind, body, and spirit' (Army Y.M.C.A. of India, 1918, 47).

There are 10 pages of 'Useful Arabic Words and Phrases' in the book. Usefully, it begins by pointing out that Arabic orthography, unlike English, is regular, and thus so is the transcription system used. It uses southern Iraqi pronunciation, with 'g' for *qāf* and sometimes 'ch' for *kāf*. It gives pronouns, the possessive suffixes, basic instructions on forming verbs, numbers, an alphabetical list of vocabulary and a page and a half of phrases, all to do with giving instructions and asking directions.

It is even more difficult to find evidence of how soldiers in Mesopotamia used these Arabic phrasebooks, and with what success, than it is for Egypt or Palestine. As ever, few of the military memoirs produced after the war reflect on language at any length, beyond adding a few half-remembered Arabic words for local colour. Percy Walter Long's *Other Ranks of Kut*, published 20 years after the war, is an exception. It offers a literary perspective from an enlisted man; most of the authors of the many war memoirs produced by British soldiers in the Middle East theatre were officers. Long was 18 or 19 at the start of the war, and census records reveal that he had left school by the age of 15 and was working as a carpenter. He therefore had no university education and is unlikely to have had much exposure to ancient or modern languages in his secondary schooling. He had been in India before being deployed to Mesopotamia, and served as a driver. He was present at the British surrender at Kūt al-'Amāra in April 1916 and spent the following two and a half years in various Ottoman prisoner-of-war camps and jails, between extended periods on the run. His

experiences of learning Arabic as a prisoner of war present an interesting parallel to those of Charles François over a century earlier (Chapter 1).

Long's account makes it clear that, for captured soldiers, knowing Arabic could literally mean the difference between life and death: 'I undoubtedly owe my life to the fact that I was able to glean sufficient knowledge of the language of the various peoples among whom I stayed to serve me, for during the whole of my captivity it was this ability that enabled me to get food where others had starved – apart from other advantages' (Long 1938, 70).[7] Speaking and understanding Arabic (and later Turkish and Kurdish) allowed Long to barter for a better price in selling his army kit for food; to befriend fellow prisoners (reducing the risk of violence against him); to beg for food or clothing from locals; and to appeal to Ottoman officers and judicial authorities for better treatment. He was unusual among his fellow troops in being able to speak much Arabic, which led to him being appointed 'terjiman' between the captured British and Indian soldiers and their Turkish and Arab captors, a position which also helped him to survive. A Turkish officer at Mosul was surprised to find that Long could speak Arabic and Hindustani and was literate, yet was not an officer (Long 1938, 80–81).

At no point does Long mention phrasebooks or any kind of formal instruction, nor does he reflect on language learning methods. His command of the languages he learnt was oral and colloquial; he did not know the Arabic script. Waiting to be moved onward from Baghdad, 'I spent many hours sitting on the river bank, chatting with any Arab who was at all amiable. In this way I greatly improved my Arabic, and often received tit-bits of food' (Long 1938, 36). He had also picked up 'a fair amount of Hindustani' during his (apparently brief) time in India, which he used in talking to Indian troops in Iraq (Long 1938, 63). During the march from Kūt into Turkey, he learnt some Kurdish and Turkish. Although he had no formal instruction in any of these languages, he was able to recognise that Kurdish and Urdu had some words that sounded similar (presumably Persian loanwords in the latter). He had a good ear, and his other great advantages as a language learner were that he was young and that he was gregarious. He sought out opportunities to communicate, and he was also aware that the ability to communicate could keep him alive. It is difficult to assess how strong Long's command of any of these languages was, since he provides only occasional words and phrases (which are usually correct, but sometimes show an imperfect grasp of pronunciation). The important thing for Long was that he had enough to make himself understood.

Long's book is written at a distance of two decades, and after a return visit to Iraq and the places he had passed through during his captivity.

He does not, however, appear to have studied any Arabic during this intervening period, and his descriptions of his wartime language learning and use come across as authentic. His story shows how crucial a command of Arabic could be to soldiers in the field, how few of them achieved it – and how unlikely this command was to be gleaned from a phrasebook, instead of practice and immersion.

As I noted above, the British military presence in Iraq persisted after 1918. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922 gave the United Kingdom ongoing control over the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Iraq, and British military 'advisers' continued to work with Iraqi units. The Imperial War Museum interviews include several with officers who worked in this capacity. John Bagot Glubb (later 'Glubb Pasha' of the Arab Legion) recalled that he learnt Arabic in Iraq in the early 1920s by asking the names for things he encountered in the course of his work (IWM 4410). He did not remember whether they had had an interpreter (he was in his eighties when the interview was conducted). John Byron Fraser Austin, in contrast, who served with the Iraq Levies from 1920 to 1922, spoke no Arabic at all during his time in the country. He was unfamiliar even with essential cultural vocabulary, since during the interview he pronounces Qur'ān as KURR-an (IWM 4490).

The continuing need (or potential market) for Arabic instruction books after the war was recognised by the firms of Crosby Lockwood and Son in London and the Oriental Publishing Co. in Karachi, who together added a volume on Arabic to their Modern Colloquial Series. The series included books on Hindustani, Persian, Pashto and Urdu, published in 1918 and 1919, written by Indian language teachers and designed to help soldiers pass military language exams. The author of *Arabic Self Instructor* is H. Hutson, who I take to be the Henry Porter Wolseley Hutson who gave an interview for the Imperial War Museum oral history project (Chapter 4). H. P. W. Hutson served as an intelligence officer in Mesopotamia in 1918–1919 and subsequently with the Military Works Department in Egypt. Asked about his reasons for taking the posting in Mesopotamia, he answered:

> Why did I join the intelligence? I think because life had got rather dull. One spent one's time sitting in very hot camps, and also they offered a bonus – I think twenty pounds or something – if you learnt Arabic. It was very easy to learn it. I had an Arab boy [i.e. servant] as a matter of fact, not a Kurd, but nearly a Kurd, and I tried to speak Arabic with him. It seemed something to relieve the monotony. And it was quite a reasonable life, quite interesting for a bit. Then they

offered – you could learn two languages, you could learn Arabic and Persian. I learnt Persian and I passed the test; I got another twenty pounds. I think that was really as much a reason as any. I never went into Persia at the time.

(IWM 4465)

Hutson does not mention writing an Arabic phrasebook, so the identification is not secure, although I find it plausible. Later in the interview, he quotes a sentence in Arabic as the punchline to a joke: it is grammatically accurate, but his accent is very English.

Hutson's book is modelled on the rest of the Modern Colloquial Series, as can be seen if we compare the section on 'Common Nouns' with the same portion of the *Persian Self-Instructor* by A. T. Shahany (1919). It is in transliteration only and does not use the Arabic script. He uses doubled letters for long vowels (e.g. 'ee' for *ī*). There are some southern Iraqi features, such as 'g' for the *qāf* in the verb 'to speak' ('agool, gillet, gool', p. 94) and 'cham' for *kām* 'how much'. The words and phrases cover the usual practicalities, with a small amount of grammatical explanation.

The English-language *Baghdad Times* also suggests a continuing market for Arabic language instruction into the 1920s. Throughout 1921 and 1922, the paper advertises Arabic classes held by Professor Georgius at the YMCA, then at Garrison Wesleyan Church. French and Arabic lessons were offered in Baghdad 'at moderate charges by an expert professor' (10 August 1922). Raphael Basmadjian advertised as 'Arabic Professor, also French and Turkish Teacher. Coaching for Field Service test also classes. Literary tuition for Proficiency Examination a speciality' (e.g. 4 July 1921). Joseph Raphael Jaboori offered 'Expert Tuition in Arabic and French' at the 'French Sisters' Convent', perhaps the same Carmelite convent from which Bahoshy's book was available (20 June 1920). A smaller number of advertisements sought Arabic instruction, and in one case a British Arabic-speaker, presumably a former soldier, looked for a job using his skills: 'BRITISHER: – Wants employment. Working knowledge of Arabic, not afraid of work or out-station' (25 June 1921).

After the Kingdom of Iraq became independent in 1932, Britain maintained military bases in the country. In 1936, a civil engineer named Laurie Gordon Hiddleston at the Royal Air Force base at Hinaidi, just outside Baghdad, published *A Primer of the Colloquial Arabic of Iraq* (Hiddleston 1936). This short booklet of just 25 pages was intended as a simpler and cheaper alternative to Van Ess's book for Britons in Iraq, especially those taking the military or civil service colloquial Arabic

examinations (Hiddleston 1936, unpaginated Foreword). Hiddleston has certainly drawn on Van Ess's book, as can be seen from his transliteration and the book's general layout, but he has simplified it significantly, removed the Arabic script and added a few phrases and some touches of his own. *Khā'* is described as the 'ch' in 'loch', as done by Van Ess, but Hiddleston – who was himself Scottish – states in addition that 'the nearest approximation [to *ghayn*] is given by the pronunciation of the "chr" in the Scotch "Loch Rannoch"' (Hiddleston 1936, 1; the description is accurate: the 'gh' in Ulster-Scots 'lough' would be even closer). Inside the back cover of the book is a sample syllabus of the colloquial Arabic exam (Figure 5.9), which Hiddleston intended the book's users to be able to take. The book seems to have been popular, since it was in its seventh edition by 1942. During the Second World War, Hiddleston was involved in constructing air bases in the Arabian Peninsula (Hiddleston et al. 1948), including those used by pilots like Leonard Davies (discussed below).

Syllabus and Standard of Qualification for Colloquial examinations held by Civil Service Commissioners in January and June every year.

|  | | Marks. |
|---|---|---|
| (1) | Conversation in the language on a military subject set by the examiners ... ... | 50 |
| (2) | Interpreting for an educated native unacquainted with English ... ... ... | 50 |
| (3) | Knowledge of military and local terms, including titles of officials, terms used in travel, transport duties, collection of supplies and reconnaissance work ... ... ... | 50 |
| (4) | Viva voce translation of military instructions written in English . . ... ... | 50 |
| | Total Marks ... | 200 |

60% of total marks are required to "pass".

**Figure 5.9** Examination syllabus in Hiddleston's *Primer of the Colloquial Arabic of Iraq* (1936). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

## Palestine

The British Army advancing from Egypt made major gains against the Ottomans in Palestine in the latter part of 1917, with Jerusalem falling in December of that year. As noted above, the official *Military Handbook on Palestine* does not contain any information on language (Egyptian Expeditionary Force 1917). Sykes' *Soldier's Handbook* for Palestine concentrated on history and scripture, and also has nothing on Arabic, Hebrew or any of Palestine's other languages (Sykes 1917). As we move into the period of the British Mandate in Palestine after the war, we find increasing local production of Palestinian Arabic teaching materials for foreigners, but at the time the troops were advancing, it seems that those who cared to learn Arabic will have been reliant on books produced and sold in Egypt, most often for the Egyptian dialect.

The *Palestine News* – 'Weekly Newspaper of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force of the British Army in Occupied Enemy Territory' – carried numerous advertisements from booksellers and other retailers in Cairo and Alexandria (where soldiers spent their leave), although novels and military memoirs were much more popular than books on Arabic. In May 1918, for example, we find a large advertisement from Kassem Meawad, 'Bookseller, Publisher, Photographer, Fancy Leather Goods, etc., etc., with the Largest Mail Order Dept. in the Orient. Head Office: Emad El Din Street, Cairo, Egypt' (*Palestine News*, No. 10, 9 May 1918, 11; the location is a few blocks west of Azbakiyya). In the middle of a large list of various books and magazines and charges for developing camera film, we find: 'Languages: Hugo's French Simplified in three months without a master P.T. 25. Lockwood's Arabic (Egyptian and Syrian) (vest pocket size) Self Taught P.T. 25. Publishers of the famous: Garpatch's Complete Pocket Handbook to Palestine and Syria. Registered, post free to any address. Price P.T. 50.' (the second book referred to is one of the many incarnations of 'Arabic Self-Taught' by A. Hassam, Carl Thimm or R. A. Marriott). By August the firm was advertising a new edition of *Arabic Self-Taught* at 30 piastres, but it is still buried among novels, memoirs and more antiquarian books on Egypt and Palestine. Kassem Meawad placed similar advertisements in *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, the newspaper of the Australian and New Zealand forces in the Middle East, which at around the same time was carrying the pieces on Arabic by Socrates Spiro discussed above (e.g. 15 October 1918).

Another bookseller who advertised in the *Palestine News* was M. Avatis, whose shop was opposite the Turf Club in Cairo, a block and a half west of Azbakiyya (for the recollections of a former Avatis

employee, see Cachia and Cachia 1999, 54). Like Kassem Meawad's, Avatis' ads focused on novels and titles of military interest. Language books are mentioned, but we find French and Hindustani at least as frequently as Arabic (e.g. *Palestine News*, No. 33, 17 October 1918, 2). We saw similar advertising practices by publishers of tourist self-instruction books for various languages in Chapter 3. The same is true of the British Newsagents, opposite Shepheard's (e.g. *Palestine News*, No. 34, 24 October 1918, 1). The personal ads and letters page of the *Palestine News* also bear out the idea that, while some readers were interested in Arabic, it was not a major concern for most. A correspondent, whose original letter was not published, was told by the editor, 'You will find that the Arabic of Palestine and Syria is often different from that spoken in Egypt' (No. 4, 28 March 1918, 14). A short humorous word list was published 'for the benefit of those of our readers whose knowledge of the language does not run beyond Imshi, Yaller and Iggory' ('go away', 'let's go', and 'run along'), but its purpose is to entertain rather than to educate (*Palestine News*, No. 13, 30 May 1918, 3). For example, in the entry for *ba'dayn* 'then, later' we find: '*Bardein:* This time, next time, some time, never; Synonymous with the Spaniard's "Manana"'. One word with which readers of the paper were certainly familiar was *ma'alesh* ('never mind, sorry'), the subject of a short article (No. 43, 26 December 1918, 12).

A couple of more serious attempts were made to provide linguistic and other local knowledge for soldiers in Palestine. Upson's *Arabic Simplified* (see above) was marketed by the Nile Mission Press as a correspondence course for soldiers in Palestine (*Palestine News*, No. 24, 18 August 1918, 2). I have found only one Arabic teacher who advertised in-person lessons in the paper: 'Mr. Mohamed Farud, recommended by the Military Authorities for teaching Arabic, is ready to give lessons to anyone wishing to study this language, with an excellent method of his own. Apply, c/o T.P.N., 10, Sharia Borsa el Guedida, Cairo' (*Palestine News*, No. 27, 5 September 1918). The *Palestine News* brought out their own series of Pocket Guide-Books for Palestine, by Harry Pirie-Gordon, the paper's editor (Gill 2012). As the title pages admitted, these were 'based upon the well known enemy publication Baedeker's Palestine and Syria and augmented by numerous additions'. A note inside the Bodleian Library's copy of the Central Palestine volume of 1918 reveals the extent of the cribbing, and Pirie-Gordon's attitude to it: 'after all a brutal and licentious soldiery must be expected to loot something'. Although Pirie-Gordon's plagiarised guidebooks contain no information on Arabic, this attitude is revealing of the means by which many of the works considered in this book were compiled.

Overall, however, examination of the *Palestine News* supports the view that learning Arabic was not foremost in the minds of the soldiers of the British Army as they advanced into Palestine. The paper contained more advertisements from soldiers trying to find other Esperanto speakers to practise with than Arabic (on Esperanto during the war, see Alcalde 2021). When the paper did publish a serious language guide, it was for Hebrew, not Arabic. In an anonymous full-page article in January 1919, it stated, 'The best way of supporting the Hebrew revival is for you to try and speak Hebrew in addressing Jewish people in Palestine. Even if you say only a few words in Hebrew you help and strengthen the movement' (No. 44, 2 January 1919, 11).

## Mandate Palestine

From July 1920, Palestine was governed under the terms of the United Nations Mandate by a British civilian administration and High Commissioner, supported by British armed forces and police. This section discusses Arabic learning materials produced for the use of this official British presence. Arabic instruction materials for Yiddish- and Hebrew-speaking Jewish immigrants to Palestine are discussed in Chapter 6. A combination of Mandate documents, now in the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem, and Imperial War Museum oral history testimony allows us to flesh out how official guidelines on learning and using Arabic worked in practice, in a way it is more difficult to do for other times and places. I have discussed this evidence at greater length elsewhere (Mairs forthcoming-b). The picture it yields is not an edifying one: language learning, both Arabic and Hebrew, was systematically neglected by the Mandate authorities. Even the official introduction of penalties for Mandate officials (including the Palestine Police) who did not sit and pass language examinations did little to increase the number of candidates who presented themselves and performed well. Among the numerous reasons given in letters of complaint from potential language examination candidates were that they did not have sufficient time away from their official duties to study Arabic or Hebrew, and that many of them in fact had little occasion to use colloquial Arabic in the course of their jobs.

In 1932, Assistant Superintendent of Police E. R. Stafford published a *Manual of Colloquial Arabic* to try to improve the numbers passing the official Arabic exams. The force's Commandant, R. G. B. Spicer, hoped that this would do the trick:

It is certain that no British Policeman can pull his weight in the Palestine Police unless he has a working knowledge of the vernaculars.

It is hoped that this manual will enable him to acquire that working knowledge; but, in addition to the concentrated study of this book, British Police must take every opportunity of conversing with the people of the country.

Mr. Stafford has earned the thanks of all British police for the trouble he had taken in the compilation of this manual, and I trust their appreciation will be shown in the near future by demonstrating their ability to pass the requisite examinations.

(Stafford 1932, no pagination)

Spicer's comments, of course, indicate that they were not regularly passing the examinations.

Ernest Stafford had previously served in the Arab Legion, and was Assistant Superintendent at Jaffa from 1931 to 1936. He then became Assistant Commissioner for Palestine. His book is laid out in such a way as to present simple sentences first, then dialogues relating specifically to police work, with a final grammar section which he recommends the user consult now and then throughout their use of the rest of the book (Figure 5.10). He gives only basic guidance on pronunciation, because he insists on the necessity of learning by speaking and listening:

There is only one way to learn to identify the word you hear, and that is to seize every opportunity to converse with the people. Never speak English to an Arab servant; when driving in a garry or motor-car keep the driver talking about something, you will find him not unwilling, and you can try the phrases in this book on him. Without a constant insistence on trying to speak, neither this book nor any other can teach you colloquial Arabic.

(Stafford 1932, 2)

A copy of the book in the Middle East Centre Archive at St Antony's College, Oxford, was owned in the mid-1940s by a young police officer named Trevor Kirby, who has annotated it extensively with extra vocabulary and tables of verbs.

Stafford gives good advice on the importance of practising. Colin Herbert Imray, who was with the Palestine Police in Ramleh in the early 1930s, recalled that 'I used to go up into the coffee houses and cafes – Arab cafes – and sit among the elders, with the object of trying to get my mind round the Arabic, and try to pick up as much as I could' (IWM 12910).

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Figure 5.10** Table of Contents from Stafford's *Manual of Colloquial Arabic* for the Palestine Police (1932). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

Ian Saxby Proud joined the Palestine Police in 1934, and while he was a committed language learner, he found it challenging to combine this with his police duties:

> The basic training was scheduled to last for thirteen weeks, which included drill, law, first aid, and a certain amount of Arabic. It so happened that because I had been an NCO in the Territorial Army, and had done a course at the regimental depot earlier in the year, and it so happened my perm staff instructor had only recently come back from service in Palestine and Egypt, that he started teaching me Arabic, I was one of eight members of my squad who were passed out after just seven weeks instead of thirteen. [This was

mainly, however, because the Palestine Police needed boots on the ground in Jaffa. The interviewer asks about friendships with Arabs and Jews.] I got on quite well with the Arabs, because being posted to an Arab area at the beginning and having taken naturally to Arabic, I found it easy to get on with them. I started to do Hebrew in 1937 and passed the lower standard examination, but then I was due to resit what was called the proficiency examination by the end of the first two years to qualify – or keep in the running for – promotion. I then, if I could take advanced Hebrew, I was posted to CID headquarters and had to think in terms of learning Italian and some German, and then I went to Samaria. It wasn't until 1945 and I was back in Jerusalem I tried to take Hebrew lessons again and every afternoon I fixed a lesson, and the powers that be decided that something else had to be done. You can't fix the teacher to be there at three o'clock in the afternoon and suddenly your District Superintendent says 'oh, you're having a conference' or this, that or the other, or something else is going on. I spent way too much money on lessons I never had.

(IWM 11109)

Even Mandate employees who had to learn languages for their work had to turn to private tuition, because of lack of institutional provision. The classifieds section of the English-language *Palestine Post* often carried advertisements from those seeking or offering Arabic instruction. It is usually impossible to tell who the prospective pupils are, but some suggest the desperation of a soldier or Mandate official cramming for a compulsory Arabic examination:

ARABIC TEACHER WANTED – will give English lessons in return and willing to pay a fee as well. Must learn Arabic quickly. Apply by 'phone. Haifa 238.

(*Palestine Post*, 26 October 1934, 12)

Books were also produced in the private sector. European academic interest in Palestinian Arabic as a distinct dialect dates back to at least the 1850s, and was encouraged by Christian pilgrimage and military activity in the Holy Land (e.g. Wolff 1857). Several prominent teachers and scholars were associated with the Syrisches Waisenhaus (or 'Schneller School') in Jerusalem, a German missionary school and orphanage which also ran its own printing press (Löffler 2004; Ehmer 2008; among the works printed there was Gabriel 1935). Leonhard Bauer (1865–1964), for example, taught at the school for many years, and published a study of Palestinian

Arabic in 1910 which was reprinted in 1926 during the Mandate (Bauer 1910; on his life and work see Seeger 2011 and Irving 2017, 125).

A student and later colleague of Bauer's at the Syrisches Waisenhaus was Elias Nasrallah Haddad (1878–1959), whose works and collaborations with Western scholars of Arabic have been studied in depth by Sarah Irving (Irving 2017; see also Furas 2015, 111). As well as authoring textbooks and teaching at the Syrisches Waisenhaus, Haddad taught Arabic to senior members of the British administration and worked with ethnographers studying local varieties (Irving 2017, 95–96, 121). From 1944 to 1948 he taught at the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies (MECAS) in Jerusalem and moved with it to Shemlan, before taking over as head of the relocated Schneller School in Khirbat Qanafār in Lebanon.

Haddad's coauthor in his first Palestinian Arabic textbook was Hans Henry Spoer (1873–1951), a German-American biblical scholar, later ordained as a clergyman (Irving 2017, 177–179). (His wife was the controversial English writer Ada Goodrich-Freer, who published accounts of her travels in Palestine and Syria.) Their 1909 *Manual of Palestinean Arabic* (Spoer and Haddad 1909) comprises a grammar, example sentences and dictionary in the by-now standard format. Irving has noted how Spoer's introduction to the book 'establish[es] Haddad as the junior partner in the enterprise, whilst also acknowledging his centrality to its success' (Irving 2017, 113; for discussion of the book and its reception, 113–122).

Haddad's relationship with the American archaeologist William F. Albright, named as coauthor of his 1927 *The Spoken Arabic of Palestine* (Haddad and Albright 1927; see Irving 2017, 122–128), was still more unequal than that with Spoer. Irving suggests that the book was largely the work of Haddad and that, despite his prominent place on the cover as named author, 'Albright's role was primarily to help with the English and to provide respectability in international markets' (Irving 2017, 123). Haddad's role as Arabic teacher and textbook author stretches beyond the parameters of this project, to his later career in Lebanon at both MECAS and the relocated Schneller School, and his authorship of another colloquial Arabic book with Jalil Irany (Haddad and Irany 1955; Irving 2017, 128–131).

Godfrey Rolles Driver (1892–1975), an English biblical scholar and Assyriologist, began writing his *Grammar of the Colloquial Arabic of Syria and Palestine* while serving with the army in Palestine and Syria during the First World War, but it was not completed and published until 1925, during the Mandate. His account of how he wrote it – 'paradigms and examples were … for the most part drawn up on the spot and submitted to the criticism of educated natives' (Driver 1925, v) – denies authorship

to Arabic-speaking collaborators in his book, as so many do. It is more a scholarly reference work than an instruction book. Driver's bibliography includes Bauer 1910; Crow 1901; Lammeyer and Darian 1913; Jaeschke 1909; Harfouch 1894; Nofal 1876 (troisième édition); Seidel 1894 and Spoer and Haddad 1909. There is no mention of any of the soldiers' phrasebooks of which he must have been aware during the war. Arabist H. A. R. Gibb (1895–1971), who at this stage in his career was teaching Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, reviewed the book for his institution's *Bulletin*:

> It is difficult to decide the exact aim which Mr. Driver set himself. It would appear from the introduction that his first draft consisted of a manual of spoken usage compiled on the spot, to which a survey of dialect forms was afterwards added from the published works of other investigators. From the student's point of view it is a pity that this was done. Its effect has been to turn the work into a description of Syrian colloquial rather than a practical grammar, and has rendered it difficult to follow and confusing to anyone who aims at acquiring a working knowledge of average Syrian speech. ... But these criticisms amount after all to little more than that Mr. Driver has produced a book for the scholar rather than the student. With this reservation it can be heartily recommended.
>
> (Gibb 1928, 881)

Gibb is doubtless thinking of his own teaching needs at SOAS, but during the 1920s and 1930s colloquial Arabic teaching materials were increasingly developed specifically for the needs of officers and officials in the Mandate administration.

*The Trilinguist: Speak in Three Official Languages of To-day* by C. A. Gabriel, covering English, Hebrew and Arabic, seems tailor-made for this market of Mandate officials (Figure 5.11), although this is not obvious in terms of content. It does not have any content specific to police or administrative tasks, and it would not help with language exams since it does not teach grammar. It contains 222 pages of phrases about social and cultural topics (including Muslim, Christian and Jewish holidays) and a long vocabulary. Gabriel had also published a trilingual list of biblical place names, discussed in Chapter 3. On the other hand, the way in which it is directed explicitly at learners of all three languages marks it out as a product of the Mandate official language learning market. A 'phonetic' transcription is given of all three languages, and there is a fuller explanation of this system at the beginning of the book, again in English, Arabic and Hebrew.

**Figure 5.11**  Cover of *The Trilinguist: Speak in Three Official Languages of To-day* by C. A. Gabriel (1938). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

As done in some of the Hebrew–Arabic manuals discussed in Chapter 6, Gabriel points out the affinity between Arabic and Hebrew, as a way of encouraging learners:

> Hebrew Grammar seems simple
> It is like colloquial Arabic
> They are sister languages

> (Gabriel 1938, 30)

Publishers also considered the *Palestine News* a useful place to advertise language books, and were keen to capitalise on good reviews in it. *Cosmos' Palestinian Colloquial Arabic in One Month Without a*

*Master: Specially prepared for the British police and members of H.M. forces in Palestine* reproduces a 1939 review in the *Palestine News* inside the cover of its later editions, highlighting the sentence 'It should be given to every member of the police and army in Palestine'. The Cosmos Publishing Company in Jerusalem was owned by Alexander Marcel Aurel-Ariely (1904–1950), who was born in Iaşi, Romania. It also published language books for Hebrew and Polish, and a 1940 Palestine guidebook. Aurel and Gh. Khatib are the authors of *Palestinian Colloquial Arabic*. Khatib is discussed below. The most extensive source of information on Aurel is Cosmos' own *Near and Middle East Who's Who*, which states that he was in addition the author of language books in French, German and Italian, of which I have been unable to locate copies (Aurel and Cornfeld 1945, 19). After the first edition of *Palestinian Colloquial Arabic* in 1939, at least four more impressions were issued. The final two, in 1940 and 1942, were 'cheap editions', presumably for the wartime market.

The book is novel in having very little actual grammatical explanation. Instead, Arabic vocabulary and tables of nouns or verbs are introduced in each lesson, and used to construct simple sentences, with English translation, for the user to infer the meaning and structures. About half of its hundred pages are taken up with the lessons, and the remainder with an English–Arabic vocabulary. No Arabic script is used. The book advises:

> Your success in learning Arabic depends entirely on your persever-ance. You will attain proficiency in Arabic in the extent to which you apply yourself to its study. The 'man in the street' welcomes the efforts of any foreigner to converse in Arabic. He is only too anxious to help him, no matter how rudimentary the foreigner's knowledge of Arabic may be. It is suggested that you practice daily, even if you only learn a few words at a time.
>
> ([Aurel-Ariely and Khatib] 1939, 6)

Some of the content is tailored to the specific needs of soldiers and police, such as the section on the 'Genitive Construction' (*iḍāfa*) which illustrates it with examples such as 'the summer uniform of the police' and 'the police car' ([Aurel-Ariely and Khatib] 1939, 26; Figure 5.12).

Khatib authored another book in the same year, which was printed at the Franciscan Press. This too is directed at British police, and Khatib is billed on the title page as 'Govt. Arabic teacher, British Police Depot'. Khatib may therefore have been one of the Arabic teachers employed for

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THE NINTH LESSON (Continued)

## The Genitive Construction

1. The commandant of the police    mudìir il-bulìs

2. The office of the police    maktab il-bulìs

3. The summer uniform of the police
    badlit il-bulìs is-safiyye

4. The police training school    madrasit il-bulìs

5. The government hospital    mustashfa-l-hukùme

6. The Jaffa gate    Bab el-khalil

7. The Damascus gate    Bab el-amùd

8. The police patrol    dawriyyet il-bulis

9. The police car    sayyarit il-bulìs

10. The key of the door    miftàh il-bab

11. The licence of the car    rukhsit is-sayyara

12. The identity card    waraqat il-hawiyye

**Figure 5.12** 'The Genitive Construction' in *Cosmos' Palestinian Colloquial Arabic in One Month Without a Master* (1939), 26. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

basic training in the Palestine Police, as described by Ian Saxby Proud above, or one of the teachers employed at police stations. There were subsequent editions as late as 1947 (fourth edition) – that is, as late as there was any demand from the British Palestine Police. The 1945 edition states that Khatib is also now teaching at the 'M. E. Centre of Arab Studies' (MECAS) in Jerusalem, where he will have been a colleague of Elias Nasrallah Haddad. I have not been able to discover whether Khatib moved to Shemlan in Lebanon with MECAS, or find any other references to him as a MECAS instructor. Khatib's preface supplies a little biographical information, and points out that oral practice is essential for learning Arabic:

I took over my present job, as Arabic Teacher for the British police, in the year 1931. All the time since then, I have been conscious of the necessity of finding a text for the British police, which they can take as a guide for the colloquial language. After my own investigation I have not found, amongst all the self taught arabic [*sic*] books, which are many, any one which can be taken as an accurate and complete text for police work. … No doubt that the spoken Arabic cannot be learned merely from a book like this or from any other book. The only way is to take every opportunity of conversing with the people of the country.

(Khatib 1939, unpaginated preface)

This book is longer and more detailed than the one Khatib published with Cosmos. It begins with simple vocabulary and phrases likely to be of immediate use in the police station ('Fí zábit haun? Is there an officer here?': Khatib 1939, 7). After pleasantries, telling the time and verbal conjugations (Lessons 1–10), there follow a series of short lessons introducing new grammar and vocabulary, with phrases on police duties: interrogating someone about their movements, taking a witness statement, enforcing the curfew, dealing with the aftermath of a traffic accident and so forth. All of the content is immediately relevant to a policeman's job. Only much later in the book do we get explanation of some basic grammatical points that other authors would have introduced much earlier: grammatical gender on page 76, and the alphabet at the very end on page 104. Used well, this book is likely to have been very useful to a police officer in the course of his work, but – significantly – it would not have helped him pass the exams in literary Arabic which the Mandate authorities still insisted on.

Although they are not directed expressly at Mandate officials, Sarah Irving has argued compellingly that Stephan Hanna Stephan's (1894–1949) Arabic manuals and tourist guidebooks were directed at projecting and defending a distinctive Palestinian identity (Irving 2017, 141; on Stephan, see further Irving 2018). My reading of the wider corpus of colloquial Palestinian Arabic instruction books also supports Irving's judgement that these manuals proclaimed the position of Palestinian Arabic as 'the language which should be used by officials and scholars living and working in the country' (Irving 2017, 56). This assertion of a vibrant Palestinian culture and identity can be seen in things like Elias Haddad's mouth-watering description of Palestinian cuisine (in the dialogues of Spoer and Haddad 1909, 140–143) or Gabriel's use of the phrase 'Our family descends from a noble Palestinian stock' (Gabriel 1938, 75).

Stephan was educated at the Syrian Orphanage/Schneller School and worked for the British Mandate administration in the Department of Antiquities. His Arabic self-instruction book came out in identical English and German editions in 1935 (Stephan 1935a, 1935b; on these books: Irving 2017, 131–135). They were printed at the Syrian Orphanage, but distributed by the Jewish company Steimatzky's. The book is a fairly conventional grammar book and dictionary, in transliteration. Irving (2017: 131–135) points out that it seems intended for long-term residents in the country, such as Mandate officials, because of the words and phrases it contains.

## Military Arabic in Egypt and the Red Sea region in the interwar period

Knowledge of Arabic among the very highest British officials in Egypt seems never to have been strong, and it did not improve in the interwar period. Lord Cromer, as we have seen, knew hardly anything of the language. Sir Miles Lampson (1880–1964), British High Commissioner (1934–1936) and then Ambassador (1936–1946) to Egypt, took Arabic lessons intermittently throughout 1935 and 1936, as his published diaries show. They reveal a frustration with typical language learning techniques of grammar drill and memorisation of phrases:

> Our first Arabic lesson at 8 a.m. We seem to have secured an excellent teacher – Tewfik Effendi. He is some sort of private secretary to Keown-Boyd and has the great advantage of knowing English well so that one can get from him phrases that one wants instead of wasting time over grammar, stilted phrases, and the like.
> (Diary entry for Wednesday, 6 November 1935, Cairo: Lampson 1997, 331)

Lampson continues to make occasional reference to Arabic lessons, with comments like 'It certainly is the hell of a language', 'It seems to get more and more complicated and one's memory less and less retentive, but that is always so with a new language' and 'It becomes no easier' (Friday, 5 November 1935; Tuesday, 26 November 1935; Tuesday, 10 December 1935: Lampson 1997, 345, 364, 388). He mostly spoke French or English with Egyptian officials, or relied on British interpreters.

In the interwar period, we find occasional evidence that the British military were aware of a greater need to promote language study. British

policewomen posted to Egypt in 1931 were reported to be learning Arabic before going, although one claimed to have already known how to speak 'a certain amount' (*Evening Telegraph*, 3 September 1931, 3). In 1932, some officials in the Government of India were concerned about the difference in standard between their own military interpretership examinations in Arabic and the Civil Service examination in Arabic taken by some Naval and Royal Marine officers who were acting as interpreters. J. R. Blair, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, wrote to the Military Department at the India Office in London that:

> the syllabus and standard of the Civil Service examination in Arabic are not in any way similar to those of the Interpretership test in that language. The Government of India are accordingly of the opinion that Naval and Royal Marine officers who have passed the Civil Service examination should not be regarded as qualified for the purpose of the provisions of Article 374, Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions.
>
> (India Office Records, British Library: L/MIL/7/1599. R. N. Officers on East India Station Interpreters Allowance. No. 313_M. New Delhi, 2 March 1932.)

It may be that this correspondence relates more specifically to British naval interpreters operating at Aden or one of the other locations in the Arabian Peninsula and Red Sea region under the responsibility of the India Office. The following year, the Royal Navy announced a drive to recruit more interpreters, with particular attention to Arabic, Japanese and Russian, but some commentators thought recruits needed a greater incentive: 'to learn Arabic or Japanese or Mandarin Chinese is a task which certainly seems to justify a more definite reward than the very restricted chance of a captain's appointment as a naval attaché, or the very meagre allowance granted to an officer who is definitely appointed as an interpreter' (*Western Morning News and Daily Gazette*, 13 February 1933, 7).

A combination of financial incentive and personal interest led Lewis Harold Porter Harper, a non-commissioned officer in Egypt in the late 1920s, to undertake language study in Cairo:

> We were encouraged to take up languages. ... It was given out through the regiment for the Berlitz School of Languages in Heliopolis, that they would take on soldiers at a reduced fee if they wished to study languages, so I thought I'd have a go. So I did. I could speak French

at school, and a bit of German, so I took up Arabic and German. French – well, you could speak French all the time in Cairo because France were in Egypt before the English, and most of the people in Egypt spoke French as well as English. So I took Arabic and German. So – and I thought to myself, well, I got through those all right. I didn't do the Arabic in writing because I did the oral Arabic, but to write is different, it's like shorthand, but I didn't have time anyway – and German. Then I went back, and I thought well, I'll revise my French. Now we got these at a reduced cost, and the army said, any man or NCO that had got a 'Distinguished' on any of these subjects, he would have an award … [The interviewer asks: What was the award you got for language work?] Well, if a soldier, through the Berlitz School of Languages had attained a distinguished award, the army would reward him with a sum of money of fifty pounds. He didn't receive this in cash, in fact it was credited to his account. All soldiers had pay accounts. Well of course there was a method in all this, because all these records were kept at War Office, which is now known as the Ministry of Defence, and if in a time of war, such as in my case, this man was wanted for anything where his languages would prove an asset to him in the intelligence service of the army, he was used. So the fifty pounds, you see, was not a bribe you might say, but to encourage him to learn and learn and learn. And this was a very good thing too. And I got one of these awards of fifty pounds for French, anyway which I learnt at school, so I just brushed it up at the Berlitz School of Languages and I got myself fifty pounds in credit to my account, which was very nice too.

(IWM 4524)

Harper's 50 pounds for French – assuming he is remembering correctly – should be contrasted with the 20 or 30 pounds other soldiers recall being given for passing Arabic exams in Sudan and Mesopotamia in the same period. Although he makes a valid point about future operational needs, the financial incentive was not necessarily working in the way the Army had intended.

John Winthrop Hackett, an officer who served in Egypt, Palestine and Transjordan between 1934 and 1948, had wanted to visit the Arab world since reading T. E. Lawrence as a schoolboy in Australia. He began studying Arabic in Cairo in the 1930s, and took his preliminary interpretership examination, even 'playing Lawrence' by impersonating a cloakroom attendant at Shepheard's one evening ('I had a bottle of champagne under the desk and was refreshing myself from time to time'). He provides us

with a description of an oral Arabic test conducted when he was with the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, which must have been a familiar scenario across British military units in the region:

> Arabic was the common language and had to be learnt by all British officers up to adequate standard. And at the end of six months the officer was tested in his knowledge of Arabic. I remember one splendid officer in the 12th Lancers who was called Dozy Willis. He had a rather sleepy air about him. He's now dead. And he wasn't over-quick at learning Arabic. When his time for examination came up, he was taken onto the barracks square by one of the senior British officers of the force. ... Dozy Willis was there for examination by a Scorpion [slang term for a senior British officer with the force] called Tawīl Smith ['tall Smith', to distinguish him from another Smith in the unit who was shorter] ... And he said 'That recruit walking across the square, tell him to come over here'. And Dozy shouted 'Ta'ala hūn, ya askari' ['come here, soldier'] and the soldier immediately doubled over towards him. And Dozy was then told by Tawīl Smith, he said 'Now tell him to go and stand over the third tree from the right by the water trough standing outside C Squadron's stables.' And Dozy, who was a man of great resource while of limited command of Arabic at once walked across ... and from there shouted at the top of his voice 'Ya askari, ta'ala hun!'. ... He was put back for further instruction.
>
> (IWM 6478; Arabic transcribed as pronounced)

When Hackett himself speaks Arabic on the recording, he uses the language accurately, but does not pronounce the 'difficult' consonants. The 't' in 'Tawīl Smith' is not the emphatic *ṭā'* but the English 't', he drops *'ayn* and pronounces the *qāf* in the place name 'Zarqa' as 'k'. In correct grammatical Arabic, 'Tall Smith' would be *Smith al-ṭawīl*.

One work which I am inclined to place in the interwar period is the undated *Arabic Words and Phrases for R.E.* (Anonymous, n.d. [1930s?]). I have only been able to locate one copy, in the Royal Engineers Museum in Kent. This booklet was among the papers of Jim Davey (1891–1974), who was in Mesopotamia during the First World War, in Palestine from 1920 to 1922 and in Egypt from 1930 to 1935. Davey's file includes a copy of *The Land of the Two Rivers* (Army Y.M.C.A. of India, 1918, third edition). I think it more likely that *Arabic Words and Phrases for R.E.* dates to his time in Egypt in the 1930s, because it uses the Egyptian dialect and was printed in Cairo by C. E. Albertiri, whose other publications

range from the late 1920s to the mid-1940s. An advertisement placed by Albertiri in the *Official Directory of the British Forces in Egypt, Palestine and the Sudan* (May 1939) as 'General Printer and Bookbinder' at 109 Rue Nazli shows that he specialised in private work and 'grey literature', including posters, business cards and tombola tickets. Albertiri was a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Army Service Corps during the Second World War, which means that he may be a candidate for author of the book as well as printer, since he would have been familiar with the kinds of vocabulary needed by engineers and support personnel in the British Army. The booklet has 14 pages of words and phrases, and all of them are solidly practical (Figure 5.13).

## The Second World War

### Overview

During the Second World War, there were far more 'official' Arabic–English phrasebooks (produced by the British, Australian, Indian and

### Concrete

1. The gravel is too big.   Il zalat kebeer awi.
2. Riddle the gravel.       Hizz il zalat.
3. Add more water.          Za-wid il mayah.
4. There is too much water  Fi mayah keteer.
5. Mix the concrete well.   Al-lib il kharasan qwayess.
6. Add more sand.           Za-wid il raml.
7. Don't add too much       Mat za-wid·shi il raml.
   sand.
8. The gravel is dirty.     Il zalat wissikh.
9. The gravel must be 4cm   Il zalat lazem yeb-à arba à
                            santi.
10. How many sacks are      Kam sha-kayer biti stàmelou
    you using to ½ M3 of    fi nous metre zalat?
    gravel?

**Figure 5.13** Making concrete in *Arabic Words and Phrases for R.E.* (Anonymous, n.d. [1930s?]). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

US military) than during the First. Military authorities seem to have learnt from the linguistic mistakes of the earlier conflict, in which basic language materials were never widely distributed among regular soldiers (as opposed to officers) and there were avoidable communication problems (such as with the episode of the Urdu–Arabic interpreters). There were still official handbooks to particular countries and regions for those, for example, working in British Naval Intelligence, but these were no longer, as in the First World War, vehicles for language material (Clout and Gosme 2003). Official phrasebooks took into account specific operational needs, including, in the case of materials produced for occupying forces immediately before and after the end of the war, the need to create a positive impression on local people. For the most part, these books give no indication of authorship. Alongside this, private enterprise – again, especially in Cairo – continued to produce phrasebooks and guides for soldiers' use. Of the Arabic instructional materials produced specifically for military use during the Second World War that I have been able to assemble, about one third were published by military authorities and two thirds by private publishers.

We can assume that language materials produced at a much earlier date were reused during the Second World War. Some new editions were brought out specifically for the war market; Alec Cury's publications were particularly frequently reprinted. There was also some intergenerational passing-on of Arabic knowledge. A newspaper article on Australians serving in Palestine reported, 'Some of the men had served here in the last war: others had fathers who served. Frank Fiser, of Sydney, had learned a number of Arabic phrases from his father, who served throughout the Palestine campaign. I found him trying them on delighted Arab camp-workers' (*Daily Herald*, 14 February 1940, 2). Recalling the First World War Australian army slang listed earlier in this chapter, it is easy to imagine what phrases Frank Fiser had heard from his father that so delighted his Palestinian colleagues.

## Australian, Indian and British 'official' phrasebooks

Although, in contrast to the First World War, the Second saw greater official prioritisation of and investment in language learning for troops, most government- or army-produced phrasebooks (for all languages) date to the second half of the war and are designed not primarily for operational use in the field, but for a prospective occupation of a foreign country. Up until about 1942, the Arabic phrasebooks published for use by soldiers in the Middle East and North Africa were issued largely by private publishing

firms in the region, and were written by Arab authors; these are discussed below. As well as military authorities, humanitarian agencies produced phrasebooks for their work in the immediate aftermath of the war. These included a trilingual English–French–German vocabulary produced by the Society of Friends' Relief Service (Underwood et al. 1945) and a Yiddish phrasebook produced by the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad (Birnbaum 1945).

The exceptions to this general rule of fairly late official publication of phrasebooks, designed for occupation rather than combat, are two books produced in 1940, one by the General Staff in India and one by the Australia Military Board. The large number of Indian and Australian troops who fought in the Middle East in the First World War explains the particular attention these two countries gave to military Arabic early in the Second. Given the fiasco of the frantic search for Urdu–Arabic interpreters in 1915, it is particularly easy to see why the Indian Army may have wished to avoid being wrong-footed a second time. The Government of India Press at Simla published *English - Roman Urdu - Arabic - Persian Phrase Book and Vocabularies* 'compiled by the General Staff, India' (Indian Army 1940). My copy has had a cigarette extinguished on its cover, but does also contain detailed notes kept by its owner, discussed in Chapter 7. The Introduction is in both English and Romanised Urdu, and states that it 'has been compiled for the use of both British and Indian personnel' (Indian Army 1940, i). It provides scant explanation of pronunciation – of, it claims, 'the "standard dialect"' – and focuses on differences between the pronunciation of its Romanisation of Arabic versus Romanised Urdu, such as in the use of 'gh' and 'kh' to indicate 'guttural' consonants, not aspirated ones. The contents are mostly excerpted from the 1916 British *Handbook of Mesopotamia*, with minor changes in orthography, and thus represent Iraqi Arabic. It contains questions such as 'Where is the nearest bridge?' and 'Where is the easiest place to swim across?' (Intelligence Division 1916). Reginald Campbell Thompson's earlier Simla-published book (Thompson 1915a) was apparently not used.

The Australian *Handbook of English - Arabic and Hebrew: Words and phrases with their equivalent in colloquial Arabic and/or Hebrew in daily requirement by the Australian Imperial Forces in the Middle East* was published in Melbourne in April 1940 (Australia Military Board 1940). As the title and contents suggest, it was designed for use in Palestine, where, as we have seen, many Australian troops were deployed in the First World War. In 1941, the Australia Military Board produced similar handbooks for use in Papua (Motuan) and in South-East Asia (Dutch, Portuguese and Japanese). The Middle East handbook is not

visibly assembled from any existing materials. There is only cursory description of Arabic or Hebrew pronunciation and grammar. After a few pages of tables of common Arabic (but not Hebrew) verbs in the imperative and past tense, there are a couple of dozen pages of English words with their transliterated Arabic and Hebrew equivalents in parallel columns. The topics covered include food, transportation and military terminology. Some items indicate that the author has practical experience of life in the Middle East and has not simply cribbed the words from a book, such as 'dried camel's dung' (for fuel: p. 12) and different terms for riding and baggage camels (p. 16).

In the early 1940s, some very basic language materials for Arabic were issued by British forces, not on the level of full phrasebooks. These were intended specifically for airmen. Aircraft were used in the Middle East in the First World War, but not in anything like the numbers they were in the Second. Air forces trained airmen in what to do if they were shot down or forced to make an emergency landing, as we have already seen with the leaflet *Vocabulary of Beduin Dialect* in the earlier section on the First World War. A few instruction booklets for such circumstances also survive from the Second, including one titled 'The Responsibilities of a Prisoner of War', expressly marked 'Not to be taken into the air', now in the Imperial War Museum (IWM Documents.184). The pilot who owned this booklet, F. J. Robertson, also kept a copy of a document in Arabic and English, with a letter from the British Government expressing friendship and asking for help in returning the bearer to the nearest British troops. It included a few basic words of Arabic and some advice on Arab etiquette and desert survival.

The box of Robertson's papers in the Imperial War Museum contains a booklet which was also kept by another airman, Leonard Davies (IWM Documents.26322). This is a small paperback with no title, consisting of only a few pages with a dotted line along the edge, so they could be cut out and kept as separate cards. There is one 'card' each in Assyrian, Azeri, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Turkish and Russian, with a text in the target language and script on one side, and some brief instructions in English on the other. The Arabic message is more or less the same as that on the document Robertson carried.

Davies spent much of the early 1940s transporting aircraft around Egypt, Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula and made many crash landings. His box of papers at the Imperial War Museum also contains an unpublished typescript memoir, in which he recalls using the booklet on several such occasions. The first instance was in the Sudan, in the region around Atbara:

The village was a hundred yards away and some of its inhabitants came up to the aeroplane. There were quickly half a dozen people around me. I communicated with them by gesticulating and by using the little RAF issue Arabic/English phrase book I had with me.

He was given hospitality and helped to return to the nearest British base. Later, on the coast of the Arab–Persian Gulf, he made an emergency landing with several other crew members:

We had not walked very far when, in the distance, we saw four local men on horseback approaching from the opposite direction, with guns slung over their shoulders. As they got closer, we stopped and decided what we would say. We had our little RAF-issue books with translations of who we were in different languages. The principal thing to communicate was that we were English.

Again, they received a warm welcome, and were given food, water and shelter: 'Conversation was quite amusing. We managed by referring to the RAF booklet, with hands and arms flying expressively.' Davies was only 19 when the war began, and his memoirs reveal a young man with little sense of his own mortality. Also in his box at the Imperial War Museum, however, are the official letters that his parents received every time he crashed and was reported missing in action, which they kept and must have given to him when he returned from war.

The earliest full Arabic phrasebook produced by European forces which I have been able to trace from the Second World War is German, not British (Wehrmacht 1942). It was produced by 'Sonderstab F', a force that travelled to Iraq in 1941 to investigate the possibility of forming a German-led 'Arab Brigade' to fight the British in the Middle East. The mission was not a success. The publisher Ernst Rowohlt worked for Sonderstab F and may have had some hand in the book's production, although he did not know Arabic (Hage and Wiegrefe 2008). I have not been able to examine a copy of this book. It may bear some similarities to a similarly titled German–Finnish work published in Helsinki in 1940, designed to help Germany's Finnish allies understand German military ranks, organisation and terminology.

The British military's Arabic phrasebooks should be set within the wider context of language materials produced for all theatres of the war. Extensive planning went into the production of guides and phrasebooks ahead of the Allied invasion of mainland Europe in 1944. A Foreign Office committee was set up to supervise the production of 'Pocket

Guides' for British soldiers. These were to be small and easily carried in a uniform pocket: 'The aim was to influence soldiers' behaviour by giving them background information about the countries they were visiting and offering them specific advice on how they should behave once they were there' (Footitt and Kelly 2012b, 75; cf. Footitt and Tobia 2013, 92–93). A great deal was at stake: a lot could go wrong in the occupying forces' relations with local people. As Hilary Footitt and Michael Kelly have pointed out in their analysis of these materials, the aim was not so much to teach soldiers to speak a foreign language well, but to equip them with 'the meta-language of good linguistic manners' (Footitt and Kelly 2012b, 86). This radically altered the nature of military language provision, changing knowledge of a foreign language from a specialised skill for the gifted or academically inclined to a basic, widespread skill accessible and deployable by all. The United States War Department produced similar Pocket Guides and Language Guides, with audio recordings to accompany the latter, as will be discussed below.

The Foreign Office's *Instructions for British Servicemen in France* and *Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany* (Political Warfare Executive 2005, 2007; both originally issued 1944; no page numbers) contain similar recommendations on using the language, but differ in the kind of phrases they provide. Soldiers are advised to have a go at French or German and not to be discouraged by any apparent complexities of the language. They should ask their interlocutors to speak slowly, and use simple vocabulary. Failing that, they can point at words in the book. The French phrases' content includes greetings, travelling, accommodation and food. These books typically have little explicitly military material. An 'anglicised' version of the pronunciation is given: 'Bonjewer' for *bonjour*, 'Oh-revwa' for *au revoir*, and 'shame bocoo sirsee' for *J'aime beaucoup ceci*; a non-rhotic dialect of English is assumed. The German book, in contrast, has a firm 'no fraternisation' message. The phrases begin with orders, not greetings ('Hände hoch! **Hend**a hohk'), and the soldier learns to question civilians, not socialise with them. Fraternisation and sexual relations were, however, central to the way that many soldiers learned and used languages, and other phrasebooks and radio programmes for soldiers assumed that meeting women was a primary motivation for learning some phrases of the local language (Footitt and Kelly 2012b, 57, 155–157; cf. Footitt and Tobia 2013, 50).

The 'From Scratch' series of phrasebooks were produced by the Services Committee for Modern Languages and issued by the Director-General of Army Education, with input from the Institute of Linguists (McLelland 2017, 82, note 6). Like most such materials, they do not bear the names of individual authors. As revealed by his obituary in *The Times*

(28 February 1980, 17), George Samuel Purkis (1889–1980) was one of the authors of the Italian phrasebook in the series. He served in Egypt and Palestine during the First World War, so may also have had some hand in the preparation of the Arabic book. The series is numbered: *French from Scratch: Bill et Tommy en France* (1), *German from Scratch: Bill und Jock in Deutschland* (2), *Spanish from Scratch: Bill y Dave en España* (3), *Russian from Scratch: Bill' i Dzhek v Sovetskom Soyuze* (4), *Arabic from Scratch: Bill wa John fi el-Sharq* (5), and *Italian from Scratch: Bill e Frank in Italia* (6). The French and German books ran through at least four editions each, and the Spanish at least two. The series continued after the war with *Bill dan John Di-Tanah Melayu* (1964) for Malay and *Tommy ra Jock Gorkhaliharu Sita* (1966) for Gurkhali. The books have no dates, but internal evidence helps us to place them between 1943 and 1945. The French book was written before the liberation of Paris in August 1944, since it mentions Maurice Chevalier singing on Radio Paris, a station that was shut down by the Allies. The Russian book was mentioned in *Hansard* for 16 October 1945, so was available before this date. Among the books recommended for further study in the Arabic book are Tritton 1943 and Nahmad and Rabin 1940, so it was published no earlier than 1943.

*French from Scratch* sets the format and contents for the other books that followed. They are intended to be used for classroom instruction with records, although the preface admits that users may not always have access to these. Guidelines for use stress the same broad points in each book: the language is elementary; the focus is oral and colloquial language, not written; instruction is designed for those with little experience of or time for language study; and students should move through the lessons slowly, thoroughly assimilating the material before moving on. The lessons tell the story of two British soldiers, in the target language. In *French from Scratch*, Bill and Tommy, both from London, get the bus from their barracks into a French town to have a beer. As the story moves on, they make the acquaint-ance of a French family and billet with them, and Tommy falls in love with the daughter, Yvonne. The soldiers take trips to the cinema, write letters home to England (in French, for some unexplained reason), buy essentials like toothpaste and razors, and socialise in the town. Customs such as tipping are introduced in the stories. In Chapter 14, there is an air raid, and the two soldiers are injured and invalided home, although Tommy plans to return to marry Yvonne after the war. The book concludes with a separate list of military, naval and air force terms.

Each of the sequels modifies the story slightly to fit local circum-stances. In *German from Scratch*, fraternisation is less encouraged.

The soldiers do not become as close to local families, and do not billet with them or develop romances. There is no air raid, but instead the pair go travelling around Germany. Londoner Tommy has been replaced with the Scottish Jock. In *Spanish from Scratch*, the air raid takes place in England towards the beginning of the book, and Bill and Dave go to neutral Spain to convalesce with their friend Don Manuel. *Russian from Scratch* contains much more information about the Soviet Union. Bill and Jack's (platonic) friend Nina takes them to visit a collective farm, and key cultural differences are explained: tipping is considered rude, education is free, and Soviet women expect men to treat them as equals. (I suspect that this volume was written by a woman.)

*Bill wa John fi el-Sharq* ('Bill and John in the East', Services Committee for Modern Languages, n.d. [1940s]) follows the pattern of the other books. The book 'has been written for members of H. M. Forces, whose time for study is strictly limited, who may be without any previous experience of learning a foreign language and whose use of the mother tongue may be mainly colloquial' (Services Committee for Modern Languages, n.d. [1940s], inside front cover). It states that students should be able to make themselves understood with its contents in most countries except Morocco, but the pronunciation used is that of Egypt (for example, 'hard g' for *jīm* and reference to *qāf* being dropped in speech by 'townspeople'). The dialect used is essentially Egyptian ('fain' for 'where', the demonstratives 'da' and 'di' but also the more formal 'hāda' in places), but with some discussion of Syrian or Iraqi forms where these vary. The Arabic script is not used. As in the Russian book, there are cultural notes. These explain some historical and religious points, with Orientalist overtones ('The philosophy of the East remains. Time means nothing': Services Committee for Modern Languages, n.d. [1940s], 5). Bill and John go to a *qahwa* ('café') where they make friends with 'Muhammad afandi', who previously lived in London. They visit him at home and meet his young sons and daughter, but not his wife. The soldiers take a trip to Alexandria (it is assumed that they are based in Cairo) and visit a mosque. After the usual air raid, they are invalided home, where they tell their families about 'el-Sharq' ('the East').

Although the author(s) of the book are anonymous and its contents and format are derived from earlier books in the series, there are some further clues as to how *Arabic from Scratch* was prepared. The First World War Naval Intelligence handbooks seem again to have been consulted, since both use the same unusual example to illustrate the sound of *hamza* ('sea-eagle'). The 'Bibliography for further study or

reading' recommends scholarly literature by academics such as H. A. R. Gibb and D. S. Margoliouth, as well as reference books on the literary language by John Van Ess, E. H. Palmer and G. W. Thatcher, works on the colloquial by Van Ess 1917, O'Leary 1926, Nahmad and Rabin 1940 and Tritton 1943, and a popular dictionary by Elias A. Elias (Services Committee for Modern Languages, n.d. [1940s], 70). All the books cited were published in England, suggesting an author familiar with Arabic studies and scholarship in Britain, but unaware (or dismissive) of complementary works published in Egypt, Palestine or other countries of the Arab world.

My overall impression of *Arabic from Scratch* is that its successful use will have depended on access to the accompanying records. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate any surviving sets of these, nor of the contemporary records for US Arabic phrasebooks, discussed in the following section. They would be invaluable as some of the earliest known audio materials produced for learning Arabic.

## The United States and Arabic in the Middle East and North Africa

The United States entered the war in North Africa in 1942. The Army Specialized Training Program ran courses in Arabic for military personnel at Princeton University, led by Philip Hitti (Khalil 2016, 44–46). The Research and Analysis branch of the Office of Strategic Services in Washington, DC, had a dedicated Near East section, which produced a series of language and country guides for the Middle East and North Africa, similar to those also produced for Europe. One of the earliest was *Hints on Life in Egypt*, published in early 1942 (Office of Strategic Services 1942). *A Short Guide to Iraq* (War and Navy Departments 1943c), *A Short Guide to Syria* (War and Navy Departments 1943d) and *A Pocket Guide to Egypt* (War and Navy Departments 1943b) followed.

These books – which share some material with one another – reinforced a consistent message: soldiers should make an effort to understand and get along with unfamiliar people and customs, create a good impression of Americans and avoid causing any offence. Keeping away from local women was an important part of this. The War Department was keen both to avoid any incidents arising from soldiers approaching or sexually harassing local women ('don't make a pass at any Moslem woman or there will be trouble. Anyway, it won't get you anywhere': War and Navy Departments 1943c, unpaginated), and to avoid the spread of venereal disease: 'don't forget – keep out of brothels. Cairo and Alexandria teem with pimps and procurers. Just say "Imshi!" and keep on going' (War and
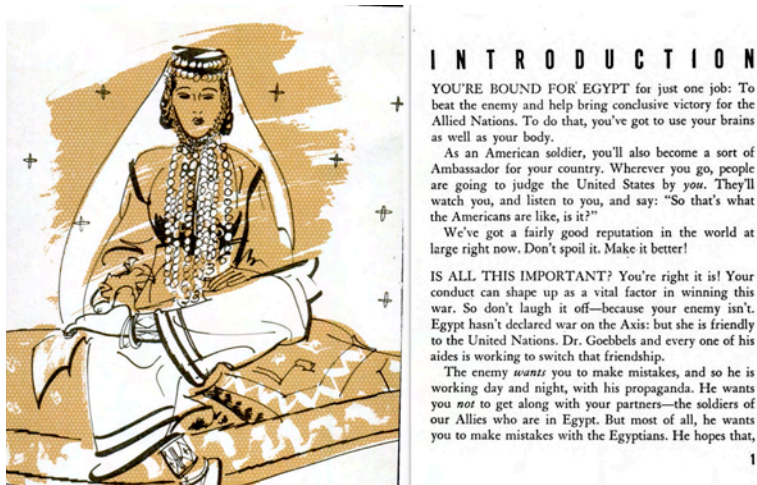
**Figure 5.14**  Opening pages of the United States Army and Navy *Pocket Guide to Egypt* (1943). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

Navy Departments 1943b, 31). Ironically, the book giving that advice opens with a clichéd, sexualised image of an 'Oriental' woman (Figure 5.14). Soldiers are warned that Egypt is not the land of camels and pyramids that they may expect, but a modern country, and that it may take them some time to warm to Iraq:

> Don't get discouraged. Most Americans and Europeans who have gone to Iraq didn't like it at first. Might as well be frank about it. They thought it a harsh, hot, parched, dusty, and inhospitable land. But nearly all of these same people changed their minds after a few days or weeks, and largely on account of the Iraqi people they began to meet. So will you.
>
> (War and Navy Departments 1943c, unpaginated)

These guidebooks encourage soldiers to attempt to speak Arabic, but do not promise immediate success: 'Speak Arabic wherever possible, no matter how badly you may pronounce it. The Egyptians will be pleased and may help you' (War and Navy Departments 1943b, 41). All three works – for Egypt, Iraq and Syria – contain the same text on the Arabic language, but were accompanied by separate sets of records with local pronunciation. The following text is quoted from the book for Iraq; the books for Syria and Egypt substitute local place names:

These are pronunciation hints to help you in listening to the Arabic language records which have been supplied to your troop unit. They will also help you with the pronunciation of additional words and phrases given in the vocabulary below, which are not included in the records.

Arabic is spoken over a great area in North Africa and the Near East. There are some differences between regions, both in pronunciation and the use of words. The dialect you are going to hear on this set of records is the Baghdad variety and you will be understood all over Iraq, except in the extreme north, and in most of Trans-Jordania. If you should go on to other regions, you will be given further information at that time. Don't worry about that now.

There is nothing very difficult about Arabic – except that you won't be able to read Arabic signs and newspapers you will see. That is because they use a different alphabet from ours. Therefore, the instructions and vocabulary below are not based on the written Arabic language, but are a simplified system of representing the language as it *sounds*. This system contains letters for all the sounds you *must* make to be understood. It does not contain letters for some of the sounds you will hear, but it will give you enough to get by on, both listening and speaking.

(War and Navy Departments 1943c, unpaginated)

The text on pronunciation is also almost identical. *'Ayn* and *hamza* are conflated with one another, and both marked with an apostrophe: 'a slight cough or choke'. *Khā'* 'is pronounced as when clearing your throat when you have to spit. Listen carefully for it on the records.' Soldiers are recommended to learn a list of the most useful words and phrases – which are included on the records – by heart. The phrases cover the usual content, such as greetings, directions, numbers, food and telling the time. There are appropriate dialectal variations, such as ''AYSH' for 'bread' in the Egypt book, 'KHU-biz' in Syria and 'KHU-buz' in the Iraqi version.

Specialist language guides were also produced, more detailed than the language sections of the country guides, which really only equipped soldiers to make a superficially good impression. These included *A Language Guide to North Africa* (War and Navy Departments 1943a), which one soldier recalled being given with little warning or preparation after his ship had left the United States: 'Everyone on board thought we were headed for England. After three days at sea that rumor was cleared up as each of us received a little booklet with the giveaway title of *A Language Guide to North Africa*' (Lewis 2010, 17). Unfortunately, he does not

record his further impressions of the book. This covered the Arabic of Morocco, Algeria and Libya, and French, and, like the country guides, was accompanied by records. The contents largely reproduced those of the other books. *North African Arabic: A Guide to the Spoken Language* is again very similar, but contains a longer English–Arabic word list (War Department 1943b).

Much more substantial – at over three hundred pages but in the same pocket format – is the War Department's *Moroccan Phrase Book* (War Department 1943a). This is more obviously for operational use and includes both transliteration and the Arabic script for an interlocutor to read or point at. Immediately inside the front cover are some short phrases for instructing an Arabic speaker to respond by gesture, and a section, in red print, titled 'These Words May Save a Life' (Figure 5.15). The book gives detailed instructions:

> The user must be thoroughly familiar with the contents of every page of the Phrase Book. Acquaint yourself with those sections you may have need of just before you go on a particular duty. If you are



### THESE WORDS MAY SAVE A LIFE

| ENGLISH | MOROCCAN | HOW TO SAY IT |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hello! | أهي | Aw-*high*-yuh! |
| I am an American (your friend). | انا مريكان (صاحبكم) | Aw-nah mer-ree-*can*-ee (saw-*hubb*-coom). |
| Where am I? | وين انا ؟ | Feen aw-nah? |
| Where are American (British) (Moroccan) (French) (friendly) soldiers? | وين العسكر المريكان — (الا قليزيين) (المغاربة) (البرنسويين) الصحاب ديالنا) | Feen el-*awss*-car el mer-ee-*can* (el-lean-glee-zee-*een*) (el-maw-*rawr*-bah) (el-frawn-saw-wee-*een*) (es-saw-*hubb*-de-*yell*-nah)? |
| I am wounded (sick) (hungry). | انــا مضروب (مريض) (جيعان) | Aw-nah mud-*roob* (murr-*eed*) (jee-*awn*). |
| Where is a doctor? | وين الطبيب | Feen et-tuh-*beeb*? |
| I want water. | انا بغيت الماء | Aw-nah breet el-*mah*. |
| My friend is wounded (sick) (hungry). | صاحبي مضروب (مريض) (جيعان) | Suhh-bee mud-*roob* (murr-*eed*) (jee-awn). |
| Go for help. | سير جيب المعاوتة | Seer jeeb el-moo-*aw*-wuh-nah. |

**Figure 5.15** 'These Words May Save a Life' in the United States War Department's *Moroccan Phrase Book* (1943). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

going on patrol in a captured town or on reconnaissance, read those sections carefully, and then put the book in your pocket, open at the proper place – you may need a foreign phrase in a hurry.

(War Department 1943a, 5–6)

Less guidance is given on pronunciation; both *'ayn* and *ghayn* are described as 'a guttural sound'. Rather than basic pleasantries, we find detailed sections on requisitioning and guard duty. Although it is not made explicit in the books themselves, it seems likely that the *Moroccan Phrase Book* is intended for use on active duty, perhaps for officers rather than all enlisted men, and that the other books discussed in this section are designed more for public relations than for combat.

The United States armed forces continued to produce similar country and language guides for Europe and the Middle East into the 1950s, as Cold War deployments and priorities gave new impetus to language learning and maintaining good relations with civilian populations. These are beyond the scope of this book, but, just as MECAS at Shemlan developed from British wartime language training in Jerusalem, so US military language study in the Cold War was grounded in the practices and experiences of the Second World War.

## Commercial phrasebooks: Egypt

As in the First World War, local authors and publishers in Cairo were quick to capitalise on new markets for guidebooks and Arabic phrasebooks in the Second, either by adapting existing works for tourists or by producing new ones. A *War-time Directory of Egypt and Vocabulary of Arabic Words and Phrases*, produced by El-Ettemad Press, noted that its first edition was intended 'to provide British and American tourists and residents with concise, comprehensive and up-to-date information about Egypt' but that 'Egypt's present day tourist is the serviceman' (Anonymous, n.d. [1940s?], 17).[8] It provides the usual historical and practical information on Egypt, but its real interest to the social historian is in the listing of the clubs for foreign troops and the advertisements, which run the gamut from department stores to cabarets. The Arabic vocabulary is brief, at seven pages, and not visibly adapted to wartime use. The author claims that 'the average Britisher or American in Egypt needs about two hundred Arabic words or phrases to get along easily' (Anonymous, n.d. [1940s?], 69). Those given include numbers, words for food and drink and giving orders, and a 'Heated Discussion' (Figure 5.16). Other guidebooks, such as the *Services Guide to Cairo* produced by the

**HEATED DISCUSSION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Enta abeet* | : | You are a fool |
| *Enta magnoon* | : | You are mad |
| *Enta afreet* | : | You are a devil |
| *Ya dahwiti* | : | Oh, hell ! |
| *Da wahed rizzle* | : | He is a mean fellow |
| *Mosh ayez ashufu* | : | I don't want to see him |
| *Kalam fàregh* or *Kalam fàdi* | : | Nonsense |
| *Ma'lish* | : | Never mind |
| *Eh da ?* | : | What is this ? |
| *Yalla* | : | Get away, hurry up |
| *Imshi* | : | Get away |
| *Rooh* | : | Get away |
| *Ta'ala hena* | : | Come here |
| *Zay ezzeft* | : | Rotten |
| *Kaddab* | : | Liar |

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**Figure 5.16** A 'Heated Discussion' in an anonymous Second World War phrasebook. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

'Co-Ordinating Council for Welfare Work in Egypt', likewise contained only short lists of vocabulary (Co-Ordinating Council for Welfare Work in Egypt, n.d. [1940?]). The accompanying *Services Guide to Alexandria* contains no Arabic at all.

Alec Wellesley Holbrook (1896–1989), an officer in the Royal Engineers, addressed the wartime need for Arabic by soldiers new to Egypt with two works, published privately in Cairo. *English-Arabic Vocabulary of Military, Royal Air Force and Mechanical Transport Technical* Terms was printed in 1939 by Imprimerie Misr, and *Colloquial Arabic Grammar* was issued in 1942 by al-Ettemad Press. Al-Ettemad (*al-i'timād*), which appears in several different Romanised spellings, was active between about the 1920s and the 1950s, and outside its wartime production of language books it mostly printed materials to do with science and engineering. It printed several of the books discussed in this section. Holbrook studied at the Royal Military Academy, graduating as an officer in 1914. Military records reveal that Egypt was one of the places where he served during the First World War, and that he returned for a long-term posting in 1922. I have not been able to access a copy of his *English-Arabic*

*Vocabulary* (Holbrook 1939). The *Colloquial Arabic Grammar*, while mostly concerned with imparting grammatical information, as the title implies, reveals a sensitivity to how the language was actually spoken in its social context. For example, Holbrook notes the use of 'helping vowels' in speech to break up consonant clusters, and tells the user how to order coffee according to the three traditional categories of a little sugar, a moderate amount and a lot (Holbrook 1942, 96). There are a few pages of phrases, on travel, military activities, and finding and managing an apartment in Cairo. Max Mallowan owned copies of both Holbrook's books, which he presumably acquired during his wartime service in North Africa (they are preserved, with his annotations, at the National Trust property Greenways, Agatha Christie's holiday home in Devon; I have not yet been able to examine them). As we saw in Chapter 3, Mallowan could already speak Arabic, but the Egyptian dialect and the technical demands of his work in the Royal Air Force required some retraining.

Most Arabic phrasebooks produced in Cairo during the war, however, were authored by Egyptians, not Britons. Riad Gayed's *The Dragoman in the Pocket: My Arabic Leader[9] (Colloquial)* was also printed by al-Ettemad, for the Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop – which still exists in Cairo, a block west of Azbakiyya. It has no publication date, but one of my copies has an owner's signature of William Gordon Macfie of the Royal Army Medical Corps, who was stationed in the Middle East between 1938 and 1947, so it was certainly used during the Second World War. Gayed was a holder of the Order of the Nile and seems to have lived in Germany later in life; his name suggests he was a Copt. In 1955, he published a *Praktische Methode für die arabische Umgangssprache (Sprachführer & Selbstunterricht)*, which is designed to be used bidirectionally, both by Arabic speakers learning German and by German speakers learning Egyptian Arabic (Gayed 1955); it is not based on his earlier English book. Other than that, I have been able to find out frustratingly little about him, including about his other books. These included Italian–Arabic and German–Arabic dictionaries, Arabic guidebooks to Europe,[10] and *Egypt from Mena to Fuad: A Practical Guide Book and Egyptian History* (1937). The contents of *The Dragoman in the Pocket* suggest to me a date immediately before the war, since it has some military terminology, but most of the material relates to general travelling and socialising. The fold-out map of Cairo marks the Qasr El Nil Barracks, but not the many soldiers' clubs which sprang up during the war. The dialect and pronunciation is Egyptian, although Gayed sometimes indicates Syrian equivalents. There is very little explanation of phonology, and a bare minimum of grammar (possessive and object suffixes, the conjugation of the verb),

but Gayed does have one particularly useful innovation in matching the English translation to the word order of the Arabic, as in the following example:

Enta tetkallem Ārabi?
*(do) You speak Arabic*
Ana aāraf kef̱aya arabi
*I know enough arabic*
F̱en etāāllemt?
*Where (did you) learn?*
Men ketab esmoh "Dalili el Ārabi."
*From (a) book its name (is) my Leader arabic.*

(Gayed, n.d. [1938?], 29)

Some works underwent more thorough revisions to cater to wartime needs. My copy of Mahmoud Mohamed Salem's *L'arabe parlé par / Spoken Arabic by Conversations: Moḥadaçât: Français - Anglais - Arabe* (Salem 1939) was also owned by a British soldier, but the book differs in some fundamental ways from its successor of only two years later (Salem 1941). Salem was the Head of the European Section of the Egyptian State Archives and published an English–Arabic dictionary after the war. His first conversational Arabic book was published by Imprimerie Kawa, cost 15 piastres, has 232 pages and measures 12 by 17 centimetres. In the Preface, dated 1 January 1939, he writes, 'I have also tried to enrich this book with various Arabic dialogues which roughly embrace all the practical needs of life; and I hope that it will interest and satisfy our diplomatic guests, the tourists, and all the foreign residents in Egypt' (Salem 1939, unpaginated). The Cairo imagined in the book is not one marked by war: the user is equipped to have long conversations about topics such as having books bound in morocco leather with gilt lettering. The target language is Arabic, and French has precedence over English. Salem introduces the Arabic alphabet, but does not use it in the main body of the book. The transliteration scheme uses French orthography, for example with 'ch' for *shīn*, and the book follows Egyptian dialect and phonology.

Careful study of Salem's book reveals that he has taken inspiration from many sources in compiling it. There are sufficient unique phrases to identify that he used Saleh 1874 (e.g. Salem p. 40/Saleh p. 224: 'Sa conversation m'ennuie à la mort') and perhaps also al-Miṣrī 1850 or a work derived from this. Curiously, it also shares some text with a Portuguese–French–English phrasebook of 1842, but with Cairene sites (the Egyptian Museum) switched for London ones (the British Museum; Monteverde

1842). By this date, the task of tracing the influence and appropriation of material from earlier phrasebooks becomes so complex that it is difficult to tell whether an author such as Salem has directly cribbed from other works, or whether it is simply the case that the genre of the phrasebook has become so homogeneous that correspondences arise without direct copying. Plagiarism and intertextuality can be hard to distinguish (see Chapter 7). As a librarian-archivist, Salem will certainly have had access to plentiful materials to use in compiling his own phrasebook, perhaps even to books going back to state institutions like the Madrasat al-Alsun.

Salem's 1941 *Spoken Arabic Without a Teacher* is a slightly different creature. It too was printed at El-Ettemad (here spelled El-Eétemad) Press. It measures 10 by 14 centimetres and has 152 pages, in a similar pocket format to many other war phrasebooks, and was priced more moderately at 10 piastres. The original 1939 work is advertised inside the front cover. Salem states that his aim with this new 'pocket-book' is 'to offer a service to our guests of His Britannic Majesty's Forces in Egypt and other foreigners who speak the English language and have the desire to make practice in common Arabic language' (Salem 1941, iii). French is now omitted, and the orthography has been altered to English conventions (e.g. 'mush' for the 'much' of the previous book). Apart from minor omissions and changing of order, however, the content remains the same, devoted to middle- and upper-class pursuits and socialising. The user still learns how to commiserate with a friend on an uncle who has just lost his fortune (p. 28). The previous owner of my copy, Lance-Corporal Sunter, has annotated it, not with additional vocabulary or notes on pronunciation, but with sketches of pin-up girls and lists of friends and family, perhaps to send postcards to (discussed further in Chapter 7).[11]

A more modest pin-up girl – a January 1943 newspaper clipping of a young woman in the uniform of the Girls' Training Corps – has been preserved between the pages of my copy of *Ultra Method: How to Learn & Speak Egyptian Language in a Few Days* (Mandarawi, n.d. [1940s?]-b). The author, Nagib El Mandarawi (1890–), was a barrister who had studied in Paris (*Who's Who in the U.A.R. and Near East* 1954). He published a book on public health law in Arabic in 1922, with the eye-catching title *Kayfa ta'īsh mi'at sana* 'How to Live a Hundred Years', as well as a novel about Marie de Medici, and a work on the European discovery of America. None of Mandarawi's several phrasebooks and guidebooks are dated, but internal and circumstantial evidence places them in the late 1930s and early 1940s. All are in the same pocket format of about 11 by 14 centimetres, or a little larger, and have the same eye-catching cover image of a woman cupping her hand to her ear to listen to a sphinx (Figure 5.17).

**Figure 5.17**  Cover image from Mandarawi's publications (1930s–1940s). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

The earliest of Mandarawi's phrasebooks and guidebooks seems to be *Méthode ultra: français-arabe, en caractères européens à l'usage des étrangers installés ou de passage en Orient* (Mandarawi, n.d. [1930s?]). This bears the markers of a pre-war phrasebook: at 224 pages and 12 piastres, it is longer and more expensive than its successors; it privileges French over English; and there is little obviously military content. The copy in the library of the Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo once belonged to Françoise Bruyère, who married the archaeologist Bernard Bruyère in 1930 (Solé 2019, 247); her name is written in Arabic on the back cover. Following a short grammatical introduction, over half of the book is devoted to conjugations of common verbs. There are then about fifty pages of vocabulary and short phrases. The Arabic is colloquial Egyptian, with Cairene features, such as pronouncing *qāf* as a glottal stop. Mandarawi adds appendices on matters such as local currency and Egyptian cuisine. The back cover of the book advertises a *Petite Méthode Ultra français – anglais – arabe, Pour apprendre l'arabe en quelques jours* at five piastres, presumably a condensed version of the same book. I have been unable to locate any surviving copies of the *Petite Méthode Ultra*.

Mandarawi's two English phrasebooks seem both to have been published once the war had started. The shorter *Ultra Method: How to Learn & Speak Egyptian Language in a Few Days* appears to be the earlier, since it is advertised on the back cover of the other, *Salamat*. (The second edition of the *Ultra Method*, in turn, advertises *Salamat*.) Since I have been unable to examine a copy of the *Petite Méthode Ultra*, I cannot be certain, but I suspect that it formed the basis for the English book. *Ultra Method* was priced at six piastres and printed by El Horria Press, not by

E. Minikidis & Co., publishers of *Méthode ultra*. It eliminates the verb conjugations of the earlier French book entirely and relegates grammar to brief explanations in footnotes. As in Salem's books, French orthography is changed to English ('cha'âr' becomes 'sha'er' for *sha'r* 'hair'), but little is modified in the condensed content of the new, English book. The cover of the book advertises that it is 'Special for British Troops', suggesting a wartime date.

My copy of *Salamat: New English-Arabic Manual* (Mandarawi, n.d. [1940s?]-a) has 214 pages and a cover price of 25 piastres. There may have been another, abridged, edition, since the second edition of *Ultra Method* advises the user to 'Ask for SALAMAT English-Arabic, The Very Up-To-Date and Very Modern Method to Learn Arabic, Special Edition for H.M. British Troops, All Arabic Verbs Conjugated Price P.T. 12'. *Salamat*'s lengthy list of vocabulary on 'Army and War – el guesh wal-**h**arb' marks it out as a wartime book (Mandarawi n.d. [1940s?]-a, 12–20). It lacks the grammatical explanations of the *Méthode ultra* and focuses more on providing lists of vocabulary for all situations. A little over halfway through the book, the sections become based around grammatical points rather than topics (e.g. 'Adverbs, Prepositions, etc. al-zoroof wa-**h**oroof el-garr'), but still simply comprise lists of words and short phrases, with no explanation of how the Arabic language works.

Mandarawi, then, produced a total of four language books: shorter and longer versions of the same book (the longer ones having a greater emphasis on grammar), first in French, then in English. After all of these, Mandarawi published a pocket guidebook, *Cairo and Egypt in a Week* (which includes a couple of pages of Arabic vocabulary). On its cover, this advertises him as 'Author of "Salamat", "Ultra Method", "Méthode Ultra" & Other Methods to learn "Arabic without a Teacher"'. This was published by Kawsar Press, which also produced a pirated edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* during the war (Gertzman 1987, 295).

A pattern establishes itself with these books. Authors of Arabic books for tourists and residents in Egypt in the 1930s brought out new, smaller and cheaper editions for the wartime 'soldier tourist' market. Often, this involved a switch from French to English and from a more established publisher to a private printer (although the borderline between printer and publisher is indistinct at this period). Other phrasebooks and guidebooks designed more expressly for military use, from the First World War, were reissued in new editions during the Second. Re-editions of Alec Cury/Alexander Khoori's works were especially numerous. Sometimes, the name was changed, as is the case with Z. Mirhom's *Egyptian Arabic: New Conversational Guide* (Mirhom 1942), which is identical to Skarous'

First World War *New English-Arabic Manual* in every way, except that it omits the Arabic script.

Other authors moved into phrasebook writing for the first time. Abdel Moneim Hussein Galal specialised in translating detective fiction from French and English into Arabic. In a career stretching into the 1970s, he translated works by Agatha Christie, Graham Greene, Arthur Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, Patricia Highsmith and Alexandre Dumas. His *How to Speak Arabic Without a Teacher* was first printed in November 1939 and went through many editions during the war (it was in its fifteenth by March 1940). It billed itself on the title page as 'The best method to learn the colloquial arabic in a shortest time specially for the british, Australian, New Zealand and Indians soldiers and tourists' (errors in original) and was published by Dar el Dee-aya wel Nashr el Togariah ('Advertising and Commercial Publishing House'). It has 64 pages and cost just three piastres. There is no grammatical or phonological information. Instead, Galal – a man of the world – cuts straight to the chase. The first section is titled 'Love: Elhobb', and after the conjugation of the verb 'to love', things escalate quickly (Figure 5.18). 'I have an appointment with a beautiful girl – ana andi mee-ad wayya bent gameelah' progresses to 'this woman is my harlot – el set di khaleelty', but then, oddly, to 'dowry' and 'wedding ring' (Galal 1939, 5–6; Hans Wehr's dictionary gives the more decorous 'paramour' for *khalīla*). An amusing typo renders 'el bent di
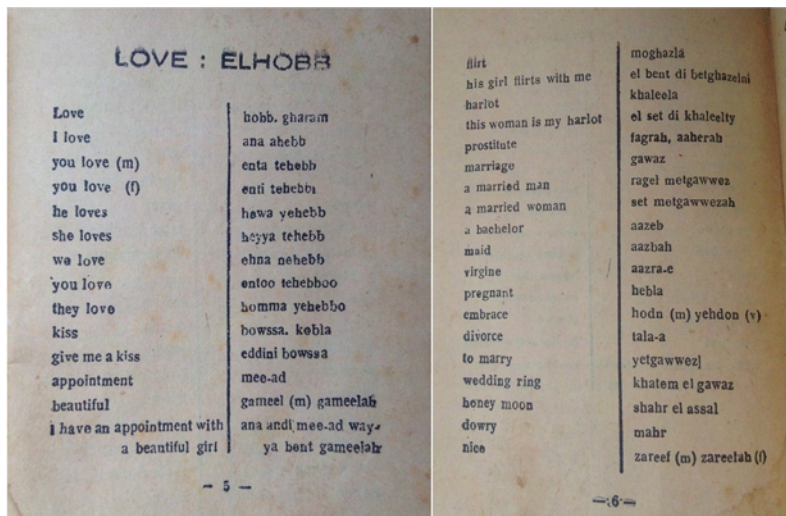


**Figure 5.18** 'Love' in Galal's *How to Speak Arabic Without a Teacher* (1939). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

betghazelni' as 'his girl flirts with me' instead of the correct 'this girl flirts with me'.[12] The rest of the book equips the user to visit the post office, hire a carriage, go to the pyramids, give instructions to servants and so forth, with – almost as an afterthought – a list of military terms on pages 58 to 61. One wonders how many users got beyond the early pages.

Galal's book stands in a similar relationship to two others as the quartet of Zaki, Chawky, Hammam and O'Neill from the First World War. In this case, I think that Galal's was probably the original, since it is the longest and we can establish that it was published early in the war. All three are booklets of a similar size, with similar pink paper covers (Figure 5.19). Two of them were printed by the same firm, but the similarity may also have had the goal of trading on their resemblance in the marketplace. A reworking of Galal's book was published under the title *How to Speak Arabic and French* at Dar el Dee-aya wel Nashr el Togariah in 1941, without Galal's name on the cover, and with the foreword now signed by one F. A. Helmy. This includes only the first half of Galal's book, with French added in a separate column, and a few phrases omitted or altered in a very minor way. 'Love – ElHobb' still opens the book. Helmy adds the words 'harlot' ('khaleela') and 'prostitute' ('fagra' = *fājira*) but (probably more realistically) omits the section on marriage.

The third book of the trio, an undated booklet, by 'Abd al-Fatāḥ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Murād and published by Maktabat al-Jumhuriyya al-'Arabiyya, is a close relative of the other two. It includes the same material as Galal, but is intended instead for Arabic speakers to learn English: *How to Speak English Without a Teacher in 4 Days* (Murād, n.d. [1940s?]). This has
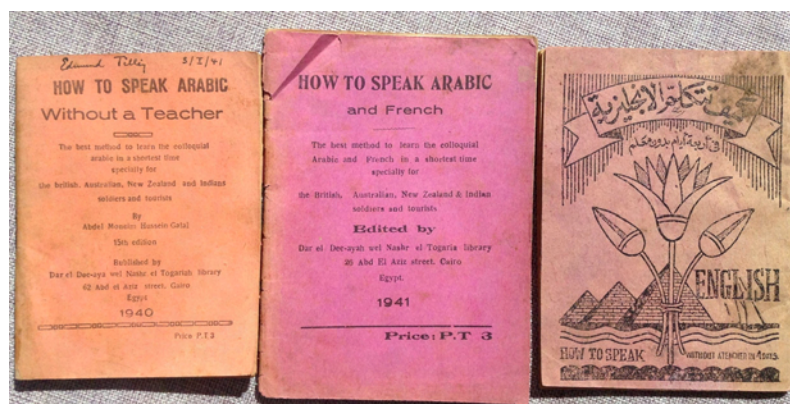


**Figure 5.19** Phrasebooks in a similar format published in Cairo in the early 1940s. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

the same English and transliterated Arabic text as Galal, with the addition of the Arabic words in Arabic script and the English transliterated into Arabic. Again, the most significant deviations from Galal and Helmy are in the section on 'Love' (now 'and Marriage'), but this no longer opens the book.

Other versions of these books seem to have circulated. Among the papers of Charles A. Martin in the Imperial War Museum is a small notebook diary for the year 1943 (IWM Documents. 20341; I own a blank copy of the same diary, bound in leather with embossed images of the sphinx, camels, pyramids and the mosque of Muḥammad ʿAlī on the Cairo Citadel). Alongside the usual printed pages with the days and dates are a few pages taken from a guidebook to Cairo and 16 pages of phrases originating ultimately from Galal's book. No author is named, and unfortunately there is no information on where and by whom it was printed and sold on either copy I have seen. The parts of the phrasebook included have none of the more racy material. Martin's diary records the films he saw at the cinema in Cairo, the lectures he attended, and frequent letters to his wife, Margaret (their daughter was only three years old).

While, of course, the Galal–Helmy–Murād trio could be put to innocent purposes (just like the equally worldly Zaki, Chawky and Hammam), they highlight the significance of sex work as a locus of language learning in colonial Cairo, particularly during the two world wars. The section on 'Love' is the one which differs most markedly between the three books, which were obviously compiled with close reference to one another. This is where the authors have exercised the greatest agency. Helmy and Murād, despite the latter's section title, have cut down Galal's material to focus more immediately on flirtation and sexual encounters rather than marriage and family. Appropriately, Maktabat al-Jumhuriyya al-ʿArabiyya (of which Murād was also the proprietor) was located on Ṣanādīqiyya Street, near al-Azhar mosque, which is also the location of Naguib Mahfouz's eponymous *Midaq Alley* (1947). In Mahfouz's novel, set during the Second World War, the character Ḥamīda is drawn into prostitution, and part of her training is to be taught basic English. As Shaden Tageldin puts it in her discussion of the episode, Ḥamīda, 'lured by an Egyptian schoolmaster-pimp into a viciously parodic "Department of English," learns to translate her Arabic name and body into parts that English soldiers can pronounce and possess' (Tageldin 2011, 194). It is easy to imagine Ḥamīda or her pimp using Murād's book, and her clients using Galal's or Helmy's. One British private in the Imperial War Museum interviews is very frank (perhaps franker than he realises) about soldiers learning Arabic in order to have sex: 'The words that most of us learned

after about five months in North Africa were, em, er, [laughs nervously] saīda bint and shuftī kush, which weren't very nice words. That's about it' (IWM 12941). I have transcribed the pidgin Arabic as the interviewee pronounces it on the recording; he does not pronounce 'difficult' letters such as *'ayn*. 'Hello, girl' is innocuous enough on its own, but it seems likely that 'kush' stands for *kuss*.

Other wartime Cairene phrasebooks leave a little more to the imagination, while retaining a focus on Cairo as a place of entertainment. H. Munib 'Ex Sudan Govt. Service' mentions the war only obliquely in his *My Arabic-Speaking Companion*:

> Thousands of English-speaking visitors and other travellers used to make annual pilgrimage to Egypt so as to see her marvels and everlasting antiquities.
>
> During their sojourn in the Nile-Land, they usually come upon many Egyptians in their way, of whose language they do not understand a single word.
>
> Thus, it was found of benefit to publish – in European characters – a series of spoken-Arabic conversation and useful words on different subjects, in the hope that they might prove of value to those who want to make some acquaintance with this language.
>
> In the meantime, they are framed in the colloquial dialect of Cairo, to be uniformly used and easily understood.
>
> (Munib 1942, unpaginated Introduction)

Munib may be the Hassan Munib Effendi of the Egyptian Government Press thanked by archaeologist Selim Hassan in the preface to his 1949 book *The Sphinx in Light of Recent Excavations*. Munib's book has 44 pages of basic phrases for shopping and sightseeing, followed by almost sixty of English–Arabic vocabulary. Like Mandarawi, he indicates 'difficult' consonants in bold type. A shopping trip concludes, '*Send the lot to Mena House Hotel* – Ib'at el-**h**âga lilokandit Meena House' (p. 38). The user visits music halls, theatres and cabarets, with some more decorous flirting thrown in:

> *Take a seat* – **Kh**od korsi
> *You are charmful* – Inti **z**areefa
> *My sweetheart* – **H**abibti
> *This dancer is very supple* – Irra'â**s**a di **kh**afeefa a-wi fi **h**arakit-ha
> *I have enjoyed your company very much* – Ana inbasa**tt** kiteer min wigoodi ma'âki

*This tango is jolly good* – El-tango da **h**ilw
*May I have the pleasure of this dance?* – Tisma**h**eeli ar-o**ss** wayyâki?
(Munib 1942, 29–30)

Attractions 'In the Town (Fi-l-balad)' include the pyramids and Citadel, as well as several museums, among them the Hygiene Museum. One New Zealand soldier recalled visits to the bar and brothel district in Wagh al-Birka north of Azbakiyya Gardens (where Anzac soldiers rioted during the First World War), and that:

> They gave you lectures on the dangers of Venereal Disease (VD), and one of the must do's in Cairo was a visit to the Museum of Hygiene which would put you off sex for the rest of your life. ... They were very graphic descriptions of cases of, various cases of VD.
>
> ('Watt McEwan talks about brothels in Cairo', https://nzhistory. govt.nz/media/sound/brothels-in-cairo, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, updated 23-Dec-2014, accessed 21 May 2023)

No price appears on the cover of *Say It in Arabic and See Egypt* (Brin and Biancardi 1942), but it is likely to have been somewhat higher than the prices of the commercially published phrasebooks I have discussed so far. It has a similar pocket format (around 11 by 14 centimetres), but is in hardback, with 157 pages and a sturdy fold-out map of Cairo. The cover has an illustration in silhouette of a man in a *ṭarbūsh* ('fez') and *gallābiyya* (long robe) speaking to a man in military uniform. There are copious advertisements from Cairo businesses, some on green paper. It is more sophisticated both in its contents and in its expectations of its readers' tastes. The publisher was Éditions Horus, which was founded by Morik Brin and Francophone Alexandrian poet (and potential prize-winner for the most Egyptian name ever) Horus Schenouda (1917–2010). Éditions Horus operated in Cairo from 1941 to 1947 (Lançon 2011), with a focus on contemporary literature in French. The fact that the press was more accustomed to publishing in French can be seen in a slip in an otherwise carefully edited book: on the Contents page of *Say It in Arabic*, the pages are marked '5 à 30' rather than '5 to 30'. In the same year as *Say It in Arabic and See Egypt*, Éditions Horus published a collection of Schenouda's poems, *Phantasmes*.

The book's authors, Morik Brin and Raoul Biancardi, were Europeans resident in Egypt. Brin (whose real name was Maurice Rocher) taught at various schools in Alexandria and Cairo and was one of the founders of 'les Amis de la culture française en Égypte' (Lançon 2015, 233). Biancardi worked for the Egyptian Finance Ministry. *Say It in*

*Arabic and See Egypt*'s use of English and practical focus mark a departure from the usual literary fare of Éditions Horus, but it nevertheless aspires to a certain elegance. In the introduction to the English–Arabic vocabulary which comprises the middle section of the book, for example, the reader is advised that the authors have given words with 'the "educated" Q. The foreigner who can adopt it will pass for a man of erudition' (Brin and Biancardi 1942, 69). Previously, the reader has been given phrases in Egyptian dialect and pronunciation, and advised, correctly, to pronounce *qāf* as *hamza* to replicate the colloquial speech of Cairo. Yet Brin and Biancardi are alert to the social polish a speaker will achieve by giving a touch of *fuṣḥā* to their colloquial Arabic, and aim to equip their readers to do this. Likewise, in the section on pronunciation, Brin and Biancardi advise that 'Only people of culture pronounce it [*jīm*] as *j* in *jam*' (Brin and Biancardi 1942, 9).

Brin and Biancardi are conscious of their book's place in a crowded market of Arabic phrasebooks, and have clear ideas about what makes it distinctive:

> This HAND-BOOK differs from others in some important respects. It is compiled on new principles and contains much matter which has hitherto not appeared in similar works and some facts that are the fruit of independent research.
>
> In the first place, every effort has been made to ensure correct pronunciation in the simplest form, and yet with all the accuracy needed by the practical student, and care has been taken to avoid antiquated phonetic symbols for the representation of sounds unknown to the English-speaking learner, this hand-book being intended for members of the British and Imperial Forces in the Middle East.
>
> In the next place, it has been our endeavour to offer, within the restricted place of a Manual, the possibility of building up elementary sentences in Egyptian Arabic and not merely of memorizing stereotyped phrases and colloquialisms so tedious even to the serious student. That has been our original design – the idea having sprung in response to criticism of many who have used manuals generally in use.
>
> The chief feature of this work is its suitability to the needs of the British Services. The aim has been to produce a practical work; to introduce only such matter as is essential to the acquirement of a practical knowledge of the language. On the practical side, therefore, it is hoped that the work will be welcomed by those who wish to be understood by the natives. To many English-speaking people,

Egyptian Arabic is a puzzle, Arabic having no relationship with the tongues of Europe.

(Brin and Biancardi 1942, 1–2; the Preface is dated July 1941.)

Their book is original (not plagiarised), explains pronunciation clearly, offers the user the opportunity to construct his own simple phrases rather than merely memorise set phrases, and leaves out material which a soldier will not need. In contrast to the smaller, cheaper paperback phrasebooks, which made few if any changes between reprints, 'The Editors take this opportunity of inviting criticisms and suggestions from all who may use this hand-book; during the next few months especially, while the type is standing, they will be grateful for immediate notification of sins of commission or omission, blunders or misprints' (Brin and Biancardi 1942, 3).

To a great extent, Brin and Biancardi achieve their ambitions for the book. The section on grammar focuses less on memorisation of tables than on practical tips for forming words from others. For example, they explain how to form an active participle from the past tense of the verb by changing the vowels (e.g. *katab* 'he wrote' to *kātib* 'writer': p. 23). Pages 34 to 66 of the book form the 'Manual' – the phrases – and cover the usual themes: the time, currency, greetings, asking directions, the post office, pyramids, shopping, dining out, travelling by train, renting a room or apartment. As in all these wartime phrasebooks, nightlife features. Soldiers hail a taxi to go to town (presumably from their barracks) and are told by the driver that he cannot take more than five of them. At the bar, they ask for beer, and the barman responds that they must wait until six o'clock: 'O.K. give us sandwiches in the meantime – O.K. *eddeena sanDwich ma'lesh*' (Brin and Biancardi 1942, 51). The following section, 'The Casino', includes flirtation, or perhaps something more commercial:

Waiter, are these girls Egyptian? *garson errA'iSAt dol miSriyah?*
To be sure *ummAl*
They are very pretty *dol Helween awi*
What's the name of that brunette? *essamrah di esmaha eih?*
Does she speak English? *betitkallem ingleesi?*
A little *shwoiyah*
Is there any dancing tonight? *mafeesh ra'S elleilAdi*
Oh! Good evening *sa'eeda*
What's your name? *esmek eih?*
Tadukhipa *tadukhipa*

What a beautiful name! *da esm gameel awi*
What does it mean, do you know? *w ma'nAh eih mata'rafeesh?*
It's a Pharaonic name *da esm fara'oni*
My stage-name is Zizi *hena bisammooni zizi*
Ah! that's better *aho keda*
What will you have Miss Zizi? *takhdi eih ya miss Zizi?*
A cocktail *koktail*
Waiter *garson*
What an enjoyable evening! *amma sahra gameelah!*

<div align="right">(Brin and Biancardi 1942, 52)</div>

The Arabic makes it clear that Tadukhipa is a dancer (*rāqiṣa*). Her name is indeed Pharaonic, but not Egyptian: Tadukhipa was a Mitanni princess, who married Amenhotep I and later Akhenaten. In any case, 'they call me Zizi here'. The Imperial War Museum interviews give us a little context for this kind of conversation. Erik Morley, who served with the Royal Artillery in Palestine and Africa during the war, met a taxi dancer (a woman employed by an establishment to dance with patrons for a fee) in a bar in Cairo in 1942, while on leave after Tobruk (IWM 16281). He recalled asking her, 'Do you speak English? Int'arif English?' (I have transcribed the Arabic as Morley pronounces it on the recording). They had few words of either language in common, but communicated on their first date at a café using hand signals: 'We made good conversation actually. We didn't do too badly at all.' With this and 'the few words of Arabic I had picked up', they were able to make plans to meet the following day. 'Aiwa, the one word – the two words: la is no, aiwa is yes, that's good enough for a conversation in my book.'

Inside the back cover of *Say It in Arabic* is an advertisement for a sequel, *Say It in French and See Egypt*, which does not seem ever to have appeared (Figure 5.20). Opposite this is another hint that French language and culture were the primary interest of Brin, Biancardi and Éditions Horus. A full-page advertisement for French lessons begins, 'Napoleon said: "He who can speak two languages is worth two men."' If this seems like a strange thing for the Napoleon whose linguistic missteps we followed in Chapter 1 to say, this is because he did not. The 'Napoleon' to whom this phrase, or a variant on it, is most often attributed is an American self-help author called Napoleon Hill (1883–1970), although the saying had been in circulation much longer. Whether or not the author of the advertisement was intentionally misleading his customers, the use of a quotation from Hill – author of works such as *Think and Grow Rich* (1937) – is appropriate. It is unclear whether Brin, Biancardi, Schenouda or someone else was teaching French
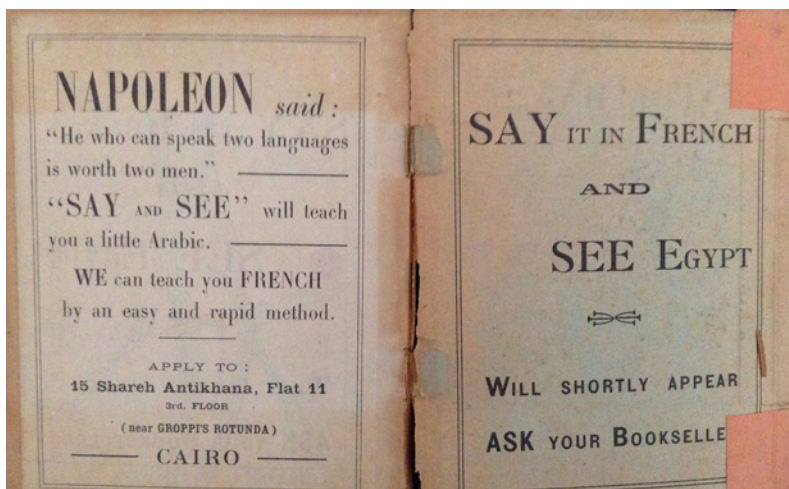
**Figure 5.20** Advertisements from Brin and Biancardi's *Say It in Arabic and See Egypt* (1942). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

at 15 Shareh Antikhana (now Shāri' Mahmoud Bassiouny) but this, along with the other material discussed in this chapter, shows how language fitted into the commercial landscape of wartime Cairo. Books like this had their place in a market oriented, in the words of one soldier, 'to supply our men with anything they want – from fly swatters to Arabic grammars, and darts' (*Daily Herald*, 7 August 1943, 3).

As was the case for the previous war, there is only scanty evidence on how these phrasebooks were used. Annotations on surviving copies of phrasebooks, which provide our best evidence, are discussed in Chapter 7. William Bird, with the Royal Air Force in North Africa between 1941 and 1943, learnt passable pidgin Arabic from working with Arabic speakers on air bases:

> And when you went into the towns, into the cities, well you could use it and the waiters and the hawkers and that sort of thing, they were all very happy to chat with you, you know. You would talk to them in Arabic and then they would say, you know, please in English and you had to tell them what this was in English. And that was waiters and shopkeepers and things like that.
>
> (IWM 33883)

When he uses Arabic words on the recording, his pronunciation and accent are good: he learnt by speaking and listening, not from a book. Joyce

Lindsay Wylie was in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and worked in an office in Cairo. As a foreign woman, she had difficulty getting her male, Egyptian employees to pay attention to her when she told them to stop talking and get on with work: 'So I then just lashed them up hill and down dale in Arabic and had no more trouble with them' (IWM 9804). Like Bird and others, she does not mention books when the interviewer asks how she learnt Arabic. She answers:

> Well I had a friend who was on the Helwan unit and he'd learnt Arabic and he – through him I met other local people, and I not only learnt the idiomatic Arabic but I did also learn some Classical Arabic. But it was no use using Classical Arabic in the office, because they wouldn't have understood. They only spoke the idiomatic. I learnt enough to get by and to bargain in the Muski.
>
> (IWM 9804)

Pierre Cachia, a fluent Arabic speaker who grew up in Egypt, recalled the warm reception he got from locals in Tunisia when he was serving in the British Army during the Second World War: 'as soon as it was discovered that I spoke Arabic I was feted and escorted from one café to another' (Cachia in Naff 1993, 10). This reception was probably all the warmer because Cachia's command of Arabic was unusual among soldiers. Pennethorne Hughes (whose *While Shepheard's Watched* provides a lively account of Cairo during the war) noted that most Britons in Cairo simply resorted to speaking English loudly in an attempt to communicate with Egyptians, or clapped their hands and shouted 'Ezma!' at waiters: 'which they fondly believed to mean "Waiter!" In fact it means "Listen"' (Hughes 1949, 16). Some tried 'execrable Arabic used wrongly':

> Soon though he discovered what he believed to be the Arabic for left, right, straight ahead, stop here, and wait, and then became a menace to everybody. It so happens that all taxi-drivers knew, if nothing else, the English for left, right, straight ahead, stop here, and wait. This did not in the least deter the boisterous passenger, who screamed his bad Arabic directions, usually wrongly, and always at the last moment, cursing the driver if he was not understood.
>
> This tiresome and arrogant habit of speech was also employed by those who affected it, on porters, in shops, and even to hotel receptionists whose English vocabulary and manners were far better than their own. Needless to say these sort of people never learnt the Arabic for please or thank you. Or, indeed, often the English.

A sub-division of this school, on finding their fiercely mis-pronounced phrases making no impression, would switch to Lower Certificate French, lashed with whisky, and on obtaining equally indifferent results retreat under high blood pressure to Shepheard's, never to be seen again.

(Hughes 1949, 96)

Hughes has kinder things to say about those who stuck to English, but used it politely and patiently, or who learnt some simple Arabic for their everyday needs, even if it was not perfect. In his view, very few Britons learnt to speak either colloquial or formal Arabic really well.

Hughes' judgements are not simply those of a linguistic snob, but of someone who was deeply concerned about poor relations between Egyptians and Britons:

Ignorantly, but definitely then, the Englishman in Egypt during the early forties often hated the place. None did this so vehemently or so loudly as soldiers, with the natural result that Egypt often didn't much like them either. It being wartime neither side could be particularly bothered, even when it was equipped to do so, to understand the other's point of view.

(Hughes 1949, 78)

Sociolinguistic understanding was especially important. If someone did not understand the shades of meaning in a word, or how it could vary in meaning from context to context, then situations could be completely misconstrued. Hughes illustrates this with a classic Egyptian example:

Almost everybody learnt that the phrase *maaleesh* expressed fatalistic apathy – 'what's it matter anyway?' – and a general disinterest. When therefore the wheel came off your gharry, depositing you in the road, or you were given the wrong change and expostulated, and the gharry-driver or barber said *maaleesh*, there was an instinctive desire to knock his block off, if you did not happen to know that the phrase also meant 'sorry'. Ignorance of religious customs, of the position of women in the East, of any psychological or physical factors but those of a ranch in Canada, a farm in the Veldt, a hamlet in Wiltshire or a small town in Missouri, meant unkindness and exasperation as well as unhappiness.

(Hughes 1949, 86)

The authors of the military phrasebooks with which I opened this section were therefore wise to concentrate on establishing good relations between Arabs and foreign troops.

## Palestine

Comparatively fewer phrasebooks were published during the Second World War in Palestine, perhaps because of the ready availability of books published in Palestine before the war, or in Cairo before and during it. In a couple of cases, we can, however, see the same publishing trends manifesting themselves in Tel Aviv–Jaffa and Jerusalem as in Cairo. In 1939 Aref Odeh published a bilingual work intended for both Arabic speakers learning English and English speakers learning Arabic: *Sullam al-lisān al-kāmil: litaʿllīm al-lugha al-inklīziyya lil-būlīs wa al-ʿāmil bidūn muʿallim wa bi al-lafẓ / Easy Guide to Spoken Arabic of Palestine: Self-taught and with English Pronunciation* (Odeh 1939). Odeh taught at the school run by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, an American evangelical organisation, in Jerusalem. I have been unable to ascertain if he was any relation of Naser Odeh, whose work on a 1911 Arabic phrasebook was discussed in Chapter 3.

The book's Arabic title reveals that its primary intended audience were Arabic-speaking recruits to the Mandate police force. The aim may have been to help with preparation for the proficiency exams discussed in the section, above, on Mandate Palestine, although these, as we have seen, had a heavy focus on formal, written English, Arabic and Hebrew. As is typical of such bidirectional books, the English and Arabic prefaces say slightly different things. The English reads:

> In order to meet the every day needs of the individual, who is desirous of acquiring the spoken Arabic of Palestine, this little book has been selected with utmost care and with the English pronuncia-tion for all that is necessary and likely to be required, avoiding too much detail, for this is the important reason for the difficulty by 'Self-taught' method.
>
> Hoping this little book will be an aid for all those who use it.
>
> (Odeh 1939, 4)

The Arabic is more frank about the challenges of learning English for Arabic speakers, and the deficiencies of available materials. Although the English language is 'easy' (*sahla*), Arab learners are confronted with large tomes full of 'morphological and grammatical rules' and

'long, boring explanations that make them difficult to understand' (Odeh 1939, 4). Odeh has aimed to pare these down to something of practical use to a policeman doing his job. English and Arabic words and phrases are given with transliteration into the other script throughout, so that, for example, a scenario where a policeman stops a motorist and asks for his licence is rendered (with Arabic-script text transliterated in italics):

| | |
|---|---|
| Have you a license? | *'andak rukḥṣa?* |
| indak rukhṣah? | *hāv yū ay lāysins?* |

(Odeh 1939, 65)

In the final section of the book, the user is given examples of personal correspondence and official documents (an application for a job, a police report on a burglary), in English and Arabic.

Odeh's sequel, *An Easy Guide to Spoken Arabic of Palestine: Self-taught and with English Pronunciation, A Soldier's Handbook*, was published by the Living Waters Press in 1940. Again, we see a pre-war book repurposed for a new wartime market of soldiers, printed by a publisher with no previous track record in language books (Living Waters specialised in English-language Christian literature). This book omits the elements directed at Arabic speakers learning English, as well as the written correspondence. Odeh seems to have referred to Thimm's or Marlborough's Self-Taught series, since he supplements his section on pronunciation from the original book with some additional explanations, including the same description as given in those series of *'ayn* as sounding like the bleating of a goat.

The firm of Y. Mizrahi & Co. in Tel Aviv seems to have been a fairly short-lived wartime enterprise. In 1942, it published *Learn Arabic without a Teacher: For the use of H.M. Forces in the Middle East*, as well as a similarly titled work for French and a few guidebooks and maps. The *Palestine Gazette* reported that the firm went out of business in September 1944. The Arabic phrasebook is anonymous, but the copyright is credited to 'Lila'; whether this was a person or an organisation, I do not know. It is a pocket-sized paperback of 39 pages and has no information on grammar or pronunciation. As well as the usual phrases for travel and shopping, it has sections on visiting a doctor, dentist and pharmacy and some content specific to military use. The section 'In the Village' allows the user to inform a village mukhtar about billeting requirements and then ask, 'where is the nearest bar? – *fien aqrab hamaara*' (for *khamāra*: Lila 1942, 30). Appropriately for Palestine, we find:

Saturday is a Jewish holiday *yom essabt hoo yom rahha i'nd el yahood*
Friday is a Moslem holiday *yom eljom'a hoo yom raaha i'nd el-islam*
Sunday is a Christian holiday *yom el-ahhad hoo yom raaha i'nd elmasihyeeu*

There are three holidays *fi talat iyam 'uttlah*

(Lila 1942, 35)

Let me conclude this section with a more positive perspective on language learning in wartime Palestine than the picture sketched for Egypt, above. I do not mean to argue that British and Imperial troops in Palestine were, on the whole, any better disposed towards the Arabic language than they were in Egypt, but it is important to temper the general picture of diffidence or incompetence in Arabic sketched (I think fairly accurately) by Hughes with examples of soldiers who did learn Arabic to a level that enabled them to function and to build positive relationships with Arabs.

Corporal Fred Payne, who had been stationed in Palestine, wrote a letter home to his parents in England which was published in the local newspaper:

> Whenever I think of Palestine I get a feeling strongly akin to the feeling I get when I think of 12, Springhead Road, because, believe me, it really was a home from home.
>
> For the first few weeks after arriving there I spent my spare time, apart from letter-writing, in studying Arabic, until eventually I could speak it as fluently as I speak English at home, and, I must say, it's a wonderful feeling to rattle away in a foreign language without having to stop and think it out. I studied French and German for four years at school and still can't speak either, but I learnt Arabic in six months, without a teacher, and in my spare time.
>
> Reason – the school method is all wrong, and if I see Mr. Beaton [Payne's former teacher?] after the war, I have one or two practical suggestions to make regarding the teaching of languages in schools. I'll guarantee to learn the language of any country within six months' time, amongst the people.
>
> Anyway, having mastered the language I really got weaving on with the Arabs, and I found them amazingly easy to get on with. I liked them and they liked me, and pretty soon I knew practically everyone of the three hundred and odd Arabs who worked in and around the depot, and the result was I was known by name to every Arab village within about fifteen miles' radius. They gave me the

very flattering name of Corporal Mohammed Eser, or in English, Cpl. Mohammed Christ. They always invent very flowery names for people they like.

<div style="text-align: right">(<em>Shipley Times & Express</em>, 15 March 1944, 16)</div>

Leaving aside Corporal Payne's, perhaps optimistic, claims to fluency, it is striking how his views and experiences on Arabic learning compare to those of Percy Walter Long in Mesopotamia in the First World War. Payne realised the importance of making friends and having a good sense of humour to language learning.


## Conclusion: after the war

The end of the Second World War marks a watershed in both military and civilian Arabic language learning in the West. As I noted in the introductory section of Chapter 4, the story of British military Arabic provision from the nineteenth century up to the 1940s is essentially one of failure: failure to devote the appropriate resources and encouragement to learning the language; to recognise how essential it was to operational needs; to develop good teaching materials; and to learn from past mistakes. That some British service personnel and administrators learnt to speak and use Arabic well does not alter this overall picture. Although studies such as those on the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s show that military language needs and attitudes have continued to evolve, by the 1940s a much more effective system was being put in place. After the war, MECAS in Lebanon and similar ventures put military Arabic on a more secure footing.

Arabic instruction books of the 1940s begin to look familiar to learners raised on *Mastering Arabic* or *Al-Kitaab*. *Everyday Arabic*, by Haim Nahmad (1910–1983) and Chaim Rabin (1915–1996), tells the story of a Syrian-American family, the Haddads, returning to Zahle after 25 years on a visit (Nahmad and Rabin 1940). The fictional Haddads might be compared to the historical Arbeelys (Chapter 2). Nahmad was born in England to a family of Aleppo Jewish origin (I am grateful to Sarah Irving for this information) and Rabin was a lecturer at SOAS. The Haddad family's adventures include applying for a visa to enter Mandate Palestine at the British Consulate. The story may be engaging, but Nahmad and Rabin still have not solved the problem of teaching Arabic pronunciation through a book: *'ayn* is 'a peculiar Arabic sound, a sort of groan. One way of acquiring it is: sing down the scale on ah until you reach your lowest

note; then sing one note lower, and you have '. Better still is to imitate a native' (Nahmad and Rabin 1940, 3–4). This may sound strange, but it is actually quite a good description, and the advice to consult a native speaker is better still.

The pronunciation problem was, of course, in part solved by technology. As we have seen, records were available to accompany some of the military language phrasebooks produced by British and American forces during the Second World War. These set a precedent for the use of audio materials in the target language in both military and civilian language training. War-era recordings, in fact, seem to have continued to be used in US Army language labs for decades (Hefner 2021).

Another way in which wartime language learning materials and practices had a lasting impact was in the development of phrasebooks for the oil industry in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Companies like Saudi Aramco hired former military linguists (Pledge 1998, 34). Aramco employee B. H. Smeaton (1915–1984) taught a colloquial Arabic course, which students received a 50-dollar bonus for passing, just as British soldiers, police and civil servants in the Middle East had received bonuses for passing language exams before the war. The Aramco staff newsletter, *Arabian Sun and Flare* (1.18, 29 September 1946), congratulated the latest successful cohort and added that 'Anyone who is ready to do likewise, says the instructor [Smeaton], should call 13-J-6 and leave word, so that an appointment can be made. Novocaine given.' Fāris al-Shidyāq had compared teaching literary Arabic to Maltese students as treating 'bad breath' (Chapter 2); a hundred years later, learning Arabic was being compared to toothache. Smeaton's *Arabic Work Vocabulary for Americans in Saudi Arabia* was printed, not coincidentally, at Elias' Modern Press in Cairo, and is in a similar format to wartime phrasebooks (Smeaton 1945). Aden continued as a British crown colony until 1963, and here too language book authors were able to improve considerably on military instruction books produced during and before the war. Like Nahmad and Rabin's *Everyday Arabic*, Muhammad Abduh Ghanem's *Aden Arabic for Beginners* (discussed in Chapter 4) has quite a different approach from his earlier book with L. H. S. Emerson, and looks familiar to modern learners of Arabic, with its dialogues and exercises (Ghanem 1955).

Self-instruction books gained renewed popularity during the Second World War, and they rose to still greater popularity in its aftermath. The English Universities Press began publishing the Teach Yourself series in 1938, and its wartime titles included books on flying, navigation and Arabic. *Teach Yourself Arabic* was written by A. S. Tritton, who had succeeded H. A. R. Gibb as Professor of Arabic at SOAS. Tritton reviewed

Nahmad and Rabin's book in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (BSOAS 10.3, 1940, 801). The review in its entirety reads:

> In composing a guide to an unwritten language the danger is that the result will be so local as not to be understood outside a small area. The authors of this book have avoided that danger by forming an amalgam language which is not spoken in any one place but has a fair chance of being understood over a wide area. There is no indication that the vocabulary in Arabic script sometimes gives literary Arabic, which is quite different from the vernacular. The authors claim that the language learnt from this book will be understood in many places; that may be, but the beginner will not understand the answers he receives.

Tritton's book, in contrast, teaches literary Arabic in the Arabic script. It is recommended in several of the official works discussed above, such as those in the From Scratch series, but many users seem to have found *Teach Yourself Arabic* heavy going, such as Sir James Craig, who thought it 'deserves prosecution under the Trades Description Act' (Craig 1998, 59). An anonymous reviewer in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (31, 1944, 335) wrote that:

> A valiant heart is needed by anyone who sets out to learn Arabic without a tutor. Professor Tritton, who at the School of Oriental and Arabic Studies has guided so many to the higher branches of Arabic literature, has here attempted to give a working knowledge of the language to the beginner who is out of reach of any teacher. Our reviewer, who has lived for many years in Arabia, quarrelled somewhat violently with the Professor's title. It remains for those for whom the book was written to prove the reviewer was wrong.

Although significant progress in Arabic pedagogy had been made by the 1940s, the old problem of reconciling the Arabic of scholarship and the Arabic of the streets remained.

## Notes

1   Although it is tempting at first glance to identify him with the Palestinian lawyer and poet Iskandar al-Khūrī al-Baytjālī (1889–1973), the dates do not line up, and al-Khūrī did not have a middle name or patronymic beginning with 'r'.

2  I have a copy of the guidebook on its own, in the same covers, with a portrait of King Farouk inside the front cover. This indicates that the guidebook continued to be issued in this form until at least 1936.

3  I am a speaker of a rhotic dialect of English, and found it perplexing when I first tried to use a French phrasebook on holiday in France as a child, since the supposed 'phonetic' pronunciation frequently had extra 'r's.

4  This acts as an interesting contrast to the case of Thomas Prendergast, discussed in Chapter 4, who focused on the importance of speaking and listening in language books he published after he went blind.

5  Since 'Elias' is a form of 'Elijah', it is possible that they are the same man; but Thompson's use of both forms in his memoir suggests to me that they are not.

6  'You speak Turkish very well' may suggest that Seresser was working from a model for learning Turkish, not Arabic.

7  This is reminiscent of Fāris al-Shidyāq's warning in one of his phrasebooks that 'a man who cannot speak the language of the people among whom he sojourns may sometimes be in danger of starving' (Shidiac 1856, 113). On language learning as a survival strategy in another captive context, see Gallagher 2019.

8  The publication is not dated, but a copy in the South Canterbury Museum in New Zealand bears an owner's inscription of 1944, so it was published before this date (Catalogue Number 2019/179.096). The owner, V. W. Simmers, also possessed a copy of Stephan Hanna Stephan's *Palestine by Road and Rail*, published in Jerusalem in 1942.

9  In the text, Gayed refers to the book as a *dalīl*, which is better translated 'guide' or 'guidebook' than 'leader'.

10  There is an apparently unique surviving example of an Arabic-language guidebook to Italy by Gayed, presented to Vittorio Emanuele III on the occasion of his state visit to Egypt in 1933, on display in the Crossroads of Civilizations Museum in Dubai.

11  The *Egyptian Railway Vocabulary* of the late 1920s or early 1930s studied by Zack 2020 is likewise annotated with romantic, not professional, vocabulary.

12  These phrases appear in a novel, *End of the Beginning*, by Tim Clayton and Phil Craig (Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), where the book is referred to – fairly accurately – as a 'dodgy phrasebook [a soldier] found in a burnt-out lorry'.

## 6

# Arabic, Yiddish and Hebrew in Palestine (1839–1948)

## Babel in Zion

In February 1890, a Russian Jewish woman living on a farm in Palestine wrote to family back in the Russian Empire, describing her new life:

> Everyone out walking passes by our house, all of the things brought into the moshava [settlement] for sale pass by our house, so I buy everything cheaply without having to weary my feet going to the market to buy what I need. I've already learnt to speak Arabic quickly, because everything is brought to my home and all of the sellers are Arabs.
>
> (Trans. Kaplan and Penslar 2011, 61; the woman's name is not known.)

Of all the linguistic encounters considered in this book, the Yiddish/Hebrew to Arabic interface is perhaps the least known and, to some, the most surprising.[1] The letter from which I have just quoted was written in Yiddish, the woman's mother tongue. She goes on to describe how her sons attend school, 'where they learn Hebrew, French, Arabic, and how to read and write in all of these languages' (Kaplan and Penslar 2011, 62). For Jewish immigrants to Palestine in the period covered by this chapter, from the Old Yishuv ('settlement') of the Ottoman period, through the rise of Zionism, migration meant learning languages. This took place in schools (for both adults and children) and through more informal practices.

It is only relatively recently that scholarship has begun to challenge the dominant linguistic narrative of the resurrection of Hebrew as a spoken language in late Ottoman Palestine, and its eventual triumph

as the sole official language of the new state of Israel. In the traditional narrative, Arabic is not the only language that has been obscured. Liora Halperin's seminal study of 'Babel in Zion' has revealed the linguistic diversity that persisted in the Yishuv (the Jewish settlement in Palestine) in the period of the British Mandate (Halperin 2015). Despite growing calls to use Hebrew as their sole language, Jewish settlers continued to use the languages they had brought with them to Palestine: both Jewish community languages such as Yiddish and Ladino, and other languages such as German and Russian. Attention has also recently turned to the multilingual archival sources from Ottoman and Mandate Jerusalem, which show the many languages in daily use by Muslims, Christians and Jews in the city (Dalachanis and Lemire 2018).

As I will explore in this chapter, there were Jews who learnt Arabic after moving to Palestine, but there were many more who already spoke and wrote Arabic before their migration. Mizrahim and some of the Sephardim who had settled in the Ottoman Empire had Arabic as a community language.[2] As Ella Shohat has persuasively argued, although the term 'Judaeo-Arabic' suggests a language severed in some way from other Arabic dialects, closer to other 'Jewish languages' such as Yiddish and Ladino, this was not the case (Shohat 2017). The Arabic(s) spoken by Jews were part of a constellation of dialects, with close relationships to the forms of Arabic spoken by their non-Jewish neighbours, from Baghdad to Casablanca. While there were indeed distinctively Jewish forms of Arabic, written in the Hebrew script and with linguistic influence from Hebrew and Aramaic, many Jewish speakers of Arabic also used local dialects and wrote *fuṣḥā*. Arabic-speaking Jews played a central role in debates about language use in the Yishuv, and the kinds of relationships that should be cultivated with their Muslim and Christian Arab neighbours (Jacobson and Naor 2016; Campos 2017; Jacobson 2011b; Jacobson 2003).

This renewed focus on linguistic diversity among Jews in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine plays into wider debates about relations between Jews and Arabs in the period (Halperin 2015, 145–146). The view that cultural separatism between the two groups was inevitable has been challenged (Eyal 2006, 237), and the complexity of intercommunity relations, and interpersonal relations between communities, has been considerably nuanced (Gribetz 2014; Campos 2011; Fishman 2020; Jacobson 2011a). There were certainly prominent voices that argued, in the press and other public fora, for a Hebrew-speaking Jewish state, and the 1948 creation of the state of Israel and the Nakba (dispossession of the Palestinian people) have made it easy to fall into teleological arguments (Fishman 2020, 4–5). But behind a public, literate, Hebrew-speaking

face, the Yishuv also had a less visible multilingual sphere: 'While the public market was, to a great degree, a Hebrew-speaking one, this liminal space between public and private, the sphere of women, new immigrants, and Palestinian Arabs, was surely not' (Halperin 2015, 81). It is these domains and areas of interface that language teaching materials allow us to explore.

It is impossible to quantify how many Jewish immigrants to Palestine learnt Arabic, and how well, but some certainly did, and moreover Arabic instruction books were produced expressly for the Jewish immigrant market. Although many of these books use the Hebrew script to render Arabic, for the most part they are not teaching a specifically Judaeo-Arabic dialect, nor do they use Judaeo-Arabic orthography. They are teaching standard or Palestinian dialectal Arabic transliterated into the Hebrew script, without overtly Jewish vocabulary or dialectal features. Their goal is therefore communication with Palestinian Arabs, not primarily with Arabic-speaking Jews. The reason these books use the Hebrew script is the same reason that Arabic phrasebooks from Western Europe use the Latin alphabet: because their intended audience was literate in this script, and may either have found the Arabic script too challenging or have lacked the time or inclination to learn it. A secondary reason is that many of these books were published in Eastern Europe by Jewish publishers, who had Hebrew typefaces (used for Yiddish or Hebrew), but not Arabic ones.

My focus in this chapter is on books written by and for Jews, in Yiddish and Hebrew. European Jews visiting the Middle East or migrating to Palestine also, of course, made use of the same Arabic phrasebooks and instructional materials as any other traveller. Hillel Halkin, exploring the abandoned houses of a previous generation of Jewish settlers at Zikhron Ya'akov in the 1970s, found a copy of De Lacy O'Leary's *Colloquial Arabic* among the contents, as well as a Cook's Handbook to Syria and Palestine (Halkin 2006, 51). In my copy of Elias' *Egyptian Arabic Manual for Self-Study*, a former owner – I presume, an English-speaking Jew – has written the letters of the Hebrew alphabet next to their Arabic equivalents (Figure 6.1). Local Jewish members of the Palestine Police during the Mandate period may have used the same books as their British colleagues to study for the force's examinations (discussed in Chapter 5).

I consider Yiddish and Hebrew materials together, since their authors tend to come from similar backgrounds, and their circumstances of production tend to be similar. Some of these books, in fact, circulated in both Hebrew and Yiddish versions. Those who knew Hebrew, however, had an advantage in approaching Arabic, since the two languages are

**Figure 6.1** Elias' *Egyptian Arabic Manual for Self-Study* (1930s) annotated in Hebrew. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

related. Several of the books I discuss here make this point, and dwell on items of phonology, grammar and vocabulary that are similar in the two languages. As well as the linguistic and cultural contents of the phrasebooks themselves, as elsewhere in this book my concern is also with the life histories, social networks and wider body of work of the authors, which shed light on the sociolinguistic picture. The topic of migration is seldom far from the minds of the authors of these Arabic instruction books, and several, indeed, had their own experiences of migration to Palestine which informed their attitude to teaching Arabic. I conclude this chapter with the establishment of the state of Israel, and with a curious episode: a series of radio broadcasts and accompanying newspaper articles which aimed to teach Hebrew to Arabic speakers.

## Why learn Arabic?

Jewish settlers in Palestine had a range of motivations for learning Arabic, and for encouraging others to do so. At the most basic level, Jewish immigrants needed to be able to carry out everyday tasks of buying, selling and interacting with Arab neighbours. Many of the books discussed in this chapter set out to equip their readers to do precisely that.

Jewish emigrants from Europe had at their disposal a variety of resources to assist them in making a new life in Palestine, just as they had for any of the other popular destination countries for emigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gur Alroey cautions against seeing waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine and the Americas as fundamentally different in motivation and mechanism. As well as Zionist ideals, Jews who made the decision to move to Palestine were pulled by the same economic factors and pushed by the same persecutions as those who went to the United States. Indeed, the introduction of US immigration quotas may have redirected many Jews to Palestine in the 1920s. Jewish information bureaux in the Russian Empire produced booklets for potential emigrants, with details of individual foreign countries, including Palestine (Alroey 2014, 16, 71–72; Alroey 2003). Those who had already made the journey warned new immigrants what to expect. Menahem Sheinkin,[3] director of the information office in Jaffa, wrote to the corresponding bureau in Odessa:

> You must also tell the passengers not to be impatient, not to be in a hurry to get off the ship, and not to be overawed by the shouts and cries of the Arab sailors. … Teach the travelers to Palestine the importance of the words 'Shwaia, shwaia' [slowly, slowly] and tell them that if they say this to the Arabs suddenly appearing on the ship, they will calm down a bit and not shout 'Yalla! Yalla!' [come on, come on] – a cry that has something contemptuous about it.
> (Letter of Sheinkin to the Odessa information bureau, 28 Tammus 1907, Central Zionist Archives, A24, file 51/2, 5; quoted and translated by Alroey 2014, 159)

The Arabic language also figures in instructions to potential settlers by Ze'ev Smilansky (1873–1944), who had moved to Palestine as a young man in the 1890s (Kaplan and Penslar 2011, 82–83):

> … a large section of our people in Eastern Europe engage in trade and act as middlemen, and thus the latter are very prominent among the immigrants. And thus it appears that while craftsmen and people who can provide for themselves and so on can find a livelihood as soon as they arrive in the country, so that it sometimes seems that artisans who only yesterday came off the ship, are already working the next day as paid assistants, even without knowing the Arabic language … our brethren who in the lands of exile were dealers, middlemen and luftmenschen ['drifters'], do not find a place of work immediately.

They must get used to the weights and measures accepted in the country and familiarize themselves with the complicated values of the different currencies used here, and gain a little knowledge of the local language, and all this takes time and understanding.

(Ze'ev Smilansky, 'Al dvar ha-aliyah ha-ivrit le-eretz-israel' [On the Hebrew Immigration to the Land of Israel], *ha-Yom*, 1906; quoted and translated by Alroey 2014, 182–183)

Arabic language-learning materials in guidebooks for settlers will be considered in greater depth below. Many such guidebooks contained little or no information on language at all, a feature which guides for Jewish immigrants to Palestine shared with those for French immigrants to North Africa in the mid-nineteenth century (Messaoudi 2015, 287). Others emphasised the need for a command of both written and spoken Arabic – without, however, compromising Jewish identity and the Hebrew language. Elias Auerbach (1882–1971), who moved to Palestine in 1909, opened his discussion of the 'Language Question in Palestine' in his 1912 guide *Palästina als Jüdenland* by stating that the country was predominantly Arab and Arabic-speaking. This obliged everyone who did not speak Arabic to learn it as quickly as possible (Auerbach 1912, 18). Auerbach thought that, aside from those in Jerusalem who had little contact with Arabs, few Jews did not at least understand Arabic after two or three years in Palestine; since he had been in the country for three years himself at this point, we may assume that he was speaking from experience. This kind of passive command is realistic, but, as we will see, Auerbach's view that Jewish schools were equipping their pupils to surpass members of the Arabic-speaking intelligentsia was rose-tinted (Auerbach 1912, 30). He saw a future for Palestine as a country with two national languages, Hebrew and Arabic (Auerbach 1912, 24). Writing in German, he pointed out that 'It does not matter to the Arab whether the Jew speaks Hebrew, Yiddish or Russian – if he does not understand him' (Auerbach 1912, 30).

Just because a person recognised that basic spoken Arabic was a necessity for making a life in Palestine did not mean that they automatically had any desire to form close social relations with Arabs. But good community relations were a concern for many, and continued to be from the start of the Yishuv well into the 1940s, when the Jewish Agency promoted Arabic instruction in Jewish settlements throughout the country for this purpose. The archives of the Jewish Agency show the demand from kibbutzim for Arabic teachers throughout the 1930s and 1940s, although high hopes for classes were not always matched by high attendance. In the absence of a teacher, correspondence courses and

newspaper columns were available for kibbutz members in colloquial Arabic in Hebrew script (Halperin 2015, 152–156).

Slightly different from the question of good relations was that of integration. More than a tool to get along with one's neighbours, Arabic could be a tool for acculturation in Ottoman Palestine, and there were those – increasingly a minority as we move further into the twentieth century – who argued that this was desirable. In 1913, there was a fierce debate at a meeting of the Association of Hebrew Teachers of Arabic in Jaffa about the amount of time that should be spent on Arabic in schools, and whether the purpose of the exercise was to equip pupils to fulfil their daily needs, or to integrate (Campos 2011, 229). There was also the matter of combating Arab anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism by allowing Jews and Arabs to talk to one another in a common language. That same year, journalist Nissim Malul (1892–1959) – born in Palestine to Tunisian Jewish parents and educated in Egypt – argued that a Jewish identity was compatible with an Arabic-speaking Ottoman one. If Jews wished to settle in Palestine, 'then we must learn the language of the land and think in it more than we do in the other languages' (quoted by Campos 2011, 230; this article is discussed further below in the section on Abraham Elmaleh). The appeal of being able to participate in the mechanisms of the Ottoman Empire was both practical and idealistic. As will be discussed below, education in Arabic or Turkish meant that Jews could carry out business transactions and serve in government offices. In the eras of the Naḥḍa, the Tanzimat and the Young Turk movement, an educated command of Ottoman languages offered the chance to be part of multiple intersecting literary and political renaissances (Furas 2015, 52).

It is important to recall that Arabic was not just the language of Palestinian Arabs, but also of a substantial number of Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, both Mizrahim and Sephardim. Arabic-speaking Jewish journalists played an important role in translating and making available articles from the Arabic press in Zionist newspapers, with a view to making Zionists aware of the views they needed to combat, but also to seeking rapprochement between the communities (Jacobson 2003; see also Jacobson 2011a). The perspectives of those Arabic-speaking Jews who authored Arabic textbooks, such as the journalist Abraham Elmaleh (1885–1967), will be considered in greater depth below.

This positive view of Arabic as a tool for facilitating daily life, good community relations and participation in Ottoman intellectual and political networks was never universal, and it became less and less prevalent as the twentieth century, and commitment to Hebrew as *the* Jewish language, wore on. Learning Arabic became increasingly associated

with more sectarian purposes. Rather than just responding to critics of Zionism (see Furas 2015, 52, for David Yellin's views on this), Arabic became a means of actively propagandising, and subsequently of coercion and control. This is most evident after 1948, but – as Halperin has pointed out – we can see the roots of this more confrontational, instrumental use of Arabic in the pre-state period (Halperin 2015, 15–16).

As well as having many good reasons for learning some Arabic, Yiddish and Hebrew speakers in Palestine had something of a head-start, compared to speakers of the other languages considered in this book. Although Yiddish is part of the Germanic language family (a grouping within Indo-European), it contains many elements – in particular, of vocabulary – from Hebrew and Aramaic, which are fellow members of the Semitic language family. Hebrew shares many cognates, grammatical structures and phonological characteristics with Arabic. Learners who already know Hebrew (and to a lesser extent, Yiddish) therefore have an advantage in Arabic. One does not have to be a trained Orientalist to see the similarities between the two languages: they are readily apparent to anyone with a basic vocabulary.[4]

The kinship between Hebrew and Arabic was exploited by some, but not all, of the language book authors considered in this chapter, to explain Arabic structures and make the language more accessible to their readership. There were also wider cultural and political issues at stake. For some, the linguistic relationship between Arabic and Hebrew reflected a shared communal heritage, in contrast – and sometimes active opposition – to European languages and cultures (Campos 2011, 230). In the 1850s, Jacob Goldenthal (1815–1867), professor of Oriental languages at the University of Vienna and a colleague of Muḥammad Anton Hassan (Chapter 1), intended his Hebrew-language grammar of Arabic to demonstrate 'l'intime affinité de la langue hébraïque avec l'arabe', languages which appeared 'comme deux images en un seul miroir' (Goldenthal 1857, ix–x). Goldenthal objected to the way in which Orientalists such as Silvestre de Sacy calqued Semitic languages onto Indo-European ones, producing grammars of Arabic that followed the format and rules of grammars of European languages and thus fundamentally misrepresented how these languages worked. He aimed to treat Hebrew and Arabic as 'Oriental languages', following their own grammatical traditions. Arabic also had a role to play in the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language. For his Hebrew dictionary project, Eliezar Ben Yehuda turned to Arabic roots to create the full modern vocabulary that Hebrew lacked, rejecting loanwords from European languages (Fellman 1973, 60, 66).

Not all settlers, of course, saw Arabic as central to the creation of a modern, Hebrew-speaking Jewish identity in Palestine, but some argued for it strongly. As Halperin has argued, in the 1930s Jochanan Kapliwatzky – whose works will be discussed below – saw Arabic as 'a conduit to Hebrew linguistic authenticity and to Jewish cultural roots' (Halperin 2015, 203), comparing the lifestyle of modern Bedouin to that of the ancient Hebrew patriarchs (for more on Zionist pan-Semitism and pan-Asianism, see Harif 2019). Some Jewish settlers in the pre-state period, known as Mista'ravim, deliberately set out to imitate Bedouin ways (Eyal 2006, 42–47) – or their own romanticised notions of them. S. D. Goitein, writing in 1946, put it more strongly still:

> Learning Arabic *is a part of Zionism*, a part of the return to the Hebrew language and to the Semitic Orient, which today is completely Arabic-speaking. We desire that our children, when they go out into the world, be able to feel *that they are children of the Orient to act within it*, just as we aspire that they do not lose the precious inheritance of European spirituality that we have brought with us.
>
> (S. D. Goitein, Hebrew pamphlet 'On the Teaching of Arabic', Tel Aviv, 1946, quoted in Halperin 2006, 481; emphasis in original)

As well as varying between individuals, attitudes to the Arabic language in the Yishuv shifted over time (Levy 2014, 26–37). Yonatan Mendel sees Jewish attention to Arabic language teaching and learning in the later 1930s and 1940s as increasingly security-motivated (Mendel 2014). This is the beginning of 'the process by which Arabic was transformed from the language of the neighbour to the language of the enemy' (Mendel 2014, 5), culminating, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, in a situation in Israeli education where Arabic has poor value as linguistic capital, valorised principally for its potential to lead to a job in intelligence or security (Eyal 2006; Uhlmann 2011; Suleiman 2018). But this takes us beyond the scope of this book.

## Arabic in Jewish schools

The position of Arabic in Jewish schools in Palestine in the Ottoman and Mandate periods was a subject of fervent debate, both among educators and among a wider public in the Jewish and Arab press. At all periods, there was a lack of good teaching materials for Arabic in the languages of Jewish

immigrants, and a lack of teachers who knew both the target language and the language of instruction well (Halperin 2015, 186–187). Speaking very broadly, Arabic was more commonly taught and was perceived more positively in the period before the First World War than subsequently. A large part of the reason for this divide is the increased promotion of Hebrew in Jewish schools in the post-First World War period. With the focus now on getting elementary school students who came from backgrounds where languages such as Yiddish or Russian were spoken to use Hebrew, there was less room for Arabic in the curriculum; it became an optional subject for older children, at a small number of schools. It was also, especially by the 1940s, losing out to English (Almog 2000, 196). As educators were quick to point out, the loss of Arabic teaching in the early years was hugely damaging to Arabic language competence (Halperin 2015, 186–187).

This First World War watershed may be perceived in retrospect, but it was also evident at the time. An article in the *Palestine Bulletin* in 1930, reviewing a new Arabic reader for secondary schools (Yellin and Billig 1931,[5] on which see Mendel 2016, 8–9), claimed that 'the pre-war Jews of Palestine all spoke Arabic' (*Palestine Bulletin*, 12 December 1930, 2). The reviewer thought that one of the things that stood in the way of Jewish school pupils appreciating 'the treasures of the Arabic language' was a reliance on outdated school texts, which were produced in Syria and Egypt and lacked material relevant to the lives of Jews in Palestine. As well as teaching materials by and relevant to Jews, another concern at the time was the availability of Jewish teachers of Arabic, for whom there was an increasing preference among Jewish schools and educational organisations during the 1930s and 1940s (Mendel 2014, 27–30).

Palestinian Arabs also advocated for more Jews to learn Arabic, and here too the watershed is around the war. In the period before the First World War, the Arabic press was already becoming wary of increasing Jewish separatism, concerned that Jews were living apart from Arabs and speaking their own languages (Campos 2011, 224–229). Many commentators perceived a decisive shift in levels of integration with the Second Aliyah (the wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the early 1900s). In the view of one writer in the journal *Filasṭīn* in 1914:

> Till ten years ago, the Jews were a fraternal native Ottoman element, living and intermixing with the other elements in harmony, interchanging business relationships, inhabiting the same quarter, sending their children to the same school, and shadowed by one banner and one crescent. Then these accursed Zionists, composed of German revolutionaries, Russian nihilists, and vagabonds of other countries,

came with their cry: O Jew, remember you are a nation, and keep yourselves apart.

> (*Filasṭīn*, 29 April 1914, quoted by Campos 2011, 228; this article
> is also discussed by Fishman 2020, 90–91, 148.)

Writing in Abraham Elmaleh's newspaper *ha-Herut* at around the same time, Raghīb al-Nashāshībī (later Mayor of Jerusalem) similarly stated that:

> I do not object to the Ottoman Jews, but to the foreign subjects among them. The Ottoman Jew enjoys the same rights as we do, and if the foreign Jew indeed wishes to get closer to us [the Muslims] he would have adopted Ottoman citizenship and learned the language of the country, so that he would understand us and we would understand him, so that we would all work for the benefit of the homeland. ... If I get elected as a representative to the parliament I will do whatever is in my power to fight Zionism and Zionists without harming the feeling of our Ottoman brothers.
>
> (*ha-Herut*, 30 March 1914, quoted by Jacobson 2011a, 112)

Some took positive action to remedy the language barrier. In 1910, *ha-Herut* reported that Arab journalist Elia Zakka, who had studied at the Russian school in Nazareth[6] and could therefore speak one of the languages of Jewish immigrants, was planning to offer evening classes in Arabic for Jews at a low price (*ha-Herut*, 11 November 1910, 2; quoted by Gribetz 2014, 193). Zakka was a known supporter of the Zionist project (Tamari 2017, 101): Arabs who insisted that Jews in Palestine should learn Arabic were not necessarily anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic. Arab concerns about Jewish linguistic integration increased as time went on. In 1936, Humphrey Bowman, Director of Education in Mandate Palestine, expressed the belief that 'there would be almost a revolution if we introduced Hebrew compulsorily [in Arab schools] ... they say it is the business of the Jews to learn their language [i.e., Arabic] and not for them to learn theirs' (quoted in Furas 2015, 37).

There was also the question of what kind of Arabic should be taught in Jewish schools. In 1903, when the subject of making Arabic part of the curriculum in Jewish schools was under discussion by the Hebrew Teachers Union, David Yellin (father of Avinoam, coauthor of the 1931 reader) argued that formal instruction in Arabic was for scholars, not for the average Jewish settler, who could pick up enough of the colloquial language for their needs from everyday interaction with Arabs (Furas 2015, 51–52). As well as devaluing the status of Palestinian Arabic as a register

in its own right, such attitudes led to a communication gap between Jews and Arabs, and have Orientalist undertones (Halperin 2015, 200). The language used in Yellin and Billig 1931 was Classical Arabic.

Others – including the authors of a number of the works discussed in this chapter – were in favour of instruction in spoken Palestinian Arabic. Abraham Elmaleh found fault with works published outside Palestine for literary Arabic:

> All the methods that have been compiled in Europe, Egypt, and Syria, both by European scholars and by religious Arabs – though excellent from the scientific-research-linguistic-grammatical perspective – are nonetheless not at all appropriate for the Hebrew student who wants to derive useful and not scholarly benefit from textbooks in Arabic.
> (Elmaleh 1928a, xiii, trans. Halperin 2015, 199)

Jochanan Kapliwatzky, in addition to the Arabic instruction manuals discussed below, wrote a series of manifestos arguing for better Arabic provision in Jewish schools and universities, and for the study of the spoken language in preference to the literary one (Halperin 2015, 199). In his view, learning spoken Arabic was essential to understand and get along with Palestinian Arabs. Israel Ben-Zeev, whose 1944 Arabic manual is one of the latest considered here, was still arguing for a focus on spoken rather than written Arabic. He argued that 'Students do not learn Arabic as a dead language for scientific purposes. They learn it for use in reading, writing, and conversation. Personal contact with Arabs is a vital need in all respects' (1939 report from the Committee of Arabic Teachers, quoted by Halperin 2015, 199).

## How many Jews in Palestine learnt Arabic?

How many Jews spoke Arabic in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine, how much did they speak, and what kind of Arabic was it? There were, of course, as I have already noted, Jews for whom Arabic was a native language: Mizrahim from the Middle East and North Africa, and Sephardim (ultimately of Iberian origin, with Ladino or Judaeo-Spanish as their heritage language) who had long been settled in the Ottoman Empire and Arabic-speaking countries. Many of those most actively involved in the debate about Jews learning Arabic in Palestine were Jews who were themselves native speakers of the language, whether an idiosyncratically Judaeo-Arabic dialect or one of the many other regional Arabic dialects. These figures will be discussed further below.

As for Ashkenazim (European Jews, speakers of Yiddish, German, Russian or other Eastern European languages) and those Sephardim who did not already have Arabic as part of their linguistic repertoire before coming to Palestine, contemporary and later assessments of their engagement with the Arabic language vary. This variation is doubtless due to variation in individual practice, but also to the fact that the very question of Jews speaking Arabic is politically fraught. Then and now, people have had their own reasons to deny or exaggerate the degree to which immigrant Jews spoke Arabic (Halperin 2020).

Most of the following testimonies, although they do not always state so explicitly, concern Ashkenazim. Ben Yehuda, writing in 1908 about Ottoman military conscription of non-Muslims, thought that the Jews were 'so distant, at least for now, from the life of the natives of the land. They do not even know the Arabic language nor the Turkish [language]' (*ha-Ẓevi* 25:30, 13 November 1908, 1–2; quoted and translated by Gribetz 2014, 107). For Ben Yehuda, it should be noted, this was a negative, since he saw Arabic as having an important role in reconstructing modern Hebrew. Likewise, in 1914 Moshe Smilansky (uncle of Ze'ev Smilansky, quoted above) wrote that:

> In the course of thirty years [since the first wave of Jewish nationalist immigration to Palestine], we have not learned the language of the land. In the entire new Hebrew yishuv, there are not even ten people [a minyan] who know how to read and write Arabic. This may seem absurd to the reader, but it is a fact, to our shame. Many of us know how to speak Arabic. But even this knowledge is extremely limited. Most of the [Jewish] Arabic speakers are from the masses of the nation; our intelligentsia in the land is entirely alien to it [Arabic]. Therefore, even the knowledge of 'those who know' Arabic is extremely limited. Two years ago, there was an incident in which a high official, an Arab patriot, wished to speak with the Hebrew leaders and asked to speak Arabic. There was not a single person in Jaffa or its surroundings who was able to take up this task and so the residents of Jaffa needed to bring a 'speaker' from Jerusalem. And even in Jerusalem, the number [of the new Hebrew yishuv members] who know Arabic is two or three.
>
> (*ha-ʿOlam*, January 1914, quoted and translated by Gribetz 2014, 187–188)

As Gribetz (2014) cautions, Smilansky and other commentators may well have exaggerated, but the essential point is that while many Ashkenazi

immigrants did learn some Arabic, it was suitable only for basic purposes. Engaging with officialdom could be a challenge, and this left Jewish settlers at a disadvantage. In 1891, Ahad ha-'Am (born Asher Ginzburg, 1856–1927) published a series of articles on 'The Truth from Erets Israel' in the St Petersburg Hebrew newspaper *ha-Melitz*, in which he reported that in court cases in Palestine:

> we still grope like blind people in a fog, and we still do not have even one *reliable* person who can at least read Arabic fluently. And our Jewish brethren buy land for thousands and tens of thousands, without being able to check *clearly* whether the purchase deeds or building permits are properly written.
>
> (Trans. Kaplan and Penslar 2011, 35)

Similarly, the Yiddish poet Yehoash (born Solomon Blumgarten, 1872–1927), on a visit to Rishon LeZion in 1914, thought that:

> the ignorance of the Jewish settlers in Palestine concerning the inner life and psychology of the Arabs is one of the weakest points of the settlement. Colonists who have been living in Eretz Yisroel for decades know only sufficient Arabic to converse with their Arab 'Arabagi', or their Arab help. As to writing and reading Arabic, that is out of the question.
>
> When an official order arrives from the government or even an ordinary Arabic document, there is often not a person in the colony who can make it out. There have been instances of persons signing papers that they would never have signed had they known what was written therein, and, as a consequence, there was much trouble.
>
> (Yehoash, trans. Goldberg, 1923, 194)

The situation appears to have been similar among the majority of Sephardim: a fair spoken command of Palestinian 'survival Arabic' among those who needed it in their everyday lives, but much more limited ability in written, formal Arabic. Salah al-Din Hajji Yusuf, an Ottoman official in Safad, became involved in a debate in the Sephardic Hebrew newspaper *ha-Herut* in 1910–1911 (discussed by Fishman 2018, 524–525), in which he claimed that 'there is not one Ottoman Jew in Safad who knows how to read or write [Arabic], a little or a lot' (*ha-Herut*, 29 March 1911, quoted and translated by Fishman 2018, 524). What was at stake was mutual respect between Jews and Arabs, but also the ability of Jews to take full advantage of their rights and opportunities as Ottoman citizens (Fishman

2020, 134–137). In Louis Fishman's analysis, this lack of a good command of educated Arabic (and Turkish) among Sephardim – which might seem surprising, since in contrast to Ashkenazim, many of them came from Ottoman lands – is the product of a language shift among Sephardim, first to French as a language of education and public discourse, then to Hebrew. There was simply no room for Arabic in this expanding linguistic repertoire.

Overall, then, the evidence from late Ottoman Palestine indicates that very few Ashkenazim and increasingly few Sephardim were literate in Arabic. As throughout this book, however, my primary interest is not in literacy, but in colloquial spoken use of the language. Here the picture is still less clear, and I hope the analysis of phrasebooks that forms the bulk of this chapter will go some way towards fleshing out the areas in which Jews sought and achieved a knowledge of everyday spoken Arabic. Beyond the evidence of these books, both anecdotal and linguistic evidence can help us see how much Arabic Jews were actually using and in what areas.

The 1890 letter from a Russian Jewish woman quoted at the beginning of this chapter shows exactly the kind of areas in which linguistic encounters happened. Drawing on memoirs and oral histories, Halperin has brought to light 'a Yiddish-Arabic netherworld constituted of female Arab sellers and female Jewish customers communicating in a pidgin of forbidden tongues on the streets or on the doorsteps of private homes' (Halperin 2015, 81). Buyers and sellers could readily develop a basic vocabulary in one another's languages. A Jewish housewife in early twentieth-century Tel Aviv might not have been able to read and sign an official document in Arabic, but she could buy milk, like the woman one memoirist recalled 'leaving her yard holding on to a bucket and calling to the Arab shepherd: "*staneh ya walad – halib, halib* [Wait, boy – Milk! Milk!]"' (quoted by Halperin 2015, 80). Conversely, a Jewish immigrant recalled how in the late 1920s/early 1930s Arabs would go door to door in his neighbourhood offering their services in cleaning vessels for Passover, calling in Yiddish '*Vays in kesalakh, vays in feyle, vays in shinhas*' ('Whiten your fabric! Whiten your tub! Whiten your copper!'; Halperin 2015, 81). As well as learning through listening and repeating, some such users of basic Arabic developed their own elementary learning materials, writing down words and phrases so they could remember them. Recalling her mother's friendship with an Arab woman, Safa, an interviewee in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Oral History Project, described how she

would write in Russian every word in Arabic. For example, if they said to her '*tafadal*' please – then she would write '*tafadal*' in

Russian and after that would write please in Russian so she would know what it was. She learned enough this way that she could, more or less, manage to get along with them.

(Quoted in Halperin 2015, 148–149)

Such encounters were not necessarily indicative of any great fellow feeling between Jews and Arabs, but they were frequent and deeply enmeshed.

There is also linguistic evidence for the use of Arabic by Yiddish and Hebrew speakers, in loanwords and linguistic interference (grammatical, phonological, morphological or lexical influence of one of a user's languages on another). In this chapter, I have drawn extensively on Mordecai Kosover's research on the influence of Arabic on the Yiddish spoken in Palestine, and in particular on his annotated bibliography of Arabic–Yiddish vocabularies (Kosover 1966, 390–407). Kosover collected his material from informants in 1927–1937, and paid particular attention to the testimony of older members of the Ashkenazi community in Palestine, who had been there since the late nineteenth century. He found that Arabic had exerted a greater influence on the vocabulary of Palestinian Yiddish than had other immigrant Jewish languages, such as Ladino. This influence he ascribed to the close economic dependence of Ashkenazi immigrants on their Arab neighbours, to whom they had to turn for all their basic necessities: food, housing, building materials, utensils, transportation (Kosover 1966, 98–99). Arabic was therefore essential for Yiddish speakers to make a successful life in Palestine. Kosover traces over 700 Arabic words that were introduced into Palestinian Yiddish, including words for household items, agricultural and economic vocabulary, and common interjections and colloquial phrases such as *yallā*, *khalāṣ* and *inshā'allāh* ('let's go', 'enough', 'God willing'), the last of which, however, 'does not possess the same degree of sincerity as in Arabic' (Kosover 1966, 137–346, quotation at 144).

## The nineteenth century: pioneering works

### Kaminitz

The patterns in Jewish attitudes to and efforts in the learning of Arabic that I have just traced can be seen on a more intimate level in phrasebooks. The earliest colloquial Arabic instructional materials specifically for Jewish immigrants to Palestine predate the large-scale immigration of the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by some decades, and come from a period when a measure of integration into Ottoman society was more common than it later became. Menahem Mendel ben Aharon Baum, who was born in Kaminitz in the Russian Empire and later adopted the name of his home town as his surname, settled in Safed in Galilee in 1833 (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. Baum, Menaḥem Mendel ben Aaron of Kamenetz). In the late 1830s, he returned to Europe to fund-raise for his community, and while there published a guidebook and account of Jewish settler life in Palestine, in a Hebrew edition of 1839 and Yiddish translation of 1841 (mi-Ḳaminits 1839, 1841; see Kosover 1966, 105–110 and 391).[7] Kaminitz opened a hotel in Jerusalem after his return to Palestine in 1842 (Gibson et al. 2013, 84–88), a family business that later expanded into a chain of Kaminitz Hotels in Jerusalem, Hebron and Jaffa, where users of the more tourist-oriented phrasebooks explored in Chapter 3 may well have stayed.

I provide here Kosover's translation of the Yiddish version of Kaminitz's Arabic word list:

> Three languages are spoken [in Palestine]: first, the language of Yishmoel [= Turkish]; second, Portugal [= Španyolish], the language spoken by the Jews called Frenken [= Sephardim]; and third, the Arabic language – the common language spoken both by village people and city people in all their transactions.
>
> The following is the manner in which they count: aḥad, tnen, tlate, arbaʻ, ḥamso, sītte, sabʻo, tmanyä, tisʻa, ʻasara, aḥadāš, tnāš, tlatāš, arbaʻtāš, ḥamastāš, ʻašrin, aḥad-ʻasrīn, tnān-ʻasrīn, etc.; tlatīn, arbʻīn, ḥamsīn, sītīn, sabʻīn, tmanīn, tisʻīn, miāh, alf. ... Jerusalem is called *ʻir quds*, Hebron *ḥebrān*, Shechem *nōblāt*, Safed *sāfaāt*, Tiberias *tiburyā*. When one asks, 'How are you?', he says *mah salamī*, and the answer to it is *salam*. When one inquires about the price [of something offered for sale], he says *kadeš hadā*. Open the door, *eftaḥ babā*. Shut [the door], *segar albab*. When one makes a vow, he says *ʻali rāsek*, namely, upon my head, or *ḥayay ʻūni*, namely, by the life of his eyes. Money is *mesāri*, and when one asks for money, he says *hati mesāri*. An egg is called *bēt*; *bācīl* onions; *mīzan* – the scales; *zet* is oil; *qdīr* – a pot; *mūyä* – water; *ṭḥīn* – flour; *ḥubzeh* – bread; *laḥmeh* is meat; *sēmak* – fish; *ʻoneb* – grapes; *tīn* – figs; *tappuaḥ* – apple; *agēs* – pears; *līft* – carrots. For 'yes' one says *ṭayyib*, and 'no' is *lā*; *lābār* [means] outside; *tāmān* means an end.
>
> (mi-Ḳaminits 1841, 23a–23b; translated by Kosover 1966, 109–110)

As Kosover points out, the list of place names contains a number of errors or missteps, such as *ḥebrān* for the Arabic *al-Khalīl*, and Kaminitz does not use Arabic possessive suffixes correctly. *Rāsek* (= *rāsak*) means 'your head', not 'my head', and *ʿūni* (= *ʿuyūnī*) means 'my eyes', not 'his eyes'. Kaminitz's command of Arabic was imperfect, and was oral, not written. It may be that he had picked up a sort of functional pidgin for use with his Arabic-speaking neighbours in Safed, which was forgiving of mistakes in grammar, phonology and idiom, such as *babā* instead of *al-bāb* 'door', the plural *bēt* (= *bīḍ*) instead of singular *bīḍa* 'egg', *tāmān* for *tamām* 'fine, OK', or *maʿa al-salāma* ('goodbye', literally 'with peace') to mean 'how are you?' All of the vocabulary Kaminitz gives is relevant to commercial transactions, and although there are many mistakes, with some patience he would have been able to make himself understood in shopping for necessities. The numbers, for example, may not be a completely accurate transcription of the Arabic, but they are recognisable.

Kaminitz's list is not, however, likely to have been a practical means for a person to learn Arabic. It gives no grammatical or syntactical information and does not mention the similarities between Arabic and Hebrew, which the writers of later Hebrew–Arabic instructional materials would frequently emphasise in order to demystify the language. Kaminitz does not render vowel length and quality accurately, and his choice of specific Hebrew consonants to transcribe Arabic ones would not have helped a learner. For example, he uses the Hebrew letter *ḥet* to render both the Arabic *ḥāʾ* (in *laḥmeh* = *laḥma* 'meat') and *khāʾ* (in *ḥamso* = *khamsa* 'five'), and Hebrew *tet* for Arabic *ḍād* (in *bēt* = *bīḍ* 'eggs'). No translations are given for the numbers, so a reader who does not know Arabic will be unaware that after counting from 'one' to 'fifteen' in sequence, he jumps to 'twenty', then 'twenty-one', 'twenty-two', 'thirty', 'forty', the tens as far as 'one hundred', concluding with 'one thousand'. While Kaminitz finds it relevant to include information on Arabic in his guidebook to Palestine, he does not argue for the importance of Jews learning Arabic, nor does he present materials designed to help them do so, to the extent that later writers did.


## Zilberman

By the 1880s, there were new imperatives for Jewish migration from Europe, and with this came a greater number of more comprehensive publications on the practical aspects of settlement in Palestine. The first more substantial Arabic manual for Yiddish speakers was published in Odessa in 1882, a time and place that are significant. Odessa acted as the major port of departure for Palestine for Jews emigrating from Eastern

Europe and the Pale of Settlement, and also had a large, politically and culturally active Jewish population of its own (Herlihy 2003). It was a centre of the Jewish press (Orbach 1980) and of the Hovevei Zion ('Lovers of Zion') movement, which led in 1890 to the establishment of the Odessa Committee (Hofmeister 2003). The immediate context for the formation of Hovevei Zion organisations was the wave of pogroms in 1881–1884. The port of Odessa acted as a gathering place for Jewish refugees, and by late 1881 ships were sailing twice weekly for Palestine (Marsden 1971, 204). The same year, Moses Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), who was involved in refugee welfare initiatives, published a highly influential essay, 'The General Jewish Question and Palestine', in the Russian-Jewish journal *Raszvet*, in which he 'stripp[ed] the Jewish nationalist argument of all romantic trappings' and argued for mass emigration to Palestine as a solution to the Jewish position as a vulnerable and constantly persecuted minority in Europe (Zipperstein 1985, 149; see also Marsden 1971, 207–215, on Lilienblum's writings in *Raszvet*).

Yisrael Zilberman's *Verter bukh tsu lehrnen di arabishe shprakhe* ('Dictionary to Learn the Arabic Language'; Zilberman 1882) is a direct response to this situation. In his preface, Zilberman alludes to the pogroms and offers his aid as a 'giborener eretz-yisroel-yud' ('[native]born Eretz-Israel Jew'). Since he is not a wealthy man:

> I can only help you with this little Arabic dictionary which, I hope, will be more useful than money and for which you will be ever grateful to me with each step in the Holy Land. ... I am therefore convinced that this booklet will help you in case you wish truly to go to Eretz-Israel. In it you will find the most useful words for speaking and understanding [the Arabic language]. ... I can assure you that as a result of studying it several times, you will not have to call for help on the local brokers who wait at the sea shores and are ready to swallow you like a bridegroom [eyes] the twisted white loaf following the marriage ceremony.
> 
> (Zilberman 1882, unpaginated; trans. adapted from Kosover 1966, 393)

There follows a 'Plan of Palestine (Eretz-Israel)' in which Zilberman offers an attractive picture of the land as a place of emigration for Jews suffering persecution in Russia:

> Palestine has two harbours, Jaffa and Haifa, and both cities are existing colonies. In Jaffa there also live Polish Jews, merchants and

commissioners, and there is a great trade there in grain, and even more in fruit, to Europe. Subsistence is very cheap there: all the European steamships are there and they unload European goods and take on goods and fruit. The main harbour of Syria is the city of Beirut, and lies next to Mount Lebanon. It has eighty thousand inhabitants, and all the European mail ships and cargo ships anchor in its harbour. Its products are wood, tobacco and fruit. It is a beautiful city, with many factories, warehouses, great European storehouses and shops. Mount Lebanon is governed by Rüstem Pasha. It is a rich and free area. There is no religious hatred there. Everyone is equal – Jew, Christian, Turk, or Gypsy. It does not matter how people carry themselves. From there one can go to Damascus by stagecoach in twelve hours. From Beirut to Sidon, Tyre, Acre and Haifa, Safed, Tiberias, from one city to another, one travels on horseback. The journey takes from nine to ten hours. Acre is the main place for buying grain, just like Odessa in Russia. The grain goes from there to England, Spain and Egypt. There is also cotton there. From Jaffa to Jerusalem one travels by carriage. It takes eight hours. Land is very cheap there. There is also a lot of work to be done, since the landlord of the farm takes a fifth [of the produce]. From Odessa to Jaffa, a ship's berth costs 15 rubles on a Russian ship; on other ships it is more expensive.

(Zilberman 1882, 4; my translation)

Zilberman's depiction of Palestine combines practical information (prices, travel times) with an assessment of its opportunities (for trade, freedom from persecution and agricultural production).

Zilberman's description of the book (in Yiddish) on the title page is likewise optimistic: 'Dictionary for the study of the Arabic language, as spoken in Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Baghdad, Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, easy to learn for young and old'. He makes no concession to the vast differences in dialect between these places, of which he may have been unaware if his experience was limited to Palestine and Syria. The printer, Heinrich Ulrich, produced books on a wide range of subjects in Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, French and German in Odessa in the 1870s–1880s. In Russian, inside the back cover, the price of the book is given as 30 kopeks, with the statement 'Sold at all bookstores in the city of Odessa, and at the author's home, Trontskoi Street, Ralli House, No. 41'. It also advertises that the second volume of the work will be published in two weeks' time. The Preface states that this second part will contain 'various conversations which a person will encounter in his [daily] life' (my translation).

Zilberman is an elusive figure. In the Preface to his *Verter bukh*, he writes that he was born in Palestine and faced a language barrier when he visited Europe for the first time: 'You do not yet know how bad it is, how bitter, to come to a land where you do not know the language of the country. Your tongue becomes numb, you do not understand anything when people speak' (Zilberman 1882, unpaginated; my translation). He recalled wandering around a large town, unable to communicate: 'if I had found a booklet like this [i.e. a phrasebook], I would certainly have given away what little I had'. For this reason, he empathises with Jews moving to Palestine who do not know Arabic. He does not specify his native language, or the languages with which he struggled in Europe. The *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (*Lexicon of Modern Yiddish Literature*) states that Zilberman was of Lithuanian descent ('geshtamt fun der Lite'), lived in Kovne, Vilnius and Odessa, and arrived in Ozorkov, near Łódź, in the mid-1870s where he was active among the local Maskilim (Jewish intellectuals) and Hovevei Zion. It does not mention his having been born in Palestine, but instead states that he 'visited Eretz Israel on several occasions'.[8] The *Leksikon*, moreover, claims that Part II of the *Verter bukh* was published in Łódź in 1885, and that Zilberman also issued an *Arabish-yidish verter-bikhl* (presumably a condensed version of the original *Verter bukh*) in Odessa in 1883, with a second Łódź edition of 1885. Kosover, on the other hand, finds no evidence that the second part of the *Verter bukh* was ever published, and I have also been unable to find any trace of further publications on Arabic by Zilberman.

There is an obvious model for the *Verter bukh tsu lehrnen di arabishe shprakhe*. Yisrael's father, F. M. Zilberman, was the author of a Yiddish–French language manual, *Ershte unterrikht in der frantseyzishen shprakhe*, published in Vilna in 1836 (Zilberman 1836; on F. M. Zilberman, see again the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*). Comparison of the sample phrases and texts reveals that this is a translation of an earlier work by Johann Valentin Meidinger (1756–1822), a German teacher of French and Italian, entitled *Erster Unterricht in der französischen Sprache für Kinder*, which is itself an adaptation of Meidinger's own *Kurzgefaßte und sehr deutliche practische Französische Grammatik* of 1785. Meidinger's books were popular, going through numerous editions well into the nineteenth century. As discussed in Chapter 3, nineteenth-century authors of language manuals frequently 'borrowed' the format and text of earlier works. The line of descent from a German–French grammar published in Frankfurt in 1785 to a Yiddish–Arabic phrasebook published in Odessa in 1882 may seem convoluted, but it is not unusual. It links Arabic phrasebooks for

Jewish immigrants to Palestine to the tradition of self-instruction books considered in Chapter 3.

Zilberman's Yiddish–Arabic *Verter bukh* has the same basic format and structure as his father's French–Yiddish manual. Both books list vocabulary under thematic headings and include short phrases and dialogues. Zilberman senior's work also contains sections on French pronunciation and grammar, which Zilberman junior may have reserved for the second part of his work on Arabic, along with the advertised dialogues. The *Verter bukh* is a much more developed tool than Kaminitz's earlier word list. Kaminitz's work is visibly ad hoc, derived from his own practical experience, while Zilberman's book, as already noted, sets itself within the existing genre of language self-instruction books. Zilberman provides the Hebrew in brackets where this is cognate with the Arabic, which will have been useful to many of his intended audience. The word lists proceed from the universal (the world, nature) to the specific (professions, commodities). The phrases cover shopping and general conversation ('Do you have coffee?', 'We have everything cheap', 'Don't be afraid – it won't rain': Zilberman 1882, 20, 22, 23). There are also elements more directly tailored to settlers in Palestine. The reader learns to say, 'We are not afraid of the Arabs nor of the Bedouin' and 'We want to buy land from you' (Zilberman 1882, 23, 24). He or she is given the tools to have a fairly comprehensive conversation about their motivation and purpose in settling in Palestine ('Do you want to buy land?' 'Enough for 50 families.' 'We want to buy land in our fatherland.' 'Is there a better land than this Holy Land? You will not find one in the whole world.' 'So that the poor may find work.': Zilberman 1882, 24).

Zilberman's knowledge of Arabic is also much stronger than Kaminitz's, reflecting his upbringing in Palestine, and he is able to use it in culturally appropriate ways.[9] For example, he translates the Yiddish polite second person pronoun *zi* as the Arabic *ḥaḍritak*. Because he does not teach the Arabic script, the fundamental problem remains of vocalising his Arabic words and phrases, and here Yiddish presents particular problems. For example, *'andak* 'you have' is transcribed *andak*, without the initial *'ayin* (Zilberman 1882, 19). This is presumably because Yiddish uses the Hebrew letter *'ayin* to represent the vowel *e* and Zilberman does not want to risk confusion. Like Kaminitz, he uses the letter *ḥet* to render both *ḥā'* and *khā'*. *Ghayn* is represented by the Hebrew letter *rēsh*, which – if realised as a voiced uvular fricative or 'rolled r' as in Yiddish – is reasonable.[10]

We are fortunate to have a reference to Zilberman's book actually being used by a Jewish emigrant en route to Palestine.[11] Abraham Fellman,

writing in 1939/1940, records that Rabbi Dov David, as he passed through Odessa in 1884,

> bought a book to learn the Arabic language [*sefer limud ha-leshon ha-arvit*], in the Syrian dialect spoken in Eretz-Israel, and during the days of the sea voyage he taught himself and his family members the phrases most necessary in everyday life. He knew that he and his sons would live among foreign neighbours, whose language they neither knew nor understood, and it was his duty to prepare himself and his sons for the new life.
>
> <div align="right">(Fellman 1939/1940, 28)</div>

Although the book is not named, the date makes it all but certain that Zilberman's Yiddish *Verter bukh tsu lehrnen di arabishe shprakhe* is meant. It would be interesting to know to what extent Rabbi David and his family put their book-learnt Arabic into practice in Palestine, and how useful they found Zilberman's work.

## Neustein

The year after the publication of Zilberman's *Verter bukh*, a book called *Der praktishe Araber* was published in Bucharest by one Isaac Neustein. Like Zilberman's book, Neustein's has a sense of urgency. In the preface, he writes:

> The idea of emigration has spread widely: everyone is hoping for the fastest way out, and finding a new home in Syria or Palestine. This is understandable, but everyone understands how bitter it is for intelligent people to have to make themselves understood by others only by signs. ... For this purpose, I wrote this little book. ... It is a practical method by which one may learn the Arabic language very quickly. I have also given some rules so that everyone can pronounce Arabic like an Arab himself.
>
> <div align="right">(Neustein 1883, 3, my translation)</div>

Neustein gives more information on the pronunciation of Arabic than Zilberman, and some of it is tailored specifically to Romanian speakers, such as when he describes *qāf* as 'like the Romanian ca but deeper in the throat' (Neustein 1883, 5). Most of the book (pages 5–32) consists of a vocabulary, by Yiddish alphabetical order. He then gives key terms such as the names of numbers and days of the week, followed by six pages of short

sentences in Yiddish and Arabic. No grammatical explanation is given. Some of the content is tailored to a recent immigrant making his way in Palestine, for example:

> 1. Can you speak Arabic? 2. I have not been in Arabia long, and understand very little Arabic. 3. Are you Russian or Austrian? 4. No! I am French, but this gentleman is a Romanian. 5. He is my compatriot. 6. What occupation do you have? 7. I am an arable farmer. 8. This man is a craftsman. 9. He is a tailor. 10. He is an excellent goldsmith. 11. What do you want to have him make?
>
> (Neustein 1883, Section 5, 38)

The book concludes with the phrase 'End of the first volume', suggesting that, like Zilberman, Neustein planned a second volume that never appeared.


## The early twentieth century


### Davis Trietsch

Although guidebooks and other works to assist Jewish settlers in Palestine continued to appear throughout the late nineteenth century, there appears to have been no further work specifically tailored towards Yiddish and Hebrew speakers learning Arabic until the early years of the twentieth century. There are several possible reasons for this: lack of demand, lack of interest in learning Arabic, but also the availability of other suitable materials. This period corresponds with the 1880s–1890s boom in Arabic self-instruction materials discussed in Chapter 3, and many of these books will also have been accessible to Jewish immigrant readers. Davis Trietsch (1870–1935) included a section on the Arabic language in his 1906 Hebrew guidebook to Palestine (Trietsch and Grazovsky (Goor) 1906[12]), but the expanded German edition of 1907 (Trietsch 1907) instead provides the reader with a list of recommended German works on Arabic (Hartmann 1881; Manassewitsch 1895; Harder 1898; and the Baedecker guide for Palestine and Syria).

Trietsch was born in Germany and lived for a period in the United States. He was an active member of the Zionist movement who wrote a number of books about Palestine. He was also one of the founders of the Jüdischer Verlag (which published, inter alia, Auerbach 1912, discussed above). His *Shimush li-yedi'at Erets Yiśra'el* ('Information about the Land

of Israel') was published by Menahem Sheinkin (whom we have already met as director of the Jewish information bureau in Jaffa) in Jerusalem in 1906. In the Introduction, Trietsch notes the current lack of a guidebook 'in our language' (i.e. Hebrew) for Jewish settlers in Palestine, and sets out to answer that need. The book concludes with 'A Few Exercises in Arabic'. Inside the back cover of the book, it is stated that the Arabic exercises are available for purchase separately, and that the book is available at the Kadima bookstore in Odessa, and from I. L. Goldberg in Vilna.

Trietsch's materials represent certain improvements on Kaminitz's, Zilberman's and Neustein's approaches. In part, this is because it is easier to transliterate Arabic accurately into the Hebrew script as used for Hebrew than into the Hebrew script used for Yiddish. Unlike Zilberman, for example, Trietsch is able to use the Hebrew *'ayin* to represent the Arabic *'ayn* (*'andī*: Trietsch and Grazovsky (Goor) 1906, Section 13). Trietsch's Hebrew-script Arabic is also written with vowel points, so that vowels and diphthongs can be rendered more accurately. A short section on 'Rules for Reading' concludes the phrasebook, explaining stress patterns and the pronunciation of sun and moon letters (changes to the definite article *al* before certain consonants).

Trietsch provides 21 pages of words and phrases, in thematic sections, commencing with personal pronouns and moving through topics such as the family, professions, agriculture, travel and ailments. Short phrases are introduced gradually into the word lists, and are sometimes used to familiarise the reader with grammatical and syntactical patterns, although there is no explicit explanation (noun–adjective sentences in Section 5: 'these apples are good, the pears are sweet, the grapes are sour'). These phrases all relate to practicalities of travel and subsistence (Section 6: 'More food, sir?' 'Thank you, I'm full'; Section 7: 'I'll sleep on the bench. Maybe you have a blanket?'; Section 13: 'Rent me a horse.' 'I don't have a horse, but a donkey'). In some cases, grammatical explanation may have been redundant since the Hebrew and the Arabic are so close, for example in the section on possessive pronouns (Section 24: *beti – baytī* 'my house'). The final sections consist of longer phrases and dialogues for scenarios in which settlers might find themselves: visiting someone at their home; talking about where they come from; buying agricultural products such as wheat, barley and wool; getting the train to Jerusalem; visiting a tailor, carpenter, blacksmith and laundry. The reader is then given the past and present tenses of the verbs 'write', 'eat' and 'do', presented in the same format as the vocabulary lists, not as grammatical tables.

Trietsch's projected audience differs from that of Kaminitz, Zilberman and Neustein in more than its use of Hebrew over Yiddish.

This is the first Arabic phrasebook for Jewish settlers to be published in Palestine itself. Its content and its position within a comprehensive handbook for settlers in Palestine reflect the growth in the extent and organisation of the Zionist movement since the 1880s. I have been unable to find any information about Trietsch's education. His Arabic exercises reveal a much stronger command of the language than that of Kaminitz or even Zilberman, one which included written as well as spoken Arabic, as his transcriptions into Hebrew script and his description of sun and moon letters reveal. He uses a wide range of grammatical forms, such as the participle in the phrase *anā jā' min maṣr* 'I come from Egypt' (transliterating *hamza* with *yud* and *ṣād* with *samekh*).[13] The Arabic is not *fuṣḥā*, however, but has distinctive Palestinian features in areas like verbal morphology, negation and object marking. This can be seen in phrases such as *kīf biqūlū lihādhā bi'l-'arabī* 'how do they say this in Arabic?' (here retaining the spelling with *qāf* even though it would often be realised as a glottal stop in spoken Palestinian Arabic) and *anā mā ba'raf 'arabī* 'I do not know Arabic'. Trietsch also uses the local name for Jerusalem – al-Quds – in Arabic. The emphasis, in content, is still on integration, both economic and social, in Palestine.

## Adolphe Mendelovitch

Like Neustein, Adolphe Mendelovitch was from Romania. His book *Metode tsu lernen Arabish: aleyn on ayn lehrer in ayn zeyer ḳurtse tsayṭ* ('Methods for learning Arabic: alone without a teacher in a very short time') was published in Jaffa in about 1912, and gives his address as 'colonie Richon-le-Sion près Jaffa, Palestine'. Mendelovitch's use of a French spelling for his name and a French address is consistent with his employment by the Alliance Israélite Universelle. An American visitor to Palestine in about 1909–1910 encountered him at the agricultural college Mikveh Israel (founded in 1870): 'We were met at the gate of the Agricultural College by its secretary, Herr Adolph Mendelowitz, a Roumanian young man, who was kind enough to conduct us through the entire school' (Gordon 1919, 39). At that time, Mikveh Israel seems to have included Arabic in its curriculum, or at least encouraged students to use the language, since the same visitor points out that 'Graduates of this Agricultural College turn out to be good supervisors and teachers of agriculture in new Colonies. With the increase of new Jewish Colonies in Palestine, the demand of skilled agriculturalists who are familiar with local methods of cultivation of soil and conversant with the Arabic language, becomes greater' (Gordon 1919, 41). Mendelovitch may subsequently

have emigrated to the United States, since shipping records show an Adolphe Mendelowitch, born in Romania about 1889 and last resident in Jaffa, occupation 'Agriculture', sailing from Cherbourg to New York in 1911. If Mendelovitch did indeed permanently emigrate, then this may be reason to push the date of publication of his Arabic phrasebook back to before 1911.

Mendelovitch sets out his purpose as follows:

> By publishing this little book, 'A Method for the Study of Arabic without a Teacher, in a Very Short Time', I am [trying] to solve a highly interesting problem, namely that of the Jewish emigrant in Palestine. The Jewish emigrant, whether he arrives in Palestine to settle or only to travel about, suffers much on account of the [Arabic] language.
>
> By making use of this method, the Jewish tourist is able to learn the language in the course of 4 weeks, and by it to spare himself many inconveniences caused by an interpreter [Mendelovitch adds the French 'Interprète', in Roman script, after the Yiddish word 'dolmetsher'] and especially when one is unable to pay for an interpreter ['interprète' in Hebrew script].
>
> For one who decides to settle in this country, this method is especially helpful, for it puts the words into his mouth without much labour. Nowadays we see many a farmer and many Jewish businessmen, who, already 4–5 years in the country, are unable to converse with or to understand the Arab, for we lack [the facilities of] evening classes as well as the desire to study the Arabic language. Hundreds of emigrants leave the country for they do not know the language. They would have undoubtedly found employment if they knew the language of the country.
>
> My book is not a thorough method for the study of the Arabic language; it only opens the way to it, and thus enables the Jewish emigrant to understand the Arab and to answer him.
>
> (Mendelovitch 1912?, 3–4, trans. adapted from Kosover 1966, 395–397)

He sees the lack of good knowledge of Arabic among Jewish immigrants to Palestine as a problem, not just for community relations and practical day-to-day living, but for the Zionist project as a whole: immigrants who do not learn Arabic are more likely to leave Palestine.

Mendelovitch introduces, but then does not extensively use, the Arabic script. His transcription of Arabic into Hebrew script is closer to

Hebrew than to Yiddish orthography, for example transliterating Arabic *'ayn* with Hebrew *'ayin* in *'andī* 'I have'. The booklet has 32 pages and is, as Kosover (1966) points out, 'well balanced', with short sections on numerals, common verbs, time words, a brief alphabetical vocabulary and some phrases. The final couple of pages of phrases give the Arabic in Arabic as well as Hebrew script, and seem designed for correspondence rather than conversation, specifically to do with agricultural affairs ('I have received your letter', 'I need more wheat', 'Send us barley now').

Mendelovitch's book appeared in a different guise some years later, without his name or introduction. *Di Arabishe shprakhe: lezen, shrayben, un shprekhen* ('The Arabic language: read, write and speak') was published in Jerusalem by Haskolah press (Anonymous 1924 or 1925). Mendelovitch's material has clearly acted as the starting point for this book, although some new material is added and some changes are made in orthography. The author or compiler may also have used another book, which I have not been able to identify.

## Isaac Shirizli

As noted above, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews who had long been resident in the Ottoman Empire played an important role in discussions about the place of Arabic in the Yishuv. Some deliberately placed themselves as linguistic intermediaries, representing the views of Jews and Arabs to one another – whether with friendly or confrontational intent – and teaching the other's language. Arabic-speaking Sephardi and Mizrahi authors of language books are therefore of particular interest in this study.

Isaac ben Mordekhai Israel Shirizli (1883–1956; alternative spellings of his surname include Sherezeli and Cherezli) came from a family originally from Serres in the Ottoman province of Salonica. His branch of the family had been in Jerusalem since the early nineteenth century; another branch of the family was in Egypt.[14] Like Zilberman, above, Isaac was not the first in the family to produce a language book: his cousin Shelomo Israel Shirizli (Salomon Israel Cherezli) was a publisher who started his career working at Ben Yehuda's printing press, and authored a two-volume Ladino–French dictionary (Cherezli 1898–1899, on which see Moreno 2016). Isaac Shirizli was an Arabic teacher in Safed, and his Hebrew-Arabic instruction book shows its scholastic context. He may be the same Itzhak Shirizli who responded with enthusiasm to the conscription of Jews into the Ottoman army, in a speech – made in Turkish – reported in *ha-Herut* in 1914 (quoted by Jacobson 2011a, 27). If this is indeed our man, then it gives some insight into how he saw the project of teaching Arabic to

Hebrew speakers: as part of the wider participation of Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

Shirizli's *Moreh 'Aravit* ('Arabic Teacher') has the subtitle 'Method to learn the Arabic language without the help of a teacher: Reading, writing and speaking'. There is no introduction or preface in which he explains his motivations in writing the book or teaching methods. On the contents page, he states simply that the lessons progress from easy to more difficult, so that 'the student will feel no difficulty in learning the Arabic language, which is truly a rich and difficult language' (Shirizli 1915, 2). Much of the book is concerned with teaching the Arabic script (Shirizli 1915, 3–27, out of 48 pages). Shirizli devotes considerable attention to teaching the different forms of the letters in varying positions within the word, and the differences between printed and handwritten text. There follow short sections on grammar, a couple of example conversations, and some exercises in translating from Arabic into Hebrew and Hebrew into Arabic.

The Arabic taught is essentially literary, but with some comments on how the spoken idiom differs from formal written Arabic. Shirizli introduces Arabic linguistic terminology such as *hamza*, *fatḥa*, *ḍamma*, *kasra*, *tanwīn* and words for masculine and feminine, singular, dual and plural – initially in Hebrew script, but in Arabic script as the book progresses. In several places, he notes similarities between Hebrew and Arabic, such as in the grammatical rules for using numbers. In the section on verbs, he states that 'Arabic grammar is very close to Hebrew grammar: the roots, tenses, conjugations and pronouns are very similar to one another, and anyone who is familiar with one can easily learn the other' (Shirizli 1915, 43).

Arabic pronunciation, says Shirizli, is similar to 'correct Hebrew pronunciation', which he defines as the Sephardi pronunciation (a contrast to the Ashkenazi is implied) which retains the Semitic consonant inventory more fully (Shirizli 1915, 3). Some of Shirizli's explanations on how to pronounce unfamiliar consonants are fairly simple to follow (*dhāl* is 'like a "d" with the tongue between the teeth, or like English "the"'), but others are less helpful (emphatic consonants are described simply as 'strong' and *qāf* is like 'a "k" pronounced from the throat'; see also Di Giulio 2016, 156, who finds both Shirizli and Elmaleh 'vague on the particulars of the Semitic phonemes'). He also makes reference to Yemeni and Polish pronunciations of Hebrew, with which his Jewish immigrant readership might be familiar, to explain sounds like *ghayn* (described as 'like the Polish pronunciation of "r": between *kh* and *g*'). He notes that Egyptians pronounce *jīm* as 'g' and not 'dj'.

In several places, Shirizli mentions that students should learn things by heart, such as the alphabetical order and the forms of the verb, and that they should practise their handwriting by copying out the exercises. Here, we can perhaps see something of his classroom practice. He notes that the dual is not much used in the spoken language, except for things that occur naturally in pairs (Shirizli 1915, 27) and that case endings and *tanwīn* are not used in spoken Arabic (Shirizli 1915, 29–30, 35–36). The two conversations – meeting a friend and discussing one's health – are brief and stiltedly formal. They use polite language, which is translated into Hebrew literally in the interlinear translation, with more idiomatic forms given where necessary in footnotes. The use of *inshāʾallah* and *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* may indicate that Shirizli anticipates the Arabic being used with Muslims. The translation exercises use classroom vocabulary, not phrases for daily life ('I have one book. You have two. Do you have a pencil?'; Shirizli 1915, 40). The final exercise is a short Arabic story about children playing a game, with interlinear Hebrew translation. Overall, then, Shirizli's book grants us more of an insight into Arabic as taught in Jewish schools in Safed in the 1910s than into the Arabic of adult immigrants.

## Getzel Zelikovits

In the First World War, the British Army recruited a 'Jewish Legion' to fight in the campaign against the Ottoman Empire, including in Palestine. A book specifically directed at this market was produced by Getzel Zelikovits (1855–1926). Zelikovits was a well-qualified but somewhat unlikely author for such a work. Thirty years previously, he had served on the Nile Expedition as an interpreter, and after returning to Europe he publicly accused the British Army of murdering a French journalist, and the British political establishment of covering it up. But Zelikovits was always an opportunist (his controversial life is discussed in Mairs 2023a). By the time Zelikovits published his Yiddish–Arabic phrasebook of 1918, he was living in the United States and was a well-known linguist and journalist. The phrasebook was originally published in the *Yidishes Tageblat* in New York in instalments (see e.g. *Yidishes Tageblat*, 8 June 1918, 4). The title page bills Zelikovits as 'former chief interpreter of Arabic with Field Marshal Lord Kitchener in Egypt and Sudan' (Zelikovits 1918, t–p), which is not true. The book's subtitle declares that it is a 'practical method for learning Arabic as it is spoken in Erets-Israel and Egypt, for the use of Jewish legionaries in the Holy Land'. As well as with other Yiddish works, it therefore also bears comparison with other phrasebooks designed for soldiers in Palestine during the First World War (Chapter 5).

Zelikovits opens the book with 'a few words to the beginner':

> This practical method for learning the Arabic colloquial language as it is spoken in Erets-Israel is not a textbook for studying literary Arabic, according to all the rules of grammar.
>
> It is a practical method, so that one can quickly converse with Arabs with the help of Yiddish – and such a method can bring great benefits not only for the Jewish legionaries alone, for whom I have written it, but also for colonists, merchants, tourists, intellectuals and students in Erets-Israel. Arabic is a Semitic language – a daughter of Hebrew, so to speak, and those who are more or less familiar with Hebrew will recognise at virtually every step in the Arabic roots, roots from Hebrew.
>
> (Zelikovits 1918, 4; my translation)

Zelikovits makes the connection between Hebrew and Arabic more explicit than previous phrasebook writers like Zilberman or Trietsch had done. He also explains his approach to writing Arabic in the Hebrew script. He has deliberately not used the orthography of Judaeo-Arabic. Instead, he uses 'our Ashkenazi Yiddish phonetic style', by which he means indicating vowels using separate characters, not diacritics. As he explains, this involves writing the phrase 'he lives in a large land [sic.]' as *huwa sakan fi madinah kabirah*, not *hwa skn fi mdinh kbirh* (for *huwa sākin fī madīna kabīra* 'he is living in a big city'; Zelikovits 1918, 5). This Yiddish-based approach to writing Arabic in the Hebrew script also means that he does not use the Hebrew letter *'ayin* to represent Arabic *'ayn*: instead, he uses *'ālef* with a *geresh* (*a'*).

Zelikovits claims that:

> someone who has a good memory will be able to speak using this practical method in a month's time. But even someone whose memory is a little weak can master this method in a short time, if he learns it together with a friend – and with several friends is better. You should speak among yourselves, listen to one another, learn the words by heart.
>
> (Zelikovits 1918, 5)

He also proposes that the book can serve as a foundation for later learning of literary Arabic, and makes reference to the long tradition of great Jewish writers in Arabic, such as Maimonides and Saadia Gaon. He concludes by hoping that 'this little practical Arabic-Yiddish method will be a great help,

not only for the Jewish heroes in Zion, but also for colonists, merchants, tourists and intellectuals who want to help build a new, free settlement in the Holy Land' (Zelikovits 1918, 6).

There follows a short guide to pronunciation and word stress. As noted above, Zelikovits transcribes *'ayn* as *a'*. He describes the phoneme as 'like aa but a bit from the throat: the Sephardim use the letter *'ayin* for it'. He transcribes Arabic *jīm* as *g'* and states that this is pronounced as 'dsh' in Erets-Israel and Africa, but 'g' in Egypt. Likewise, he points out that the phoneme 'p' occurs only in Turkish words and is pronounced as 'b' in Arabic. *Ghayn* is transcribed *gḥ* (*gimel-ḥēth*) and described as 'half *g*, half *r*'. (Here, Zelikovits's knowledge of French is relevant, since *ghayn* ressembles the French rolled *r*, not the the English *r*.) The consonant *ḥā'* is written with *ḥēth* and described as 'like Berlin German "ich"'; *khā'* with *kāf*, 'hard, like the Russian word *kholoda* [cold]'. He uses *tav* for *thīn* and *tsade* for *ṣād*; the other emphatic consonants are not mentioned. These rules are not followed consistently in the body of the text itself. For example, in the first lesson, *'andak* 'you have' is written *andak*, with no diacritic to indicate the presence of *'ayn*; on the same page, *ma'a* 'with' is given the diacritic. As might be expected from his time in Egypt, he often gives the Egyptian pronunciation of a word, without always indicating it as such (for example, dropping the *qāf* in *mala = mil'aqa* 'spoon': Zelikovits 1918, 10). In other cases, he explains dialectal differences (*aywa* is the same as *na'am* 'yes': p. 27; *'āyiz* in Egypt instead of *biddi* for 'I want': p. 28).

The bulk of the work is divided into themed lessons suitable for Zelikovits's designated audience of Jewish soldiers fighting in the First World War in Palestine. After a first lesson devoted to personal pronouns, prepositions and basic description ('We are Jews', 'Is your honour American?'), we find lessons with words and phrases devoted to military matters ('the British have inflicted a defeat on the Turkish army'), nationality ('Jerusalem [rendered al-Quds in the Arabic] is the fatherland [*waṭan*] of the Jews'), religion ('Moses our lord was a great prophet'), time words, numbers, the weather and so forth. There is some material suitable for soldiers who stayed on in Palestine as settlers ('We want to buy land in Zion': p. 11; 'God will give us a place in Zion': p. 29). Like Zilberman, Zelikovits gives the word for 'pig', but also tells the reader how to say in Arabic that it is forbidden (*ḥram = ḥarām*) for Jews (p. 13). Zelikovits deliberately juxtaposes similarly pronounced words, but his transcriptions of the Arabic do not always help the reader to actually differentiate between them (*kelb* for *kalb* 'dog' and *kolb* for *qalb* 'heart', where he represents the *qāf*'s influence on the following vowel, but not the consonant itself: p. 12).

There is little or no grammatical explanation in the early lessons, with the exception of a box on page 10 explaining that Arabic, like Hebrew, does not mark the verb 'to be' in equational sentences, and on page 16 a brief mention of the present continuous tense with *bi-* prefix. Only in Lesson 10 do we find a more detailed section on grammar: 'now that the learner has formed an idea of Arabic words, it now remains to give some idea of Arabic grammar, as little as is necessary to be able to get by' (p. 19). Giving Hebrew grammatical terms in brackets after the Yiddish, Zelikovits explains the article and the formation of the plural and dual of nouns, and gives a more detailed account of pronouns and possessive suffixes, which were introduced as early as the first lesson. He explains how to describe events in the future and past. The book concludes with two longer sections of 'necessary phrases' (pp. 27–31): greetings, and social chat relevant to the situation for which the book is designed ('Is your elder son a soldier?' 'Yes, madam, he is in France now.' 'Yes, my little brother has joined the English army'). The final section includes phrases where 'the Arabic words ... are virtually the same as the Hebrew' (p. 29). Many of the example sentences say more about Zelikovits, his political interests and career, than the needs of actual soldiers or settlers in Palestine: 'They say that Trotsky has fled and moved abroad, but the news of his flight is not official'; 'Lord Reading the English ambassador in Washington is a fine speaker and a good Jew'; 'This is the daily journal in Yiddish, known as the "Tageblat".' The book concludes, somewhat bizarrely, with some typical Zelikovits name-dropping:

'Have you seen President Wilson?'
'No, my friend, never.'
'I have been to the White House.'

For all its eccentricities, Zelikovits's book is a potentially useful tool for self-instruction in Arabic. He goes to more trouble to explain phonology and grammar than most of his Yiddish- or Hebrew-medium predecessors. He tailors the phrases and vocabulary (for the most part) to the needs of his specific audience of Jewish soldiers and settlers in Palestine. He is aware of and mentions dialectal features specific to Egypt, Palestine and North Africa, although it is evident that his greatest experience is with Egyptian Arabic, not that of Palestine as the book intends. Zelikovits's own life experience has clearly played a part in shaping the book, in particular his concern with military Arabic and the book's Egyptian flavour. His long track record as a journalist and self-promoter also fits the profile of many of the publishers of materials considered in Chapter 3. Whether the book

ever actually reached its intended audience, however, is debatable. It was published in New York, not in Europe. While it will have been available to Yiddish speakers who had emigrated from Europe to the United States and were planning to move back across the Atlantic to Palestine (whether for war service or for settlement), it will not have been so readily accessible to the much larger market of Yiddish speakers in Europe.

## Isaac Trivaks

The utility of Zelikovits's book is criticised in another Arabic–Yiddish instruction book just a couple of years later. It is considered of limited use for Yiddish-speaking immigrants to Palestine: first because its Arabic is too Classical, too far from the modern dialect spoken in Palestine, and secondly because it was published in New York and thus 'not available in Europe' (Trivaks 1920, unpaginated Preface). (This latter point is ironic, since the author – writing in Warsaw – must have come across a copy.) This book, *Arabish verterbikhel: mit geshprekhen; mit dem originelen Arabishen Alefbeys* ('Little Arabic dictionary, with conversations, with the original Arabic alphabet'), was published in two more-or-less identical editions around 1920: by Ferlag Altnayland in Warsaw, and by Qum Qera in Tel Aviv. The Warsaw edition has 'Useful for immigrants to Eretz-Israel' printed prominently in red at the top of the title page (Figure 6.2). I follow Kosover's identification of the author, whose name does not appear on either edition of the book, as Isaac Trivaks.

Abraham Isaac (Yitzhak) Trivaks (1893–1952) was born in Russian Poland and spent a year or so living in Palestine as a child (on Trivaks, see his entry in the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*). His surname is also spelled 'Triwaks', and in his 1938 application for Palestinian citizenship he spells his name 'Icek Trywaks' (Israel State Archives, ISA-MandatoryOrganizations-Naturalization-0004mvw). He wrote for the Yiddish and Hebrew press in Poland. During the First World War, when Warsaw was under German occupation, he published a German–Yiddish dictionary, of which only the first volume appeared (I have not been able to access a copy of this work). Like Zilberman, he therefore had previous experience with language teaching materials for a European language before turning his hand to Arabic. Trivaks ran the publishing house Altnayland, named after Theodore Herzl's Zionist novel, which published his Yiddish–Arabic book. He also edited a magazine named *Altnayland*, which ran irregularly in 1919–1920 and 1924–1925. In 1925, he moved to Tel Aviv.

Trivaks published many works. Those of most relevance to his Yiddish–Arabic book are the publications encouraging Jewish settlement

נוצליך פאר עולים קיין
ארץ - ישראל!
אַראַביש
ווערטערביכעל
מיט געשפרעכען

מיט דעם אָריגינעלען אראַבישען אלף־בית
אין זיינע פיער געשטאַלטען

פערלאַג „אַלטניילאַנד‟,

וואַרשא,

קויפט שטענדיג
די אילוסטרירטע ארץ־ישראל־בלעטער
„אַ ל ט נ י י ל אַ נ ד‟
וואַרשע, לעשנאָ 6.
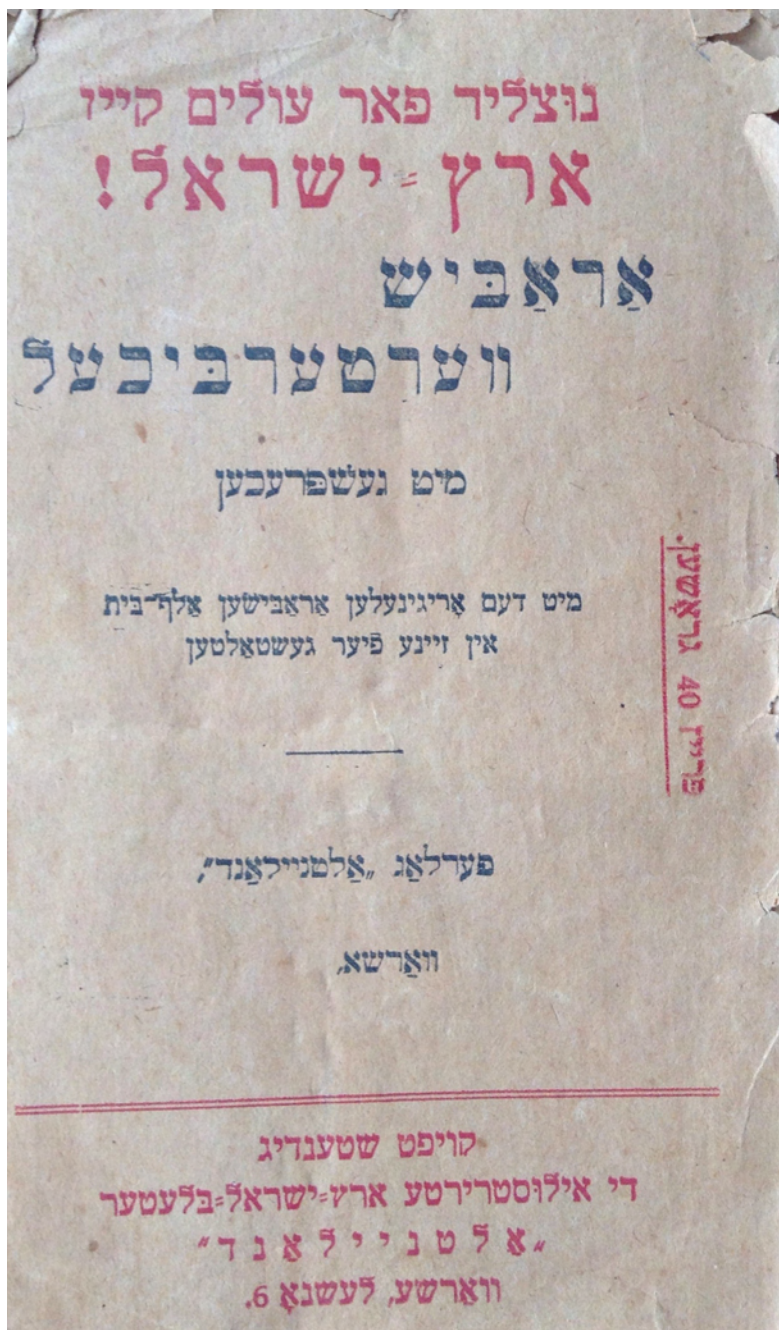
**Figure 6.2** Cover page of Trivaks' *Arabish verterbikhel* (1920). Public domain.
Photo © Rachel Mairs.

in Palestine which he wrote in the 1910s–1920s. These include a guidebook, which does not contain anything about language but may be seen as a companion piece to his phrasebook (Trivaks 1932, first edition 1918). His magazine *Altnayland* ran articles with headings like 'Our Arab friend', about the pro-Zionist poet Aziz Domet (on whom see Landau 2014; *Altnayland* 3, 11), and advertised the *Arabish verterbikhel* (e.g. *Altnayland* 3, 106).

Where did Trivaks get his information on Arabic? It seems unlikely that he would have had any residual Arabic from his brief time in Palestine as a child, if indeed he had been exposed to the language then at all. In the Preface, Trivaks states that the work has 'greatly benefitted' from Trietsch's 'Exercises in the Arabic Language' (Trietsch and Grazovsky (Goor) 1906, discussed above), which is something of an understatement. Almost all of the text of the book is taken directly from Trietsch's Arabic exercises.[15] Trivaks' innovation is in translating Trietsch's Hebrew text into Yiddish. He retains Trietsch's Hebrew-style, rather than Yiddish-style, transcription of Arabic (for example, rendering the Arabic *'ayn* with Hebrew *'ayin*, which would be read as the vowel *e* in Yiddish). Trivaks notes that all letters are to be pronounced in the Hebrew manner, with the exception of *gimel* with a *geresh*, which is to be pronounced as a 'soft j'; but 'of course, there are slight differences [in pronunciation] between speakers, which can easily be learnt in the place [Palestine]' (Trivaks 1920, Preface).

This is not entirely true, and makes one doubt whether Trivaks had much knowledge of Arabic at all, other than what he had gleaned from books. Hebrew and Arabic letters do not always match directly onto one another, certainly not in the pronunciation of the modern spoken languages. Trivaks provides a table with the Arabic letter forms, although he does not use Arabic script elsewhere in the book. It is unclear where he got this information from: the Arabic script is not used by either Trietsch or Zelikovits, although it may well have been contained in the book-length publication of Trietsch's Arabic exercises. Trivaks' choice of Hebrew transcriptions for Arabic letters is not intuitive: for example, he renders Arabic *dhāl* as Hebrew *dalet-hei*, *ṣād* as *tsade*, and *ḍād* as *dalet-zayin*, none of which would help a Hebrew or a Yiddish speaker to accurately pronounce the consonants.

Since Trivaks largely reproduces Trietsch's work, I have little more to say about this book here. As with other instances of plagiarism, which I will discuss more fully in Chapter 7, the practice implies a keen market for Arabic phrasebooks (in this period of intensive Jewish immigration to Palestine of the early twentieth century), and the desire of authors to serve

this market, whether for ideological reasons or for financial gain. Trivaks, in his Preface, does give some indication of how he intends the book to be used. He states that it is more convenient for users to have vocabulary and phrases arranged by category than by alphabetical order: 'such a dictionary arranged by category has a mnemonic role, because going over words which have a relationship with one another forces them into one's memory, and will certainly do so for the immigrant to Erets-Israel' (Trivaks 1920, Preface).

## 'Abu Isaac Alfagnah'

In 1924, the Warsaw publisher 'Orient' brought out an Arabic reading book by someone calling himself 'Abu Isaac Alfagnah' (Alfagnah 1924). The book is a curious addition to Orient's catalogue, since in the mid-1920s most of what it was producing was more obviously commercial: Polish translations of Karl May novels; Yiddish biographies of Lord Byron, Confucius and Leonardo da Vinci; and stories by the Yiddish writers Sholem Asch and Sholem Aleichem in Polish translation. As we have seen with Trivaks' book, this implies that publishers in the period were alert to the potential market for works for Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

The man who calls himself 'Abū Isḥāq al-Fajnā' in Arabic on the book's title page (Figure 6.3) is almost certainly to be identified with the 'A. Hufnagel' to whom copyright is attributed: if we read only the consonants, 'Alfagnah' is an anagram of 'Hufnagel'. The Arabic title of the book is 'Principles of Arabic Reading', and the Hebrew description below specifies that it is 'for the benefit of those who know the history of the past, who wish to travel to the land of our forefathers, or to compare the two languages Hebrew and Arabic'.

The introduction makes its scholarly credentials and priorities clear by referring back to Jacob Goldenthal's 1857 Hebrew grammar of Arabic. Unlike the works discussed above, such as Zilberman's, that set themselves within the tradition of language self-instruction manuals, Hufnagel allies himself with more academic traditions. Alfagnah/Hufnagel points out that Arabic and Hebrew both derive words from a three-consonant root. He introduces the Arabic script, and gives Arabic names for grammatical terminology. The book is quite short, and consists mostly of short passages in vowelled Arabic, transcribed into pointed Hebrew, with vocabulary. The content includes animal fables, and the final passage of the book is the *isti'ādha*, recited before Muslim prayer: 'I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan'. Although published in Poland at a time when other authors were bringing out Arabic phrasebooks for Jewish emigrants to

**Figure 6.3** Title pages of Alfagnah's *Sefer Torat sefat Arav* (1924). Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

Palestine, the book's scholarly focus is maintained throughout. The only hint of influence from colloquial dialects is the fact that Alfagnah clearly pronounces *jīm* as 'hard g' (a dialectal feature of Egypt and parts of the southern Levant), as can be seen from the Arabic spelling of his name.

## The 1920s–1930s: literary Arabic versus colloquial Palestinian

### Abraham Elmaleh

We have already encountered Abraham Elmaleh above, as one of the key participants in the debate about Jews learning Arabic in early twentieth-century Palestine. Elmaleh (1885–1967; his name is also transcribed as Elmalech, Elmalih and Elmaliach) was born in Jerusalem to a family of Moroccan Jewish origin (on his life and career, see Campos 2017 and Behar and Benite 2013, 29). He attended Sephardi schools and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, where he studied Ladino, modern Hebrew, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and French. Arabic appears to have been his mother tongue ([Comité du jubilé] 1959, 50). His first job, at the age of 17, was as

a Hebrew and French teacher at the Alliance Israélite Universelle ([Comité du jubilé] 1959, 92). From an early age, he was a committed Hebrew revivalist and, while still in his teens, he worked with Ben Yehuda. He was a prolific translator and writer, especially in the Sephardi Hebrew press, and founded the paper *ha-Herut* in 1909 (Gribetz 2014, 97–98) and the scholarly journal *Mizrah u-Ma'arav* ('East and West') in 1920 (Campos 2017). Elmaleh was exiled to Damascus during the First World War. He played a leading role in several Sephardi and Maghrebi organisations, and, later in life, in Israeli politics.

The *Hommage* dedicated to him on his 70th birthday in 1955 gives some idea of the range of Elmaleh's political and scholarly interests, and the languages in which he operated. One contributor sums up his career: 'Militant sioniste de la première heure, écrivain de talent et érudit de la science juive, traducteur, philologue et lexicographe, Abraham Elmaleh est un des vétérans de la presse hébraique et un des plus dignes porte-parole du Judaïsme séphardi et oriental' (Isaac R. Molho in [Comité du jubilé] 1959, 49). The emphasis in the *Hommage* is on Elmaleh as a prominent figure of Zionism and the Hebrew revival, a linguist and historian of the Sephardim, and a Francophone intellectual. His French–Hebrew dictionary (Elmaleh 1923 with subsequent editions and expansions), for which he was awarded the Légion d'honneur, is celebrated, but there is very little mention of his contribution to Arabic teaching. In this work, produced after the creation of the state of Israel, his role in advocating for Jews to learn Arabic is neglected, perhaps deliberately.

In the 1910s and 1920s, the paper founded by Elmaleh, *ha-Herut*, was (as we have already seen in the opening sections of this chapter) one of the locations of the most active debate about the language question and relations between Jews and Arabs. Shimon Moyal (1866–1915) and Nissim Malul (1892–1959) – both of them, like Elmaleh, born in Palestine of North African Jewish descent – were among the other Sephardi and Mizrahi intellectuals who argued that it was necessary for Jews to learn Arabic. In an essay published in *ha-Herut* in 1913, Malul tried to disentangle the question of language from that of Jewish national consciousness, arguing not only that Jews *could* maintain their Jewish identity while speaking Arabic, but that to do so was crucial to forging an authentic Jewish and Hebrew identity (Jacobson 2003, 120–121; Jacobson 2011b, 170; Campos 2011, 229–230):

> If we desire to be the inheritors of Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi and the Rambam, to follow in their paths, then we must know Arabic and mix with the Arabs like they also did. In the role of a Semitic

nation we must base our nationalism in Semitism and not blur with European culture, and through Arabic we can found a real Hebrew culture. But if we bring into our culture European foundations then we will simply be committing suicide.

(Quoted and translated by Campos 2011, 230)

This was an extreme view, as Jacobson notes, and the editor of *ha-Herut* felt the need to add a coda stating that, while learning and using Arabic was crucial, it was of secondary importance to the revival of Hebrew (Jacobson 2003, 121; the editor at the time was Haim Ben Attar, not Elmaleh).

Malul's views are of particular interest here because he was a friend of Elmaleh, who acknowledges him in the preface to his Arabic textbook (Elmaleh 1928a, xxii). Elmaleh praises Malul as 'one of the most proficient scholars in Arabic', states that he consulted him on many details, and thanks him for having read the entire manuscript before printing and offered suggestions which he then incorporated. While the work is Elmaleh's, we may therefore see Malul as having had an influence on it – certainly linguistic, probably pedagogic, and to some extent ideological.

Elmaleh's own views on Jews and the Arabic language were not as assimilationist as Malul's. In an essay opening the first issue of *Mizrah u-Ma'arav*, he claimed that Hebrew had been neglected by the Sephardim, when it was 'the national language that stitches together the rifts within our nation; it gathers our scattered people from the earth's four quarters' (translated by Behar and Benite 2013, 8). In a lecture on Zionist activities in Palestine at the Great Synagogue in Beirut in 1927, Elmaleh addressed his audience in Arabic 'after having expressed my great regret at being unable to speak in my people's language since most of the audience did not understand Hebrew' (quoted and translated by Stillman 1991, 325–327). For Elmaleh, Sephardim were ideally placed to both justify and promote the Zionist cause ('as Jews rooted in the soil of this land for many generations, we believe that the solution to the Jewish question lies solely in Zionism': statement to the Peel Commission in December 1936, quoted and translated by Jacobson and Naor 2016, 37), and to act as cultural brokers between Jews and Arabs. In the founding manifesto of the short-lived Jewish defence organisation ha-Magen, Elmaleh indicated that 'we, the Sephardim, who know the language of the country' had an awareness of anti-Zionist writings in the Arabic press which other Jews lacked, and therefore 'cannot sit silently while such a great danger threatens the entire *yishuv*' (quoted and translated by Jacobson 2011b, 172). Somewhat less confrontationally, in interviews conducted with Elmaleh by the Institute of Contemporary Jewry in 1964, he reflected on

the missed opportunities for Jewish–Arab entente in the early twentieth century, caused by some (non-Sephardic) Zionist leaders failing to open a meaningful dialogue between Jews and Arabs before barriers came down (Jacobson 2011a, 111).

This, then, is the context for Elmaleh's Hebrew–Arabic/Arabic–Hebrew dictionary project (Elmaleh 1928b) and Arabic instruction book of 1928. He aimed to equip a Hebrew-speaking Jewish community in Palestine to understand the (related, Semitic) language used by their Arab neighbours. His choice to teach standard literary Arabic rather than Palestinian dialect may be connected to his concerns about the need for Jews to understand what was written about them in the Arab press. The dictionaries were also used by Arabic speakers studying Hebrew. In a 1955 interview, Elmaleh noted that they had been 'très favorablement accueillis par les immigrants [i.e. Jewish immigrants to Palestine] de langue arabe, en particulier des Juifs d'Irak. Les étudiants égyptiens voulant apprendre l'hébreu l'utilisent également. Ici encore, c'est mon expérience de l'enseignement de l'arabe, que j'ai résumée dans une méthode pour l'étude de cette langue, qui m'a conduit à la rédaction de ces dictionnaires' (J. Poliatchek in [Comité du jubilé] 1959, 93). I will return to the topic of teaching Hebrew to Arabic speakers in the final section of this chapter.

Elmaleh's 'Arabic Teacher' (*ha-Moreh ha-ʿAravi / Ustādh al-ʿArabiyya*) has a lengthy introduction explaining his motivation and methodology in writing the book, which is primarily intended for self-study (Elmaleh 1928a, xx). He also addresses the challenges posed to the publisher in Jerusalem by the need to print both vowelled Arabic and vowelled Hebrew text in the same work. He is upfront about the dilemmas he faced:

> When the Mitspah company approached me with a proposal to compile a book for learning the Arabic language in Hebrew, for Hebrew students and educators, I was faced with two difficult questions:
>
> A. To whom should this book be directed? Is it for beginners who do not know Hebrew or Arabic, or for students who more-or-less know Hebrew and want to learn Arabic without the help of a teacher, or for those who know Hebrew well and have more or less knowledge of Arabic and want to study the latter language by a well-known method in Hebrew?
>
> B. By what method should this textbook be composed? According to one of the European methods published in recent years, or one of the Arabic methods by which they learn in schools in Egypt and

Syria, or should I create a completely new method according to the latest rules of pedagogy and based on my many years of teaching experience?

And, truth be told, I could not find a correct answer to any of the questions that stood before me.

(Elmaleh 1928a, xi; my translation)

It is interesting that Elmaleh conceives of his readership as potentially having an imperfect command of Hebrew, and thus facing the double challenge of learning the target language through the medium of another non-native language.

Elmaleh shows an awareness of previous works for teaching Arabic, in European languages and in Hebrew, and finds them deficient: 'there is no convenient and easy method for learning this language [Arabic] today: that is to say, there is no method that is truly complete, perfect and rational' (Elmaleh 1928a, xii). The two Hebrew works he cites are those of Shirizli – from whom he in part borrows his title – and Alfagnah. Shirizli's work, he notes, is brief and gives only 10 lessons in 48 pages. Alfagnah, in his view, jumps too quickly from the basics to reading complex Classical texts such as the Qurʾān 'that even those well-versed in Arabic cannot understand without the help of a veteran teacher who is proficient in Arabic – this is self evident!' (Elmaleh 1928a, xii). As well as identifying a gap in the market for a good Hebrew book on Arabic *tout court*, Elmaleh also criticises the methodologies employed in both European and Arab works on the Arabic language. The Arabic textbooks compiled by European authors (he is clearly thinking of scholarly grammars of Arabic rather than self-instruction books), Elmaleh finds overly philological, and ill-suited to elementary students who want to learn by a convenient method without a teacher. Elmaleh has a still lower opinion of Arabic grammar books produced in Syria and Egypt: 'none of these [Arab] teachers has so far been able to compile a textbook which expresses what he wants to express in clear words, and without the same convoluted and nebulous phraseology in which the older generation of Arab writers excel' (Elmaleh 1928a, xiii). Elmaleh has, however, little to say about his own method and how it differs from previous ones, stating merely that he has chosen 'the way I thought was best suited to the purpose to which we aspire, and I discovered from all the many methods [available] the most suitable and practical for this book' (Elmaleh 1928a, xiv).

Elmaleh provides the necessary background information on Arabic, which he considers a 'very difficult and complicated language' (Elmaleh 1928a, xiv) to learn: the complexity of its grammar and writing system;

vast differences in dialects; the schism between the written language and the spoken language (which he considers a debased form of the literary); its position, with Hebrew, in the Semitic language family; the status of the Qur'ān as the epitome of Arabic language and style. He puts particular emphasis on commonalities with Hebrew, such as the fact that short vowels are usually not written, common Semitic roots, and the form of the verb, including the use of the same root to present verbal paradigms in Arabic and Hebrew (√f'l /√p'l). He establishes a few regular sound corre-spondences, such as the Hebrew *yod* and Arabic *wāw* (Elmaleh 1928a, xix).

Elmaleh states that he has only touched on syntax in such a 'small book' (it is 200 pages long) but that his aim has to been to present a basic yet comprehensive overview of the language and its grammar, reinforcing each rule with examples and exercises. He issues some instructions and warnings to his intended audience of self-teaching students. It is not enough simply to skim the book. Instead, the student should focus on the first three chapters and repeat the material in these 'a hundred times' (Elmaleh 1928a, xxi) to make sure it is thoroughly consolidated, before moving on to more complex material. Learning should be supple-mented by reading unvowelled text in one of the many Arabic readers published in Syria and Egypt. Ideally, the pronunciation of an 'Oriental teacher' (Elmaleh 1928a, xx) should be imitated, especially for the aspirated consonants. If the student does this, they will find more complex material easier, and be able to move on to reading simple authentic texts with the help of a dictionary. To assist the learner, Elmaleh compares Arabic to Hebrew where the two languages shed light on one another. He concludes that 'if, by my small book, learners are able to acquire the Arabic language, and if at the same time it also helps in the study of Hebrew grammar, that would be my reward' (Elmaleh 1928a, xxiii). A short bibliography follows the preface, citing French and Arabic works, mostly published in Beirut (later editions of Harfouch 1894 in Arabic and French; a 1922 edition of Heury 1867; Armez 1907; the Arabic readers Beidas 1923 and Hammām 1893; a table of Arabic verbs published by the Jesuit Missionary Press in Beirut; a 1910 French edition of Brockelmann 1906).

Elmaleh requires discipline from his students, as well as some familiarity with learning a language in the conventional grammar–translation method. His introductory table of the Arabic alphabet gives the Hebrew and Roman equivalents, the latter transcribed in the French manner with (for example) *chine* for *shīn*. He explains the pronunciation of letters, including regional variants (such as Egyptian 'hard g' for *jīm*: Elmaleh 1928a, 13), although the focus remains on standard literary Arabic. Arabic grammatical terms such as *tanwīn* and 'sun and moon

letters' are used, and case endings and nunation are taught. Exercises and translations cover practical topics such as the seasons of the year and simple conversations ('Did you write the letter? I did not write the letter': Elmaleh 1928a, 166; 'I walked until I found a horse': Elmaleh 1928a, 194), but there are no phrasebook-style dialogues. The coverage of the verb is extensive. Towards the very end of the book, there is some more colloquial material, where phrases in use in the spoken language are translated and explained. For example, *mā 'alayk* is given an idiomatic translation ('don't worry'), a Hebrew calque or cognate (*lo alaykha* 'not on you') and a longer explanation ('it is not your duty'; Elmaleh 1928a, 198); *'ala al-rā's wa al-'ayn* is translated/explained: 'on the head and the eye: that is, I willingly accept'.

## Elmaleh's contemporaries

Retaining my focus on works intended for self-study and/or for use outside formal educational contexts, I will not be providing fuller coverage of Arabic teaching in Jewish schools and universities in Palestine (for which see Halperin 2015, and for a case study of Arabic teaching at the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa, Mendel 2016; on a Hebrew textbook for Arabic, by Martin Plessner, used at the Reali School, see Levy 2016), but it is important to contextualise Elmaleh's work with regard to that of his contemporaries Yosef Rivlin, Johanan Kapliwatzky and Israel Ben-Zeev.

Although he was Ashkenazi, not Sephardi, perhaps Elmaleh's closest parallel is with the work and career of Yosef Yo'el Rivlin (1889–1971). Rivlin was also born in Jerusalem to a family which had been settled in Palestine for some generations. A former student of his recalled an old joke that the family was so numerous that there were three kinds of Jews in Jerusalem: 'Ashkenazim, Sephardim, and Rivlinim' (Patai 2001, 64). Like Elmaleh, he was exiled to Damascus during the First World War and worked for Jewish educational and cultural causes there (Stillman 1991, 82). Both men were Zionists and workers for the revival of Hebrew, who also saw benefits for Jews in learning Arabic – both with the goal of developing better relations with Arabs, and that of building a new form of Jewish identity as speakers of a Semitic language in the Middle East. The milieu in which Rivlin was raised and educated was also multilingual. He had Yiddish as his home language and studied at an Arabic school, Rawḍat al-Maʿārif, as well as growing up speaking Arabic with both Mizrahim and Arabs (Harif 2016, 41; Hussein 2017, 228–242). As a youth, he had a Hebrew–Arabic language exchange with Ḥilmī al-Ḥusaynī (Hussein 2017, 231; on the Ḥusaynī family, see Pappé 2010).

Rivlin taught in Hebrew schools, and served as the chair of the Hebrew Teachers' Organization from 1930 to 1941 (Stillman 1991, 82), but is best known as an academic Arabist. He received his PhD in Arabic philology at the University of Frankfurt, and was appointed to a position at the Institute of Oriental Studies, founded in 1926, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; he was the only professor at the institute who had been born in Palestine (Eyal 2006, 62). He produced translations into modern Hebrew of the Qur'ān (Harif 2016) and the *Thousand and One Nights* (Hussein 2017, 226–270).

Rivlin's textbooks for studying the Arabic language have not received as much attention as his translations and scholarship on Islam. His *fuṣḥā* textbook for elementary schools (Rivlin 1936) contains 'excerpts from the Qur'an and other classical sources; Arabic texts written by Jews; excerpts from contemporary newspapers; and selected Arab legends' (Halperin 2015, 208). Rivlin also produced an Arabic reader (Rivlin 1932) with an accompanying volume including a partial transcription and translation (Rivlin 1933) and another school textbook (Rivlin 1938).

My own copy of Rivlin 1933 was purchased along with a copy of Kapliwatzky 1938. This provides us with some insight into how at least one learner used these books. Johanan Kapliwatzky's works on Arabic, in Hebrew and English, went through many editions and were widely used in schools in Palestine and later Israel, as well as the English-speaking world (the United States: McCarus 1992, 217; South Africa: Mohamed 1997, 190–191).

Kapliwatzky (1895–1960) himself is elusive. I have had to rely on the small amount of biographical information he discloses in his own books, and his immigration file in the Israel State Archives. He was born as Johann Caplivatchi in Căpreşti, Romania (now Moldova), and held a Romanian passport until he was naturalised in Palestine in 1934. His occupation in his naturalisation application is given as 'teacher'. In the Preface to his 1940 *Arabic Language and Grammar*, Kapliwatzky states:

> This book is the result of many years of experience that I acquired in the instruction of Semitic languages generally and of the Arabic language particularly. It is the result of the scientific books that I wrote in the Oriental Institute of the Vienna University and in the Semitic-Islamic Institute of the Berlin University and of the Arabic school-books which I published for Hebrew students in Palestine.
>
> (Kapliwatzky 1940, unpaginated Preface)

In a footnote he adds that he was in Vienna from 1922 to 1930, and in Berlin from 1931 to 1933; he left, presumably, because of the rise of the

Nazis. The acknowledgements of his books indicate that he was acquainted with David and Avinoam Yellin (Kapliwatzky 1937), members of the Abū Ghosh and Nashāshībī families (Kapliwatzky 1938) and Mordechai Zlotnik (later Avida, 1909–1986, whose voice opened the radio broadcast of the Israeli declaration of independence in 1948).

Kapliwatzky published his first Hebrew-language Arabic textbooks in 1937–1938. His later works included one on colloquial Palestinian Arabic (1939), a Hebrew textbook for Arabic speakers (1941) and a book of selections from the Arabic press (1946). He also published a series of manifestos about the state of Arabic teaching in Palestine (which he considered dire). He promoted the study of spoken Arabic instead of literary Arabic, and was one of several Jewish writers who romanticised the contemporary Palestinian bedouin as offering an insight into the lives of the Hebrew patriarchs (Halperin 2015, 199 and 203).

Those of Kapliwatzky's books which I have been able to discuss (I have not been able to obtain a copy of his 1939 work on colloquial Palestinian Arabic), however, teach literary Arabic. The introduction to his 1937 Hebrew *Arabic Language and Grammar* refers to his experience as a teacher of Arabic in a Hebrew school in Palestine, and – like almost every author of such a textbook – he notes his dissatisfaction with existing teaching materials, the novelty of his method, and his intention that the book be useful both to school pupils and to those who wished to study on their own (Kapliwatzky 1937, Introduction). His list of the sources he used in compiling the book is mostly composed of Palestinian authors (Beidas 1923, whose work was also used by Elmaleh; Cheikho 1882; Sakākīnī 1930; Nashāshibī 1934; and al-ʿĀrif 1933). The Arabic is literary, not colloquial, but the student learns sentences that might be of some relevance to their life in Palestine: 'Where hast thou learnt the Arabic language? – I have learned it in an evening school', 'In this town there are 4 evening schools for teaching the labourers reading and writing', 'The husband of this woman learns the Arabic language in one of the evening schools', 'My father has 12 cows and 5 camels' (examples taken from the English translation: Kapliwatzky 1940, 136). The explanation of Arabic phonology supposes some familiarity with European languages, such as the explanation of *khā'* as similar to the German 'lachen', given in Roman script (Kapliwatzky 1937, 19). Kapliwatzky's 1938 companion book focuses on introducing the student to handwritten as well as printed Arabic, with the goal of equipping them to read not just Arabic newspapers (which he claims many who have studied Arabic in Hebrew schools can barely do), but also letters and everyday documents. It introduces the student to unvowelled, handwritten text, with printed,

vowelled text alongside for comparison. Some of the text is shared with the 1937 book.

The English version of *Arabic Language and Grammar* was also published in Jerusalem (its Second World War date may indicate that it was produced for the British military market), but in its several editions achieved a much wider circulation (Kapliwatzky 1940). It is directed to 'English students who wish to learn the Arabic language thoroughly and by an easy method' (Kapliwatzky 1940, unpaginated Preface). It is very similar to its 1937 Hebrew predecessor. There are minor changes for a new market: the Hebrew version, for example, includes the words 'Jew' and 'Hebrew' in its vocabulary lists, whereas the English text omits these but retains 'Muslim' and 'Arabic'. Kapliwatzky seems to have consulted other Arabic instruction books for English speakers, since he describes *khā'* as the ubiquitous 'ch' in 'loch', 'but more from the throat' (Kapliwatzky 1940, 27). As noted above, the book enjoyed a long period of popularity in teaching in Anglophone higher education, but it is unlikely to have been useful as a wartime phrasebook. It teaches literary Arabic, with nunation.

Israel Ben-Zeev (né Wolfensohn, 1899–1980) was an almost exact contemporary of Kapliwatzky, and only a few years younger than Rivlin and Elmaleh (on Ben-Zeev's life and career, see Abd El Gawad 2016). Like all of these authors, he was born in Palestine to a family (in his case Ashkenazi) which had been there for some generations, and grew up in a multilingual milieu. Like Rivlin and Kapliwatzky, he was acquainted with influential Arab families in Jerusalem, in his case the Nashāshibīs and Ḥusaynīs. Also like Rivlin and Kapliwatzky, he studied in Germany. Ben-Zeev was also educated in Egypt, at Cairo University, where he was a student of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, and taught at Cairo University and Dār al-ʿUlūm. He specialised in the history of the Jews in Arab lands, including work on the Cairo Geniza. He returned from Egypt to Palestine in 1938, and went on to a career at Bar-Ilan University and as an inspector of schools.

Like Kapliwatzky, Ben-Zeev placed an emphasis on spoken rather than literary Arabic. His views on teaching a living rather than a dead language were quoted earlier in this chapter. In the same report, he argued that 'It is necessary to adapt the sounds, expressions and accents of Arabic to the student's ear before the eye adjusts itself to the dead letters' (quoted by Halperin 2015, 199). This is easier said than done in a textbook. Ben-Zeev's title – *Spoken Arabic* – differentiates his 1944 book from those of his fellow authors of Arabic instruction books in Hebrew. In the introduction to the first edition of his book, he expresses his wish to 'give the student, along with the spoken language, some knowledge, too, of the life of the Arab people in Israel' (Ben-Zeev 1944,

Introduction: I have only been able to access this quoted in the introduction to the fifth edition). He claims to select his texts from authentic materials 'from the books of Oriental scholars and of Arab and Jewish writers who transcribed them from the people', 'as far as possible without changing the original language'. The vocabulary he introduces comes from both literary Arabic and the spoken language, with special attention to cognates with Hebrew.

Ben-Zeev states his intention to produce accompanying records so that students can practise their accent and pronunciation, but I have been unable to verify if these were indeed produced. He takes the Jerusalem dialect as his standard, trying not to mix dialects from across Palestine. Writing in the introduction to the 1949 edition, Ben-Zeev notes that since the first edition of the book he has been able, in his role as a school inspector, to observe the book being used in classroom practice, and revise it based on his observations.

The book introduces the Arabic alphabet, but does not use it in the lessons. Instead, Ben-Zeev transliterates Arabic into vowelled Hebrew script, according to a fixed system of equivalencies (e.g. *tsade* for *ṣād*). He borrows the Arabic *shadda* to indicate doubled consonants. Some notes on pronunciation are given to help the student. These require some familiarity with European languages (*jīm* is described as the sound in English 'gentleman' or French 'jour' and *ghayn* as the Parisian 'r') and with regional pronunciations of Hebrew (several sounds are described as being the same as Mizrahi pronunciation). Some reference is made to local variations in Arabic pronunciation within Palestine, for example of *qāf*.

The book is designed for classroom use, and would not have been so helpful to an independent learner. The first chapter begins with classroom vocabulary (*bāb*, *shubbāk*, *kitāb*, *qalam* 'door, window, book, pen') and simple phrases reinforcing these same vocabulary items ('shū hādha? hādha kitāb' 'What is this? This is a book'). The basic building blocks of sentences are introduced at the beginning: demonstratives, personal pronouns, possessive suffixes. The verbal paradigm, introduced on page 15, uses *fahima*, so that the student can form sentences about 'understanding'. The book is well designed for beginners, with plenty of exercises and short sentences consolidating patterns, but it really requires a teacher.


## Moses Jacobsohn

In the 1930s, as in the 1880s, new waves of persecution in Europe brought greater Jewish immigration to Palestine. The second edition of Moses Jacobsohn's *Deutsch, Neuhebräisch, Arabisch in lateinischen und*

*hebräischen Lettern: schnell und leicht zu erlernen um den Palästina-Reisenden über die erste Zeit im Lande hinwegzuhelfen* was published in Berlin in 1935 (I have been unable to locate the first edition). Jacobsohn did not publish any other books. I think that he should be identified with a man of that name who was married in Berlin in 1916, giving his place and date of birth as Jaffa in 1890 (Landesarchiv Berlin; Personenstandsregister Heiratsregister; Laufendenummer: 503). This Moses Jacobsohn may be traced further in the Arolsen Archives (International Center on Nazi Persecution: 1. Incarceration Documents / 1.1 Camps and Ghettos / 1.1.5 Buchenwald Concentration Camp / 1.1.5.3 Individual Documents male Buchenwald). Jewish citizens of neutral Turkey were not deported to the camps until fairly late in the war (Baer 2013); Moses Jacobsohn was sent to Buchenwald in October 1943. His prisoner card (https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/document/6155374, accessed 29 May 2023) gives political activities as the grounds for his imprisonment, but the abbreviation 'mos.' (for 'mosaisch', not 'moslem') under 'Religion', the Star of David and word 'Jude' outlined in red pencil on the card show that he was known to be a Jew (which would have been obvious from his name in any case). His languages are given as Arabic, 'Egyptian', Turkish, German and Hebrew. In April 1944, Jacobsohn wrote to the commandant of Buchenwald, asking to be repatriated to Palestine, a request that was evidently denied. Jacobsohn survived Buchenwald (he died in 1956) but his experience shows just how much was at stake for the authors and users of Palestinian Arabic phrasebooks in the 1930s. A Jewish scholar of Semitic languages, Mojzis Woskin-Nahartabi, taught literary Arabic classes for a time to fellow prisoners in the Theresienstadt ghetto. His teaching notes are now held in the collections of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (online exhibition: https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/through-the-lens/terezin.asp, accessed 23 May 2023). Nahartabi was less fortunate than Jacobsohn, and was deported to Auschwitz and murdered in 1944.

Jacobsohn's attitude to the Arabic language chimes with that of Elmaleh and his contemporaries in Palestine. He considers a knowledge of Arabic in addition to Hebrew absolutely essential for settlers in Palestine:

> ... the fact cannot be denied that we have to deal with the Arabs at every turn, be it as porters, servants, traders, etc. After all, the Arab population represents the majority of the country's inhabitants. As a born and raised Palestinian, I know that the Arabic language is just as necessary as the Hebrew to get ahead in the country.
>
> (Jacobsohn 1935, 4)

Jacobsohn makes the usual claims that his book will enable the user to fulfil their daily needs in both languages in the shortest possible time. He adds that 'both languages are very similar in grammar and pronunciation, so you can learn them at the same time' (Jacobsohn 1935, 4). The book has 63 pages, of which the vocabulary (in alphabetical order by the German word) takes up 23. Jacobsohn gives a table of the Arabic alphabet, which looks, from its font, to have been copied from another book, but does not use it elsewhere in the book. He gives both Hebrew and Latin script for the Hebrew throughout. There is very little explanation of pronunciation and his transliteration system. Grammatical explanation is also fairly brief, and gives a little more space to Hebrew than to Arabic. Most of the book is made up of parallel word tables and thematic vocabularies, some of which – like the section on personal pronouns – make the kinship between the two languages very clear to the user (Figure 6.4). The phrases cover greetings, shopping and socialising, with some material of particular relevance to immigrants:

> Wann kamst du ins Land? ämta dschit lal bäläd? matei bata l'äräz Jisrael? ['When did you come to this country?']
> Vor einer Woche. aul dschm'a. lifne scha'wu'a. ['A week ago.']
> Sprichtst du schon Hebräisch? ibtichki ibrani? Hakwar medaber ata iwrit? ['Can you speak Hebrew yet?']
>
> (Jacobsohn 1935, 37)

**Persönliche Fürwörter.**

| Deutsch | Hebräisch | — | Arabisch |
|---|---|---|---|
| ich | אני | ani | ana |
| du (m.) | אתה | ata | inte |
| du (w.) | את | at | inti |
| er | הוא | hu | hu |
| sie | היא | hie | hie |
| wir | אנחנו | anachnu | nichna |
| ihr (m.) | אתם | atem | intu |
| ihr (w.) | אתן | aten | intu |
| sie (m.) | הם | hem | hom |
| sie (w.) | הן | hen | hom |

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**Figure 6.4** Hebrew and Arabic pronouns compared in Jacobsohn's *Deutsch, Neuhebräisch, Arabisch* (1935), 12. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

The digitised online copy of the book held by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek has some annotations in Polish, suggesting that it was owned by a Polish Jewish immigrant, or prospective immigrant, to Palestine.

## Hayim Keler

Mitspah, the same company that published Abraham Elmaleh's Arabic–Hebrew books, issued two Arabic textbooks in 1935 by Hayim Keler: the Hebrew *Lemad ʿAravit*, and its Yiddish translation *Lern arabish: a leykhte sisteme tsu erlernen di arabishe shprakh* ('Learn Arabic: An easy system to learn the Arabic language'; Keler 1935a, 1935b). My comments here relate to the Yiddish version, but as far as I can tell the two books are identical. Keler (1892–1975) was born in the agricultural colony of Rosh Pinna, and his name indicates that he was of Ashkenazi descent. He was a teacher by profession. An advertisement inside *Lern arabish* reveals the place of Keler's books in the Mitspah catalogue. The company also offered French, German, Yiddish and Polish phrasebooks, books on English, Elmaleh's Arabic–Hebrew and Hebrew–Arabic dictionaries, and Yiddish–Hebrew dictionaries. There were discounted prices for buying both dictionaries in a set together. The multilingual reality of the Yishuv appears here in clear focus.

Keler states that 'this book is intended to teach you to speak Arabic, as well as the first basics of reading and writing. The main purpose of the work is to remind each of us to interact with our neighbours, the Arabs, so that we can understand each other' (Keler 1935b, 5). His approach successfully integrates the best features of a phrasebook with those of a conventional grammar textbook. The first chapter deals with greetings. Keler imagines the user as a Jewish farmer, living in the countryside, interacting with his Arab neighbours. The phrases introduced come with instructions like 'Ask your neighbours about their health as follows', 'When you pass by and see labourers in a field, in an orchard, or in a vineyard, you greet them as follows' and 'Do not greet an Arab woman unless she is from a family of your acquaintance' (Keler 1935b, 9–10). The contents of the first few chapters are all to do with working on a farm and talking about family. It is not until page 27 that the table of the Arabic script is introduced: Keler eases the user into Arabic gently, with phrases and social contexts that he expects them to actually encounter. The script is introduced very gradually, as is grammar, with tables of the verb not appearing until page 49, and the possessive suffix pronouns a few pages later. Most of the content remains appropriate for a rural lifestyle in a Jewish agricultural colony.

The final page of the book gives, in Arabic-script Arabic, Hebrew-script Arabic and Yiddish, the following phrases, allowing a Jewish settler to give an account of themselves to Arab neighbours:

> I was born in Palestine.
> I was born in Russia.
> But I have settled in Palestine.
> Palestine is my (home)land and I love it.
> And I (will) always work for its benefit.

<div align="right">(Keler 1935b, 104)</div>

## Irene Garbel and Ernest Bloch

Keler's 1935 book is the latest Yiddish instruction book for Arabic that I have come across. All subsequent Arabic books for Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and later the state of Israel, are in Hebrew. Some teachers continued to see learning Arabic and learning Hebrew as complementary, such as Dr Irene Garbel (1901–1966), who taught both colloquial Arabic and Hebrew pronunciation on the radio in the 1940s (the latest listing for both classes in the *Palestine Post* that I have found is in 1947). Garbel was an academic linguist who wrote her 1930 doctoral dissertation in Berlin on influence from foreign languages on modern Hebrew, and subsequently taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She was one of the instructors on the Israeli Ministry of Education's Hebrew course for new immigrants in 1949 (*Palestine Post*, 8 June 1949, 3). Along with her colleague Ernest Bloch, Garbel published a Hebrew textbook for standard literary Arabic in 1945, *Aravit yesodit* 'Elementary Arabic' (Garbel and Bloch 1945).

S. D. Goitein, whose views on learning Arabic as an essential part of Zionism were quoted earlier in this chapter, reviewed the book favourably in the *Palestine Post* (15 March 1946, 7). He praises Garbel's 'excellent broadcasts on spoken Arabic [which] have become a regular accompaniment to Tuesday night's supper in many Jewish families'. Goitein emphasises the modern pedagogical and linguistic principles on which the book is constructed, which Garbel and Bloch also draw attention to in their introduction. They aim to 'establish the study of the Arabic languages along the methods accepted today in the teaching of foreign languages in Anglo-Saxon countries' (Garbel and Bloch 1945, 5). Flicking through the book, it is striking how much it feels like a modern language textbook. Like the books considered towards the ends of Chapters 3 and 5, Garbel and Bloch's book brings us into the realm of the familiar for

language learners who used textbooks in the second half of the twentieth century, or even the early twenty-first century. It is also clearly influenced by innovations in textbooks for European languages of the nineteenth century. Garbel and Bloch introduce a set amount of material, systematically, in each lesson. They use pictures of items and actions to help fix vocabulary in the learner's memory, and to encourage them to map new words directly onto concepts, rather than constantly translating into their mother tongue. On page 23, for example, pictures of a boy and a girl drinking from cups are used to illustrate the phrases *al-walad shariba* 'the boy drank' and *al-bint sharibat* 'the girl drank' in Arabic, in Arabic script, without any Hebrew. Garbel and Bloch use diagrams of tongue position in the mouth to explain how consonants are pronounced, for example the difference between *qāf* and *kāf* (page 25). On page 79, the learner is tested with a simple crossword. The book is well thought out, from a pedagogical point of view, and explains pronunciation in a scientific, physiological manner, without all the vagueness of 'strong' consonants or animal similes.

## Hebrew for Arabic speakers

The project of teaching Arabic to Hebrew and Yiddish speakers was accompanied by a parallel one of teaching Hebrew to Arabic speakers.[16] The potential audience for Arabic-language Hebrew instruction books was twofold – Palestinian Arabs and Arabic-speaking Jews – and individual works might be directed primarily at one or the other. The growth in such works across the first decades of the twentieth century correlates with the decline in works for teaching colloquial Palestinian Arabic to Hebrew and Yiddish speakers. The dominant expectation was becoming less for Jews to integrate in Palestine and with Palestinians, than for both immigrant Jews and Palestinians to conform to the ways of an incipient Jewish state in which Hebrew was the primary language.

Two works published by Abraham Kestin in Alexandria fall most obviously into the category of Hebrew instruction books produced for speakers of Judaeo-Arabic, designed to integrate them with a Hebrew-speaking Yishuv. I have only been able to access the second of these, printed by Jacob and Maimoun Ben Attar in 1910 (Kestin 1910).[17] The earlier work, published in 1896, is known to me only through a small number of photographs published on an auction website and seems to have been similar or identical in content to the later book (Kestin 1896). This copy has owners' signatures of Nessim Haddad and Mordechai Almosnino, both of whom were Jews of North African origin. It bears a curious

dedication: 'This book shall be an Everlasting Memorial before the L-rd, of the Committee of the Friends of Israel in Scotland; by whose agency this book was published'. Kestin, despite his Jewish (most probably Ashkenazi) heritage,[18] was a 'native evangelist' for the Church of Scotland Mission to the Jews at Alexandria (see the Church of Scotland Year-Book for 1896, 99). His publications derived from lessons he had given for many years at the Mission School there (Mackie 1896). Despite this, the books have no obvious Christian evangelical content or purpose. George Mackie, a Church of Scotland missionary at Beirut, thought them suitable 'for Christian and Hebrew schools among the Arabic-speaking Jews' (Mackie 1896).[19]

Kestin's 1910 work is approximately half grammar and half vocabulary. It introduces the Arabic script, but does not make extensive use of it, presenting Judaeo-Arabic and Hebrew in Hebrew script throughout. The focus is on Hebrew as a living language, and it includes vocabulary for everyday life. The publisher, Rabbi Maimoun Ben Attar (1867–1958), was a fervent supporter of the revival of spoken Hebrew (see, for example, his congratulatory letter to Eliezar Ben Yehuda in *ha-Herut*, 22 April 1910, 2). Kestin and the Ben Attar brothers' endeavour therefore presents an interesting counterpoint to the efforts of Sephardim and Mizrahim in Palestine to promote the use of Arabic by Jews, such as in the works of Elmaleh, discussed above.

Moshe Gottstein's Hebrew lessons for Arabic speakers, produced after the foundation of the state of Israel, are rather different. Voice of Israel, the Israeli national radio station, broadcast the lessons from December 1948 to August 1949. The radio programmes were accompanied by print lessons in the newspaper *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿAmr*, an Arabic-language paper produced by the Histradrut, a Jewish labour organisation, which addressed an audience of both Arabic-speaking Jews and non-Jewish Arabs (Jacobson and Naor 2016, 91–93; Halperin 2015, 170–171). The lessons were later published in book format by Gottstein and Shaul Bar-Chaim (Gottstein and Bar-Chaim 1950). The book could be used in the classroom (as it was at the Arab Teachers' College in Jaffa: Gottstein and Bar-Chaim 1950, fn. 1), or for self-study, with accompanying radio broadcasts and answer key to the exercises.

The lessons in *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿAmr* start with the basics: the alphabet and simple phrases for greeting and talking about where you live (Figure 6.5; note the description of *gimel* as *jīm miṣriyya* – 'Egyptian j' or hard 'g'). Words and phrases are given in both Hebrew script and Arabic transliteration, alongside the Arabic translation. Gottstein makes a point of selecting cognates to illustrate the Hebrew sounds: Hebrew *bēt* / Arabic *bayt* 'house'; Hebrew *tov* / Arabic *ṭayyib* 'good' (*Ḥaqīqat al-ʿAmr*,

**Figure 6.5** Hebrew lessons for Arabic speakers in lessons in *Ḥaqīqat al-ʿAmr*, 22 December 1948. Public domain. Held at the Bodleian Library. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

22 December 1948, 4). This is similar to what some textbook authors did in the opposite direction.

The book's Hebrew and Arabic introductions explain its teaching methodology, emphasising the use of spaced repetition to reinforce key vocabulary, and the need for the learner not to become dependent on transliteration or vowel points, but to grow used to reading unvowelled Hebrew text (the book makes less and less use of transliteration and vowel points as it goes on). Gottstein explains that he has included comments on the similarities between Arabic and Hebrew, but that 'each teacher has the right to use the proximity between the two languages as he sees fit' (Hebrew introduction).

Gottstein opens the book's Hebrew introduction by mentioning the creation of the state of Israel, which he claims has raised 'the problem of teaching Arabic speakers. ... The Arab citizens of the country are interested in acquiring the knowledge of the Hebrew language as soon as possible.' His interest is in teaching practical, spoken Hebrew, but also in presenting 'the history of the Jewish people' to his readership: 'it must always be remembered that learning the language is not the only goal'. This message is

not repeated in the Arabic introduction. The intended audience is stated in the Hebrew introduction to be 'Arab citizens of Israel and Arabic-speaking immigrants – both adults and upper-class students' and in the Arabic introduction as 'Arabs who know Arabic well, especially Arab students in the upper and secondary grades, and last but not least those coming from the Arab countries'. This implies to me that it is intended both for Arabic-speaking Jews – already resident in Palestine, or new immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East – and for Muslim and Christian Palestinian Arabs. The use of Arabic script, in contrast to Kestin's earlier works for speakers of Judaeo-Arabic, supports the notion that Gottstein's lessons were for speakers of Arabic broadly, not principally or exclusively Judaeo-Arabic.

This is relevant because elements of the book are overt propaganda. The reader learns Hebrew greetings and phrases for everyday interactions such as shopping and applying for a job, but spaced throughout the lessons are passages designed to promote a positive view of the state of Israel. A series of 'Excerpts from the history of the people of Israel' trace a narrative from Abraham, through successive exiles, to the ultimate modern return. Many of the reading lessons praise the progress brought by the Jewish people to Israel-Palestine (e.g. Gottstein and Bar-Chaim 1950, 61, on Tel Aviv). Other passages describe Israel's modern transportation and amenities. Dialogues and sample letters show how to deal with the new state's bureaucracy: having your identity card checked, applying for a licence to open a shop. There are, however, ominous notes. Amid dialogues on going to the doctor, or buying a new pair of shoes, we find 'At half past one the enemy planes appeared over the city, and then the sirens sounded' (p. 107) and 'The Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff visited a military camp in the Negev' (p. 135).

In these lessons, produced in the immediate aftermath of the Nakba, the Zionist message of a Palestine reclaimed and rejuvenated by the Jews is strong:

> Recently my grandfather had a birthday. Do you know how old he is? He is ninety years old, and God willing, there will be many more years. The whole family was watching over him, the boys and girls, their spouses and grandchildren. And when we all sat at the table, set with food, my grandfather turned to tell us:
>
> 'You live, thank God, in a beautiful country, in big cities and modern homes, but I remember how the country was eighty years ago. At that time no one had thought of Tel Aviv and the new Jerusalem, the colonies and the kibbutzim, agriculture and orchards.

The country was very poor, and only a few people lived there. I remember those days, when I left with a few guys from Jerusalem, and started working in a new place, far from Jerusalem – in Petah Tikva.'

'But Grandfather, isn't Petah Tikva a big city?'

'Right. But seventy years ago there were not even a hundred people there. And every year they began to establish new moshavot: Rishon LeZion and Zikhron Ya'akov, Nes Ziona and Rehovot and many other places. And then the kibbutzim began to form, until today we have four hundred settlements.'

'Grandfather, is that true?'

'This is true. The land was like a desert then, and we could not have done everything you see today without the work of the hundreds of thousands who worked for many years. And so you will continue to work, as we did, and as your forefathers did before you.'

(Gottstein and Bar-Chaim 1950, 97–98, my translation)

This is a long way from Keler's neighbourly conversations between Jewish and Arab farmers, of only a few years earlier.

## Conclusion

The material considered in this chapter is more diverse – in terms of contents, structure and teaching approach – than that in the preceding chapters. Military and tourist Arabic phrasebooks more obviously conform to their own genres, connected with the nineteenth-century Ottoman and European traditions of language manuals for self-instruction. Missionary and early nineteenth-century scholastic works on colloquial Arabic (Chapters 1 and 2) show closer relationships to Orientalist grammars of the Classical language. Arabic phrasebooks for Yiddish and Hebrew speakers intersect with all these trends, and range from relatively unsophisticated word lists drawn up by bilinguals with no formal experience of language teaching and learning, to works modelled more closely on self-instruction books, phrasebooks and grammars of Arabic in languages other than Yiddish and Hebrew.

In my discussion, I have sought to demonstrate the variety in individual approaches and attitudes to Arabic instruction for Jewish immigrants to Palestine. There are, however, some very broad trends that may be sketched. As might be expected, the periods when greater numbers of such phrasebooks were published correspond to periods of

more intensive than usual persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe, and thus of greater immigration to Palestine. Numbers increase significantly in the first decades of the twentieth century. Both Ashkenazim and Mizrahim/Sephardim published Arabic phrasebooks, but we see from Mizrahi and Sephardi authors a greater emphasis on reading, writing and participating in intellectual and political life in Arabic. In the 1920s, works for teaching Arabic, both colloquial and literary, become more obviously scholastic in their approach and intent: the emphasis is no longer so squarely on communication with one's Arab neighbours, both socially and in commerce.

## Notes

1  Certainly, the security officers who discovered Arabic books in my luggage at Ben Gurion Airport required some convincing that nineteenth-century Jewish immigrants to Palestine had found it useful or desirable to learn Arabic.
2  Mizrahim are Jews of Middle Eastern and North African heritage. Sephardim are descended from the Jews expelled from the Iberian peninsula after the Reconquista, many of whom settled in the Ottoman Empire.
3  I have not been able to access a copy of Sheinkin's own guide, *Yedies vegen Eretz Yisroel*, published in Vilna in 1908.
4  See, for example, the comparative vocabulary produced in the early nineteenth century by Elizabeth Smith, who studied the languages independently, and was able to identify many cognates without being part of the academic community of comparative Semiticists (Smith and Usko 1814, vii–viii). To give an example for those not familiar with either language, the word for 'sun' is *shams* in Arabic and *shemesh* in Hebrew.
5  Ironically, both Yellin and Billig were killed by Arab assassins during the disturbances in the second half of the 1930s (see Goitein's Preface to the 1948 edition of Yellin and Billig 1931, and Jacobson and Naor 2016, 196–197).
6  This is also where Khalil Beidas, whose Arabic reader was used by Elmaleh 1928a and Kapliwatzky 1937, studied. For the experiences of another student at the school, who went on to study in Russia, see Pflitsch 2002.
7  The Hebrew text is available online at benyehuda.org/boym_m/korot_haitim.html, accessed 23 May 2023. There is also a modern reprint of both the Hebrew and Yiddish versions: mi-Kaminits 1975. This is probably the book mentioned by Spolsky 2014, 253, without further references: 'A Yiddish book published in Warsaw in 1841 included a short list of essential Arabic words – numbers, place names, foods, a few phrases – to help them adjust.'
8  There is an online translation of the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* by Joshua A. Fogel at http://yleksikon.blogspot.com, accessed 23 May 2023.
9  Although why he gives both the Arabic and the Yiddish for 'pork' is a mystery: Zilberman 1882, 13. 'Cochon' is included in Zilberman 1836, so it may be that it has been carried over.
10  In modern Hebrew, the Arabic letter *ghayn* is transcribed as *rēsh* with a diacritic *geresh*; the same method is used to distinguish *ḥā'* and *khā'*.
11  I am grateful to Yair Wallach for bringing this account to my attention.
12  It contains advertisements for the Hotel Kaminitz, owned by the descendants of Menahem Mendel Kaminitz, in Hebrew, French and German.
13  I interpret Trietsch's use of the participle here as deliberate: rather than simply saying *anā min Maṣr* 'I am from Egypt', he wishes the speaker to say that he has come from Egypt to live in Palestine.

14 I have taken most of my information on the Israel-Shirizli family from a family genealogical resource, http://www.cherezli.com/, which unfortunately no longer seems to be active.

15 As noted above, Trietsch's 'Exercises' in his guidebook – the only version I have been able to access – were also published as a separate book. In the very few cases where Trivaks' work contains words and phrases not in the guidebook version of Trietsch, I presume that this is where they come from.

16 I have not found any works for teaching Yiddish to Arabic speakers.

17 My copy is inscribed at the head of the title page, in English: 'Presented to Mr M. Kesten by his loving brother, the author of this book' (underlining in original).

18 He may be the same Abraham Kestin who wrote for the Hebrew journal *ha-Magid* in the issue of 25 December 1884.

19 Mackie, however, seems to fundamentally misunderstand the position of Judaeo-Arabic(s) as independent registers, not merely ad hoc creations of Jewish speakers of Arabic who have not been taught to read or write Arabic script.

# 7
# Conclusion: patterns and networks

## The wood and the trees

Over the preceding chapters, I have discussed around two hundred books for learning colloquial Arabic (listed in the Catalogue), published in many languages and across five continents, from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century. While I have the advantage of having spent several years immersed in this material, the reader most probably has a greater challenge in seeing the wood for the trees. The present chapter ties my discussion and arguments together, by identifying patterns and trends in the publication of phrasebooks for colloquial Arabic; exploring social networks between teachers and learners of Arabic; revealing the extent and nature of plagiarism between Arabic books; and, finally, utilising annotations and marginalia on extant copies as a way of revealing how, and with what success, learners used their books.

As I noted in the Introduction, I see this book as falling, broadly, within the fields both of Nahḍa studies and of the history of the teaching and learning of languages. I have traced how colloquial, dialectal Arabic emerged as an object of study and interest in its own right in Europe and the Middle East over the course of the nineteenth century. Many famous names associated with the parallel emergence of *fuṣḥā* as a literary language were also concerned with *ʿāmmiyya*. Colloquial Arabic phrasebooks written by figures such as Fāris al-Shidyāq, graduates of the Madrasat al-Alsun, and intellectuals of the early twentieth century deserve to be assessed as products of the Nahḍa. In terms of the history of language learning and teaching, this book also reveals a parallel history, this time to the production of phrasebooks and developments in language teaching for European languages. I have shown how closely trends in colloquial Arabic

instruction books followed those for European languages: the gradual replacement of grammar–translation methods with the direct method; the emergence of cheap books for travellers in the mid- to late nineteenth century; and the promotion by teachers and publishers of 'systems' and 'methods' for language learning. European models were used for many of the phrasebooks and other instruction books discussed here, but there were Arab and Ottoman models, too, making the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Arabic phrasebook a hybrid product.

The Arabic phrasebook emerged as a genre with its own recognisable structures and features. It is common to find a preface in which the author explains their reasons for producing the book, which are invariably that nothing similar (as small, convenient, practical, accurate, modern etc.) exists on the market. This is almost never true. The contents usually include an explanation of the Arabic script and its pronunciation, some grammar, a word list, and phrases on a predictable range of topics (objects the user might encounter or wish to describe, and scenarios in which they might find themselves). There was, however, much potential for variation and improvisation within this basic structure, as we have seen over the preceding chapters, and there is no discernible pattern over time in how authors structure their phrasebook, and what items they include or omit.

The challenges faced by Arabic phrasebook authors, summarised in the section on the Arabic language in the Introduction, were quite different, however, from those faced by the authors of phrasebooks for European languages. The questions of romanisation and of how to explain the grammar and phonology of an Afro-Asiatic language to speakers of Indo-European ones were probably the most serious. Few if any authors succeeded. Romanisation was often inconsistent and gave the user little chance of pronouncing the Arabic, if not completely accurately, then even in a comprehensible manner. Grammar was a constant problem, with most books providing either too much or too little information to enable a user who was not a scholar to form their own phrases, without putting them off. As I have frequently stated throughout this book, the advice given by some authors that the user needed to consult a native speaker was the best and most honest: one cannot learn to speak colloquial Arabic from a book alone. A history of colloquial Arabic *teachers* is a desideratum.

Most fundamentally, however, what I hope this book has demonstrated is the agency of Arab authors and contributors – often unacknowledged – in the production of knowledge about, and teaching of, colloquial Arabic. Although there are some cases where we may recover the role of a specific native speaker in the production of an Arabic phrasebook whose named author is European or American, all of the books

considered here required input from native speakers and these deserve to be considered authors as much as anyone whose name is on the title page. In the case of Arab authors of phrasebooks, we have more direct access to their own viewpoints on the teaching of their language to foreigners. In many cases, such as the privately published phrasebooks produced in Cairo during the world wars, they present us with an intimate, Arab perspective on Europeans in the Middle East.

## Chronological and linguistic trends

The publication of Arabic phrasebooks in the period 1798–1945 follows a clear pattern corresponding to political events, and to a lesser extent to developments in transportation technology and infrastructure in the Mashriq. Let us return to the graphs of numbers of Arabic phrasebooks published over time, included in the supplementary online materials to this book (available on the University of Reading Research Data Archive, at https://doi.org/10.17864/1947.000469). The yearly and cumulative graphs (Graphs 3 and 4, respectively) show few publications until the 1840s. There is then a steady growth (occasioned by steam and rail travel), until the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) and British occupation of Egypt (1882) each produce steps in the curve. The annual rate of publication of phrasebooks thereafter remains relatively high, and annual growth steady, until the First and Second World Wars, which each produce major spikes in the graph. These trends have already been discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. It is very clear that rates of publication of Arabic phrasebooks were highest at periods of intense European military intervention or leisure travel in the Middle East, just as one might expect.

Patterns for individual languages are also significant (Graph 5). In some cases, of course, too few phrasebooks were issued in a particular language to say anything much of statistical import: this is true for Spanish, Portuguese, Urdu and Russian. My coverage of French-language materials – as discussed in the Introduction – is restricted to the Mashriq and does not take account of works published in the Maghreb, which means that the graph for French does not accurately reflect actual trends in the publication of French phrasebooks for Arabic. A more holistic coverage of French materials would produce an earlier spike in the graph, in the 1830s, after the Expédition d'Alger, and follow major events in the French conquest and occupation of North Africa closely. English adheres to (or rather, shapes) the overall trend of increase in publication of phrasebooks around the opening of the Suez Canal, British occupation

of Egypt and First and Second World Wars. With no German or Austrian colonies in the region, the output of German-language books is closely associated with the late nineteenth-century boom in tourism to the Middle East, although with some earlier materials directed at commercial travellers (Anton Hassan's works in the 1850s) and some later ones at German-speaking Jewish immigrants to Palestine. The Italian pattern is similar, although with a few works in the 1880s coinciding with Italian colonial ambitions in Eritrea and the Red Sea region. Yiddish and Hebrew works, as noted in Chapter 6, closely follow waves of persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe, and thus of emigration to Palestine. The last Yiddish work was in 1936, reflecting the eventual dominance of Hebrew as the language of daily life of Jews in Palestine.

## Social networks

As the preceding chapters have shown, authors of Arabic phrasebooks often knew one another, and knew one another's books. In the following section, I will examine plagiarism and 'borrowing' between phrasebooks. First, I look at social networks among phrasebook authors, and teachers and learners of Arabic more widely. Academic networks – of friendship, tutelage and patronage – have long been crucial in shaping the direction of a scholar's work, and dictating the opportunities afforded them (see e.g. Pietsch 2013). In nineteenth-century Europe, academic Orientalist networks were strengthened by periods of study abroad – for those who could afford it – and by meetings like the Oriental Congresses (Servais 2014; Ryad 2018; Zakī 1894). The history of the teaching and learning of colloquial Arabic through phrasebooks runs parallel to, and frequently overlaps with, the history of academic, Orientalist Arabic studies. In the same way, Orientalist networks and those of teachers and learners of colloquial Arabic also overlap.

     Graph 1 shows social connections between teachers and learners of Arabic. The full data set from which the graph is generated is available in the Gephi file, but readers may prefer to use the visualisations provided in PDF and JPEG formats. Most of the 'nodes' (which here represent individual people) are authors of phrasebooks, but I have also included some other well-known historical figures (T. E. Lawrence, Sigmund Freud, Gustave Flaubert) and scholars of Classical Arabic (Silvestre de Sacy, D. S. Margoliouth) where these allow us to create links between other nodes, or to reveal something about an individual's wider milieu. Lines on the graph indicate personal acquaintance. Arrows indicate

pupil–teacher relationships, with the arrow pointing in the direction of the pupil. All these connections have been established by references in published or archival documents to the individuals knowing one another. This graph is merely illustrative, and not to be used for the purpose of statistical analysis. I have not input the entire available data set on the social networks of these figures, so the graph represents only a fraction of these individuals' relationships, not the entire social and intellectual world in which they moved. For example, I have not included much detail on missionary networks in Lebanon and the United States, which I am sure would ultimately have yielded additional linkages between al-Shidyāq and Kayat on the one hand, and the Arbeely family on the other, across the generations.

Unsurprisingly, Silvestre de Sacy is the spider at the centre of the web. Chapter 1 showed how well connected he was to contemporary Arabists, and how younger scholars, including Egyptians such as al-Ṭahṭāwī, were keen to attend his classes, or to seek acquaintance with him. Sacy was in a position of considerable power in the world of European Orientalism, deriving from his official position at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes, his age (he was born in 1758) and his status. Annick Fenet has demonstrated how a network of patronage was created among the scholars he supported for membership of the Société asiatique (Fenet 2016). Sacy may not have approved of the teaching of 'arabe vulgaire' in Paris, and visiting Arab scholars may have found his command of the spoken language lacking, but scholars and teachers of Arabic revolve around him on the graph like spokes on a wheel. His connections are, however, almost exclusively to intellectuals in Paris. Foreigners such as Jonas King attended his classes in Paris, and he had connections to Arabs who were visiting or in exile in Paris, but he never visited the Arab world, and is not well connected to, for example, the *'ulamā'* of Cairo.

Al-Ṭahṭāwī, in contrast, bridges the worlds of European and Egyptian scholarship. He is firmly embedded in Cairene intellectual networks, with relationships to earlier generations of Egyptian scholars, such as al-'Aṭṭār. His French connections, from his time in Paris, are also numerous. Crucially, his connections to a younger generation of scholars are also close, thanks in particular to his position at the Madrasat al-Alsun. Through these – and through a few European sojourners in Egypt, such as Edward Lane and Joseph Russegger – he is indirectly connected to authors of Arabic phrasebooks well into the later nineteenth century.

Another central figure in the graph is Fāris al-Shidyāq. Like al-Ṭahṭāwī, he links multiple important groups, in particular in Britain and France. As a Christian, however (before his conversion to Islam later in

life), he lacked strong ties to the *'ulamā'*, apart from his acquaintance with al-Ṭahṭāwī and attendance of some classes at al-Azhar.

Some obvious national and geographical groupings emerge. We find a cluster of scholars resident in Cairo in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who are linked to one another by multiple ties. The group, which includes al-Dasūqī, al-Ṭanṭāwī, Edward Lane and Fulgence Fresnel, were all acquainted with one another. The cluster around Silvestre de Sacy, as I have already noted, was based in Paris. Anton Hassan, who left Egypt as a very young man, has an intellectual circle which is almost entirely in Austria. Jerusalem (Elias Nasrallah Haddad's circle) and Oxford (Margoliouth, Odeh and Lawrence) emerge as places where intensive interaction between teachers and learners of colloquial Arabic took place. Specific institutional loci can also be identified: Cairo University in the early twentieth century is where the link between Carlo Nallino, Israel Ben-Zeev and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn took place.

There are some significant areas where we do not see intensive interaction taking place. British scholars, for example, tend not to have close connections to their French counterparts. While there is some intensive contact between Arab and European scholars in the early nineteenth century, European authors of Arabic phrasebooks later in the nineteenth century were not usually well connected to the traditional *'ulamā'*. Indeed, many late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century phrasebook authors – such as Carl Thimm – have few, or only very tangential links to academic circles anywhere.

## Plagiarism, borrowing, imitation

Graph 2 represents the 'genetic' relationship of individual books to one another (as with Graph 1, users can access this in Gephi, PDF and JPEG formats). Individual nodes represent books, with their author and year of publication. Lines between books represent reproduction of structure or contents, with the arrow pointing from the source book towards its 'borrower'. The graph can be used as a proxy for visualising the agency of individual authors in constructing their books. As with the social network graph discussed above, the data set is of necessity incomplete and imperfect and therefore should not be used for quantitative or statistical analysis. But it is worth remarking on the fact that there are one hundred individual items represented in this diagram: almost half of my total corpus of language books either copied in part from earlier books, or were themselves copied. It is likely, for reasons I will discuss, that this is a conservative estimate.

Few if any of these individual acts of 'borrowing' were remarked upon in other written sources at the time. A small number of authors themselves acknowledge, usually in the prefaces to their books, that they have compiled their work from pre-existing sources, and an even smaller number name them. I have been able to establish most of the links in the network graph simply because I have become so familiar with the corpus of books. Few of them have been digitised using optical character recognition, so I have been reliant on my memory. In some cases, I had good reason to suppose that a book would contain copying from an earlier book, even from the beginning of my research. Such is the case with authors who published multiple books, and might be expected to self-plagiarise in later ones (Caussin de Perceval, Fāris al-Shidyāq, August Seidel). Books that were published as part of a series also prompted me to search for similarities to other books in the same series ('Thimm's' phrasebooks, 'Arabic from Scratch', Ernst Klippel and Karl Wied). Biographical research sometimes threw up suggestive information: the fact that Yisrael Zilberman's father wrote a French textbook suggested that the son might have used this as a model for his own book, as indeed he did (Chapter 6). If an author had no known connection with the Middle East and I could not find any evidence that they had ever studied Arabic, then I worked on the assumption that they had used another book to write their own, and went looking for the source (although, as in the case of Singara Devi Chenapa, I did not always find it). Often, an unusual phrase helped me to establish a connection between books, such as 'Do you wish the pantaloons to be made after the last fashion?' from al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840. If this appeared in a book, then I knew that the author had consulted al-Shidyāq and Badger, since the phrase was too bizarre to crop up by accident. In other cases, a phrase or form of wording triggered déjà vu, and I made a note of it so that I could make the connection when I came across it again in another book. Most of the links in the network graph are therefore the product of repeated perusal of the corpus of books, and a decent memory, and it should be assumed that there are other linkages which I did not spot.

The practice of what I will for now, for the sake of simplicity, call 'plagiarism' was widespread in language book publication in the nineteenth century. James Meakin even felt the need to state that he had not based his own *Introduction to the Arabic of Morocco* on any other: 'This is no work based either on another in its own class in any language, or on a dictionary. Each word has been culled from the lips of the people, and for the most part immediately entered in an ever ready note-book' (Meakin 1891, iii). Language book plagiarism is a recognised historical phenomenon in Europe (see e.g. Villoria-Prieto and López 2018), although

there has been little work on it in books for Arabic (Moscoso García 2012 is an exception; see also Zack 2023). Discussions of historical plagiarism in publishing more broadly tend to focus on literary works and on the development of copyright and intellectual property law (e.g. Loewenstein 2002; Macfarlane 2007; Saint-Amour 2011). The question of copyright is, however, essentially irrelevant in the present study: where copyright laws even existed, they were more or less ignored by language book authors and publishers, even after international intellectual property agreements such as the Berne Convention of 1886 came into force.

Some popular Arabic instruction books do bear statements about legal ownership of the material contained in them. These statements are most common in books published by established commercial presses, such as the Meyers Sprachführer series, or Thimm's and Marlborough's 'Self-Taught' series (Chapter 3). The wording 'All rights reserved' (or the equivalent in other languages) is typical in the early twentieth century. In some jurisdictions, copyrighting a work required registration, with a fee, which likely deterred many smaller publishers from doing so. In earlier periods, we sometimes find more elaborate formulations designed to prevent the publication of pirate editions, stating that the book should be regarded as counterfeit if it does not bear the signature of the author (see, for example, Martin 1847). Such statements, however, do not preclude either that the book was itself copied, or that it would not go on to be copied with no apparent repercussions. Sergeant O'Neill (Chapter 5) marked his *Soldiers' Guide on English, Arabic, French & German* as 'Copyrighted throughout the Commonwealth', even though it was plagiarised from 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Zaki. The Baedeker guidebooks were issued by a major publishing house, which would certainly have sought to protect its intellectual property, yet these too were plagiarised by Harry Pirie Gordon during the First World War: 'after all a brutal and licentious soldiery must be expected to loot something' (Chapter 5). This brings us to the heart of the question: intellectual property rights were only meaningful if they could be protected and enforced.

For plagiarism to be countered, it had first to be detected by the original author or publisher. This was unlikely to happen if the books concerned were published in different countries, or some years apart. If the original author was dead or the original publisher no longer in business, then plagiarism might reasonably have been considered a victimless crime. Assaad Kayat, for example, had been dead for some years when his *Eastern Traveller's Interpreter* was copied by Gabriel Sacroug. If plagiarism was between books in different languages, then it could be all the more difficult to detect. Pedro María del Castillo y Olivas, in Spanish, might have had

a reasonable expectation of getting away with cribbing from Honorat Delaporte, whose original book was in French.

If plagiarism were identified, then the original author or publisher would still have to take legal action against the plagiarising party. While a major publisher with financial resources behind it might seek to protect its intellectual property in the law courts in their own country, their ability to do so across international borders was limited. No Middle Eastern and North African countries, with the exception of Tunisia and Morocco under French colonial rule, were signatories to any of the major international copyright agreements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Green 1883, for example, which was published in Cairo, could not be prosecuted for making (freely acknowledged) use of books published in Germany and the United Kingdom – nor, indeed, of Nakhlah 1874, which was also published in Cairo, since there was no specific law on intellectual property within Egypt itself at this period (on the history of Egyptian copyright law, see Amine 2013, 2014). Even where intellectual property law existed and was enforceable, smaller publishers and individual authors are unlikely to have had the time and money to pursue court cases against plagiarists. The Ottoman Authors' Rights Act of 1910, for example, does not ever seem to have led to an actual court case (Birnhack 2012, 83–86; see this work in general on copyright law in Mandate Palestine). Notions of authorship and plagiarism among *nahḍawī* authors evolved over the course of the nineteenth century (Khayat 2019).

The linkages illustrated in Graph 2 are not all of the same nature. Some represent what we might think of as 'real' plagiarism – dishonest and unacknowledged reproduction of a text written by someone else – while others are more subtle. There is a continuum, as anyone who teaches undergraduates knows, between acceptable paraphrasing of the work of others and outright plagiarism. At its worst, plagiarism is a crime not just against the original author, but against the reader, who must deal with poor-quality, inaccurate or outdated work. The classic example of this in the phrasebook genre is *English as She is Spoke*, which I have already briefly considered in Chapter 3. The author of this notorious work used a French–English dictionary to translate someone else's Portuguese–French phrasebook into the disastrous *O Novo Guia da Conversação em Portuguez e Inglez*. Carl Thimm employed a similar method in some of his phrasebooks. As well as benefiting dishonestly from the labour of others, he was also providing his readers with a defective product.

The boldest and most obvious examples of plagiarism are the phrasebooks published in Cairo during the First and Second World Wars: Hammam, Chawky, Zaki (and O'Neill) in the First World War, and Galal,

Helmy and Murad in the Second (Chapter 5). Mirhom, in the Second World War, also copied a phrasebook by Skarous from the First. Wartime plagiarism of language books is essentially opportunistic: 'authors' and printers/publishers saw an opportunity to profit from the presence of large numbers of foreign soldiers in Cairo, in the same way as the providers of other goods and services. Reprinting an existing phrasebook under a new name and selling it to soldiers on leave was a good business opportunity.

A rather different form of copying represented in the chart is that of borrowing the structure and content of an existing phrasebook for other languages, and either adding a new language or replacing one of the existing ones. Trivaks' Yiddish–Arabic book was copied directly from a Hebrew–Arabic work by Trietsch (Chapter 6), the only difference being that he translated the Hebrew into Yiddish. Sacroug translated some of Nolden's work into English (Chapter 3; Zenker and Vaujany also plagiarised Nolden, but in the original French: see Zack 2023 for a discussion of the relationship between these four books). Other links are not so much cases of plagiarism as of inspiration and conformity to an established genre. Mallouf's polyglot phrasebooks for Maisonneuve, for example, replicated the format and contents of an existing series published by Baudry (Chapter 3). In a wider sense, Mallouf was also composing his phrasebooks within the conventions of an existing Ottoman genre of polyglot phrasebook or grammar. Yisrael Zilberman adapted his own father's French book for Arabic (Chapter 6). ʿAbdalla Kalzī al-Ḥalabī modelled his Arabic–Russian book on a Russian–French–German phrasebook by Coursier (Chapter 1). Shidiac 1856 was commissioned as an Arabic version of Barker 1854 (Chapter 2). In cases like these, it is fairer to speak of adaptation than of plagiarism: the authors are borrowing the vessel, but not the contents.

In books which are cribbed only in part from an existing work, the most common elements to be copied are the guide to pronunciation and the dialogues. Samples from all the guides to pronunciation are collected in my Catalogue of Arabic Phrasebooks, and it can be seen that many authors take their descriptions of the 'difficult' consonants in Arabic directly from their predecessors (see further Mairs forthcoming-f). Describing *khāʾ* as the 'ch' in 'loch', for example, becomes the standard way of explaining the sound in English, probably because few dialects of English contain the phoneme /x/ and the author could not think of another example. Some of the pronunciation descriptions given in Hassam 1883 are the same as those in Kayat 1844, which shows that the author consulted this book (or Sacroug), even though he did not copy from it more substantially.

The practice of reproducing dialogues from earlier works dates back to manuscript Arabic phrasebooks, the texts used by *jeunes de langues* and diplomats discussed in Chapter 1. Savary, for example, used dialogues which, as Langlès noted, 'sont répandus depuis long-temps parmi les droguemans du Levant' (Savary and Langlès 1813, ix) and can be found in many extant manuscripts. The most commonly copied dialogues in later decades were those of al-Shidyāq and Badger 1840 (Chapter 2). The book seems to have been widely available, since it was pillaged for material by Hayes (or his publisher, since Hayes had died two years previously) and 'Abd al-Fattāh in India; the Sarkīs brothers in Beirut; Malaty in Cairo; and Tien in London. As well as its geographical reach, al-Shidyāq and Badger's book also had an astonishing longevity. Elias A. Elias' *An Egyptian-Arabic Manual for Self-Study*, which was first published in 1899 and primarily directed at Arabic speakers learning English, adapts their dialogues. This book was reprinted for many decades (I have one with an owner's inscription of 1992), meaning that the dialogues written by al-Shidyāq and Badger in the 1840s survived in active use, at least in part, for more than a century and a half.

Some authors drew by preference or necessity on books in their own language. August Seidel, for example, who was based in Germany and did not travel in the Middle East (Chapter 3), used four German books (including one of his own) and two French books in preparing his Egyptian manual. Arthur O. Green (Chapter 4), writing in Egypt, used mostly English works, but also one German. Anton Hassan (Chapter 1) shows a slight preference for works in German (his second language), but as a native Arabic speaker he was less constrained by the language of publication, and freely used works on Arabic in French, English and Latin. Books written in Arabic by writers such as Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad Qadrī (Chapter 1) are mined for material only by other native Arabic speakers – with the notable exception of Carlo Nallino (Chapter 3), whose Arabic was so good that it impressed even Ṭāhā Ḥusayn.

One tendency that is apparent in the chart is a disconnect between French and English works – something also visible in the network graph of relationships between authors of Arabic phrasebooks. There is an important caveat to be made here, which is that this chart does not include French–Arabic phrasebooks for the Maghreb, which fall outside the scope of my project. If they were included (and the corpus thereby probably doubled in size), then doubtless there would be instances where, say, a French work for Algeria was plagiarised in an English work for Egypt. We have seen above how at least one French work for Algeria was plagiarised

in Spanish. But even with this caveat, I think it can be seen that French and British authors of books on colloquial Arabic tended to consult one another less frequently than either of them did books in their own language or in German. In particular, I have found no English work that makes use of any of the works by Caussin de Perceval and his colleagues teaching 'arabe vulgaire' at the École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes. This pattern may owe something to national rivalries, but probably also to the different priorities France and Britain had in the Arab world.

At the other end of the spectrum from cynical plagiarism, borrowing can be a creative and productive strategy. The best example of this is Khalīfa b. Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī, one of the pioneers of the translation movement centred on the Madrasat al-Alsun in Cairo. Khalīfa Effendi's own teacher, al-Ṭahṭāwī, had been taught French in Paris using monolingual French books: Lhomond's grammar, but also books intended for teaching schoolchildren. The books used by Khalīfa Effendi in preparing his own instruction book for French provide us, as we saw in Chapter 1, with indirect evidence for the books that were used in teaching at the Madrasat al-Alsun before this point. Lhomond is an obvious influence, but so too is Hamonière – whose descendants ranged from the sublime (*Qalā'id al-jumān fī fawā'id al-tarjumān*) to the ridiculous (*English as She is Spoke*). Khalīfa Effendi has deployed his source material thoughtfully, to answer the specific needs of Egyptians learning French in the era of Muḥammad 'Alī's drive for modernisation. His work also, however, remained grounded in the Arabic grammatical tradition, again as befits a student of al-Ṭahṭāwī: the verb *frapper* is used in examples in place of the Arabic *ḍaraba*.

The chart also tells us something about the timescale of plagiarism. While some works were pirated almost immediately (the phrasebooks published in Cairo during the First and Second World Wars being a good example), a book might just as often be pressed into service as inspiration or source material for another decades after its first publication. In the first part of the nineteenth century, this is understandable: there were few enough available books on colloquial Arabic, so Caussin de Perceval (for example) might use Herbin, or Anton Hassan use Caussin de Perceval, Oberleitner or, indeed, Agapito da Fiemme. But it is also common practice in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Sacroug, in 1874, went back to works by Kayat and Nolden from the 1840s. In 1894, Seidel used al-Ṭanṭāwī's book of 46 years earlier. In some cases, this is probably because authors simply used the books available to them. In others, it seems clear that individual works continued to hold prestige over a long period of time. This is the case with Gairdner's

*Egyptian Colloquial Arabic: A Conversation Grammar* (1917), which became the model for works written for Sudanese Arabic. Interestingly, the only book that copies in any way from Van Ess – and that only slightly – is the simplified version by Hiddleston. The original, as the large number of surviving copies indicates, was ubiquitous (see further below).

Let me reiterate that inclusion in Graph 2 does not mean that a book was simply cribbed from another. The lines on the graph represent the full spectrum of 'plagiarism': from stealing another's book and putting one's own name on it, to respectful acknowledgement of 'borrowing', to less tangible inspiration and emulation. These lines of influence can be traced between books in many different languages, and the process was facilitated by European and Ottoman multilingualism. The graph shows us how widely Arabic phrasebooks circulated, and provides an important insight into how the genre developed and crystallised.

## Annotations

### Approaching marginalia

Although some of the Arabic phrasebooks I have discussed in this volume are available online as digital scans, in most cases I have handled the book itself, sometimes in several different copies. This has been crucial to the present project: a book's size, its durability, the quality of its paper and the annotations made on it by its past owners all tell us something about how it was produced and used.

I possess my own copies of about 40 per cent of the phrasebooks listed in the Catalogue. (Thankfully, as a fellow participant in a conference on the history of language learning and teaching remarked, collecting used language textbooks is a fairly inexpensive vice.) I purchased most of these online, from eBay or used book dealers, and acquired the rest from several years of trawling second-hand bookshops around the world. I had most success in the United Kingdom, the United States, Egypt and Palestine/Israel. By far the most common book I encountered was Van Ess's *The Spoken Arabic of Mesopotamia/Iraq*. Various editions – especially late twentieth-century ones – of Elias A. Elias' *Egyptian Arabic Manual for Self-Study*, and his dictionaries, are also relatively common. Books by Alec Cury/Alexander Khoori are the next most commonly encountered in bookshops and online. The many Arabic books produced for use in French Algeria, especially those by Machuel and Soualah, appear quite frequently, too, but since I did not have the chance to scour second-hand

bookshops in the Maghreb, my sample is tilted against these. In many other cases, I have only been able to source a single copy of the book on the market in several years of hunting. For a couple of phrasebooks, my own copy is the only one I have been able to locate anywhere, including in libraries.

I have consulted copies of phrasebooks in person in libraries in the United Kingdom, the United States, Egypt, Palestine and Israel. Other libraries in the United States, Australia and Israel were kind enough to send me scans when I was unable to visit in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I used online scans of Arabic phrasebooks from libraries in these countries, as well as Germany and France. Overall, the impression I get of the present-day distribution of colloquial Arabic instruction materials in libraries is a fairly predictable one. They occur most frequently in the countries of origin of the intended user of the book (e.g. plenty of copies of phrasebooks for British soldiers in libraries in the United Kingdom, fewer in the United States) and in foreign institutes in Middle Eastern countries (e.g. the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies and Institut français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo, and the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem). Libraries in Europe and North America are more likely to have searchable online catalogues than those in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, so my survey is by no means comprehensive.

Overall, taking the used book market and library collections together, colloquial Arabic books are not especially rare. Individual books may be – for example, I know of only two surviving copies of Singara Devi Chenapa's *Colloquial Arabic in Romanised Characters* – but at any one time there are dozens of works of the genre on eBay, and most university libraries in Europe and North America contain a selection. In the absence of figures on initial print runs, it is difficult to say much about the rate of survival of these books. Copies of Van Ess are encountered quite frequently in the United Kingdom because it was the 'set text' for military Arabic exams, but it may also survive well because it had a higher than typical print run, and because it was sold in hardback covers. Paperback phrasebooks produced privately in Cairo during the First and Second World Wars survive poorly because of their flimsy paper covers and poor-quality contents, but were also probably produced in shorter print runs.

Looking at the physical condition of surviving copies may provide us with some insight into how and with what success phrasebooks were used. The missionary Ion Keith-Falconer observed of his wife Gwendolen's Arabic studies in Aden in 1885: 'G. is struggling with Arabic. Arabic grammars should be strongly bound, because learners are so often found to dash them frantically on the ground' (Sinker

1888, 156). Gwendolen Keith-Falconer's Arabic books probably do not survive; nor, for quite different reasons, do those of the Canadian novelist Gilbert Parker, in Egypt in 1898, who described 'prowling the purlieus of Cairo with an Arabic grammar and a vocabulary of donkey-boy Arabic' (*Morning Post*, 21 February 1899, 7). Books that were thrown about in frustration, or, conversely, so 'well loved' that they fell apart, tend not to make it into libraries or to be offered for sale, since they have such a low market value. (On several occasions, online used book dealers have emailed me after a purchase to spell out the book's poor condition in more detail, to allow me to withdraw from the sale – when, ironically, books in poor condition that had been scribbled over were exactly what I wanted.)

Unfortunately, there is little we can learn from the books that do not survive. The ones that do survive are not all in good condition, but some are. Some that were acquired by libraries shortly after publication are in mint condition. However, what surprised me when I first began collecting Arabic phrasebooks was how many examples which had been in private hands all their 'lives' were also pristine. There is a sample bias here: books in good condition by definition are more likely to survive and to be sold, and ones in bad condition less so. But even compared to contemporary works of other genres, my impression is that Arabic instruction books tend to be in unusually good condition. Even a Victorian novel in a good state tends to show evidence of being read, with the paper more supple from the pages being turned, the corners bumped and the occasional dog-ear. In contrast, I often come across Arabic phrasebooks (such as my copy of Hassam 1883) whose pages are crisp and their corners still sharp. Sometimes the pages are even uncut.

The reason for this is surely learner disillusionment. As we have seen throughout the previous chapters, instruction books made bold claims that they could make learning Arabic easy. When someone tried to use a book like this, they would quickly realise that this was not true. A tourist in the 1880s, for example, might buy a copy of Hassam's *Arabic Self-Taught* in London, open it once or twice on the steamer out to Egypt, then give up and abandon it in their trunk for the rest of their trip. It would be unpacked and shoved in the attic when they returned to England, eventually to find its way into a second-hand bookshop when a descendant died and the house was cleared a century later. Pristine books are a testament to failed language learning.

It is books in semi-good condition, however, that offer the best evidence of unsuccessful learning. My copy of Fatah 1912, for example, was annotated by the artist Wilfrid Blunt (1901–1987), and bears his

signature inside the cover. Blunt has made neat pencil annotations on the first few lessons of the book, filling in his answers to the transcription exercises. He gets these right. After a few lessons, however, the annotations stop. Did Blunt find the book too hard going and give up, or did other commitments intervene?

It is difficult to move beyond the impressionistic in assessing the physical condition of books, evocative though it may be to feel the texture of a page and imagine how often it was turned by a past owner. In the rest of this section, I will focus more specifically on users' annotations, like Blunt's, and what they can tell us about how books were used and with what success. The study of annotations like these has taken off in the past couple of decades (Jackson 2001). Marginalia reveal how readers engaged with books and their contents. As well as edited collections covering multiple periods (Schuerewegen 2020; Spedding and Tankard 2021), Renaissance and Early Modern Europe have been especially well served (Myers et al. 2005; Sherman 2008; Orgel 2015; the nineteenth century: Stauffer 2021). While I have found these works inspirational, they are principally concerned with literary or scholarly marginalia. Users' writings in language books, in contrast, are more akin to annotations on a musical score, or performance notes on a play script. (They are perhaps closer to the latter even than they are to students' notes in school textbooks.) I make these comparisons because annotations in phrasebooks tend to be directed at helping the user 'perform'. Unlike marginalia in works of literature, philosophy or science, they tend not to record the reader's reactions to the text, or their desire to engage in dialogue with the text or other readers, but do often show the user trying to shape the text to their own present or future needs. Most of the examples I discuss here seem to represent annotation by a learner, but some may have been made at the direction of a teacher. The early chapters of my own copy of *Al-Kitaab fii Taʿallum al-ʿArabiyya, Part One* have *ʾiʿrab* (grammatical case endings) pencilled onto words, because my teacher disagreed with the textbook's approach and had the class add them so that we could learn a more elevated form of *fuṣḥā* from the very beginning.

As many studies of literary marginalia have pointed out, until quite recently in history it was not only acceptable, but expected, for readers to write in the margins of their books. In Renaissance Europe, for example, 'readers were not only *allowed* to write notes in and on their books, they were *taught* to do so in school' (Sherman 2008, 3). While many people today frown upon the idea of writing in books at all, instruction manuals, such as phrasebooks, are one genre where it is perhaps considered more acceptable to do so. Indeed, several Arabic phrasebooks anticipate their

users writing in them, including blank pages headed 'Notes' or similar (e.g. Meakin 1891; Robertson and Ayrût 1898; Hiddleston 1936). A missionary writing in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1824 advised that a learner of Arabic who encountered new words should 'look for it in his dictionary; and if he does not find it, he should add it in both parts of his dictionary in the proper place, with a pencil, in the margin' (February 1824, 104). Although writing in books was common in the past, scholars investigating marginalia in Renaissance and Early Modern European books – the most thoroughly studied contexts – face some significant challenges. Not only are 'well loved' books less likely to survive to the present day, but book dealers and collectors have often deliberately sought to remove marginalia by washing or trimming books' margins (Sherman 2008, 6–7). Fortunately, few Arabic instruction books have a high enough market value for it to be worth anyone's while to do this, so annotations survive much better.

Another of the difficulties in assessing the extent of marginalia noted by Sherman (2008), however, is relevant to my corpus here: writing in the margins of a book is often complemented or superseded by notes kept in a separate notebook or on loose sheets. As books pass into libraries or onto the market, these notes are usually separated from the book. In a few cases, discussed below, I have been fortunate enough to find a previous owner's loose notes folded and accidentally left inside a book. I have had some revealing conversations with book dealers on this subject. One dealer I contacted was selling a large number of books on languages and other subjects from a single previous owner. The Arabic books included Spiro 1895, de Bussy 1910 and Harder 1911, showing that the owner had taken an interest in Egyptian, Algerian and standard written Arabic. I emailed the dealer and asked if he could tell me anything about the size and scope of the collection. It turned out to have belonged to an academic who had recently passed away, and whose books had been sold at auction in job lots. In the boxes along with the books, the dealer had found notebooks and other ephemera of no resale value, which he very kindly gave me in case they could be of some use in writing this book. The academic was a parsimonious annotator of his language books, usually marking only his name and the date in pencil, but he also kept copious notes in these separate notebooks. He even used printed address books with tabs for each letter of the alphabet to make his own alphabetised vocabulary lists. Surviving marginalia therefore likely represent only the tip of the iceberg of language learners' note-taking practices. In a copy of Manassewitsch 1895 now in the Weston Library in Oxford, a

previous owner has enclosed some of his own notes on the Arabic verb forms, but also an article on 'The Terrible Jap Language' clipped from a newspaper. Presumably he was finding Arabic equally difficult.

Relatively few of the library copies of Arabic instruction books that I have examined contain annotations, unless these were made by a previous owner before the book was donated to or bought by the library. As well as prohibitions against writing in library books, another reason why this is so is that language book annotations are usually intended for the user's own future reference. If the book is not going to be permanently in their possession, then there is little point in writing in it.[1]

About a third of my own copies of Arabic phrasebooks have annotations. This figure is not necessarily representative. On the one hand, books with extensive marginalia, as noted above, are less likely to be offered for sale. On the other, I have been deliberately seeking out copies of books with users' annotations. There is no way of knowing whether these two opposing forces have cancelled each other out. I am inclined to agree with Sherman's general conclusion, for his own corpus, that the practice of writing in books was much more widespread than the number of surviving copies with annotations might suggest (Sherman 2008, 5).

Before I move on to the specifics of book annotation, let me note some general trends across my corpus. As with Blunt's copy of Fatah 1912, to which I referred above, annotation of Arabic instruction books is usually concentrated in the first pages or chapters. It is unusual to find a book that has been annotated the whole way through, supporting the notion that the rate of attrition among Arabic learners was typically high. By far the most common form of annotation is the owner's name, and where this occurs it is almost always on the front endpapers or at the head of the title page. Underlining and additional vocabulary are also common. Corrections are less frequently encountered. Vocabulary lists quite often have dashes or asterisks next to particular words, suggesting that they had some special relevance for the user, or that they were checking off words they had memorised.

## Ownership inscriptions

In itself, it is nice to know the name of the person who once owned the book, but ownership inscriptions can also provide useful information on where and under what circumstances a book was used. Thanks to online genealogical services such as Ancestry, almost all Europeans, North Americans and Australasians who wrote their names in my collection of Arabic books can be identified. Documents such as census returns,

ship manifests and military medal rolls give their family associations, dates of birth and death, and travel movements. Arabs and those of other nationalities are more difficult to trace.

The Victoria and Albert Museum's copy of al-Miṣrī 1850 is inscribed 'Cyril Graham (1856) Cairo' with *al-Miṣr al-Qahira* (*sic*: 'the Egypt Cairo') in Arabic script below. Graham (1834–1895), who spent time in the Middle East in the late 1850s and 1860s, is described in one obituary as a 'master of Arabic' (*Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 56.5, February 1896, 200). Whether or not this was later true, in 1856 he was clearly still a learner, since he gives *Miṣr* 'Egypt' a definite article, which it does not need, and omits the long *ā* vowel in *al-Qāhira*. Graham's is not the only owner's inscription to show us a learner taking their first tentative steps in writing Arabic. The Institut français d'archéologie orientale (IFAO) in Cairo has a copy of Mandarawi's *Méthode ultra: français-arabe, en caractères européens* with the name 'Bruyère' on the front cover, and on the back, in Arabic script, *Franswāz Brūyir*. The letter *wāw* in her surname is connected to the following letter, which it should not be. Françoise Bruyère was the niece of Pierre Jouguet, who directed the IFAO from 1928 to 1940. In 1930, she married archaeologist Bernard Bruyère, who excavated at Deir el-Medina on the Theban West Bank (Solé 2019, 247). On the back cover, Bruyère has also written 'Arabe' and, tentatively, *'Arabī* in Arabic script. She went on to spend decades of her life in Egypt, especially in and around the village of Gurna on the Theban West Bank, and became a good Arabic speaker. Her phrasebook in the IFAO library shows her at the beginning of this process.

My own copy of Mandarawi's *Salamat New English-Arabic Manual* has the unconnected Arabic letters *k b l* on the cover, which may be a learner trying to write their initials. One of my copies of Nakhlah 1874 has been personalised with the owner's name in gilt letters on the spine, in Roman and Arabic script. 'David McAllister' is, however, rendered *Dīfir Makālistir* in the Arabic. Either McAllister himself has made a mistake in writing the final *dāl* of 'David' as the similar-looking *rā'*, or the (Arab) binder, unfamiliar with the foreign name, has done so. A copy of Seidel 1894 digitised from the collection of the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt belonged first to the theologian Caspar-René Gregory (1846–1917) and then (from 1919) to the Orientalist Johann Fück (1894–1974). Gregory has tried to write his name in Arabic script, but has used the letter *hā'* to write the 'e' vowels so that 'René Gregory' becomes *rhnh ghrhghūrī*.[2] Almost all of the attempts at writing Arabic in owners' inscriptions which I have seen contain mistakes like these: marking their name was one of the first things

someone did when acquiring a book, and their Arabic was usually not yet quite up to the challenge. An exception is the copy of Meakin 1891 digitised on Google Books which has, on the back endpaper, a competent if shaky Arabic inscription: *Albirt Idward Shipprfīld min Ḥ A S Mārs 29/62* ('Albert Edward Shipperfield [or Chipperfield?] from Ḥ A S March 29/62'). The writing is accurate, but with full *tashkīl* (diacritics), including short vowels and *sukūn* ('zero vowel' mark). This, along with the slightly wobbly handwriting, marks it out as the work of a learner.

Books with multiple owners' signatures are particularly interesting, showing how they continued to be used for extended periods of time. My copy of Saleh 1874 has an inscription from the merchant Gottlieb Wild, in Cairo in 1874, and a later one by an E. J. Saul in 1912. I have a copy of Green 1887 (second edition) inscribed by 'A. H. Corble Lieut. R.G.A. Khartoum Sudan' and underneath 'D. B. Jelliffe Medani, Sudan Dec '47'. Corble (1883–1944) was an Olympic fencer who served with British forces in Egypt and Sudan during the First World War, returning to England in 1920 (Peeters and Vanleeuwe 1987, 15–19). Derrick Jelliffe (1921–1992) was a doctor who specialised in tropical paediatrics. This book was printed in England in 1887, and passed through the hands of unknown owners before Corble acquired it in Khartoum in about 1918. Corble had it rebound, with his name stamped on the cover in gilt lettering, and had the first couple of pages, which seem to have become detached, reinforced and stuck back in. This may mean that the book was in poor condition by 1918. But Corble was a bibliophile (his fine collection of fencing books is now in the library of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), so it may be that he habitually rebound his books, whatever their condition. Jelliffe may have acquired the book in England, but it is intriguing to think that it may instead have remained in Sudan in someone else's possession for the 30 years since Corble left. I purchased it from a book dealer in California (where Jelliffe spent his later years) in 2018. My copy of Amery 1905 also had a long life in the Sudan. A British doctor, Douglas Oliver Richards (1892–1968), crossed out a previous owner's name (now illegible) and wrote his own in Wad Medani in July 1923, then kept his location updated: Kassala in December 1924 and Berber near Atbara in November 1925.

The copy of Cameron 1892 in the Biblioteca AECID in Madrid, digitised on Biblioteca Islamica, has multiple library stamps from British consulates in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said, dated from 1897 to 1911. D. A. Cameron, as we have seen in Chapter 4, had a long career in the Arab world and retired as Consul-General at Alexandria in 1919. This copy has a dedication from Cameron himself at the head of the Preface: 'To my dear

friend, Margery Abrahams, from the author D. A. C. Merton 23/4/23'. Did Cameron 'liberate' a copy of his own book from the consulate library when he left?

My copy of Sterling 1912, appropriately for a book written by a minister and published at St George's Collegiate Church in Jerusalem, remained consistently in the hands of missionaries. It was inscribed first by Chester T. Hucheson (1896–1983), an American missionary in Syria in the 1930s, and then by Eunice L. McClurkin (1914–2015) at the American Mission in Latakia. McClurkin was in Syria in 1947 to 1957, and after she died presumably her books were donated to the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary Library in Pittsburgh, from whom I purchased it in a book sale in 2020.

Other owners' inscriptions are indicative of the range of people who took an interest in colloquial Arabic. Signatures on wartime Arabic phrasebooks can often be matched to soldiers who were serving in the Middle East at the time, as might be expected. Sometimes we find wartime soldiers' signatures on older books, such as the Thomas B. Matheson who signed my copy of Tien 1885 in Jerusalem in 1918. This makes sense, but one wonders what Lieutenant S. Churchill of the Royal Scots Fusiliers was doing with Hassam 1883 in Thayetmyo, Burma, in 1885; he does not seem from military records ever to have served in the Middle East. Some suggest a less practical and more scholarly interest in Arabic, such as the Bodleian copy of al-Shidyāq 1832 which was owned by the Basque language specialist Edward S. Dodgson (1857–1922). The Assyriologist A. H. Sayce was the previous owner of the Bodleian's copy of Sacroug 1874; I will discuss this book and its annotations in more depth below. My copy of Cadri 1861 is inscribed (in Roman script) by a Mahomet Chaquire, who presumably used it to learn French. I have tried, without success, to trace him. An owner's stamp of 'A.-H. Hamdi Avocat' appears in my copy of Heury 1867; like Chaquire, he must have been using the book for help with French, not Arabic.

Overall, owners' inscriptions show us that Arabic instruction books sometimes remained in active use for very long periods of time, and in particular that single copies could pass from hand to hand in a single location, as old foreign members of staff left and new ones arrived. Occasionally, too, we find stamps of the bookshops where books were sold. An S. Corio bought what is now my copy of Spiro 1919 at the Shakespeare Book Shop, 22 Rue Kasr el Nil, in Cairo. Cibi Sturrock (1922–2007) bought Harfouch 1894, some time before she married Dugald Stewart in 1947, at the 'Librairie Académique' of H. Friedrich & Co. on Shāri' Maghrabī, now Shāri' 'Adlī, just off Azbakiyya.

## Bidirectional use of phrasebooks

Chaquire's and Hamdi's books provide us with evidence for bidirectional use of language books. Some, as we have seen in previous chapters, were deliberately designed to be used by native speakers of both Arabic and the relevant foreign language, although usually the book works better in one direction than the other. Sometimes we see books being used 'against the grain' of their original purpose, such as Edward S. Dodgson's use of al-Shidyāq 1832 to study Arabic, or the Columbia University copy of Sarkīs and Sarkīs 1863, intended for Arabic speakers learning English, but annotated by an English speaker learning Arabic.

User inscriptions and annotations also show us learners studying Arabic through the medium of languages other than their own mother tongue. Cibi Sturrock, who was Scottish, used a French book. Either Gottlieb Wild (a German speaker) or E. J. Saul (an English speaker?) had difficulty using their copy of Saleh 1874, since they have put question marks next to some French words. They have also tipped in a page of phonological notes extracted from Meadows' *A New French and English Pronouncing Dictionary* (many editions from 1835), to help in pronouncing French transcriptions of Arabic. My copy of Vavrina 1916 was previously owned by someone with the Czech name Palička, suggesting that German may have been their second language. The Deutsche Digital Bibliothek copy of Jacobsohn 1935 was used by a Polish speaker, who has pencilled in the meaning of some words in Polish next to the German. Most of the annotations in my copy of Alfagnah 1924 are in Hebrew, the language of the book itself, but there are occasional words in English, suggesting that the user was bilingual. Mahomet Chaquire's copy of Cadri 1861, which I bought from a dealer in Barcelona, has a few words written on it in Catalan. Colloquial Arabic books were available in a wide range of European languages from the latter part of the nineteenth century, and for the most part owners' signatures and annotations suggest that learners used books in their own language. But these exceptions are significant, speaking both to the greater availability of works in some languages and the multilingualism of educated people.

An interesting example of a book that was definitely used in both 'directions' is preserved in the collections of the Imperial War Museum (Documents.11187: Private Papers of T W Beaumont). The book, a copy of one of the many editions of Socrates Spiro's English–Arabic dictionary, documents the friendship between an Egyptian, Ahmed Mostafa, and a British soldier, Thomas Beaumont, who served alongside T. E. Lawrence during the Arab Revolt. Inside the cover is a dedication

to Beaumont from Mostafa, giving his address in Shubra in Cairo. Mostafa has also enclosed a signed postcard-sized studio portrait of himself, again with a dedication to Beaumont. Inside, many dictionary words, both Arabic and English, are underlined in pencil; it is impossible to tell whether Mostafa or Beaumont was the annotator. The user has also added a few English words in places where the meaning is not completely clear. That Mostafa knew English can be seen from the dedication. We also have direct evidence that Beaumont knew Arabic from his homemade, bilingual business card, in the same Imperial War Museum folder. Beaumont, who gives himself the somewhat grandiose title 'Shiek Tooma Eff[endi]' in Latin script on the card, gives an address at British Headquarters in Aqaba on one side, and at the Savoy Hotel in Cairo on the other. His Arabic-script rendering of his name is shaky, but legible. Rather than transcribing Beaumont letter by letter into Arabic, he spells it according to the pronunciation, as *Byūmānt*.

## Non-linguistic annotation

For some users, their Arabic phrasebook was just a convenient piece of paper. A child has scribbled over my copy of the fourth edition of *Marlborough's Arabic Self-Taught* (1911). Corble, Jelliffe or one of the other owners of their book doodled a pyramid on one of the blank pages added at the end when the book was rebound. One of my copies of Van Ess 1917 has a horse sketched in pencil on the front cover, and two faces in profile (one wearing a *ṭarbūsh*) inside.

The most egregious – but probably typical – non-linguistic annotation of a phrasebook I have found is that of a copy of Salem's *Spoken Arabic Without a Teacher* owned by a Lance-Corporal B. R. Sunter (Figure 7.1). Sunter has written his name on the front and back covers of the book, and the title page. He has not written anything on the book to do with the Arabic language. Instead, we find a sketch of a woman's face in profile on the verso of the title page. On a blank page at the end of the book is a list of names (not shown) – perhaps for buying presents or sending postcards – including one who seems to be in a German prisoner of war camp ('STALAG'). 'Winnie' from the list reappears as the subject of a pin-up-girl-style sketch on the back endpaper, with a bleeding heart bearing Sunter's initials, stabbed through with a dagger, next to her. (Medal rolls show that B. R. Sunter served in Palestine from 1945 to 1948, but he married Florence Walker in 1949, so things seem not to have worked out with Winnie.) This kind of use of a cheap phrasebook as a convenient notebook was probably common in the wartime Middle East.
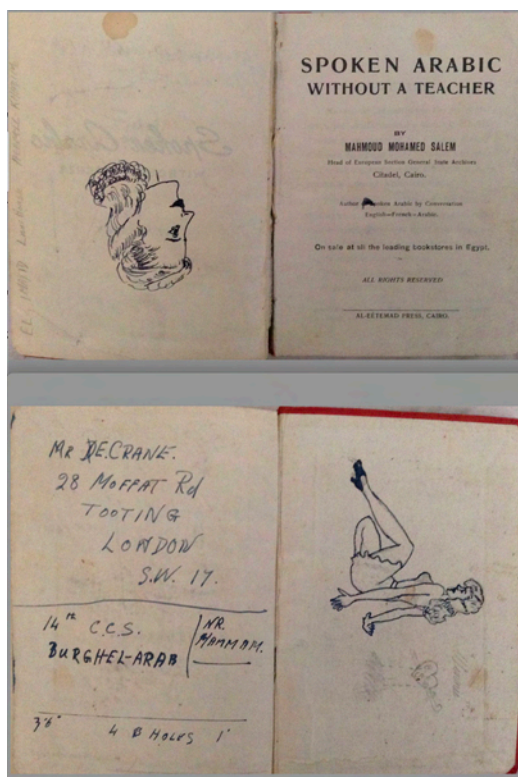
**Figure 7.1** Annotations to *Spoken Arabic Without a Teacher* by B. R. Sunter. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

## Adaptation for dialect and gender

Several books I have examined show evidence that they have been used in a region of the Arab world other than the one for which they were intended. Even works designed specifically for one region are sometimes altered to bring them closer to the spoken dialect. The digitised copy of Vincent 1830 from the library of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, for example, which was designed to be used in Algeria, has been annotated by a past user who adds supplementary transcriptions of some of the Arabic words. In some cases, this is to bring the French transliteration closer to how the word might be rendered by a German speaker. *Shams* 'sun', for example, is given as 'chems' in the text and the reader has added 'schimsch' (not entirely correctly). In others, it is to reflect more accurately Maghrabī pronunciation, which shortens or elides unstressed vowels. *Nahār* 'day' is changed from 'nehār' to 'nharr'.

The Gregory–Fück copy of Seidel 1894 shows us a user coming to terms with dialectal differences for the first time. Gregory has written 'Leipzig, 6. Nov. 1903' on the front pastedown: this is probably the date of purchase. On the page opposite is a bibliographical reference to 'Belot, Vocabulaire arabe-français à l'usage des étudiants, Beyrouth, imp. catholique, 1893'. Underneath this, in larger letters, Gregory has written:

Dieses Buch muss <u>beirut</u>-isch sein; fast überall, wo es ä hat, sprechen die Araber in Jerusalem a oder â aus. ['This book must be Beirut-ish; almost everywhere where it has ä, Arabs in Jerusalem pronounce it as a or â.']
   CRG
   Jerusalem, 2. Juli 1906.

At the head of the Preface, Gregory has also added:

Beirut }
Jerus }        alle verschieden; Hartmann mehr Beirut
Liban }
Bedawin sprechen anders aus kelb – tchelb
['Beirut, Jerus[alem], Lebanon: all different. Hartmann is more Beirut. The Bedouin have different pronunciation: kelb – tchelb.']

In a few other places, Gregory also underlines or annotates the text to indicate dialectal differences in pronunciation or word choice. I have not been able to locate Gregory in Mediterranean shipping manifests to back this up, but the scenario seems to be that he took this book with him when he travelled to Palestine for the first time, and there discovered that the 'Syrian' dialect it provided him with was not quite what he was looking for. He seems to have had a copy of Hartmann's 1893 *Arabischer Sprachführer für Reisende* as well, since he notes that this too deals with the dialect of Beirut (where Hartmann had been dragoman at the German Consulate).

Gregory was meticulous in noting local differences in Palestinian and Syrian Arabic. Another user who picked up on nuances of register and dialect was the person – probably a British soldier in Egypt during the Second World War – who wrote inside the front endpaper of my copy of Holbrook 1942: 'In low Arabic the future "SA" is replaced by "RAYAH" or part of this word. As "ANA RA-ADFAH" instead of "ANA SA-ADFAH".' He noted, correctly, that in Egyptian Arabic the future tense is sometimes formed by using the participle (*ism al-fāʿil*) *rāyiḥ* 'going' instead of a prefix on the verb. But some users seem to have

found the wide dialectal variation in the Arab world as a whole hard to come to terms with. A past owner of the Bodleian copy of Hillelson 1925, on Sudanese Arabic, has underlined the phrase 'though the unlettered native of Morocco can no longer understand the Syrian or Egyptian' in the introduction. I suspect that differences in dialect between different regions, and between their book and their location, must have gone over the head of many learners, and been a subject of frustration in trying to use these books.

Another adjustment which some users needed to make in books was in changing grammatically gendered language. All of the phrasebooks in my corpus take the default user as a man, and his interlocutors as men, with a few exceptions such as Kayat's 'Discourse with an Eastern Lady', designed for an English-speaking woman to talk to an Arab woman, or the various wartime phrasebooks which tell soldiers how to accost women. Some instruction books which have a section on grammar explain how to modify Arabic words to speak as, or to, a woman, but this is not generally accounted for in phrase lists themselves. Rosemary Smith, who served as a signals operator in the Women's Royal Naval Service in Cairo during the Second World War, annotated her copy of a 1943 edition of Cury's *Arabic Without a Teacher*. She has underlined 'Ezzayyak' ('How are you (m.)?') and written underneath 'Ezzayyik?', which is the form used to speak to a woman.[3]

## Grammatical and usage notes

Few of the phrasebooks I have examined contain annotations to do with grammar. The Columbia University copy of Sarkīs and Sarkīs 1863 – a book that is essentially a vocabulary list – has the singular, dual and plural personal pronouns written out in Arabic (in Arabic script) on the blank leaf opposite the title page. The user has also added the singular and plural of some words. The only extensive grammar and usage notes I have found are due to an accident of preservation: in my copy of Indian Army 1940, two pages of handwritten notes remained enclosed. This book is an English–Urdu–Arabic–Persian phrasebook, and while it lists variations on some words (I write, I wrote, my house, your house, etc.), it does not contain any actual explanation of grammar. Nor, unlike many official military language books, does it give any account of how to use the language in its social and cultural context.

The past owner was named Bailey (the initials are illegible) and he used the book specifically for Arabic. The first of his pages of notes is a side-and-a-half with the heading 'Pasha's note on Arab courtesy'
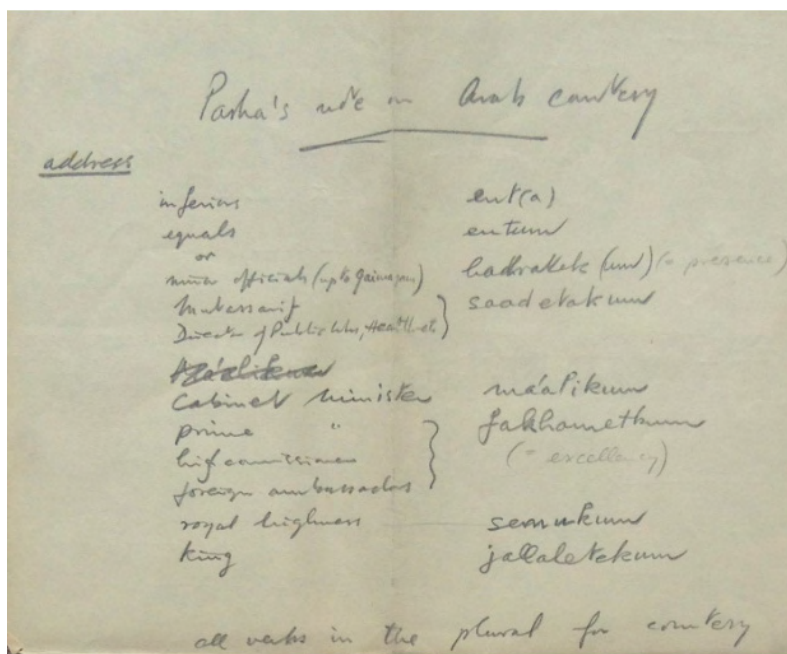
**Figure 7.2** 'Pasha's note on Arab courtesy'. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

(Figure 7.2), suggesting that he was taking down notes from a lecture or conversation with a superior officer. The section on 'address' gives a detailed list of appropriate forms of address for people in a subordinate or higher position, escalating from 'ent(a)' ('you' (m. sg.)) to 'jallaletekum' ('your Majesty'). Below this, he lists courtesy phrases and professional etiquette: 'formal call on senior Arab govt official in his office (mutassarif, qaimaqam, mudir) 5 minutes only and, if he visits first, call an hour later'.

The second sheet is a table of forms of the Arabic verb. Bailey's focus is on the prefixes and suffixes used to indicate person and tense. After the first line, the space for the verb stem is left blank, allowing him to slot in other verbs. The terminology he uses is Latinate. He describes the *bi*-imperfect as 'indicative, regular action' and first, erroneously, marks the present participle (*ism al-fāʿil*) as the 'continuous present' (which is what it functions as in practice), before correcting himself.

Bailey, then, has added to the book to make it fit for his purpose. The book is otherwise unannotated, its pages are in good condition, and a cigarette has been put out on the cover, none of which would suggest that it was used for its real purpose. The notes allow us to see that in fact it was,

and may destabilise the assumption I made, above, that books in excellent condition were not much used.

## Corrections and additions

Some users correct both mistakes in the Arabic and typographical errors in their books. F. Figuller, who acquired my copy of Dirr 1893 in 1911, has neatly pencilled in corrections to the text, such as a missing 't' at the beginning of the word 'tawîl' (*ṭawīl* 'tall, long') on page 20. A past owner of my copy of Bahoshy 1918 has likewise corrected the misprint 'ahmza' to 'hamza' (p. 6). The sailor who owned a copy of Marriott 1911 (which I will discuss in more depth below) writes in that 'ābū galambo' means 'crab', not 'lobster'. The 1940s *Services Guide to Cairo* (Co-Ordinating Council for Welfare Work in Egypt 1940?) has a mistake in the vocabulary list, where the Arabic words for 'fork' and 'flies' are in the wrong order. The past owner of my copy has added pencil lines to switch these round, perhaps after a confusing visit to a restaurant. Cameron was in a position to correct the errata in his own 1892 book before he gave it to Margery Abrahams, crossing out two lines and writing 'correct'. For the most part, however, the elementary learners at whom these books were directed were more in a position to make additions than corrections. Extra words of vocabulary are by far the most common of these.

A former owner of one of my copies of Nakhlah 1874 has kept almost all of his extra vocabulary for the endpapers of the book (Figure 7.3). These are in Egyptian dialect written out according to the phonetic logic of a speaker of a non-rhotic dialect of English. 'Today', for example, is rendered 'INHarder' and 'key' as 'muftar'. An arrow between the words for 'open' and 'key' shows that the person is aware of the etymological connection (root f-t-ḥ). The Imperial War Museum has a copy of Watson 1885 where the back endpapers have similarly been employed for additional phrases, in this case orders.

Sometimes additional vocabulary or phrases bear an obvious connection to the user's profession: they are adding specific words which a phrasebook directed at a more general audience does not include. The most thorough examples I have found belonged to an academic, a doctor and a sailor.

A. H. Sayce's copy of *The Egyptian Travelling Interpreter, or Arabic without a Teacher for English Travellers visiting Egypt* (Sacroug 1874) is now in the Bodleian. Sayce (1845–1933) was an Assyriologist and travelled extensively in the Middle East, especially in the period from the late 1870s
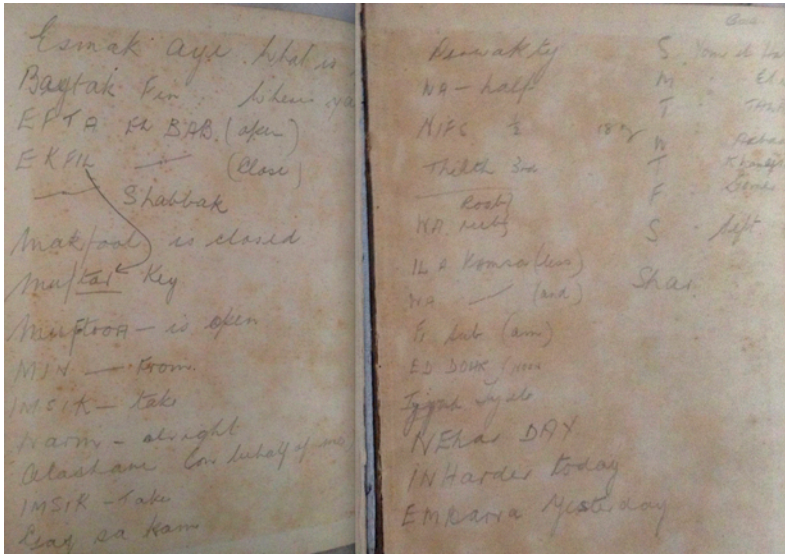
**Figure 7.3** Annotations on a copy of Nakhlah 1874. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

to the early 1890s. As we have seen in Chapter 4, he wrote an introduction for Willmore 1901. References in his memoirs (Sayce 1923) indicate that his knowledge of both standard written and colloquial Egyptian Arabic improved steadily over this time, and in several places his remarks indicate a distaste for foreigners who lived in Egypt and did not make an effort to speak Arabic. His annotations of Sacroug's book suggest that Egyptian Arabic was still relatively new to him when he made them, but he already had an ear for nuance and common patterns.

On the very first page of the 'Familiar Dialogues', Sayce has added a few notes. For example, next to 'What do you mean? Maânakalámak aih?', he has pencilled in the pithier and more idiomatic 'yâni ê?'. (He uses the 'a' with circumflex to indicate *'ayn*, although not consistently.) The only other part of the book that he has annotated is the section 'On researches of antiquities' (pp. 330–331), which has brackets, replacements and corrections to the Arabic of every phrase. The mistake 'qutub' for 'books' is corrected to 'kutub'. For 'Are there?' or 'Is there?', Sacroug (who we should recall is partially plagiarising Kayat) typically gives 'hal yougad?'. Sayce brackets this and writes above 'fî' (i.e. *fî*), which is more idiomatic in Egyptian Arabic. The phrase 'Are there in this neighbourhood any remains of ancient cities, temples, or castles?' is given by Sacroug as 'Hal yougad fee hàza el qorb athâr beläd qadeêmeh aw hayákel aw hhus soŏn?' Sayce

changes 'hayákel' 'temples' (*ḥayākil*) to 'birabi' (i.e. *barābi*), a word used specifically for ancient Egyptian temples, and, indeed, derived from the (ancient) Egyptian word *r-pr*. Sayce's annotations, overall, show a concern both for the way Arabic was spoken in Egypt and for accuracy when talking about ancient artefacts and monuments. This concern is practical: one can imagine him using these phrases when actually conducting antiquarian research in Egypt.

D. O. Richards' notes on his copy of Amery 1905, made in Sudan in the 1920s, also reflect professional concerns. He annotates in English and in Arabic in both Arabic and Roman script. Sometimes he crosses out words, but more often he adds missing items relevant to medical practice, such as 'outpatients' or, on the back endpaper, 'kuss – (vulva, part of a woman)'. Amery gives three options for 'thin', but Richards, as a doctor, needs to be more specific and annotates them as 'lean', 'tender or delicate' and 'weak'.

Unfortunately, I do not know the identity of the sailor who marked up his (now my) copy of Marriott and Hindié 1921. This paperback, still in reasonably good condition, is, paradoxically, one of the most thoroughly marked books I have come across. Inside the front cover is a long list of 'Nautical Terms' in English and transcribed Arabic (Figure 7.4). These technical terms, which it will have been crucial to get right when working on a ship, were probably elicited from a native speaker by the book's owner holding or pointing at the object in question. The section 'Shooting Implements and Fishing Tackle' likewise has some words added for equipment ('gimlet, pliers, screwdriver, cold chisel, shifting spanner'). The word for 'sailor', given by Marriott as 'marākbi', is changed to 'bahara pl buharia' (i.e. *baḥḥāra*). A little below this, the phrase 'kam el browa: = how's the ship's head' is written in the margin. Next to the section on military ranks, he has written 'not in Egypt' next to 'field-marshal – mushīr' and drawn the relevant insignia for several ranks. We also find added words for creatures found on or around ships: 'cocker sursah' (i.e. *ṣurṣur* 'cockroach'), 'crab abu galambo, lobster astacosa, prawn gumbari'. Next to the words for the numbers from one to ten, he has written the Arabic numerals, so that he can recognise them. Aside from a few words of practice at the head of the page on the alphabet, elsewhere he does not use the Arabic script at all.

The sailor's other annotations speak to off-duty activities. The word 'pipe (tobacco) pîp' is corrected to 'bibe' to reflect Arabic pronunciation of the 'p' sound. At the foot of the page on 'Mankind; relations', he has added 'snappy piece helwa, bint zeyn', showing that even phrasebooks which did not have sections on meeting women could be modified to suit.

**Figure 7.4** Nautical terms on a copy of Marriott and Hindié 1921. Public domain. Photo © Rachel Mairs.

At the head of the section on 'Conversation Phrases and Sentences' is the addition 'your health fi sahetak', used when toasting someone with a drink.

## The Arabic script

In books that use the Arabic script, we occasionally find handwriting practice in the margins of the book, usually on the pages where the alphabet is first introduced. Since printed Arabic differs slightly from the handwritten script, some users have written out words in a more cursive form next to the printed text. For example, a past owner of my copy of Aleppo and Calvaruso 1912 has written out some words with 'stacked' letters or the 'flatline' *sīn* found in handwriting. The only annotation in my copy of Hassam and Odeh 1915 (fifth edition) is on the first page of vocabulary, where the user has copied out the word *kharīf* 'autumn' in Arabic script, and next to it spelled out the names of the letters 'Kha Ra Ya Fa'. Mahomet Chaquire may have been practising his French handwriting when he wrote out 'la pluie a passé' on page 256 of Cadri's dictionary, but it seems more likely that he has done this because the print of these words is faint.

Edward Dodgson had to customise his copy of al-Shidyāq 1832, as noted earlier, to make it suitable for an English speaker learning Arabic, rather than vice versa. On the front endpapers, he has written out the Arabic alphabet, along with letter names, connected forms and pronunciation. The Columbia copy of Sarkīs and Sarkīs 1863, also mentioned earlier, was also used 'against the grain' by an English speaker learning Arabic. This copy has been modified by the user adding *tashkīl* to some of the phrases, to help him pronounce them correctly. The book uses unvowelled Arabic because it is intended for Arabic speakers.

More extensive Arabic-script annotations actually appear in books that do *not* introduce the script, as users make up for this deficit. As well as developing reading and writing skills, adding Arabic script will also have helped with pronunciation, and with looking up words in dictionaries. (During research for this book, I also developed a habit of writing words in Arabic script on photocopies of phrasebooks, for future reference, so I could see more clearly what word the – often mangled – transliteration was supposed to represent. I found this especially useful for phrasebooks in Hebrew script, which I cannot skim-read.) A few words are added in Arabic script in the Bibliothek der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft copy of Nolden 1844b and the University of California copy of Meakin 1891. On my copy of Klippel 1913, signed by W. Rau in 1944, there are extensive additions in Arabic script. On the pages where Arabic

phonology is introduced, Rau has added the Arabic letters for each sound, and included example words in Arabic.

## Making works more user-friendly

Books contain other forms of annotation which also work towards making them more accessible to their user. Sometimes the section on pronunciation contains notes or underlining. The past owner of my copy of Bahoshy 1918 underlines the point that 'r' at the end of a word in Arabic must always be clearly pronounced, unlike in some dialects of English where it may be silent. The ubiquitous description of *khā'* as being like the 'ch' in Scottish 'loch' is bracketed in the Imperial War Museum copy of Lila 1942 – whether because it is intuitive or because it is confusing, I do not know.

Sometimes, owners have written things on the cover or first page for easy reference. The Corble–Jelliffe copy of Green 1887 (second edition) has a list of page numbers on the front endpaper, including the note '85 conversation carpets', referring to phrases for buying carpets on page 85. On the front cover of the Imperial War Museum copy of Chawky 1915 (third edition, 1916), someone has written 'min hena This way Ana Misharef' – keeping phrases he needed, including 'I do not know', easily accessible, so he would not have to flick through the book to find them. Even W. Rau, who made many notes in Arabic script on his copy of Klippel 1913, has added a short note on the title page: 'Genug! Bess!'

## Concluding remarks

I argued in the Introduction that spoken language represented a fundamental challenge to the Orientalists' mastery of their domain. Although the history of European Orientalist study of Arabic and that of the study of colloquial Arabic run parallel to one another, with frequent points of intersection, teaching and learning *'ammiyya* was a very different task from teaching and learning the written language. As the materials I have discussed reveal, those who sought to teach and learn a spoken dialect of Arabic through books alone were highly unlikely to make much progress. I have chosen to conclude by discussing annotations on surviving copies of Arabic phrasebooks because these make the struggles of learners so vivid.

Modern phrasebooks for colloquial Arabic differ from their ancestors in some essential respects – for example, in crediting Arab authors, and

simplifying and abbreviating the discussion of grammar – but someone opening a Lonely Planet phrasebook today, or even a more specialised work such as the American Center for Oriental Research's *Arabic for Archaeologists*, will find that much of the content and format replicates those of historical publications. The uniform-breast-pocket-sized format of Second World War phrasebooks produced in Cairo is the same as that of most present-day works. Words and phrases cover the same circumstances, and many of the same places and activities. Users no longer learn how to give orders to servants, but they still learn to ask the way to the pyramids or to haggle with a taxi driver. A tourist can even buy a phrasebook covering multiple languages of the Middle East (most often Arabic, Hebrew and Turkish), a descendant of the Ottoman polyglot phrasebooks.

Tempted though I was to take a vintage phrasebook for an experimental walk around Azbakiyya, Egyptian friends confirmed that this would probably be a very bad idea. Most of the words and phrases I might have attempted to use would have been outdated or inappropriate, likely to cause offence. But the sight of a foreigner wandering around the neighbourhood with a phrasebook, trying to find their bearings, would have been one with which local residents have been familiar for more than two hundred years.

## Notes

1  Some entertaining examples of the kinds of things that readers do write in library books can be found in the Oxford University Marginalia Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/Oxford-University-Marginalia-500979143259881/, accessed 23 May 2023.
2  Gregory uses *hā'* in its isolated form, unconnected to the letters that come before and after it. This, along with its use to mark a vowel, suggests to me that he has been influenced by the orthography of Ottoman Turkish, although I have not been able to discover whether he knew the language.
3  I am grateful to Smith's daughter, Dr Rosie Mack, for showing me her mother's phrasebook.

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# Index

References to notes are indicated by n.

During the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, more Europeans visited the Middle East than ever before, as tourists, archaeologists, pilgrims, settler-colonists and soldiers. These visitors engaged with the Arabic language to differing degrees. While some were serious scholars of Classical Arabic, in the Orientalist mould, many did not learn the language at all. Between these two extremes lies a neglected group of language learners who wanted to learn enough everyday colloquial Arabic to get by. The needs of these learners were met by popular language books, which boasted that they could provide an easy route to fluency in a difficult language.

*Arabic Dialogues* explores the motivations of Arabic learners and effectiveness of instructional materials, principally in Egypt and Palestine, by analysing a corpus of Arabic phrasebooks published in nine languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian) and in the territory of twenty-five modern countries. Beginning with Napoleon's Expédition d'Égypte (1798–1801), it moves through the periods of mass tourism and European colonialism in the Middle East, concluding with the Second World War. The book also considers how Arab intellectuals understood the project of teaching Arabic to foreigners, the remarkable history of Arabic-learning among Yiddish- and Hebrew-speaking immigrants in Palestine, and the networks of language learners, teachers and plagiarists who produced these phrasebooks.

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