Language practices and the performance of identity and belonging in "globalising" Siwa (Egypt)

Dr Valentina Serelli | University of Aix-Marseille

Keywords: language ideology; globalisation; language and identity; Oasis of Siwa

Access to globalisation in peripheral areas is favoured by specific "infrastructures of globalisation" enabling connections between local events and translocal processes, as new media and communication technologies, the emergence of new forms of economic activity and new (re)productions of local identity formations (Wang et al. 2014: 29-30). The maintenance or change of language ideologies and linguistic practices is related to the structure of the community's social network (Milroy 1980); therefore, when processes of socioeconomic change as those triggered by globalisation affect the social network of a given community, they also have an effect on its linguistic practices and language ideologies because they change the quantity and quality of members' interaction (Gumperz 1982, Milroy 2002).

The globalisation wave reached the Egyptian oasis of Siwa in the last decades, implying a circulation of people, goods and knowledge that was unknown to the Siwans. Mobility increased in both directions: Siwans started to travel for a range of reasons, young Siwans started attending universities in the major Egyptian cities and, from the there side, a growing number of people settled in the oasis for working purposes or visited it as tourists, with a consequent growth of intermarriage rates and the emergence of multiple identities. New goods and practices started circulating in the oasis both among Siwans, substituting traditional ones, and among the non-Siwan residents that are both providers and consumers. Mass media and internet became available to most Siwans. Therefore, the

community underwent significant demographical, social and economic changes that impacted on the linguistic ecology of the oasis.

The paper discusses how these change relate to and affect language practices and ideologies within a community that was largely monolingual and homogeneous until recently and that is now transiting towards bilingualism and experiencing the emergence of blurred identities and multiple belongings. Assuming that language is "a fundamental resource for identity production" (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 382) and that social meaning is created through evoking macro-sociological categories in situated communicative practices (Silverstein 2003; Eckert 2008; Collins 2011), the paper presents the strategies of language use enacted to perform or project a given identity - and signal belonging to a group - by speakers of Berber and Arabic in present day Siwa.

The study is based on data collected between 2013 and 2015 within the framework of a doctoral research, aimed at investigating the sociolinguistic of the oasis from an emic perspective. A qualitative approach was chosen in order to detect and explain individual's nuances and details; data was gathered through participant observation and unstructured or semistructured interviews (Garret et al. 2003; Preston 2011) and analysed following the grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006).

References:

Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. 2004. Language and Identity. A. Duranti (ed.) *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. 369–94.

Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory. A practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Eckert, P. 2008. Variation and Indexical Field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics 12, 4:* 453-476.

Collins, J. 2011. Indexicalities of language contact in an era of globalization:

nagging with John Gumperz's legacy. *Text & Talk 31, 4:* 407-428.

Johnstone, B. 2010. Indexing the Local. N. Coupland (ed.) *The Handbook of Language and Globalization.* Blackwell Publishing. 386-405.

Garret, P., N. Coupland and A. Williams. 2003. *Investigating Language Attitudes. Social Meanings of Dialect, Ethnicity and Performance.* Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Gumperz, J. 1982. *Discourse strategies.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Milroy, L. 1980. *Language and Social Networks.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Milroy, L. 2002. Social networks. In J.K. Chambers, P. Trudgill and N. Schilling-Estes (eds.) *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change* (Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics). Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell. 549-572.

Preston, D.R. 2011. Methods in (applied) folk linguistics. Getting into the minds of the folk. *AILA Review 24:* 15-39.

Silverstein, M. 2003. Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life. *Language and Communication 23:* 193–229.

Wang, X., Spotti, M., Juffermans, K., Kroon, S., Cornips, L. and Blommaert, J. 2014. Globalization in the margins: Towards a re-evaluation of language and mobility. *Applied Linguistic Review 5 (1):* 23—44 [pre-print version 10.1515/applirev-2014-0002]