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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

***THANK YOU, MERCI, SHUKRAN!* PRIVATE EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE IN
EGYPT**

A Thesis Submitted to

Department of Middle East Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

by Ericka Lynn Galegher

(under the supervision of Dr. Benjamin Geer)

May 2012

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ABSTRACT

The American University in Cairo

***Thank You, Merci, Shukran!* Private Education and Language in Egypt**

By: Ericka Lynn Galegher

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Benjamin Geer

My thesis examines the processes by which the reproduction of power and social hierarchies transpire in the field of international, private schools in Egypt. More specifically, I will analyze how the linguistic system in these schools reproduce and reinforce forms of power and inequality. I will consider the process by which nonnative languages, principally English, became the dominant and legitimate linguistic system of these schools, and how the complexities of their habitus have influenced students' language beliefs and practices.

Language is a place for ideological contestation and identity assertion reinforcing power relations between groups and individuals. Differences in accent, grammar, language, and vocabulary indicate hierarchical social positions and quantities of linguistic capital. Furthermore, this process has stigmatized Arabic, although the national language, as deficient and subordinate. Using a theoretical framework guided by the work of Pierre Bourdieu and through ethnographic fieldwork, I will attempt to understand the effects such developments have on structuring agents' (students—primarily Egyptian, teachers, alumni) behavior and beliefs, and how private schools assist in the reproduction of this social order. Aside from my ethnographic fieldwork, I explore the effects of two transformative socio-historical processes on Egypt's education system and social order. First, I explore the emergence of the *effendiya* and the reproduction of their habitus and practices into a privileged, cosmopolitan class. Second, I explore the reproduction of social positions and inequalities through the continued bifurcation of Egypt's education system into two distinct tracks.

Previous scholarship focused on public Egyptian schools analyzing curriculum, the pyramidal and antidemocratic nature of public schooling, the impact of Islam on school culture, and the State and Arabic language policies. I, however, will focus on the complexities of social processes in Egypt's "privileged" class regarding the development of language using education as the site of contestation. Through a rather unexplored approach, this thesis will show how inequalities and social hierarchies are transferred into the macrosociety through the English language and education. Furthermore, it also addresses ways in which power relations and social positions of the elite in Egypt are maintained and reproduced.

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1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the processes by which the reproduction of social hierarchies transpire in the field of international private schools in Egypt by focusing on the complex social processes surrounding language, particularly English. European and subsequently American influence has been an integral part of the Egyptian education system since Egypt's first encounters with the French in 1798. Egypt's education system reflects political, social, and historical processes of power struggles both with internal and external forces that has directly influenced the social formation and identity of Egyptian society. As an influential socialization tool of the powerful in Egypt, examination of private, international schools as "a microcosm of society and an element of social production" helps our understanding of the social processes that impact the relationship between school culture and the culture of society at large.¹

Thus, my thesis focuses on the role language plays in creating boundaries between those who belong and do not belong to this privileged social class.² I will analyze the social processes that shaped the education field, and the ways in which a particular linguistic system from these schools reproduces and reinforces social distinctions. More specifically, I will focus on the role linguistic capital plays in categorizing members of society as well as creating a sense of in-groupness and out-groupness.

¹ Kamal Naguib, *Cultures of Arab Schooling: Critical Ethnographies from Egypt*, ed. Linda Herrera and Carlos Alberto Torres (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 53.

² I am indebted to the work of Dr. Ghada F Barsoum, *The Employment Crisis of Female Graduates in Egypt: An Ethnographic Account, Education* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004) for the use of privileged class while referencing the social group under discussion. These members are those 'privileged' by their ability to possess and accumulate many forms of capital, and subsequently benefit from this system. Referring to this group as merely of high socio-economic standing is not comprehensive enough. This term just gives an indication of material wealth or economic capital.

My fieldwork focuses on one private international school whose language of instruction is English in order to provide an in-depth ethnographic snapshot of an elite school that arguably sits at the apex of this field. This school, which I will call, the International American School (IAS), is a symbol not only of American power in Egypt but also of Egypt's powerful technocrats and ruling elite whose sons, daughters, and grandchildren attend this school. By analyzing the linguistic practices and perceptions of the students, teachers, and the institution itself, I will elucidate the role language plays in how students categorize those who belong and do not belong to their social categories, and how those categories reinforce social distinctions within the larger society.

In Egypt and throughout the world, private education is a site of exclusivity. An important component of maintaining such exclusivity is private schools' ability to provide access to language practices and act as a source of linguistic capital. As the number of Egyptians capable of entering this exclusive field expanded in the latter part of the twentieth century, linguistic capital and its role as a barrier and social distinguisher of members of social categories became more prevalent.

Behind these linguistic practices lies a more complex set of socio-historical processes surrounding the role of education in Egypt. The bifurcation of the education system into two distinct spheres—one originating from the Islamic education of al-Azhar and the other from the European-style education system started under Mohamed Ali³—has had profound impacts on the social fabric of Egyptian society.⁴ The societal

³ Mohamed Ali, regarded by many as the founder of modern Egypt, was the *wālī* or governor of Egypt from 1805 to 1848.

⁴ Bradley J. Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognitions* (Ann Arbor: Bell & Howell Company, 2000), 63.

cleavage, which formed from this bifurcation, is maintained and reproduced by the education system and those who benefit from it. This process has been neither rapid nor linear. Those who first benefited from this structure were members of the *effendiya*.⁵ Adapting to new social, political, and economic contexts, the *effendiya* were able to reproduce this social structure and practices.

This structure and practices are seen today in a privileged, cosmopolitan class of Egyptians who send their children to private, international schools. Education continues to reinforce the position of this dominant group by reproducing members with the “right” kind of knowledge, skills, and culture. Linguistic systems are a necessary part of this hierarchical structure determining economic and social mobility and asserting their dominant social position. The linguistic system of the privileged is defined more and more by the “right” English practices. Their use of English is so prevalent that it goes beyond instrumental functions⁶ to being a social determinant in interpersonal functions.⁷ Language choice, accent, slang and pronunciation in English have all become important social markers for a small segment of Egypt’s population whose native language is not English.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

As this study revolves around a very complex network of hierarchical class arrangements associated with education and language, I will employ a theoretical framework grounded

⁵ The simple definition of this term refers to a title of privilege, often indicating an educated male who has usually graduated from a secular state school. A more complex and in-depth definition will be given later in the paper.

⁶ Instrumental function: Language use in public and private educational institutions. Mark Schaub, “English in the Arab Republic of Egypt,” *World Englishes* 19, no. 2 (2000): 225-238, 226.

⁷ Interpersonal function: Language use in family situations and religious or other social groups. *Ibid.*, 226.

in concepts developed by Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu through years of in-depth analysis of language, education, class structures, and power. Bourdieu's framework provides the structure needed to comprehensively understand the complexity of conditions that define and influence language formation without taking the existence of this language for granted.⁸

It is necessary to give a brief overview of the three main concepts I will use throughout this study—field, habitus, and capital. Bourdieu's concept of field indicates social contexts where individuals act and obtain agency to act, particularly through their habitus. Habitus provides participants within the field with a set of dispositions that reflect the social conditions in which they are acquired and “incline agents to act and react in certain ways.”⁹ In an objective sense, a field is a “structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or ‘capital.’”¹⁰ Capital can be economic such as material wealth, symbolic such as accumulated prestige, social, in the form of interpersonal relationships and connections, and cultural such as linguistic knowledge, which I will refer to often as linguistic capital. A field acts as a site of struggle for distribution of these forms of capital as it is a location for conversion of one form of capital into another form.

I will focus mainly on a sub-set of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, linguistic habitus—behaviors and practices attained through the process of learning to speak in particular contexts or fields such as at home or at school. This linguistic habitus

⁸ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

influences identity and dispositions as well as produces and reproduces hierarchical structures by filtering those who belong and can participate, and those who lack the necessary linguistic habitus to acquire such skills and practices in an almost self-regulating manner—censorship. For example, I will be analyzing the ways in which students categorize others as “too Americanized” or “too Westernized” based on their linguistic habitus. These forms of linguistic capital are products of their linguistic habitus and position within and interaction in a variety of fields.

In the following, I will explain how I use these concepts to form a theoretical framework for this study. The field I will be analyzing is the field of private, international education. In general, four types of private schools exist in this field—ordinary, language, international, and religious. These schools offer curriculums in the American High School Diploma, the British IGCSE, French Baccalaureat, the German Abitur, and the International Baccalaureate.¹¹ As previously stated, I will examine the International American School (IAS) which offers an American High School Diploma and International Baccalaureate courses with English language instruction.

A broader overview of the historical development of private schools will also be undertaken to provide context for the current situation. The social context of this field is today defined by a transnational exchange of various forms of cultural capital generally from Europe and the US. Students transform and appropriate imported and established forms of cultural capital into forms of social distinction and categories of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Students’ habitus greatly affects the ways in which this process takes place and their perceptions of life opportunities.

¹¹ *Egypt: Education System and Policy Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: International Business Publications, 2009), 88.

1.3 Aim and Scope

“Tell me what your language is, and I will tell you who you are.”¹²

The above quote encapsulates many processes that I intend on uncovering. First, how has acquisition of a foreign linguistic habitus, generally English in nature, become the dominant and legitimate linguistic system of these schools and an indicator of social status? What affects has this had on the status of Arabic amongst members of this group? Second, how does linguistic capital structure students’ perceptions of life opportunities and maintain its exclusivity? How does the supply and demand for differing forms of capital define the position of IAS in this field? The last part of the above mentioned quote captures the third area of inquiry: “*I will tell you who you are*” (emphasis added.) How do the perceptions of students influence how students play by the “rules of the game” and determine perceived authentic and inauthentic categories? As a field of transnational exchange, the field of private, international education plays an important role in the creation of authentic and inauthentic categories of belonging for the Egyptian students. Finally, what role does this institution play in the transnational exchange of capital; and furthermore, the students’ struggle to absorb and balance the dualism of their Egyptian, Arabic identity within the international context of their school?

By examining the above mentioned areas of inquiry and research questions, I hope to elucidate the benefits this privileged class ascertains and maintains through their participation in this education field, and how their perceptions of those who belong and do not belong, as a result of a dominant, self-proclaimed legitimate linguistic habitus,

¹² Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 133.

reproduces inequalities in the larger society by creating a nearly insurmountable barrier for upward mobility.

I am not, however, suggesting that English is a necessary requirement for advancement and influence. Obvious examples of wealthy and influential Egyptians who speak only Arabic exist. Yet, there remains undoubtedly extreme emphasis on English and other foreign language schools today as in the past. Even those who attained influential positions without knowledge of English, many times insist on sending their children to these schools to acquire the linguistic capital which they lacked. Participation in this new social domain necessitates knowledge of the “rules of the game.”

Furthermore, some may argue more simply that labor markets require knowledge of English. However, this does not acknowledge the processes and dispositions that exist and are demanded by actors in this privileged class and the job market. This simple conclusion fails to acknowledge that acceptable behaviors and articulatory style that developed, has transformed and defines this privileged class. I will show that reproduction of Egypt’s social hierarchy is highly dependent upon acquiring or maintaining a linguistic habitus only obtainable in these private schools. However, this is a cyclical process whereby Egypt’s social hierarchy also reproduces this linguistic habitus. I will demonstrate further that linguistic capital is an important factor in determining intra-class categorization and important social distinguisher.

Private education and language in Egypt is closely linked to broader sociopolitical and economic processes that began in the nineteenth century. The advantageous opportunities acquired through education and ties with European powers enabled a newly developed class of *effendiya* to transform cultural capital into economic capital. The

maintenance of this profitable relationship was largely dependent upon and linked to the formation of European-inspired education. The discourses surrounding the modernization and development of Egypt was commandeered by this group of individuals, products of European-inspired schools, who held close ties and relationships to the state and power. This relationship has persisted until today partially through the exclusiveness of their education system and barriers they have erected as gatekeepers.

In Chapter Two, I detail the emergence of this group of gatekeepers. They are a dominate group of high socio-economic standing closely related to Egypt's state and power as well as a participant in the global dominant elite through the use of the global cultural capital. I will expand upon these historical underpinnings in Chapter Three by detailing the emergence and transformation of private schools superseding public schools. These two chapters will reveal that the bifurcation of Egypt's education system has been instrumental in perpetuating this social class and maintaining barriers between them and the rest of society. One of the most important elements in this process is their monopolization of and ability to use cultural capital to reinforce barriers to social mobility maintaining their influential position in society. Through time, acquisition of such capital was largely found only through private, language schools. Therefore, pathways to power intersect in these schools.

Chapter Four details the fieldwork I undertook in IAS. It is an in-depth ethnographic study that explores the aforementioned areas of inquiry. The qualitative methodologies employed were participant observations, interviews, group discussions, and a linguistic experiment. Participants included teachers, students and former students,

administration, and parents. Conclusions from the fieldwork as well as further areas of potential inquiry based on the study will be discussed in Chapter Five.

1.4 Literature Review

Studies on language and education in Egypt are plentiful. However, most studies focus on less privileged classes, Arabic, Islam and public schools. There is need for a more sophisticated analysis of the impacts of English language education on Egyptian society and the privileged class. In this regard, multiple works on education in Egypt were very beneficial for the present study.

Ghada Barsoum¹³ provides a very useful and original ethnographic study on the ways in which the processes of capital accumulation affect the female labor market in Egypt. Her book is a great sociological approach in which she convincingly employs Bourdieu to an area that is often approached only through an economic lens. She looks beyond the traditional correlation between educational attainment and labor market placement. She supplements this focus by analyzing the social backgrounds and the ability or inability of female graduates to accumulate the capital desired by the labor market. Although she approaches the subject by focusing on the “less-privileged” class of female graduates, her study focuses on the same sociological processes as the current study. I, however, approach the subject by focusing on a privileged class and processes that occur before the entrance of these participants into the employment sphere. My focus is on the field of private schools and language acquisition.

¹³ See Barsoum, *The Employment Crisis of Female Graduates in Egypt: An Ethnographic Account*.

Mark Allen Peterson¹⁴ analyzes the transnational exchange of goods within Egypt's privileged class, a subject I will lightly touch upon as my last area of inquiry. He examines how these goods have come to define an elite cosmopolitan class. His exploration of the struggle this class has in balancing their global consumption patterns with their Egyptian identity is very useful for the present study. They do so mainly through a process of localization "a cultural process that produces locality by contrasting things that are 'local' with those that are from elsewhere."¹⁵ He expands his research further to the perceptions of middle and lower class members of this cosmopolitan class and how they in turn react to the encroachment of transnational goods in their local markets by participating in this process through different capacities. He employs Bourdieu's concepts in identifying how the goods and forms of consumption are forms of social capital and used by Egyptians to assert their cosmopolitan identity in their struggle to be simultaneously modern and Egyptian.

Peterson's study is paramount for identifying the influx of capital mainly from the US and Europe that students absorb and appropriate in schools like IAS. Peterson's book is a much broader look at the ways in which capital is appropriated to form their modern, cosmopolitan identity, arguing that "styles" of modernity are not accessible to all classes as they are greatly linked to taste and education.¹⁶

I, however, am exploring a very specific aspect of his broader study by focusing on the use of English by the privileged, cosmopolitan class. I focus on how language is

¹⁴ See Mark Allen Peterson, *Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Modern Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

styled in the field of private education to manage their global and local locations. Whereas Peterson analyzes “Western modes of education”¹⁷ as a form of cultural capital, I analyze “Western modes of education” as a field. I argue that this field is the site of struggle over exclusive linguistic capital. This struggle necessitates analyzing it as a field with influential players rather than only as cultural capital. This field is a very prominent identifier of class whereby the privileged who monopolize this linguistic capital can immediately identify those who belong and do not belong through their language practices. Furthermore, my study will also explore the historical development of private education and this cosmopolitan class.

Also focusing on language, Niloofar Haeri, a sociolinguist, examines the power of language as symbolic capital focusing on the Egyptian state and Arabic. *The Sociolinguistic Market in Cairo* is a contributing study through her comprehensive approach that explores a variety of categories—gender, social class, and education—which influence the use of classical and non-classical Arabic in Cairo. In helping readers understand the language situation in Egypt, Haeri employs the concept of a linguistic market.¹⁸ She strives for a holistic analysis of the linguistic market in Egypt looking through the lens of anthropology and history. However, her focus is solely on the use of Arabic.

She states that “Egyptian Arabic, on the other hand, is the mother tongue of elite and non-elite Egyptians. It is the language of daily life and interactions not only within

¹⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸ Niloofar Haeri, *The Sociolinguistic Market of Cairo: Gender, Class, and Education* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1997), 6.

the home and among intimates, but also in institutions and between strangers.”¹⁹

However, my study will illustrate, Egyptian Arabic along with English and code-switching defines the language of the elites. Much of their day is spent interacting with foreigners or Egyptians with a similar linguistic habitus. Thus, a study of English and the market in which it is acquired is needed. Haeri and many others overlook the influence and importance of English on Cairo’s linguistic market.

Haeri does an excellent job of describing Egypt’s linguistic market and the complexity of forces that exist within this realm. In her article “The Reproduction of Symbolic Capital: Language, State and Class in Egypt,” Haeri employs Bourdieu in her description of the relations between class, language, the state, and linguistic values in Egypt.²⁰ She provides a critique of Bourdieu by showing that the state in Egypt does not hold monopolizing power over the reproduction and transformation of the official language of Egypt. She argues that the religious establishment forms another locus of power that challenges the state’s role in language reproduction. However, a weakness in her study is that she often interchanges the dominant language, which Bourdieu attaches to the dominant class, and the official language. The dominant language is not necessarily a monolithic, unfettering linguistic system. It can transform depending on the agents and context in which it is found.²¹ I propose to help solve the problem she raises by providing evidence that the dominant language is not necessarily the official language and that defining the dominant language as a single vernacular is problematic.

¹⁹ Ibid., 8.

²⁰ Niloofar Haeri, “The Reproduction of Symbolic Capital: Language, State, and Class in Egypt,” *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 5 (December 1997): 795-816, 795.

²¹ Ibid., 806.

Yasir Suleiman²² focuses on Arabic language systems in nationalist projects throughout the Middle East. Regarding Egypt, he does an excellent job of exploring the use of language in Egypt's nationalist project in the early twentieth century and detailing the intellectuals behind such discourse. My study will also focus on the symbolic values and connotations rather than simply the functional capacity of language.²³ Suleiman effectively employs Bourdieu to explore the symbolic value of Arabic in terms of prestige and in- and out-groupness, which was successfully cultivated by elite Arabs.²⁴ My argument brings in a new element and challenges his reliance on Arabic as the sole linguistic system of the elite. I will explore a linguistic system used by privileged cosmopolitan Egyptians—today defined by both English and colloquial Arabic.

Cultures of Arab Schooling: Critical Ethnographies from Egypt is a compilation of a variety of critical ethnographic studies examining the relationship between schooling and the macrosociety. The book generally focuses on the role of the state and the reproduction of power relationships in Egypt's education system. The authors argue that this relationship reinforces the undemocratic culture and hierarchical structure of schooling as a reflection of the larger state culture. Not only does this book present excellent examples of ethnographic work in studying education, but the authors also use this approach to expose a variety of ways in which inequality and repression is reproduced through Egypt's education system. The studies, however, focus on the ways in which

²² Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology*.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

lower socioeconomic classes are repressed due to the relationship between knowledge and power of Egypt's state.

For example, author Kamal Naguib argues that a cycle of oppression exists in Egypt's schools system and larger society by analyzing the culture of Egypt's public schools in facilitating reproduction of the despotic rule of the powerful state over the oppressed. This is a very necessary approach; yet, a plethora of studies on the state and lower socioeconomic classes in Egypt already exist. Islamization of education and the role of the state in determining educational policies and influencing social formation is also a popular area of study. My study, however, focuses on a privileged class rather than solely the state and less privileged classes in the facilitation of reproduction.

In conclusion, I hope to contribute to this scholarship by focusing on elite, secular education and language. Identifying areas like education and language where social hierarchies and power relations are reproduced and reinforced is significant to understanding how these structures are transmitted into the Egyptian society at large. Such approaches highlight the ways in which education and access to language skills, particularly English, can determine what is "probable, possible, or impossible for a given social group."²⁵ It also exemplifies the ways in which Europe and the US still significantly influence the social formation of Egyptian society. Illustrating these processes provides a foundation for further research in this subject.

²⁵ David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 104.

2.1 Education and Cultural Capital: Inheritance from the *Effendiya* to the Cosmopolitans

As previously mentioned, private education is a site of exclusivity in Egypt and throughout the world. Providing access to valuable language practices and acting as a source of linguistic capital are vital to maintaining the exclusive environment of private schools. Today, Egyptian parents pay excessive fees to access these linguistic systems through private education. However, schools are not simply a site for language accumulation. Students are socialized in institutions that reproduce cultural practices that are very different from what most Egyptians are accustomed to. Faced daily with imported forms of capital, students absorb and appropriate these forms of capital distinguishing themselves from established forms of what they perceive as Egyptian. They construct categories and a sense of who belongs and does not belong to these categories largely based on the values they assign to forms of capital. It is the way they dichotomize themselves and place themselves within Egypt's society and the global cosmopolitan society.

However, the values attached to these forms of capital are a result of a complex network of relations between class, power, and reproduction of practices.²⁶ This process was largely affected by the emergence of two influential formations in Egypt's society. First, the bifurcation of Egypt's education system whereby European and US-inspired, private schools continue to hold a dominant position in Egypt having profound cultural, economic and political effects on Egyptian society. Second, the emergence of the *effendiya* and the perpetuation of practices and value judgments this group assigned to

²⁶ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1984).

capital associated with language and education. Most important in this process was the perpetuation of their strategy of using exclusive educational institutions to reproduce and maintain their influential positions in society. This strategy is similarly used by today's privileged class.

In this chapter, I will focus largely on the second formation namely the ways in which the *effendiya* emerged, and maintained and reproduced their social position through the education system. Furthermore, I argue that the cosmopolitan elites of today are the inheritors of the practices and strategies of the *effendiya* mainly as a result of the education system. In this historical analysis, I will trace the origins of the practices they acquired through education and the strategy of using such education for reproduction.

The system revolved around the *effendiya's* ability to convert cultural capital attained in modern, European-inspired schools into economic capital. This strategy has largely perpetuated until today. A cyclical process, as more and more economic capital is needed to acquire cultural capital through private schooling, the system is reinforced and societal cleavages deepened.

2.2 The System

The values assigned to symbolic and cultural capital were largely monopolized first by the *effendiya*. Their ability to control this relationship was largely attached to the profitable opportunities that resulted and necessitated their maintenance of inclusive and exclusive categories associated with cultural and symbolic capital. The transformation of symbolic and cultural capital into economic capital and the reinforcement of barriers to taking part in this process largely began with those associated with the *effendiya* and continued through today's privileged, cosmopolitan class.

I am not, however, arguing that this is a linear process whereby this cosmopolitan class is a direct offshoot of the *effendiya*. Nevertheless, these powerful, small segments of society are similarly defined largely by their formal (western) education as well as their high status in society. It is largely through their education that they have been able to exclude the rest of Egypt's society from seeking the profitable opportunities they are privy to. In order to understand the relationship between these two groups and the strategy they both employed, their definitions must be explored.

The term *effendiya* is difficult to define, and membership to such category has changed through time. Elites, students, middle-class bureaucrats and professionals have all been associated with this category. To acquire the title of effendi, one generally had to get the "right" kind of education associated with European-style state schools. Other more exclusive honorific titles also existed. The honorific titles of bey and then pasha, which was the highest rank, were generally granted at the ruler of Egypt's discretion.²⁷ Also known in their plural forms as bahawat and pashawat, these honorific title holders generally held the highest two ranks in the bureaucracy and highest three in the military.²⁸

In attempts to provide greater understanding to the development of the term *effendiya*, I will use Lucie Ryzova's²⁹ definition of *effendiya* not as a class but as a sociocultural category. Her definition provides opportunity to analyze its diverse membership and the emergence of this category in relation to wider social

²⁷ "Pasha." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Brill Online, 2012. Reference. 16 May 2012 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/pasha-COM_0887>

²⁸ Ehud R. Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 69.

²⁹ Lucie Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity through the 'New Effendiya'," in *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952*, ed. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson, and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005).

transformations for the purposes of this study—private education. She associates the *effendiya* with two things:

In one sense it was a conceptual category, a label for people who outwardly manifested certain diacritics of dress or manner. In this sense an effendi was closely related to status, and was defined by culture, often the result of formal (western) education, and, often but not necessarily, by position in the state bureaucracy. The other sense of the term was the sociological group associated with it. The social group of effendis, the *effendiya*, changed considerably over time, as did the perception of what it signified in cultural terms.³⁰

This study will largely focus on her first concept regarding formal (western) education. This is the main thread tying the *effendiya* to today's privileged, cosmopolitan class. Both the *effendiya* and today's privileged cosmopolitan class include members from middle income to very wealthy positions. It is through these educational institutions that forms of cultural and symbolic capital are largely socialized into these members. The exclusivity of such education reinforces and reproduces the exclusivity of membership to these groups. By reproducing these educational institutions and their bifurcating nature, the dominant position of this class and their practices are reproduced.

Regarding the term cosmopolitan, I rely largely on the work of Mark Allen Peterson in *Connected in Cairo*. His use of cosmopolitan is linked to class and reflects the ways Cairenes view themselves.³¹ The term describes the cosmopolitan class as diverse with membership from both the middle and elite classes.³² For members, cultural capital in the form of transnational goods³³ is a defining element of their identity. Like

³⁰ Ibid., 124.

³¹ Peterson, *Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Modern Middle East*, 25.

³² Ibid., 58.

³³ According to Peterson, this includes commodities, persons, discourses, technologies, and capital (4).

the *effendiya*, they are largely defined by their outward manifestations of dress and manner that separates them from the rest of Egypt's society. For both the *effendiya* and the cosmopolitans, this manifestation of dress and manners was a negotiation between transnational, or what I previously referred to as imported capital, and established capital. Inclusiveness and exclusiveness for both depended largely on a person's ability to negotiate between "Western" and Egyptian forms of capital. The acquisition of which largely takes place in private schools. For the *effendiya* and the cosmopolitans of today, "it is primarily locally that this cosmopolitan class harvests the fruits of its transnational modernity, because participation in global flows is a circuitous route to a significant place in local class and status hierarchies."³⁴

Both classes have held a similar, hegemonic position over the allocation of value to capital largely associated with their formal (western) education. Consequentially, the discourses of the appropriate forms of progress, development, and enlightenment³⁵ in Egypt have perpetuated the importance and value of this form of education for social mobility. This control has allowed a small segment of society to create and reproduce the "rules of the game." The appropriate ways to balance the transnational capital attained through education with established values and traditions. To understand this process further, a historical analysis of European influence in Egypt's education system must be addressed.

2.3 Historical Development of the *Effendiya*

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁵ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Drama of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*, New York (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 148.

European intervention in Egypt was not only a physical intervention but an intervention of morals, customs, and most relevant to this study, schooling and language. A process of integrating the language and culture of the colonizers into an exclusive, powerful class of Egyptians thus began. This process is defined by an interplay between the cosmopolitan characteristics of the Europeans—dress, mannerisms, language—in an Egyptian context. The reproduction of the most ideal way to negotiate between these two discourses was neither rapid nor continuous. It was largely monopolized by the emergence of a category of people closely associated with the state and power, the *effendiya*, through the field of European-inspired, private and public education. I will now focus on the overlap of the *effendiya* with European-inspired schools.

After witnessing firsthand the strength of the French military machine, technologically advanced equipment and the French academic mission to Egypt in 1798, Mohamed Ali undertook an expansive modern state-building campaign. One of his first steps was to modernize Egypt's education system using Europe as his muse. He began the custom of sending missions or groups of students to Europe for training and education in the modern sciences. This educational background was meant to prepare the students for work in Mohamed Ali's state apparatus. In this way, Mohamed Ali would not be dependent on Europeans in Egypt but would educate mainly Turks and some Egyptians to implement this newly acquired knowledge in Egypt.³⁶ He was not interested in creating cultural ties with France or other European countries but rather to exploit their know-how and implement this knowledge in Egypt.³⁷ The first mission was sent to Italy in 1809 to

³⁶ James Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, New Impres. (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1968), 105.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

study military science, ship-building, printing and engineering although the destination of most missions was France.³⁸ In the nineteenth century, the *effendiya* were largely considered members of society who had been sent to Europe on these missions or attended his newly created khedivial (royal) schools.³⁹

Mohamed Ali also called upon European experts to create and staff these new khedival schools and colleges. The influx of foreigners working in Egypt as well as students returning from Europe to work in the bureaucracy would undoubtedly have a profound impact on the forms of cultural capital available in Egypt and more importantly their habitus. Exposed to new ways of thinking in khedival and European schools, the habitus of members of the *effendiya* would undoubtedly change.

Following Bourdieu's logic, school systems are the "institutionalized context where the intellectual habitus of culture develops."⁴⁰ As a result, the habitus of the *effendiya*, many who attended these new schools, would transform to include the cultural capital attained in these exclusive, institutional contexts. The master patterns of behavioral style would be monopolized by these individuals due to and as a result of their privileged positions in society.⁴¹ What they now faced were new forms of structuring structures that not only challenged their traditional habitus but also provided them with an opportunity to set them apart from the rest of Egypt's society. The aspirations and expectations of the *effendiya* would expand as their privileged positions and control in society expanded. They faced new forms of resources that if invested properly upon

³⁸ Ibid., 105.

³⁹ Ryzova, "Egyptianizing Modernity through the 'New Effendiya,'" 125.

⁴⁰ Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 102.

⁴¹ Ibid., 108.

return could yield profitable economic results. However, maintaining the scarcity of such resources ensured their profiting position and consequential need to reproduce this social structure.

Cultural and symbolic capital was transmitted by the expanding *effendiya* across generations through Egypt's exclusive education system. With this transmission, new generations would be defined by the pre-existing distinguishers and "natural familiarity of those born to these classes" to key social and cultural cues.⁴² Appropriating "western" cultural capital with Egyptian cultural capital became institutionalized. Like private, international schools today, the khedival schools and private, foreign schools began to reflect the experiences of the dominant *effendiya* and influenced class expectations.

If we use Bourdieu's definition from "Les strategies de reconversion,"⁴³ cultural capital became a power resource attached to expertise in technical, scientific, economic, and political fields "facilitating access to organizational positions and simultaneously an indicator for class positions."⁴⁴ Originally, Mohamed Ali focused on these forms of expertise. Although he was not interested in cultural ties with Europe, Mohamed Ali would be unable to prevent the flow of other forms of cultural capital, namely "widely shared, high status cultural signals used or social and cultural exclusions."⁴⁵

Partially due to their links with European-inspired education, many *effendiya* occupied "similar positions in the social space;" consequentially, they organized

⁴² Michele Lamont and Annette Lareau, "Cultural Capital : Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments," *American Sociological Association* 6, no. 2 (Autumn 1988): 153-168, 155.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

themselves as a group through their production of “a certain vision of the social world and of themselves as an identifiable group within this world.”⁴⁶ They were not merely an identifiable group but the group that constituted and legitimated themselves as possessing the appropriate vision and means to modernize Egypt. Many held prestigious positions in the state. Others held profitable business ties with European associates.

The British embassy in Cairo also recognized the need for allying with this increasingly dominant class who exercised “the predominating influence in the future political development of their country.”⁴⁷ Today, US-backed financial donors seek out like-minded Egyptian partners in their search for profitable opportunities in Egypt. These partners are generally sought out from the privileged, cosmopolitan class. Many educated abroad like the *effendiya* of before, return instilled with a new found entrepreneurial spirit. Their economic and cultural capital allows them to reap more benefits through establishing new business ventures.⁴⁸

2.4 Commandeering Modernity and Progress

In the early twentieth century, “the *effendiya*’s self-appointed guardianship of the state” reinforced their distinct position within Egypt. The cosmopolitan class of today often takes on this position as modernity continues to be tied with localized western associations.⁴⁹ With the development of the *effendiya*, a set of social distinguishers also emerged dichotomizing modern and non-modern that largely persist today. The *effendiya*

⁴⁶ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 30.

⁴⁷ Ryzova, “Egyptianizing Modernity through the ‘New Effendiya’,” 134.

⁴⁸ For more on Egypt’s entrepreneurs see Peterson, Chapter 6 “The Global and Multilocal: Development, Enterprise and Culture Brokers.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

and cosmopolitans are identified through their European and American way of dressing. Their manners, languages, and occupations are often associated with transnational cultural capital. They live in urban areas and familial lineages to distinguish between old and new money are often asserted as social markers. On the other hand, the non-modern Egyptian is associated with rural and *sha'bi* locations. They dress in the traditional galabiya. Rarely would they speak a language other than their local dialect.

The following excerpt by Egyptian sociologist, Sayyid 'Uways describing a family member, illustrates the dominant position and reproduction of this new habitus and value for cultural capital associated with the *effendiya*:

My uncle Mahmud's wife originated from a different socioeconomic background than the one of my parents...[She] brought with her a different culture and different human experience. She was greatly proud of her father, 'Ali Effendi, because he was an effendi...She used to mix up with effendis, her father's friends, and learned a great many things from listening to them. She was aware of their lifestyle and the life of her father was for her a model of social relations and behavior. This effendi lifestyle she considered an ideal one, and it differed enormously from what she encountered after her marriage. But what could she do?⁵⁰

The *effendiya*, and the characteristics associated with this category, took on a defining role in the formation of modern Egypt. The term *effendiya* became “organically linked to the building of a modern state, and related to both the emergence of a modern bureaucracy as well as the secular and Egyptian character of its elite.”⁵¹ This link which established their dominant position in society generally resulted from “the building of modern schools on the western model, sending students to missions, and enrolling

⁵⁰ Ibid., 128.

⁵¹ Ibid., 127.

children from the provincial notability to attend these schools.”⁵² These schools provided effendi men with the acquisition of cultural capital, such as professional skills and knowledge of a European language,⁵³ desired by the state. They represented and directed the way forward for Egypt as implementers of the European know-how Mohamed Ali sought.

Their position would undoubtedly reinforce a sense of worthiness in Egyptian society. Career prospects became increasingly associated with education in government schools established by Mohamed Ali rather than the traditional *kuttab*⁵⁴ system. These schools were authorized as the “gates of entrance to ‘power and influence.’”⁵⁵ Much of this was tied to the symbolic capital associated with higher education degrees which necessitated a shift in educational trends by the dominant Egyptian class.⁵⁶ Social distinction was tied to government positions and “learning subject matter imported from the West was believed to lead automatically to modernism, prosperity, and freedom.”⁵⁷

By the twentieth century, the *effendiya* took on a more cosmopolitan character aspiring for influential occupations outside the bureaucracy. Although this transformation would expand their influential position and control over discourses on

⁵² Ibid., 127.

⁵³ Ibid., 128.

⁵⁴ The *kuttab-madrassa* system is a religious system of education that generally refers to an elementary level of education. A more detailed definition will be provided later in the chapter.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁵⁶ Cf. Peterson 2011, Reid 1990.

⁵⁷ Abu al-Futouh Ahmad Radwan, *Old and New Forces in Egyptian Education: Proposals for the Reconstruction of the Program of Egyptian Education in the Light of Recent Cultural Trends*. (New York: Columbia University, 1951), 123.

nationalism in Egypt's society, it put them in direct conflict with the religious establishment. More institutions would be needed to support their liberal ideologies. This competition is illustrated in the formation of Cairo University and particularly the transformation of the School of Law, which educated influential characters such as Lutfi al-Sayyid, nationalist leader Mustafa Kamil, prime ministers Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat, Ismail Sidqi, and Muhammad Tawfiq among others.⁵⁸ Shalakany, a legal scholar, describes the influential role this group of scholars acquired:

By monopolising the leadership of the Egyptian nationalist movement, Khedival Law School graduates managed to glorify the image of the 'native lawyer' invested in defending the case for Egyptian independence in the modern terminology of international law, and in the process reversed the traditional stigma haunting the honourable nature of their profession. Moreover, by intellectually developing a new project of nationalist rebirth, contributing deeply to the invention of modern Egyptian nationhood, and providing on the ground anti-colonial leadership, the lawyers banked on their nationalist credentials to push through a variety of domestic legal reforms that eventually led them to prevail over their Mixed and Shari'a Courts colleagues.⁵⁹

Shalakany⁶⁰ convincingly articulates the rise of these secular, legal elites and their subsequent influence on the economic development and political emancipation strategies by taking charge of Egypt's nationalist project.⁶¹ His description of the rise and fall of the secular legal elites, the reproduction of this group, and his acknowledgement of the influential role in Egypt's nationalist discourse they still hold is telling. He even puts

⁵⁸ Donald Malcolm Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 15.

⁵⁹ Amr Shalakany, "I Heard It All Before': Egyptian Tales of Law and Development," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 5 (2006), 842.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 834.

forth the argument that calling the 1919 Revolution a revolution and fixing its date⁶² may be a result of a single nationalist scholar, Abdel Rahman al-Rafi'i.⁶³ An influential Egyptian historian and nationalist, he is a product of the Khedival Law School as well as the Ras al-Tin Secondary School in Alexandria.⁶⁴ The struggle against the British colonial powers during this period inevitably increased the position and influence of those associated with the term *effendiya* in the nationalist project.

2.5 Barriers to Social Mobility through Education

Capital, symbolic and cultural, associated with foreign-modeled education are still sought as a means of social mobility. Although the focus of privileged, cosmopolitan Egyptians today is business, engineering and medicinal degrees,⁶⁵ the symbolic capital associated with higher education degrees is still very important. However, "the relationships among class origin, profession, and income have not remained constant. If anything, social mobility seems to have declined."⁶⁶ Higher education is not in itself a sure means to social mobility. The "right" kind of higher education through liberal institutions like foreign universities based in Egypt or abroad is necessary for attaining the expertise and knowledge needed for profitable careers in multinational corporations, banks, or private

⁶² Noteworthy, the date of the 1919 Revolution was determined as the date the law students went on strike. This strike was shortly followed by many violent clashes (Ibid., 844).

⁶³ Ibid., 844.

⁶⁴ Jr. Goldschmidt, Arthur, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 163.

⁶⁵ Walter Armbrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 135.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 135.

companies. This decline can be linked to the increasing inaccessibility of the “right” cultural capital linked to foreign language and education.

Cairo University provides an example of erecting new barriers. The public Arabic section of Cairo University’s School of Law is overcrowded and academically weak with class sizes reaching more than 5,000.⁶⁷ The French section⁶⁸ and English sections require much higher tuition. In return, students are granted class sizes of 20 to 140. Moreover, graduates from the French and English sections are more likely to secure a higher-paying, corporate job.⁶⁹ What this scenario proves is that even when access to higher education increased for the general Egyptian public, new ways were found to secure the privileged position of the dominant class.

Linguistic capital would increasingly become a barrier to education for less privileged classes and an increasingly important sign of prestige among the *effendiya* and today’s privileged cosmopolitans. Egyptian cinema encapsulates the formation of an “authentic” modernity depicted by those from the old *effendiya* class not only through mannerisms and dress but also largely through linguistic capital—a marker of education and position within Egypt’s society.⁷⁰

The 1952 revolution led by former President Gamal Abdel Nasser challenged the position of the privileged *effendiya*. He attacked the educational institutions that reproduced this class and challenged their monopoly over dictating the discourse on

⁶⁷ Shalakany, “‘I Heard It All Before’: Egyptian Tales of Law and Development,” 851.

⁶⁸ According to Shalakany the French section is run by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs similar to the 1890 *Ecole libre de droit* (851).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 851.

⁷⁰ Cf. Armburst 1996, Lila Abu-Lughod 2005.

modernity in Egypt. Despite being from rather modest backgrounds, Nasser and former President Anwar Sadat are products of the aforementioned privileged, educational institutions.⁷¹ Nevertheless, they challenged the status quo attempting to drastically change the exclusive, inaccessible nature of Egypt's education system they were products of.

Nevertheless, the bifurcation of Egypt's education system and rigid social structure persisted. Under Sadat, "the foreign, private schools once again became the means of attaining higher economic and social status."⁷² New *infitahi* or *nouveau riche*⁷³ would still have to play by the rules of the game founded by the *effendiya*. The practices and habitus associated with those dominating this structure are adaptable. These practices are "a way of understanding one's place in the world that is capable of generating new practices amid shifting social, economic, and cultural contexts."⁷⁴ Even amid the shifting economic, political and social ideologies of Nasser and Sadat, these practices that reproduce and reinforce the position of the elites, from the *effendiya* to the cosmopolitan class of today. Membership may expand and change; however, the basic rules of the game remain the same.

2.6 Conclusion

In the 1930s, the hallmark of the modernity defined and monopolized by the *effendiya* was their ability to "practice the European ways 'correctly'—that is, as a proper

⁷¹ Sadat attended Fu'ad I Secondary School and Gamal Abdel Nasser in Ra's al-Tin (See Reid 1983).

⁷² Judith Cochran, *Education in Egypt* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 55.

⁷³ New money or those associated with profiting from Sadat's free market policies (Armburst, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, 26.)

⁷⁴ Peterson, *Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Modern Middle East*, 7.

Egyptian.”⁷⁵ Privileged, cosmopolitan Egyptians today face the same standards and struggle between being simultaneously Egyptian and “modern.”

If modernity is a style, in Egypt it is a style to which not everyone has access. Facility with foreign languages, not only spoken languages but the languages of dress, of bodily comportment, of brand names, of technological familiarity, and of current events, rests on one’s ability to afford certain schools, to shop at certain stores, and to gain access to particular technologies of connection and consumption. Modernity as style is a class issue. As such, it is a style over which [the privileged cosmopolitan class] have a monopoly.⁷⁶

These are the forms of cultural capital through which the dominant class reproduces itself, inherited by today’s privileged cosmopolitans from the *effendiya* of the past.

Practices of the *effendiya* are reproduced in today’s privileged cosmopolitans. Their reproduction is largely tied to their strategy of accessing European and American-inspired, educational institutions. Access was and still is largely tied to economic, social, and cultural capital. Private, secular education continues to have a profound impact on shaping social futures and justifying their social positions. Ability to convert cultural capital, liberal ideologies and language, as well as symbolic capital, higher education degrees, into economic capital reinforces their dominant position in society. The privileged cosmopolitans, like the *effendiya* of the past, monopolized the discourses on modernity and development necessitating their leading role in Egypt’s future acting as gatekeepers to power and prestige. I will next turn to the second transformation, the bifurcation of Egypt’s education system and the development of the field of private, international education within this context.

⁷⁵ Armburst, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, 84.

⁷⁶ Peterson, *Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Modern Middle East*, 6.

3.1 The Bifurcation of Egypt's Education System and the Spread of the English Language

In this chapter, I will focus on detailing the socio-historical context through which the field of private, US and European schools emerged in association with need for foreign language education. As an influential transmitter of culture, linguistic systems, distinctions, and connections, these institutions created boundaries of what is possible and not possible for the class-specific location of the previously discussed *effendiya* and privileged cosmopolitans. Their privileged location in Egypt's macrosociety is further legitimated through and a result of this field. The process of bifurcation led this class to distance themselves further and further from goods, places, and persons who were excluded from their social world.⁷⁷

Towards the end of the chapter, I will focus on the spread of the English language and its transformation into a form of linguistic capital. I will argue that as the position of this class became challenged by an increasing number of students and parents wanting to participate in this field, adaptation to changing conditions was necessary. One of the adaptations I will explore through my field research is the increased value of English linguistic capital and linguistic habitus as an indicator of social status.

3.2 Historical Analysis of Egypt's Two Educational Paths

⁷⁷ Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 106.

It is important to understand the state of Egypt's education system prior to the introduction of European-inspired schools by Mohamed Ali in order to provide a starting point for analysis and to situate the modern education system in a broader context. As a foundational pillar of society, education has far-reaching influence. Divisions within the education system will inevitably reflect divisions within the greater community. In Egypt, a class division connected to educational achievement existed before Mohamed Ali's revamping of the education system. However, this class was much different than the *effendiya*. These were religious elite, ulama—a product of the al-Azhar system. They, along with the ruling Mamluks, were the dominate classes prior to Mohamed Ali. A politically powerful military class, the sons of the ruling Mamluk Amirs were not interested in the knowledge attainable through purely academic institutions but for learning for practical application in battle. They were sent as slaves to military training barracks where they would receive an elementary education. Once they reached adolescence, they received training in the art of war.⁷⁸

Much of the Mamluk's educational efforts were focused on building countless mosques and schools to perpetuate their names in history.⁷⁹ However, “not one of them or their subordinates or sons ever attended one,”⁸⁰ and lack of funding left many of these buildings in disrepair. Although the deterioration in Egypt's education system was well underway prior to the eighteenth century, “the Mamluks did not significantly alter this situation.”⁸¹ Only a few were chosen from the larger Egyptian population for the

⁷⁸ Radwan, *Old and New Forces in Egyptian Education*, 69

⁷⁹ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 17.

⁸⁰ Radwan, *Old and New Forces in Egyptian Education*, 69.

⁸¹ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 15.

Mamluk's military education and an equally few number were chosen to attend the mosque-college.⁸² The rest of Egypt's population was relegated to apprenticeships generally within family context. The education system was very divided and so too was the macrosociety. Although the education system has transformed greatly, the status of education in the eighteenth century still captures the exclusionary character education has historically held in Egypt.

3.2.1. Egypt's Education System in the Nineteenth Century

As previously mentioned, education in Egypt was already divisive in nature and this characteristic would continue under the rule of Mohamed Ali. Mohamed Ali defeated the Mamluk rulers, destroying this military class and bringing in a new educational system modeled after Europe. Prior to Mohamed Ali and the French invasion, education in Egypt revolved around religious education. Under his rule, Egypt began its path, however slowly, into two distinct educational spheres, the *kuttab-madrasa* system and one based on the European model. The *kuttab* is similar to the notion of an elementary school, and one could advance to the next level called the madrasa.⁸³ Students in the *kuttab* "learnt the orthography of the Arabic language mainly through memorising the Kor'an."⁸⁴ This was an elementary education, rather Islamic in nature, that revolved around memorization and recitation. Upon finishing this system, students could continue their studies at al-Azhar, the premier religious university, if he was from the sheikh class, or undertake an apprenticeship usually under the command of his father.⁸⁵ Religious

⁸² Radwan, *Old and New Forces in Egyptian Education*, 72.

⁸³ Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognitions*, 58.

⁸⁴ J. Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

Coptic schools were also available for the Coptic community. Although waqf-funded,⁸⁶ religious schools were accessible to the poor, few children were sent as they were often needed to work alongside their fathers.⁸⁷ Consequentially, although the schools established under Mohamed Ali were technically public, attendees were generally from a somewhat privileged background, and thus became associated with the privilege of the *effendiya*. Starting under Mohamed Ali, the government primary-secondary-university ladder under the auspices of the state became the *effendiya*'s track to influential positions.⁸⁸

The core of Mohamed Ali's modern state-building campaign was the advancement and improvement of his military to aid his expansionist policies. As a result, concentration on science, industry, and strengthening the military define the changes in Egypt's education system during his reign. Modern science was needed to create the industries and factories to supply the military. His schools were generally military establishments, a recruitment site, or provided technical support to the military.⁸⁹

The schools provided Mohamed Ali not only with officers but also civil servants who would become the core of his administrative needs. As the former *kuttab-madrassa* system was not suitable for his needs and ultimate goals,⁹⁰ he moved away from the strictly religious curriculum to teach a variety of skills from languages to geometry. The focus on European-inspired education rather than the old *kuttab-madrassa* system left the

⁸⁶ Waqf is an Islamic religious endowment usually for religious or charitable purposes.

⁸⁷ Radwan, *Old and New Forces in Egyptian Education*, 80.

⁸⁸ Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 14.

⁸⁹ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 203.

⁹⁰ Radwan, *Old and New Forces in Egyptian Education*, 86.

latter system in continued disrepair. Social mobility was through these new state schools or being sent on education missions abroad. The following excerpt reinforces the reproduction of the exclusive group of Egyptians that became known as the *effendiya* largely through connections and capital or “training” attained through this educational track:

There is still one other important aspect of this educational policy; in spite of the hostility to these earlier missions on their return to Egypt, the very fact that most of them were Mohammad Ali’s picked men, whether Turk, Armenian or Egyptian, gradually forced the idea in official administrative circles that training and specialization abroad was the hallmark of education. It was these missions that provided the officials for governmental posts and so created a new stratum in society which might be called, whatever may be its quality, the cultured aristocracy. It was through their training that they were enabled to take over posts that led to high salaries, gifts of lands and titles.⁹¹

Due to many costly wars and defeats, finances were heavily strained towards the end of Mohamed Ali’s reign, and education suffered as a result. Most of the military schools previously opened were closed as there was no need for more officers. Many more were further closed under Abbas I, his successor. However, his sons and the sons of many notables continued to be sent to Europe for education and training and would continue his legacy of focusing on the European-inspired government schools at the expense of the religious *kuttab-madrassa* system.

Mohamed Ali’s impact on the course of education in Egypt is profound. Like his predecessors, he left the religious *kuttab-madrassa* system in disrepair, further delegitimizing this educational choice in the face of his modernizing education project. He was the first to thrust Egypt into large-scale consumption of scientific knowledge and expertise available in Europe driving Egypt further into participation in the global

⁹¹ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 170.

exchange of transnational capital. Yet his new public school system was not easily accessible, and this exclusivity meant the pathways to power and influence depended greatly on maintaining the bifurcation of education in Egypt. In a sense, he established the foundation for what would later become the field of private, international education. This field would become a derivative of the primary-secondary-university ladder.

3.2.2. Mohamed Ali's Successors

The crossroads between powerful state positions and European-inspired education became further entrenched as educational missions to Europe continued and an increasing number of private, foreign schools were established. As those returning from Europe received high administrative positions, this system took on a more and more prestigious character in relation to the still defunct *kuttab-madrassa* system. The Bakli family is an example of social mobility through this education system. Originally poor peasants, five members of this family were sent on missions to Europe starting under the reign of Sa'id Pasha in 1854 and promoted to high ranking positions in the administration.⁹²

Mohamed Sa'id Pasha, son of Mohamed Ali and ruler from 1854 to 1863, did much to expand a European-inspired system of private education in Egypt. Sa'id Pasha rapidly developed modern schools, largely European, during his reign while the Egyptian government schools such as the School of Medicine, the Naval School, and the Military School were given little attention.⁹³ Much of the development of modern schools was a direct result of the financial generosity of Sa'id Pasha. Land and money was given to a variety of foreign educational opportunists—French, American, Italian and more. While

⁹² Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 330.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 340.

Sa'id significantly paved the way for foreign, private schools, his neglect for the education of the general Egyptian populace is rather shocking. In fact, "the amount of money which he gave to the Frères in Cairo and to the Italians in Alexandria was probably more than he spent on his educational budget during the whole of his reign."⁹⁴

His successor, Ismail Pasha, was the grandson of Mohamed Ali and ruled Egypt from 1863 to 1879. The number of Europeans living and working in Egypt during this time expanded greatly, and concurrently, a demand for foreign schools. Simultaneously, Ismail tried to re-establish some of the schools like the Military School established by Mohamed Ali and separate the civil schools from the military schools.⁹⁵ In 1868, a School of Administration and Languages was established under the leadership of Minister Ali Mubarak that would later become Cairo University's School of Law. This development shows an increased process of localization in Egypt.⁹⁶ Not only did this reduce their dependence on Europe, but the focus on civil schools coincides with the development of nationalist fervor in Egypt. These educational institutions became the breeding ground for the *effendiya*.

His efforts to once again focus on the primary-secondary-university ladder may have been in reaction to the increased number of foreign schools catering to the needs of the foreign community and the need for a similar education for Egyptians, needs the *kuttab-madrasa* system could not fulfill. In the past, the government was more concerned with higher education institutions neglecting the elementary *kuttab* schools for

⁹⁴ Ibid., 340.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 352.

⁹⁶ For more on localization see Peterson (2006).

the mass public. Nevertheless, in his efforts, more attention was also given to *kuttab* schools.⁹⁷

The impact of the state and high-society's focus on the primary-secondary-university ladder is detailed at great length by Donald Reid.⁹⁸ He focuses on three secondary schools, the Tawfiqiyya, Khidiwiyya, and Ra's al-Tin, which produced many of Egypt's most influential men until the 1952 revolution. The Tawfiqiyya and Khidiwiyya produced at least four prime ministers each. Influential Wafdist leader Mustafa al-Nahhas is an alumnus of the Khidiwiyya and eight out of eleven of his ministers were from either of these two schools. Reid states that at least "three-fourths of the ministers between the late 1920s and 1952 may have come up through one of the three schools."⁹⁹ Further Khidiwiyya alumni include nationalists like Mustafa Kamil, scholar Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, jurist Abd al-Azizi Fahmi, journalist-politician Mohamed Hussein Haykal, feminist and judge Qasim Amin, parliamentary leader Ismail Abaza and many more. Tawfiqiyya alumni include Watani party leader Mohamed Farid, and industrialist Ahmad Abbud. Ra's a-Tin produced President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Prime Minister Nuqrashi, and influential historian Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i.¹⁰⁰ The purpose of these schools as Reid states was not simply educational but to "bring together the sons of

⁹⁷ Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 5.

⁹⁸ Donald Malcolm Reid, "Turn-of-the-Century Egyptian School Days." *Comparative Education Review* 27, no. 3 (1983): 374-393.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 375.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 375.

prosperous merchants, landed aristocrats, and religious leaders at an impressionable age and to mold them into partisans of the status quo.”¹⁰¹

A private, foreign-language track also existed in which the French schools had by far the largest share of students. Although this system did provide a means to success, the state schools track was still the best and most popular means amongst the *effendiya* to influential careers. Alumni from private French schools include three prime ministers: Adli Yakan, Ismail Sidqi and Ahmad Ziwari.¹⁰²

The alternative trajectory, the *kuttab-madrasa* system, was reformed and given more attention by Ali Mubarak. The schools were now administered by the government, and were “now generally referred to as ‘primary’ and the provincial town schools as ‘secondary’ schools.”¹⁰³ Yet, these names do not reflect any significant improvements in the standard of education given to this system in comparison to the government primary-secondary-university ladder. In the past, students could theoretically gain prestige by advancing from a *kuttab* to al-Azhar and obtain social status as a sheikh. In the new primary-secondary track, students’ educational careers generally stopped after secondary school. This educational restraint prevented students from acquiring prestigious statuses such as becoming a sheikh. Heyworth-Dunne further elaborates on the problems with these reforms:

The reformers may have wished to develop a school system in Egypt in order to spread education more widely among the people but, in spite of this work, they could not break away from the idea that the schools had to be subservient to state control and that the students, although many of them never entered anything more

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 376.

¹⁰² Ibid., 378.

¹⁰³ Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 370.

advance than a *kuttab*, were finally destined for the provincial town schools, then the government primary and preparatory schools, going on from these to the special schools, either civil or military, and so to government service.¹⁰⁴

European modeled education continued to be necessary for upward mobility.

“Not unlike education during the period of Mohamed Ali, Ismail’s secular system of education created a distinct class of Europeanized Egyptians, exacerbating further the social disjuncture his grandfather had introduced three decades previously.”¹⁰⁵ During this period, many minorities and Muslims enrolled in private, foreign education institutions. These institutions would no doubt facilitate connections to foreigners who controlled many economically profitable enterprises. Upward mobility was further possible through acceptance into government schools. These students were in turn placed in the bureaucracy.

3.2.3. British Occupation

Egypt’s financial problems made genuine, sustainable educational reform impossible, and these financial troubles eventually led to foreign occupation. Even after appointing French and English ministers into his cabinet, Ismail Pasha was forced to resign by the European powers. His son, Tawfiq, replaced him until the British officially took over after suppressing the 1882 rebellion. This would mark an era of British occupation and significant foreign diffusion in all aspects of Egyptian society followed by the emergence of Egyptian nationalism in response.

The bifurcated structure of Egypt’s education system was advantageous for the British occupiers. The less education provided for the masses the better, as this ensured

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 371.

¹⁰⁵ Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognitions*, 65.

continued subordination to their foreign occupiers. The paths to advancement through education became narrower when Consul General Lord Cromer announced that free education would be illegal in 1907.¹⁰⁶ “By charging tuition, Cromer managed to widen the gap further between elites and the masses; between those who could afford higher education and those who could not.”¹⁰⁷ Access to profitable positions through British contacts necessitated the *effendiya* adapt their capital to suit the new political context. “The British did not alter the secular and religious elitist educational system. The only difference was that the British trained the secular elite to be English speaking governmental bureaucrats rather than members of a military machine.”¹⁰⁸

Pathways to success became even more dependent upon linguistic skills under British occupation. English became a main focus in many schools, and the success of students was often accredited by the British Examiners by how well they spoke or understood English.¹⁰⁹ They controlled who and where these students would be placed after graduation. Knowledge of the English language and access to the British elite would further incentivize private English education as this guaranteed government employment.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the elite had multiple resources to advantageously exploit. Many traveled to Europe, could pay for private tutoring, and lived in urban areas close to these schools, all of which aided their ability to pass government exams.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Cochran, *Education in Egypt*, 95.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

Noteworthy is the establishment in 1902 of Victoria College in Alexandria.¹¹²

This private school challenged the dominance of the increasingly expensive state schools and offered a secular curriculum in contrast to the private missionary schools. The reputation of this Oxford-modeled private school achieved is largely associated with the powerful men it produced. Its reputation continues to be revisited by Egyptians glorifying days of the past. According to a website created by the Old Victorian Association in Alexandria dedicated to remembering the glory of the boys that produced by her, Victoria:

Victoria did not turn out faceless bureaucrats destined to run the continuing colonial administration, but rather leading personalities of the modern Arab world. Victoria's generations of students included Yeghens and Toussons from Egypt's Royal family, George Antonius, Edward Atiyah, his son sir Michael Atiyah, Charles Issawi, Amin Osman, Prince Regent Abdulillah of Iraq, Hussein ibn Tallal (King of Jordan), and also from Jordan, Princes Raad Hussein and Zeid ben Shaker, el Mahdi and el Merghani boys [c]ame from the Sudan, Rezas and Saudas from Sudi Arabia, Senoussis from Libya, Sabbahs and Ghaems from Kuwait. King Simeon from Bulgaria, and the Crown Prince Zogg of Albania, Youssif Chahine, Omar Sharif and Edward Said were all Victoria boys. Whether in politics, business, the arts or academia, the roster reads as a Who's Who of the Middle East.¹¹³

The British used the education system to ensure bureaucratic advancement could be attained only by those in the higher echelons of Egypt's society. They increasingly segregated the elementary *kuttab* schools from the state primary schools primarily

¹¹² Sahar Hamouda and Colin Clement, eds., *Victoria College: A History Revealed* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), 1.

¹¹³ Sahar Hamouda, Colin Clement, and Hala Halim, "History of Victoria College", *The Victorian.net*, accessed 21 March 2012, <http://www.thevictorian.net/history2.html>.

through high tuition costs and created even more exclusive private schools like Victoria College.¹¹⁴

In 1902, only three state, secondary schools existed that together graduated only 100 students a year.¹¹⁵ With the abolishment of free education, “education became the privilege of an elite group; and what was worse was that it became for the first time in Egyptian history exclusively the privilege of the rich.”¹¹⁶ The disadvantages this system gave to the rest of Egypt can be seen in the fact that 95 percent of the population was still illiterate by 1907.¹¹⁷ Lack of financing was also to blame with only 2 percent of the annual budget allocated to education.¹¹⁸

After the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1923, the government of Saad Zaghloul established a free and compulsory education system in 1923. Yet, education was only free in elementary levels and not all villages had even a single school.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, reforms were being made to improve the situation of the *kuttab-madrasa* system. By 1950, the state allocated around 12 percent of its budget to education compared to 6.4 percent in 1923.¹²⁰ A greater emphasis was placed on secondary and higher education with the establishment of the Egyptian University in

¹¹⁴ Reid, “Turn-of-the-Century Egyptian School Days,” 382.

¹¹⁵ Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 18.

¹¹⁶ Cochran, *Education in Egypt*, 98.

¹¹⁷ Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognition*, 70.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 70.

¹¹⁹ Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 109.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 113.

1908 which would later become Cairo University.¹²¹ The state trajectory of primary-secondary-higher education would feed the *effendiya* endowed with the “right” capital into this university.¹²² As all fees to the elite primary and secondary schools were abolished in 1943 and 1950 respectively,¹²³ mass enrollment to this traditionally elite educational trajectory followed. Higher education was more accessible as well due to financial assistance provided by the government, and by 1952 under Gamal Abdel Nasser university education would be free.

From 1923 onwards, the government made genuine steps towards abolishing the division between these two systems, most notably the distinctions between elementary and primary educations. However, the *effendiya* simply found new means to exclude those who did not belong. Members of the general populace were still restricted from authentic political participation as educational barriers consecrated these positions to the educated elite and well-connected.¹²⁴ These barriers situated the *effendiya* in opportune positions that allowed them to indirectly control state resources. Nevertheless, even when efforts were made to allocate more money to the elementary schools, funding could never keep up with the amount of resources needed for the ever expanding enrollment.¹²⁵ As enrollment grew, the quality of instruction decreased and an over-supply of educated graduates followed. These two trends continue until today and were greatly exacerbated by educational policies following the 1952 revolution.

¹²¹ Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognitions*, 73.

¹²² Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 15.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹²⁴ Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognitions*, 78.

¹²⁵ Reid, *Cairo University and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 110.

3.2.4. Modern Trends in Education

The 1952 Revolution led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and a small military corps called the Free Officers saw the transformation of the education system as a pillar of their broader socialist goals. Enrollment in primary and secondary schools expanded like never before. Nasser also succeeded in bringing al-Azhar under direct state control. However, his plans, like previous leaders, were hindered by lack of funding and failed to provide much needed quality education. Furthermore, his policy of guaranteeing employment upon graduation in the State's bureaucracy continues to have serious economic consequences until today.

Nasser looked to nationalism and socialism to inspire and socialize students in the lower levels of education.¹²⁶ As a result, enrollment in foreign, private education decreased reflecting this political philosophy.¹²⁷ Such reversal would challenge the cleavage between the privileged class and Egypt's masses. Although he attempted to overcome this societal rift, his policies were often polarizing. With few resources and losing the 1967 War, his dreams of uniting Egyptian society and overcoming educational barriers failed.

Nasser's policies had several implications for the development of the field of private, international education. The expansion of free public schools and the concurrent lack of finances meant that private education was now the only means to ensure quality education. Furthermore, the policy of guaranteeing jobs also meant that the value placed on job opportunities in the state bureaucracy was much lower. Government schools were

¹²⁶ Cook, *Egyptian Higher Education: Inconsistent Cognitions*, 85.

¹²⁷ Cochran, *Education in Egypt*, 45.

now producing clerks and bureaucrats at an unprecedented scale. The aspirations of the privileged class endowed with secular educational capital would need to adapt to the new economic and political context that caused many in this class to lose ownership to land and private companies due to land reforms and nationalization policies. However, a plethora of new investment opportunities presented themselves shortly.

After the failure of Arab socialism and in order to firmly set himself apart from the policies of Nasser, President Anwar Sadat implemented the *Infitah*, a policy which opened Egypt to a flood of private, generally American investment and subsequently culture. Egypt would once again become a playground for foreign advisors and experts. Educational missions resumed once again, mainly to the US, financed through USAID. Judith Cochran in *Education in Egypt* refers to Sadat's policy as "the Open Door Educational Policy." As the name suggests, an opening of the economy as well as the education system to the US would have far-reaching effects on the formation of the privileged class. As capitalism began to flourish in Egypt, a new group of capitalists exploited new opportunities. The focus continued amongst Egypt's cosmopolitans to use education and now private, international education for acquiring the needed capital to participate in the booming neoliberal development project.

Overcrowded, low paying bureaucratic jobs continued to be guaranteed for graduates of government schools while the aspirations of the elite adapted to the new neoliberal context. Flush with cash, newly established capitalists had the means to send their children to schools out of reach for the masses that guaranteed jobs in the private sector. The government looked to foreign donors like USAID to solicit money for the overburdened education system. "Foreign affiliated Egyptians became wealthy as

attending a foreign school and speaking a foreign language became the ticket to increased income. But foreign schools had not educated these Egyptians to have a concern for the poor with whom they shared neither common values, language nor social status. So while there were more Mercedes in Cairo than in Dallas, completed telephone calls, sugar and potable water were luxuries for others.”¹²⁸

Lucrative contracts with foreign and particularly American businesses further perpetuated the need to acquire the necessary capital to participate in the capitalist system. With the spread of the neoliberal project, English language skills became increasingly necessary for Egypt’s privileged cosmopolitans. Again, those who lacked the ability to pay for private tutors or pay the exorbitant school fees were excluded from many beneficial educational opportunities and thus, economic opportunities as well. English is often a prerequisite for graduates and students hoping to travel abroad. For example, “emphasis on the English proficiency for graduate training has meant the selection of candidates for Peace Fellowships¹²⁹ are made from elite Egyptians who already speak English.”¹³⁰

Furthermore, Egypt’s inability to finance the expanding needs of Egypt’s education system resulted in reliance on foreign aid. Foreign aid in the education system in Egypt is a double-edged sword. Although there is little doubt that the state of Egypt’s education system requires vast amounts of investment and financing in order to give Egyptians the education they deserve, it comes at a price. As Judith Cochran describes it:

¹²⁸ Ibid., 55.

¹²⁹ Peace Fellowships was a program funded by USAID to fund graduate training of Egyptians in US institutions.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 105.

Foreign aid in education, as it is currently constituted, poses a severe threat to the delicate imbalances in Egyptian society. The Egyptian ambition is to retain the economic aid from Western countries such as the U.S., Germany, Japan, and France and continue to maintain the Egyptian culture. Successful American educational aid projects, if completed, could further divide society—and perhaps increase secular power. The more money provided to westernized Egyptian administrators, politicians, and technologists, the greater the polarization becomes between the religious and secular factions in the country.¹³¹

To cater to the growing transnational needs of this cosmopolitan class, a shift towards private, English education started in the 1970s. The educational avenue of the primary-secondary-university ladder of the *effendiya* was now transformed into private, foreign language schools for privileged cosmopolitans. This shift occurred for a variety of reasons. One, the lack of resources and financing for state schools meant they were of poor quality and over-enrolled. Second, the expansion of public education meant that the primary-secondary-university ladder was no longer exclusive enough. Three, power and influence I would argue was now redirected to those from the military establishment and profit-seeking capitalists or technocrats who needed transnational capital to exploit the global capitalist economy. New private, foreign-language schools were needed to provide the transnational capital for profitable investment.

The conscious and unconscious participation by Egyptians in the transformation and bifurcation of Egypt's society through education is illustrated today through the proliferation of private schools founded by Egyptian businesspersons as profitable enterprises. The Egyptian government issued Law 306 of 1993 as part of broader neoliberal goals to incentivize private-sector investment, which allowed for the establishment of private schools distinct from the previous non-public, religious

¹³¹ Ibid., 122.

schools.¹³² In 1995, Law 107 was passed that similarly permitted the establishment of private universities. Prior to 1996, the American University in Cairo was the only private university in Egypt.¹³³ These laws have drastically changed the landscape of private education in Egypt, and continue to shape the context of private, international education today.

The Egyptian government promoted this process by attracting investors with cheap land, amenities, and tax incentives to decrease start-up costs.¹³⁴ The 1990s saw an explosion of privately-owned schools, mainly by Arabs from the Gulf, Lebanon and Egypt. Important for this study is the establishment of elite, English-language schools accredited through US institutions across Cairo and Alexandria in the early to mid-1990s.¹³⁵ This indicates a shift from the traditional establishers of private schools being missionaries or foreign consulates to Egyptians themselves looking to exploit this profitable industry. Furthermore, “lower taxes and less regulation have led to an explosion of private language schools and (less so) universities, and have transformed what was perhaps the preserve of the elite in the 1990s into a norm for upper middle-class families today, especially in Greater Cairo.”¹³⁶ Again, the influx of participants into the field of private, international education would require the established, privileged class to

¹³² Marion Dixon, “Investing in Inequality: Education Reform in Egypt,” *Middle East Report* 225 (2010): 40-47, http://cornell.academia.edu/MarionDixon/Papers/824759/Investing_in_Inequality_Education_Reform_in_Egypt, 42.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

erect new barriers and necessary distinctions to preserve their position. English linguistic capital is undoubtedly one such distinction.

3.3. English Linguistic Capital

Bourdieu observes that legitimate language generally corresponds to the official language of a political unit; in Egypt, however, the situation is more complex.¹³⁷ Egypt can be argued as a case where the linguistic system of the dominant class is not the same as the official language. Debates amongst Arabic sociolinguists have often explored arguments concerning variants of classical and non-classical Arabic. These debates go far beyond the scope of this paper, yet, what is often overlooked is the place of foreign languages and particularly English in Egypt's sociolinguistic market. One must ask then what language, or more specifically linguistic system, is dominant?

If one of the most important institutions for reproduction of Egypt's dominant cosmopolitan elite is private, international schools, and the language of instruction in these schools is often English or another foreign language, then the place of English in the linguistic system of the dominant must be explored. The dominant class dictates the dominant language, but identifying this dominant language is not a straightforward matter in Egypt.

English has permeated the Arabic linguistic system of the dominant class. The linguistic system of students in these schools is defined by code-switching between colloquial Arabic and English. A comprehensive and in-depth analysis of institutions, persons, and social processes which produced the current position of English in the linguistic system of the dominant class goes beyond the scope of this paper. However,

¹³⁷ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 45.

the following chapters will provide evidence to support my claims that English and code-switching is used in an interpersonal function by these students. This phenomenon has further authorized these schools as holders and facilitators of what participants view as the “right” forms of English linguistic capital. The knowledge of existing social distinctions related to this capital is acquired through the habitus, generally at home. It is then reinforced at school or acquired by those who may lack this familial habitus but see the need for acquiring such practices as they participate within this social space. Accessing resources available through these schools is necessary in order to perpetuate their positions in society. As a result, these institutions hold a powerful place in facilitating children of the elite into profitable positions in the labor market.

The field of possibilities and social futures increases through English education. Yet, not simply through English but the “right” English language capital whose value derives from accent, code-switching, pronunciation, and correct usage of slang—resources used to define themselves in relation to others. The knowledge of the existing social distinctions and appropriate practices associated with the English language were originally structured by agents like the *effendiya* and are reconstructed in new fields and contexts today.¹³⁸ Today, foreign languages are one of the most sought after skills.¹³⁹ However, mastery of a foreign language is not simply a skill. It is a social marker, the reproduction of practices related to the aforementioned processes of class formation and notions of modernity.

¹³⁸ Peterson, *Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Modern Middle East*, 66.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

This system is reinforced as parents' visions for their children's life opportunities revolves around the importance of acquiring the most valuable form of this linguistic capital, which is only attainable in the most expensive and prestigious private, international schools. The economic capital paid in terms of fees is used to provide competitive salaries to recruit top, native speakers and teachers. Arabic is constantly associated with less profitable opportunities than English, and in such position, continuously loses value amongst participants in this field. These students can have poor Arabic skills, but their connections in society will still result in lucrative job opportunities. Yet, poor proficiency in English would reflect very negatively on them both in terms of social position and also future opportunities.

Many Egyptians from a variety of social classes can speak English with varying degrees of proficiency. The expansion of the neoliberal project in Egypt and dependency on tourism necessitates knowledge of foreign languages, particularly English. As a result, this dominant class reconstructs the necessary linguistic capital that distinguishes them from the rest of Egyptian society. Mispronouncing the English "p" as "b" such as "bebsi" instead of "pepsi" has immediate consequences in terms of placement in social space.

Arabic in this system is often devalued, a process I will explore further in the following chapter. For example, numerous restaurants in the affluent neighborhoods of Ma'adi and Zamalek cater to these clients. As a result, they no longer make the effort to even put Arabic alongside English on their products and menus. This also illustrates the prevalence not only of Egyptian English-speaking consumers but also by relying solely on English marketing, these restaurants exclude a majority Egypt's population.

Furthermore, the stores assume these customers have an advanced familiarity with English to rely on English as the only vernacular for marketing.

As more people in the last few decades have acquired the needed economic capital to participate in this field of education, participants had to find new ways to exclude new members and maintain their prestigious positions. A division needed to be created between those who had mainly economic capital and the inheritors of cultural capital from the past elites like the *effendiya*. This capital can also signify sub-categories of social positions within this class. In the following chapter, I will explore the ways in which linguistic capital “is related in specific ways to the distribution of the other forms of capital (economic, cultural etc.) which define the location of an individual in social space.”¹⁴⁰ Such indicators are accents, grammar, and word choice, which to participants represent differing amounts of linguistic capital.

“Modernized sensibilities”¹⁴¹ distinguish the privileged cosmopolitans from the growing number of English speakers developed. English has become a mechanism transformed to ensure the reproduction and exclusivity of this class.¹⁴² English linguistic capital is a presupposition for being a participant in their class, it has been written into the rules of the game. Egypt’s cosmopolitan elite have created market conditions which favor those with the ability to express practices and distinctions in congruence with the forms and formalities of this market of transnational exchange.¹⁴³ Knowledge of such

¹⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 18.

¹⁴¹ Mahmud A Faksh, “The Consequences of the Introduction and Spread of Modern Education: Education and National Integration in Egypt,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 16, no. 2 (1980): 42-55, 46.

¹⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁴³ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 84.

formalities enables those endowed with linguistic capital and habitus to perform in the most valued ways in a variety of situations and markets.

Yet, this knowledge is difficult to attain as it is monopolized by the elite to maintain its exclusivity. Correct pronunciation, accent, and word choice “can only be acquired through prolonged and precocious familiarity with markets that are characterized, even under ordinary circumstances, by a high level of control and by that constantly sustained attention to forms and formalities which defines the ‘stylization of life.’”¹⁴⁴ This acquisition is through a linguistic habitus, which is a very telling sign of social position as linguistic interaction “bears the traces of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce.”¹⁴⁵ Practices¹⁴⁶ reflect the educational context and habitus in which they are acquired and thus indicate social status. These formalities surrounding language make it difficult for new participants to perform successfully in the markets such as English-language higher education and high society. As a result, English linguistic capital and the habitus in which it is acquired have increasingly become an intra-categorical distinguisher amongst members of the most privileged cosmopolitan class.

Investment in the belief of the rules of the game can be seen through the economic capital Egyptian parents are willing to pay to send their children to such schools with the assumption that they will provide their child with the necessary resources to achieve the aspirations and expectations they have established for their child. For example, the fees parents must pay to send their child to IAS is around \$18,000 per

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 84.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁶ Practices are products of the relation between the habitus and a specific field/s (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 14).

year. Although this is one of the most expensive schools in Egypt, the average cost for private, international schools is still well above the annual salary of an average Egyptian. According to Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, in 2008 the average monthly private sector wage was LE567 for males and LE444 for females.¹⁴⁷ Steps are being taken to raise this minimum wage to LE700. Even optimistically using LE700 and adjusting for the current exchange rate, the monthly salary is approximately 116 US\$ or 1,392 US\$ per year. Just the annual fees for IAS alone are nearly sixteen times higher than the optimistic calculation of the average Egyptian annual salary.

As an English teacher in the customized English program at a foreign university based in Egypt, I taught one-on-one lessons to two male professionals—one a former military officer and the other a banker in one of Egypt's national banks. The banker had acquired a Ph.D. from Cairo University and gave training to other banks on international banking regulations. He knew many academic business terms but struggled in conversational English. He told me he wanted to take English lessons because he wanted to improve his skills since he was giving presentations for work. When I inquired further he complained of having dedicated so much time and effort into his Cairo University Ph.D. only to receive a small raise and a salary atrociously less than those in the top positions in the bank, some who may not have had the same academic credentials. He resentfully told me, he will not go beyond his current position because those positions were given to a few young men returning from universities abroad who had connections with the heads of the bank. They often lacked Arabic skills but spoke English fluently.

¹⁴⁷ Ahmed Feteha, "Egypt's Private Sector Minimum Wage Just an Initial Step: Official," *AhramOnline*, 23 October 2011, accessed 14 April 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/24919/Business/Economy/Egypt-private-sector-minimum-wage-just-an-initial.aspx>

Furthermore, he was very upset with the “culture of Egypt” not appreciating academic credentials and the work he put into his studies.

This story illustrates a few important points. One, social mobility is often associated with English rather than simply higher education. In this case, the lack of Arabic was superseded not simply by English language skills but the “right” English capital acquired in foreign universities and through connections. Receiving a Ph.D. from Cairo University, to the influential bankers, was not equivalent to even a lesser degree from a foreign university education. This serves to restrict the social mobility of middle-class Egyptians.

Furthermore, throughout his lessons he was consistently worried about his accent. He understood that having a bad accent could have negative implications during linguistic exchanges, particularly at work. He seems to have believed that if he could pronounce complex business terminology correctly, the receivers of his presentations would allocate greater value to these linguistic exchanges, and he would be authorized with greater understanding and knowledge of the subject matter. He was undertaking what Bourdieu calls self-censorship. As the banker wished to produce discourse successfully within this market, he had to observe the forms and formalities.¹⁴⁸ However, his lack of the “appropriate” linguistic habitus that would provide him knowledge of the dispositions and practices valued by the dominate class meant that his mispronunciations and hyper-corrections would still leave traces of his status as an outsider.

The role elite schools play in this process is to provide resources to the dominant class to exclude possible participants like the previous banker. “The field of elite schools

¹⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; 20.

insulates and placates the various categories of inheritors of power and ensures, better than any other device, the *pax dominorum* indispensable to the sharing of the spoils of hegemony.”¹⁴⁹

The historical portion of this analysis detailed the emergence of two important social formations for the purpose of this study. First, the inheritance of practices from the *effendiya* to current privileged cosmopolitans, and second, the bifurcation of Egypt’s education system that has given birth to a new educational ladder to facilitate Egypt’s elite into influential positions as technocrats. Finally, the analysis of English as a necessary component to include when studying the dominant and legitimate linguistic system of Egypt’s cosmopolitan elite was made. I will next turn to empirical evidence to support my arguments through ethnographic fieldwork done in an elite private school.

¹⁴⁹ Loïc J. D. Wacquant, foreword to *The State and Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, Pierre Bourdieu, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), xii.

4.1 An Ethnographic Study of the International American School

IAS is located in an elite neighborhood of Cairo called Ma'adi. It is home to much of the expatriate community and those who can afford real estate prices that rival the large metropolises of Europe and the US. Unlike much of Cairo, the streets are lined with large trees, greenery, and villas housing ambassadors. There are expensive grocery stores and small kiosks selling the latest imported items catering to the tastes of the foreign community and wealthy Egyptians alike. IAS is located in the heart of this community, walled in by large brick walls. Two entrances exist blocked by gates and a very enthusiastic security team. Visitors are required to sign in, hand over ID, and wear a visitors badge at all times while on the campus. Egyptian police sit outside the school at the corner of the school drop-off point and the main street it is located on. The latest imported vehicles, from Land Rovers to Mercedes and BMWs, line the front gates with drivers and nannies dropping off students. Once the school day is over, most students are met at the entrance by a crowd of Asian or African nannies or their Egyptian driver. A small kiosk, located just outside the walls of IAS, has also been absorbed into this transnational exchange of goods that defines this school and the community in which it is located. An Apple sticker was placed in plain sight on the refrigerator which holds a variety of local and imported drinks. Imported items from Pop-Tarts to cereal bars along with the wrappers of past imported, hard-to-get items are placed at the front of the kiosk—enough items to fill the craving of any student given enough lunch money.

While government schools lack enough desks for students, the campus at IAS has a track and two large playing fields that separate the high school from the elementary and junior high school as well as a theater, large sports complex, and swimming pool. The

elementary school is a new addition and was paid for partially through donations from families. Symbolically, those who made larger donations were given a large brick on the walls of the elementary hallways with their children's names and year of future graduation engraved on it. Those who made lesser donations were given smaller bricks inlaid in the floor. The names on the bricks did not simply represent those who were generous enough to give donations to physically hold the building together but participants of the system it represents and reproduces. Most symbolically, the first two names at the start of the hallway are the grandsons of a famous, former Egyptian president. These are not the hallways of a neutral space that simply represents a domain of learning, but represent the dominance of a specific privileged group and an educational system which assists in their reproduction.

This chapter details fieldwork undertaken between January and April 2012. I undertook an in-depth ethnographic study of IAS. The choice of this school was made partially because of contacts in the school community—faculty, students, and alumni—and also because IAS arguably sits at the apex of the field of private, international schools. I will go into further detail on the impact of this reputation later in the chapter. The IAS community is a multicultural mix of faculty, students, and parents from around the world. The impact of such an international environment would no doubt have a profound impact on the Egyptian students who attend. Along with an international environment—which few other international schools have and this is one of the main selling points of the school—the school continues to educate the children of some of Egypt's most influential technocrats. For example, the grandchildren of former presidents and ministers are amongst the attendees or alumni. Many children of the

family-owned business empires described in the works of Timothy Mitchell attended IAS or a similar international school. The connections to influence and privilege are far reaching amongst the Egyptian members of the IAS community. In fact, in casual conversations between the IAS alumni I interviewed, I noticed they always asked each other who the owner of a new franchise or business was. When I asked one of the interviewees why they always assume they knew the owner of all these different businesses, he nonchalantly replied, “because we almost always do.”

The participants in this study were faculty members, students, and alumni. I spoke with two elementary teachers, one an elementary language teacher, five junior high school teachers, two high school teachers, and a librarian. I held either group discussions or one-on-one interviews (depending on the students’ preference) with fourteen tenth-grade students, eight junior high students in seventh- and eighth-grade, and a group discussion with an eighth-grade Arabic class for native speakers. I undertook participant observation in multiple classrooms from February 1 to March 12. I observed four ninth-grade World Cultures classes, one eleventh-grade Advanced Placement History class, eighth- and tenth-grade Arabic classes for native speakers as well as English, Geography, and US History for seventh- and eighth-graders. I focused participant observation largely on the junior high school and interviews with the tenth-grade Arabic class. I will also occasionally draw evidence from my three years of experience in private education in Egypt. These experiences have provided me with prior insight into this field and its participants as well as evidence to support some of my claims.

I spent a significant time in each classroom before asking students to participate in interviews or group discussions. I wanted the students to become familiar with my

presence before asking them to participate. As this school is very international, my presence was not disrupting or unusual for the students. The students interviewed were those who were willing to participate and received permission from their parents.

Furthermore, I undertook one linguistic experiment with students from the tenth-grade Arabic class as well as students from junior high school. The linguistic experiment is a tape recording of four different voices speaking the same English paragraph. I then asked the students general questions about the speakers' background. My focus was to uncover the impact of English education on their perceptions of English speakers and how this is related to the status of English as a social indicator. The results of this experiment will further illustrate how perceptions of social structures and life opportunities are further shaped by linguistic capital and educational institutions like IAS.

The necessity of studying English as it relates to the linguistic habitus of these students as well as their familial habitus, or habitus at home, will be supported by evidence from my fieldwork. I will outline evidence that supports the interpersonal function of English as well as its use as an indicator of social status. This will provide additional information on the status of Arabic amongst these privileged cosmopolitans. This ethnographic fieldwork will provide a snapshot into the current situation of the field of education that assists in the reproduction of Egypt's most privileged class. This ethnography of the elite will provide parallels to the emphasis on certain forms of exclusive capital and "rules of the game" inherited from past generations of influential Egyptians such as the *effendiya* described in Chapter 2. Like the *effendiya* of before, the fieldwork will detail continued emphasis on acquiring foreign education and foreign-language schools to participate "appropriately" within the social space of Egypt's high

society. English linguistic capital and the perpetuation of the existence of English in their linguistic habitus are defining elements of students and families who attend this school. Barsoum highlighted graduates' agency by looking at the ways in which less privileged graduates "act and strategize their options."¹⁵⁰ In a similar effort, I will try to explore how students and families at IAS strategize their choice of IAS and linguistic systems to best exploit the system and their position within it.

4.2 The Function of English

The use of English amongst these students is profound. All of the students interviewed speak some English at home with their parents and/or siblings. A majority of the students speak a mixture of English and Arabic. Only three students said they speak only Arabic at home but that if they cannot find the word to express themselves in Arabic they resort to English. There is a significant correlation between the linguistic system at home and the linguistic system at school. All of the students said their parents speak English, some also speak French. Of the students interviewed, eight had a parent who was not Egyptian—two were Syrian and the rest were of American or European origin.¹⁵¹ A teacher even expressed to me their shock at finding out a parent of one of the students could not speak English. The teacher said it was accepted that a parent who may be Korean or another nationality did not speak English, but it was extremely rare and almost unacceptable that an Egyptian student be admitted to IAS whose parents could not speak English. In fact, admission to the school is getting more competitive making it less likely

¹⁵⁰ Barsoum, *The Employment Crisis of Female Graduates in Egypt: An Ethnographic Account*, 76.

¹⁵¹ I also included those whose parents may be of Egyptian-American origin. In one case, the parents were both Egyptian but the children spent much of their lives in the US and another case in which the mother was of Egyptian origin but grew up and lived most of her life in the US.

that a child whose parents cannot fluently speak English would be admitted.¹⁵² This is a definite barrier that the institution itself has created and enforced with the growing demand for IAS. Not only the students but the parents as well must fit the international profile created by the school for admittance.

The habitus of the students interviewed were rather analogous as they have similar backgrounds and “class-specific experiences of socialization in family and peer groups.”¹⁵³ One student noticed this connection through seeing the difference between students who attended his previous school—although this school is still one of the most expensive and prestigious international, private schools. “The IAS students are more exposed to other cultures and also from home the kids at [my other school] you wouldn’t really hear English at home, like they could speak English but it wasn’t as good as the parents who send their kids to IAS.”

In terms of peer groups, none of the students interviewed had close friends who could only speak Arabic. A couple students tried in vain to recollect any acquaintances they may have that could not speak a foreign language but rarely came up with any. Besides their friends at IAS, students generally socialize only with students from a handful of prestigious private, international schools. In general, they did not have friends who attended government schools or even less well-known private schools. One student searched to find someone he knew who could not speak a foreign language. I asked where he met his friend he stated, “He lives like somewhere around.” When I asked another student if he had friends who did not know how to speak English he replied,

¹⁵² Anonymous (faculty member) in discussion with the author, 11 March 2012.

¹⁵³ Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*, 102.

“From my old school...no, no they could speak English but it wouldn't be good.” The importance of this is that his old school is again one of the most expensive and prestigious schools in the field of private, international education and the classes are taught in English by mainly native-English speaking teachers. Most Egyptians would consider these students to be privileged speakers of English.

This student's classification emphasizes the reputation IAS has as being above most other schools in terms of linguistic systems and the critical ways in which students themselves categorize and create barriers between those within this field. I even asked an alumnus who his friends were and he said, “Most of my friends were all from IAS. The only other friends I had were from the French school. They were friends of friends. And other friends I had were family friends from childhood days. Everyone I know can speak some English at least. Only Arabic? Maybe the people who work in the house.” I received a similar response from a current student who noted she spoke Arabic mainly with her gardener or maid.

Most of the students had no preference in speaking either Arabic or English. There were, however, quite a few students who spoke mainly English but were of Egyptian origin; this also greatly affected who they associated with. One student, S, of Egyptian-Syrian origin preferred not to speak Arabic at all, and distanced himself from those he had to speak Arabic with. S grew up speaking English at home with his Syrian mother, who was also educated in an English system. His father, who gave him more encouragement to speak Arabic, did not see him very often. “I don't like Arabic. Like every year the teacher knows, and I am weaker than the other students in the class. I'm

Egyptian but I don't like the language." He does not want to stay and work in Egypt in his future, and when I asked him if it has to do with his language skills he said:

S: Yes. Because a lot of people here, a majority, they are Egyptian here and a lot of times they speak in Arabic and I can like understand what they say most of the time, but I can't really speak it. So when I hang out with people speaking Arabic, I am usually a really loud person and stuff, but when I am hanging out with people who are communicating in Arabic, I kind of become quite because I don't really know how to communicate.

Q: So that affects who you hang out with?

S: I hang out with people from here but are more Americanized. I don't mind hanging out with people who communicate in Arabic and are more Egyptianized but I prefer hanging out with more multinational people because I can communicate with them better and be myself.

Q: So you don't have friends who can't speak English?

S: No, no also [...] there is one girl in my Western Civilization class and she can't even speak English. She is French. She can't speak English. She is in my class and can speak a couple words in English and we manage to communicate but typically I hang out with people who can speak English. It is easier. They are most like me.

Additionally, the international make-up of the student body affects who the students hang out with in class and during breaks. In general, I observed that the older the students were, the more a split developed between the Egyptian students and the foreign students. I was told by a long-time faculty member whose children also went to IAS that this split was not always so prevalent, but since the number of Egyptians enrolled has drastically increased, the split between foreign students and Egyptians has increased as well.

There undoubtedly exist endless reasons for this split, but language definitely plays a role. One teacher believes that the teaching of Modern Standard Arabic rather

than Egyptian Colloquial Arabic to the foreign students means they are not equipping the students to partake in the conversations of their fellow Egyptian classmates. It was often noted by many students that they prefer to hang out with Egyptians because they can speak Arabic together and they understand each other's jokes. Faced with many non-Egyptian students at IAS, they try to stick together. Some students told me they understand each other and what it is like to be an Egyptian in an American school.

However, students' lives are characterized by a more profound difference; the students themselves were not necessarily aware of it, but many alumni were. The students leave IAS and move on to higher educational institutions—in general the foreign universities based in Egypt, because as many students put it, it is the best option in Egypt, or to universities in the US or Europe. In this process they are exposed to new players who often are not socialized in the same international environment and their differences become most exposed. One of the alumni explained:

The main reason is that it puts you in this special place. It doesn't make you Egyptian but at the same time you don't feel like I'm an American. So you can't really socialize with people the way you would like to. It's different. I feel it especially when I am sitting with friends of my brothers for example. Or even when I sit with *masalan* [for example] people that are American *masalan*. I don't feel like I think like them and at the same time I don't feel like I think like a pure Egyptian [...] It raises a different, totally different generation. Different thinkers, different way of thinking. You will always find the guys from IAS are not really close to the country [...] you won't find them in Tahrir Square fighting. It doesn't happen but *mumkin* [maybe] we can go and watch *bas* [but] you just feel different.

Of course this disconnect is not inevitable for all students who pass through the gates of IAS. However, this is just one example of a student who is fully Egyptian and went to IAS for most of his life. His disconnect with a majority of Egyptians even went into his personal life. He was divorced from an Egyptian woman who attended a “totally

Egyptian school.” I asked him if he believed this barrier he spoke of had an impact on his marriage and why he got a divorce and he said definitely it did. He does believe his socialization at IAS was part of the disconnect. Although the barriers are different he stated, “The barrier is as big as dating a Russian.”

The differences in language skills were more striking to this alumnus when he entered a foreign university based in Egypt for one year before moving to Switzerland to finish university.

[The foreign university] is like a more advanced IAS *ya ‘ni* [sort of]. The English there was weak. You can find people who graduated from [the foreign university] and they are from good families, well-off, good social class...but their English sucks, *ya ‘ni* [like] sucks, sucks. Because [the foreign university] doesn’t teach you English, it teaches you how to read and write. It will teach you the basics but it won’t put it in your blood. IAS puts it in your blood. It’s different.

For another alumnus, “[the foreign university] was a step down from IAS.” This attitude can similarly be seen in many of the students’ possible university choices. The male students often express their desire to go to the US or Europe for university. Foreign universities based in Egypt are their alternative option if they are forced to stay in Egypt.

The previous discussion has outlined some of the linguistic backgrounds of the students and parents. It shows the prevalence of English as an influential determinant in the linguistic habitus of these students and often the parents, although a much more in-depth examination of the parents is needed. The influence of English and the desire for acquisition of this dominant linguistic system through a school like IAS has inevitably had a serious impact on the status of Arabic, to which I now turn.

4.3 The Status of Arabic

The status of Arabic in the school is quite unusual. Since IAS is linked to the US embassy, they do not follow the Egyptian national curriculum. In order to attend IAS, Egyptian students must get approval from the Ministry of Education that allows them to enroll. This approval, I am told, states that they are not going to be taught Arabic and religion, as these are the subjects the Ministry requires be taught in all schools, whether private or public, using the national curriculum. It is then the parents' responsibility to teach their children Arabic and religion. This has had a profound impact on the status of learning Arabic for Egyptian students who attended IAS. It places the full responsibility of teaching the language on the parents. In the past, starting from third-grade, you could take French, Arabic and Spanish, but only as a foreign language. If Arabic was your mother tongue, you could not take that class.

Within the last few years, the school has started a pilot program which is slowly phasing out the old program where Egyptians were not taking Arabic. Arabic is now taught in elementary to both native and non-native speakers in separate classes. However, IAS still does not follow the national curriculum for teaching Arabic, and the permission from the Ministry of Education still permits them to take Arabic at IAS with the understanding that it is not taught in the same way as in the national curriculum schools. IAS and one other school are the only schools I am aware of that have this special status. All other schools in Egypt, private and government, are required to teach Arabic using the national curriculum.

IAS's Arabic program has undoubtedly had a profound impact on the Arabic language skills and status of Arabic amongst Egyptians in its student body. Furthermore, the requirement of *wasta* (connections) to maneuver through the endless bureaucratic red

tape of Egypt's government to receive special permission from the Ministry of Education is undoubtedly another barrier to those less privileged. As Arabic had previously been nearly absent from learning in the elementary school, more and more parents are sending their children to IAS in junior high and high school to ensure they receive a solid background in Arabic in a private school that focuses more on Arabic and teaches the national curriculum. As an elementary French and Arabic teacher, Mrs. L stated:

Because the fact that you have to take it at home and not during school time right that was previously until now, and even now it is only half an hour. I mean they have English two or three hours a day. They have Arabic half an hour, so this gives it already an inferior feeling, this is I don't really need to do that you know. It's like coming to a play time a little bit.

A former English Language Specialist (ELS) said she used to have to beg parents not to speak English with their children at home and let the school do their job of teaching English. "Some people's view is that speaking English is a higher class thing but I think that is changing. There are still some parents who insist on speaking English with their kids even if their English isn't very good, and that doesn't help. It doesn't help their view of their country, language, identity." In fact, many of the students learn to be literate in a foreign language before Arabic. As Mrs. L stated, "We teach kids to speak a foreign language first. I mean I was taught to speak French before I was taught to speak Arabic. And now I see with my nieces, my sister did the same thing. And their kids they learned how to speak English and French both before they spoke Arabic, imagine!"

Acquisition of foreign language capital is as in the past seen as an advantage particularly in the labor market.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps one explanation could also be that this privileged class focuses on properly speaking English, because the linguistic market is

¹⁵⁴ See Barsoum (2004).

less concerned with written abilities. Other forms of capital such as economic or cultural in the form of European and American fashion trends are more important as they are immediate indicators of status. The students supported this statement when many complained of the difficulties they have trying to live up to the expectations of what to wear while going to IAS, since it one of the few private schools without a uniform policy. It is much easier and simpler to make judgments immediately based on initial linguistic exchanges and cultural capital such as dress and style.

As the former ELS teacher stated:

You will find many of the Egyptians were not literate in any language. They weren't literate in Arabic and they weren't literate in English. So what happened is they picked up spoken English, nannies, the maid, clubs or whatever, so you would be fooled into thinking they had good English. But get them to read and write, and their English is really poor. Give it to them in Arabic and it is even worse.

She refers to picking up English from nannies in reference to the trend amongst members of this class to hire Filipino nannies and increasingly African nannies. This would undoubtedly have a serious effect on the acquisition of Arabic skills by these children. If they spend all day with their Filipino nanny and often their parents are speaking a mixture of Arabic and English, their opportunities to use Arabic are very limited. The only contexts they would generally do so would be as some of my interviewees stated with the gardeners and other household workers. Speaking Arabic in those limited contexts to that particular audience would no doubt put Arabic in inferior position in the minds of those children. Many of the students told me that their friends who were Egyptian but had difficulty with Arabic often had Filipino nannies. This is another very interesting trend that deserves further research.

Another reason for the inferior status of Arabic amongst these students is that they do not see the benefits from Arabic as they do with English. The former ELS teacher added:

There is something happening at home with the dynamics that doesn't make the child see the necessity. So often the parents say you must and you have to and they threaten but don't follow through. Often it is just that the kid is neglected and often the kid knows that the parents are really rich and they are just going to inherit it anyhow, so why should they bother?

This supports my previous argument that even the children at an early age intuitively sense the ways in which English linguistic capital through education can be transformed into economic capital. In this case, the teacher states that their economic capital is of greater value than their use or need for Arabic capital. She is, however, overlooking the value this class places on cultural capital in order to reproduce social positions. If simply passing on economic capital through inheritance was enough, parents would not be interested in sending their children to IAS. Yet in order to fully profit from the system, parents must invest economic capital in schools like IAS to acquire cultural capital through mastery of English and schooling.¹⁵⁵ The children are then equipped with an array of capital to gain full access to their parents' social position. This attitude is also probably due not only to their home environment but their peers. If as was stated before, many of these students do not socialize with others outside of this field and privileged class, these trends tend to become reinforced. Another interesting note is that the teachers all said they do not see this trend with other nationalities at IAS. As one teacher put it, you would not find a Korean not knowing how to speak Korean.

¹⁵⁵ I am grateful to Dr. Benjamin Geer for bringing this point to my attention.

However, the institute itself plays a role in this process. Attitudes and habits associated with linguistic capital are products of “family social milieu, education experience, the interaction of these two, and subsequent personal and professional experience.”¹⁵⁶ If the students at home generally speak a mixture of English and Arabic, their friends also go to similar foreign-language schools, and the lack of valorization of the Arabic language within IAS, the inferior position Arabic is allocated and the lack of enthusiasm the students have for their country’s official language is not surprising.

A few teachers enthusiastically informed me about the first language library the school developed. So I met with a librarian and asked to be shown the first language library books. To my surprise there are only four Arabic books but fifteen Chinese books. Most of the books are translated from famous English writers like Shakespeare. Only two were originally an Arabic text. They have multiple Dutch and Danish books and even had three Indonesian books nearly as many as the Arabic collection. They have two shelves of references in Arabic that I was told are rarely if ever used. The computer keyboards do not have Arabic letters on them. An Arabic teacher told me he asked for rubber ones to use in his Arabic classroom but his request was never granted.

The school does attempt to valorize the mother tongue of all the international students by holding a “Language Day” also referred to as mother tongue day. I asked how the students in junior high school were preparing for it, and the Arabic teacher expressed his disappointment in the lack of enthusiasm by the students to prepare anything. He could not get any students to agree to sing or perform anything in Arabic. Instead, it was turned into more or less a culture day, although they already have such a

¹⁵⁶ Michael Grenfell, “Language and the Classroom,” in *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, e-Library. (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 76.

day. The Egyptian students brought Egyptian food to share. It is, however, understandable why the students do not regard the day with much importance. It can be argued that the school is in fact marginalizing the language by creating a special day implying the language is only important for that one day a year. If the school in fact intended on valorizing the Arabic language, it would be important every day.

The school's language policy also reflects this marginalization. Although the students are allowed to speak Arabic during breaks, the students are prohibited from speaking any Arabic during class time. I was repeatedly told during multiple interviews that the Egyptian students in particular were singled out and reprimanded for speaking Arabic. The students said the teachers rarely reprimand other foreign nationals speaking their mother tongue. One explanation could be that the largest non-English speaking majority in a single classroom is Egyptians; and thus, speaking Arabic may create a louder disruption. Nevertheless, nearly all of the students I interviewed felt unfairly treated and punished for speaking Arabic in class because the teachers overlooked the linguistic transgressions of the other non-English speaking students. This policy and classroom environment, which prohibits students from speaking their mother tongue in some form in their native country for many hours of the day, will of course have a significant impact on the students and their perceptions of Arabic.

I attended Arabic classes for native speakers at both the tenth-grade and eighth-grade levels. The level of Arabic was poorer than I had expected. First, I noticed that the teacher lacked the high-tech gadgets such as a smart board that teachers of other subjects had. The junior high Arabic teacher, Mr. A, was quite disappointed with the level of Arabic amongst the Egyptian students. His demeanor, however, was more empathic. He

felt sorry for the students and tried his best to valorize the language. He says he thinks Arabic is the only language that native speakers cannot read and write. He taught at other private international schools previously, and has seen similar problems, but not to the extent he faces at IAS. He even said that students from the other schools view students from IAS differently.

He specifically noticed that the students are not very proud of their culture or being Arab. He gave the example of “Peace Day,” where he noticed students from all different cultures at IAS—US, Japan, Korea, Brazil—were proud of their nationalities, while the Egyptians were not proud to be Arab at all. He asked a student to sing for Language Day; she speaks Colloquial Egyptian Arabic fluently but is in the Arabic class for non-native speakers, because as Mr. A informed me, she barely knows the alphabet. However, she refused because she only likes singing in English.

He asked the students at the beginning of the year why they chose to learn Arabic over Spanish or French; once they are in junior high they have a choice. Almost all the students said because their parents forced them. I also asked that same question when I was allowed to speak with them during class, and I received the same answer. Mr A. made the remark that many Egyptian students speak “more American than the American students. The American students say they are more American than us.” Many with dual nationality even write that they are only American although as he states “they only have the US passport.” They are not acknowledging their Egyptian nationality. He said they want to be anything—American, Swiss—but not Egyptian. There is a similar trend I found in the elementary school of passports or foreign citizenship becoming a form of

capital. An exclusive resource sought out and exploited by this class. I will go into more detail on this later.

Mr. A said it is difficult for the students to learn Arabic because the Arabic they teach is MSA and not the Colloquial Egyptian Arabic. However, when I was in the classroom, almost everything was done in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic anyway. He noticed that the students can develop deep ideas in English but not in Arabic. He also remarked that when he has them for home room in the morning, and they are allowed to speak English, they are completely different than when he has them for Arabic class.

Parents give Mr. A many excuses for why they cannot concentrate on Arabic at home. Parents often say there is not time, the tutor is mean and they could not find a new one, they have birthday parties, and numerous other excuses. It is understandable that the students do not feel the need to put time and effort into learning Arabic if the attitude of the parents is the same. Mr. A also noticed that the generation of parents whose children are between the ages of eleven and thirteen is often parents who also cannot speak, read, or write Arabic properly either. Here the reproduction of the lack of Arabic linguistic capital and reproduction of a linguistic habitus at home can be seen.

When I went into their classroom, Mr. A introduced me to the class valorizing my ability to speak Arabic. He tried to use me as an example for the students to motivate them and make them proud of their language. He said look, this is a foreigner who studies Arabic and can read and write Arabic excellently. Although he may have been exaggerating my abilities slightly, he nevertheless seized the opportunity to try and encourage these students that he pitied. I spoke to the students in Arabic explaining what I was doing. Many were interested in why I was studying the Middle East and Arabic—

students were often perplexed as to why I would be interested in this part of the world. During the class period not a single student spoke the entire class time in only Arabic, even colloquial Arabic. Even the better students had to resort to using English and Mr. A as well to get their points across. Students often asked in English “how do you say this in Arabic”—a very easy and basic sentence they could easily express in Arabic. When students were asked to search for things in the media, almost all of the students resorted first to English news outlets. Most of the side conversations between the students were also in English despite the class rule that you can only speak in Arabic.

The students’ motivation for learning in the Arabic class was much lower than what I experienced in other classes. The first boy who entered the classroom immediately complained that he was tired and asked Mr. A if they could not do anything for class that day. Some students were allowed to sit with headphones in and listen to music while they did their schoolwork, something I did not see in other classrooms. The students with slightly stronger Arabic skills were those students who previously went to private schools that taught the national curriculum. There was one oddity, a girl who barely spoke Arabic at all, but I knew had skills superior than what she was portraying to the class. She only came to IAS in sixth-grade which meant she was in a private school that taught the national curriculum for Arabic for most of her life. She told me in our interview that Arabic is so much easier at IAS than her previous school. She said this year they are doing “all the stuff we learned in third-grade.” She knows she should be better she admits, but she is not, and this could be part of her dislike and lack of motivation in the Arabic class. Additionally, she could also be adapting to the new educational and social context she finds herself in where the Arabic of the students is so

poor, and in order to not be “too Egyptian” as the students often say, she downplays her Arabic skills.

When I spoke with the students, only one or two said they would use Arabic for work, and since they believe education is better abroad, they would go there for university and would not need Arabic. In their interactions with other students, they said they often get made fun of by those with stronger Arabic skills because they might use the wrong Arabic words and also for speaking English with students who do not speak English very often. They all said they noticed the accents of students from other schools and that they do not have friends outside of the small circle of about five or six elite private, international schools. Many of the students admitted that their parents threaten to put them in government schools so they would learn Arabic. When I asked them why that would be so bad, they replied that they would get made fun of and would not fit in. They are different and taking all their classes in Arabic would just be too hard.

The students are well aware of the differences between them and the rest of Egyptian students. Many of these differences can be as subtle as an accent or word choice. As Bourdieu notes:

To speak is to appropriate one or other of the expressive styles already constituted in and through usage and objectively marked by their position in a hierarchy of styles which expresses the hierarchy of the corresponding social groups. These styles, systems of differences which are both classified and classifying, ranked and ranking, mark those who appropriate them. And a spontaneous stylistics, armed with a practical sense of the equivalences between the two orders of differences, apprehends social classes through classes of stylistic indices.¹⁵⁷

Two female students in junior high told me similar stories of working hard not to speak English during their tennis lessons. They both played tennis at a local sporting club.

¹⁵⁷ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 54.

Many of the other players come from less privileged classes with very different socializing environments. They both understood their audience and the context in which they were participating. As a result, they had to work hard at trying to fit in by not speaking English at all. If they did they would get made fun of. “If I go to my tennis training, like they are all Egyptian so like I can’t speak English in front of them or else it’s like, you know, they will make fun of me. They would laugh, so I just speak Arabic the whole time.” The students knew that the other tennis players had already picked up on their accent as “Americanized” Arabic. “My friend’s like how come your accent is so American, cause she is like in an Egyptian school and then I don’t speak English in front of them” It is not just the students at IAS that pick up on these subtle linguistic differences, habits and characteristics of their linguistic habitus but those from less privileged positions do as well.

When I asked a tenth-grade student what language says about your place in society, he responded with the following story about his attempts to join a local football team:

F: When I used to for example play for a football team my Arabic wasn’t, it was about a year ago, they were from the streets kind of so my Arabic wasn’t as good as theirs, it was good but it wasn’t as good as theirs, so and so they would see me as not a very fluent speaker to them [...] so I wouldn’t really be their friend.

Q: Do you think that is their choice or yours as well?

F: Their choice

Q: Do you find that in general after coming from IAS or another private school do you feel like there will always be this barrier between you and another person who just went maybe to a private school? They can tell when you speak you have an accent and then judge you?

F: Yeah they can, they did. They did notice it. It was obvious. But that is part of the reason why I couldn't really be part of their team when I was there. So when I was there, I wasn't there, I wasn't really part of the team as much as I wanted to because of the language barrier and because I look different to them I guess, so I look different to them as well.

Q: Did it upset you?

F: No, like I knew why so it doesn't matter, I'm playing football I guess, I'm here to play football not make friends.

Q: Do you think this happens to other people in IAS or other friends?

F: Maybe. It matters more to the people who only speak Arabic than people who speak other languages like English.

Q: What about someone who went to [your previous English school]? Would they still have a similar problem in a scenario like your football one?

F: Well, good question, ahhhh yeah, probably because they would look different to them, like when I would go I would wear my football clothes so they would probably look wealthier than the other people on the team so they would stand out some way.

When I asked if it bothered the students that they were looked at differently because of these cultural and linguistic differences, most of the students said no. They were just there to play football or tennis. At the end of the day, they possess greater authority, as they possess the greatest linguistic capital from which they can speak from with authority. They understand the benefits from this system. The students are strategizing their linguistic capital to meet the needs of the context and audiences they meet. However, the scarcity of their language skills inevitably will make them stand out from students from schools where there is no opportunity to obtain this linguistic capital. What this linguistic capital represents is not simply cultural capital but also economic capital, as most Egyptians are aware of the extremely high fees parents must pay in order to send their children to schools to obtain this form of capital.

Similarly, poor Arabic skills were also seen in the tenth-grade Arabic class. However, in high school, a few students were much more capable in their Arabic skills. Those students were the students who came to IAS in high school or at the earliest during junior high school. There was a group of three boys who had previously attended a German school where the national curriculum was taught, and their Arabic skills were far superior. To them, the class was more or less an “easy A.” One girl admitted that what she was taking in tenth-grade was what she took in her previous school in fourth- or fifth-grade, and said she was embarrassed by that fact. They were somewhat ashamed of the Arabic capabilities of their classmates. They said: “It’s embarrassing, really embarrassing for them at least;” “Doesn’t really matter to them now. A majority of the Egyptians here they speak to each other in English. They don’t seem to care about it that much.” As the interview progressed, I asked the three boys how they felt going to IAS in comparison to their experience in the German school. One answered: “It is just different, just very different. It is not really related to the diversity just the people and how they interact and how they speak. Yeah, it’s just different.” Later in the interview, one of the students went on to say, he didn’t consider a majority of the Egyptians at IAS to be actual Egyptians. I can only assume that lack of Arabic skills has something to do with this categorization. An alumnus I interviewed had a similar comment and was similarly unable to express exactly what “different” was. “It just puts that thing in you,” he said.

Because of Arabic’s subordinate status to English at home and at school, students are more focused on acquiring English linguistic capital rather than Arabic. As a result, English has become a defining indicator of social status to this group. Many students said that they believe new students are judged based on their language skills. Only one

admitted to judging others in this way. She admitted it was not right, but just the way it was. They admitted to judging students based on “their accent and the way they speak and stuff.” Some agreed that they judge people based on whether or not their accent is *bi’a* [vulgar], too American or too Egyptian. “Their accent’s so like American. Everyone is like ohhh the *khawaga* [foreigner].” Students seemed to have to find the perfect mixture between being Egyptian and American in their linguistic exchanges. Students agreed that it was more acceptable to have a “fully Egyptian” or “very Egyptian” accent in IAS because the reputation of the school itself offsets the negative values associated with having a poor accent. Interestingly students often used fully Egyptian, really Egyptian, or very Egyptian to negatively describe poor English accents. Also, because of the scarcity of Egyptians within the school compared to other private international schools, the students said they are more judgmental of new Egyptian students. One commented: “But here it is super difficult. It is so judgmental. You have to fit a certain profile to fit in.” This profile is partially defined by their ability to express their “Egyptianness” and rejecting certain American trends in their American school. This is the thin line students at IAS have to navigate.

Accents might not be as important for the students and parents who go to IAS compared with students and parents I encountered while working at private, international schools in Alexandria. One explanation may be that the capital IAS already represents simply by being accepted negates the negative value associated with a poor accent or not having the “right” English linguistic capital. Nevertheless, students are still aware of the stigma attached to having a poor English accent and do still judge others based on their accents. One student commented: “I couldn’t tell exactly which school but the kind of

category I guess.” A few admitted to knowing the difference between the English of IAS students and those who attended similar private, international American schools.

“It was like like Egyptian kind of English. It was weird. It’s just like slangish” (tenth-grade student).

“Sometimes [...] I think when you meet someone here who’s English isn’t as good as other people, there’s like immediately like everyone judges them because it’s like they’re not like us” (tenth-grade student).

“Like say if there is an Egyptian, I’m not making fun or anything [...] and attempts to speak English for example and it is really, really, like yeah, like fully Egyptian and he tries to speak English and it’s really like not good and then you can tell. You can always tell” (eight-grade student).

“The accent just gives an indication of their education, how they learned the English. If you learned it in an American school you would have a better accent. If you just learned it in a random Egyptian school, you just had some English classes or whatever then you would notice” (alumnus).

One student, B, was very aware of the categorization of education her parents had and made it known in the interview. Her categorization was also connected to their accent:

B: My mom went to an all-girls Egyptian school in Alexandria and my dad went to a probably really low public school here in Cairo [...] He’s in the hotel business so we’ve been moving around because of that. He studied in the States, like for his Masters degree, when he was like thirty something years old [...] and that’s I think where he started picking up his English like how it became better and now his accent is kinda almost gone.

Q: So before that he spoke English?

B: Before that he barely spoke English. Like probably like low, private school kind of English. Probably like that last tape we just heard.¹⁵⁸ But my mom still speaks barely any English, like barely any words. Her grammar is completely off.

¹⁵⁸ She is referencing a speaker I used in my linguistic experiment that all of the students associated with very low-class, public schools.

She goes on to provide evidence for the importance of an American accent amongst lesser privileged Egyptians who do not have the capital to get into a school like IAS. Here is the excerpt from our interview:

Q: What do you think in Egypt language says about your place in society?

B: Well, I think actually in Egypt, English has become so widespread that like I think if you speak French you're like more unique. Even outside like, wow you speak French. Because French even used to be the more dominant language like when my mom was young like she spoke fluent French but then forgot it over the years. So like I think French has become not so dominant, because now you have like [another American school] and everyone that speaks English, now government schools all speak English so it is much more common. But I think obviously your accent like, I know amongst my family, like my mom's side of the family, they all go to an Egyptian school, an Egyptian language school, so their English isn't that strong. So then all of them who have kids are like ok speak English to my child, like their baby, and I'm like I don't really want to [laughs]. Like I want you to read her a book with your accent or [...] they really look at it as like oh you came from IAS, your accent is amazing, talk to my kid.

Q: Do you find that it is those kinds of people who don't go to a specific private English school worry about the accent?

B: Yes, oh yeah, like I have my aunt she, like they are still young and she is trying so hard to get that American [stresses] accent, like she wants that American accent. So she would ask me to speak with her. [...] She can speak English. She can understand everything, but she obviously has the Egyptian accent but she doesn't want her daughter to ever have that accent. She doesn't want her to have that accent so she is always trying to speak English to her daughter so that she can get her to speak English and she wants her to like grow up like me and my brother speaking English to each other all the time, and I don't think it is that important. Like they take it as too much that you have to speak English fluently and perfectly in order to like to look good in society. So it's like a really big thing like if you speak English. You can't just speak English you have to speak English with a good accent. With either like a good British or a good American accent like you can't be an Egyptian speaking.

Q: But here you don't see that is an issue as much?

B: Yeah if you are going to IAS, it's like alright, it doesn't really matter, you are already in probably the most expensive school in Egypt.

Additional responses further support the important role language plays as an indicator of social status in Egypt:

“I think it plays a big part in society” (tenth-grade student).

“I think people think the more languages, like if you can speak languages then it makes you something big or something, but I don't believe that” (tenth-grade student).

“I think most people when they see someone who doesn't speak English they just think they are uneducated or something” (tenth-grade student).

“A lot of Egyptians go out and try to learn different languages because they think it's like but I don't think you should define someone by what languages they speak” (tenth-grade student).

“People usually say they are *wilad nas*¹⁵⁹ because they can speak different languages or they speak English or something. But I don't see why. You don't have to speak different languages to be this” (tenth-grade student).

“I think like in Egyptian society the Arabic we speak would be considered different from other parts of society. Like you can tell where someone comes from the way they speak Arabic and also speaking English says something. It usually means higher educated (tenth-grade student).

Another tenth-grade student, P, expressed the necessity of knowing all dispositions associated with linguistic capital when it comes to social class classification:

P: Pretty much the more languages you can fluently speak the higher class you are.

Q: Is it just fluently or do people look at your accent, mannerisms, the way you speak?

¹⁵⁹ Adjective for those who are of an elite family background (See Barsoum, *The Employment Crisis of Female Graduates In Egypt: An Ethnographic account*, vii.)

P: Yeah, all of this is.

4.4 Linguistic Experiment

To obtain more information on how accents affect the ways in which students categorize others and shape their perceptions of other English speakers, I undertook a small linguistic experiment. Suggestive evidence and trends can be deciphered from the experiment and used for future research.

In this experiment, I recorded four different male Egyptians speaking the same paragraph. This would deny the students the opportunity to base any judgments on grammar skills. The paragraph goes as follows: “Today the weather is partly cloudy. I hope tomorrow the weather is better. What do you think?”

I hypothesized that given the combinations of “th” and “p” in which Egyptians often have trouble pronouncing usually saying “z” and “b,” students would most likely pick up on those errors. Voice 1 and Voice 2 both attended IAS, the same school as the students, starting in elementary school. Voice 3 and Voice 4 were recordings of staff members at an international institution based in Egypt. It is interesting to note that when I asked Voice 3 if he would read the paragraph so I could record him for my project he agreed, but was very worried about his accent. Upon finishing his recording he wanted to listen to it a few times, and asked me continuously how his accent was and if it was good enough. He also wanted to know who else I was going to record so he could compare himself to the other recordings. Here again we see the importance lesser privileged Egyptians place on accent. The anxiety and worry he had concerning his speech is what Bourdieu associates with their effort “to adapt their linguistic expressions to the demands of formal markets. The result is that their speech is often accompanied by tension and

anxiety, and by the tendency to rectify or correct expressions so that they concur with dominant norms.”¹⁶⁰ As will be shown in the following discussion, this hypercorrection was easily observed on by the students.

I had eight participants from junior high as well as seven participants from high school. All the students said Voice 3 and Voice 4 definitely did not go to a school like IAS or even in that category. Interestingly, the junior high students were much more open with their criticism and jokes concerning Voice 3 and Voice 4.

The students from junior high made the following observations and categorizations. They made fun of the way Voice 3 pronounced the “th” as “z” in “weather.” They said the last two definitely did not have any English at home. Voice 3 was *sha’bī* (of the people), *falāḥī* (peasant-like), *bi’a* (vulgar), and different society. He probably went to a very low, private school because he could still speak English. Others said he definitely has an Egyptian accent, went to a public school, but he is trying his hardest to speak English properly. The students definitely picked up on the overemphasis to compensate for the lack of English skills, indicating that although the speaker speaks English, he still does not belong to their world. They said he would probably have a lower class to a mid- or lower class job. One interesting hypothesis was that he was a businessman but not a good or successful businessman.

The observations by the junior high students on Voice 4 varied only slightly. Some said he went to a really bad school, others a *very* good public school in Egypt. They said he definitely would have absolutely no English at home. The students were candid in their jokes about the speaker. Other responses were that he was from Upper

¹⁶⁰ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; 21.

Egypt, but that he was educated well enough that he knows how to speak English. But again he is like Voice 3 in trying too hard to speak English. Other descriptions were: he is from Shubra (working-class district in Cairo), *buwwāb* (porter), *falāḥ* (peasant), microbus driver, janitor, security guy at the gate, he sounds uneducated. One hypothesis was the only way he could be rich was from inheritance. He was raised by the streets. He could be someone from Upper Egypt because he knows how to speak so many languages because of the tourism but probably could not even write his own name. When I asked if they would know this person they said they probably would not know him in any close, personal way.

In high school, the students were more reserved in their responses and slightly more hesitant to stigmatize the speakers through their responses although their placement of Voice 3 and Voice 4 were in comparable categories to the junior high students. The responses to Voice 3 varied. One student said maybe they went to the International Schools of the Middle East (ISME). This was an interesting observation since ISME is considered a more prestigious private international school and other responses indicated that he most likely went to a government or low ranking private school. From knowing the student, I would assume her judgments of the standards of English at ISME are low. The answers in general ranged from a public school to a very low, class private school. Another interesting answer from one student was that he would normally speak Arabic with a person like that so he would not know what their English accent sounded like. His occupation could have been someone at a kiosk and definitely not someone who attended IAS.

Observations of Voice 1 and 2 were generally the same in junior high and high school in that they were categorized in a higher class than Voice 3 and 4. In junior high, some compared Voice 1 to students at IAS as well as indicating the possibility of his attendance at their school because “some have the really Egyptian accents but still go to IAS.” Others said, he did not go to IAS but another private school. Harsher criticism was given by the eighth-grade boys who said Voice 1 was definitely Egyptian and probably went to “one of those language schools [...] didn’t necessarily go to an international school or a public school but something in the middle.” They definitely could tell he was Egyptian and from “a specific part.” In high school, the observations were similarly mixed for Voice 1 ranging between the possibility of having attended IAS to some other similar private school. One perceived his accent as definitely being an Egyptian from IAS, “they all have the same accent.” Another comment was that he would “manage” in IAS but his English appeared weaker.

Voice 2 was more often associated with a student who could have attended IAS or a similarly comparable school. One observation was that his language skills were good enough to get a good job. Others said he did not have an Egyptian accent but could have a middle-class job. He also sounded like a television presenter. He is talking more formal, so he could have gone to an international school. The students often named a few other private, international schools that to most Egyptians are very prestigious but to the students are not of the same caliber, which the speaker could have attended. They said at times he could have English spoken in his home environment. Voice 2 was most likely to be someone they knew or associated with.

What conclusions can be drawn from this experiment? First, as I hypothesized, Voice 1 and Voice 2 who had the more American accents were associated with coming from more prestigious, expensive private, international schools. Noteworthy is the students' tendencies to critically categorize even the two better accented males into categories just beneath IAS by choosing prestigious private, international schools they believe are just below the caliber of IAS all based simply on accent. This shows how stigmatizing accents can be even in terms of intra-class categorizations. Secondly, the students could easily pick up on the hierarchical positioning of the speakers and could subsequently infer many social indicators. Expressive styles and hyper-correction of Voice 3 and Voice 4 gave their hierarchical position away. The students distinguished those speakers as being unable to speak the legitimate language. Interestingly, the students could make judgments not simply on what school they may have attended but where they are in society, what occupations they may hold, and in what contexts they may or may not interact with such a person.

These students hold the dominant linguistic capital and are products of a similarly dominant linguistic habitus. As a result, they are “armed with a practical sense of the equivalences between the two orders of differences, apprehends social classes through classes of stylistic indices.”¹⁶¹ The role an educational institution like IAS plays in this subjugation is that they and institutions of similar positions have a monopoly over the producers and consumers “and therefore in the reproduction of the market without which the social value of the linguistic competence, its capacity to function as linguistic capital

¹⁶¹ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 54.

would cease to exist.”¹⁶² For the students, maintaining their control and acquisition of this linguistic habitus is important because it provides them with the linguistic styles and mannerisms that distinguish them from the rest of society. Keeping control over scarce resources like linguistic capital and erecting new barriers to belonging keeps the system functioning in their favor.¹⁶³

Further exploration of elementary school students could help strengthen the impact of early English education on their perceptions of other English speakers in Egypt’s sociolinguistic market. From my experience teaching in a private, international school at an elementary level, I would hypothesize that the students are well aware of the linguistic differences that stigmatize those with the “right” English accents and expressions. Even the elementary language teacher from IAS said, “They feel it. They feel it very much. They can differentiate with who they can speak, and actually as you said, it will determine if they can play with that person or not and be there and feel safe around them or not.” She gives another example of her niece giggling and looking to her for a response as she peered on in amusement as her Egyptian maid tried to speak English.

I observed even at school this inferior treatment of those from less privileged classes whose English skills were far inferior to the students. The elementary language teacher admitted that she knew of poor treatment of the Arabic teachers in the elementary school but did not want to comment further indicating the sensitive nature of the subject. One scenario I observed occurred in the high school Arabic class. The teacher began

¹⁶² Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 57.

¹⁶³ Michael Grenfell and David James, eds., “Theory, Practice and Pedagogic Research,” in *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory* (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 19.

speaking in English while I was in the classroom to introduce me to his class. I could see the students looking around at each other and laughing at the teacher when he spoke English. It is highly unlikely from my experience in the school that I would have seen any similar disrespect for the other foreign teachers at the school. However, since the teacher was a teacher of Arabic and Egyptian, and spoke English not at the same level as the students, perhaps to the students, it legitimated their reaction. When I asked some of the students why they laughed at him, one student replied: “I think it’s like just because it’s the teacher so we were making fun of him.” Similar stories from alumni support their ill-treatment of the Arabic tutors who came to their homes to give them lessons. I witnessed first-hand the ill-treatment of Egyptian staff at the private, international school I previously worked in. Similar inferior treatment was seen in both the students and their parents.

The social privilege the students obtain through language often goes unnoticed by the students and often parents, and is perceived as a natural fact, a “social distinction as a ‘natural’ distinction.”¹⁶⁴ These simple linguistic experiments and linguistic exchanges are related to what Bourdieu seeks to understand as the relationships in which language is generated.¹⁶⁵ Bourdieu best expresses the role of power in society and language:

[...] linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power through which the relations of power between speakers and their respective groups come into being in a transfigured way. As a consequence, it is impossible to interpret an act of communication within the limits of a purely linguistic analysis. Even the most simple linguistic exchange brings into play a complex and rarefying network of historical power relations between the speaker, endowed with a socially specific

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶⁵ Grenfell, “Language and the Classroom,” 72.

authority and his audience who recognises his in varying degrees, as well as between the respective groups to which they belong.¹⁶⁶

4.5 Navigating the Field of International, Private Education: Life Opportunities and Language Acquisition

In exploring how linguistic capital structures students' perceptions of life opportunities, it became clear that there are many influences on the direction these students will take in the future. Throughout my interviews, however, the most determining element was the influence of their parents. Not only in terms of encouraging them to take a certain language class or attend a certain school but also in shaping the habitus of students at home. All of the parents of the students I interviewed at IAS, I was told, spoke another language. Many students claimed they spoke multiple languages generally English, French and Arabic. The parents undoubtedly wanted their children to have a similar educational experience as their own.

The "ladder of possibilities"¹⁶⁷ in the field of private international education is quite limited for the most privileged in Egypt's society. For reasons discussed in Chapter 3 such as overcrowding, poor quality, and lack of exclusiveness, public schools are completely out of the question. They are used merely as empty threats by parents to motivate their children to perform better in school. As we have seen, these students barely interact on a close, personal level with students outside of their small prestigious circle of schools. Even this small circle of schools which is comprised of a handful of American, British, French and German schools are hierarchically categorized by students, as shown through the previous linguistic experiment. The reputation of the schools is

¹⁶⁶ Pierre Bourdieu and L. Wacquant, *Réponses*, (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 118, quoted in *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁶⁷ Barsoum, *The Employment Crisis of Female Graduates in Egypt: An Ethnographic Account*, 61.

comprised of multiple indicators. Economic capital is of course important, but participants are still judged on whether or not they merely bought their way into a school. That is one indicator that puts IAS at the top.

Besides being one of the most expensive schools in Egypt, you cannot just buy your way in. You must pass an exam. As one tenth-grade student remarked: “That is why a lot of schools hate IAS. Especially [the other American school] hates IAS because most people failed the exam here. I know that for sure. That is a known fact that most people at [the other American school] had failed the IAS test so they had to go there. And they have the money to just get in. You just pay and you’re in.” This statement suggests that studying at IAS, and being a member of the dominant fraction of the dominant class, requires more than just money.

The exam itself also expresses a form of symbolic capital—knowledge. The school recognizes the value of the student’s knowledge, and consecrates it by means of the exam. The participants accept the school’s authority as legitimate; this reinforces a hierarchy in this field. The consequences “are more than simply symbolic; it [passing the exam and acceptance] ‘buys’ prestige, power and consequent economic positioning.”¹⁶⁸

IAS is often sought after because of its international student body. However, some Egyptians prefer not to send their children to IAS, out of fear that they will become corrupted and too Americanized. The lack of Arabic and a religious curriculum is a problem for some Egyptian parents. Schools are also judged based on what type of Egyptians attend the schools. While working in a private, international school in Alexandria, the application forms asked parents to list the sporting clubs they were

¹⁶⁸ Grenfell and James, “Theory, Practice and Pedagogic Research,” 23.

members of and languages they spoke. The question concerning sporting clubs is significant, since membership in particular sporting clubs is an indicator of social class in Egypt. The owner asked such questions to ensure she was not admitting people who did not fit her profile. I was even personally asked to use my *wasta* (connections) to get a child into kindergarten at the school I was teaching at. The family is one of the wealthiest in Egypt but this was not enough to grant the child acceptance. When I spoke with the owner, she was hesitant because they were “*nouveau riche*.” As the participants in the field of private, international schools increased, new barriers to belonging and participating are erected to maintain exclusivity.

A school’s ability to maintain a strong reputation in terms of the kinds of cultural capital the students and families of their school possess is very important. I recognized this development while working in the education field in Egypt. Parents are often worried about the school becoming too *bi’a* (vulgar) or full of *nouveau riche*. In the case of IAS, the reputation is so strong and the admission process so difficult that for many students, just being admitted is a feat. I was told by the students that nearly every school will without question accept a student who moves from IAS. Although I cannot verify this information, from my experience it is quite possible.

Besides needing to have enough economic capital to pay the fees and passing the exam, students with the US passport are given priority and expedited to the start of the waiting list at IAS. One student explained how her father decided to move her at the last minute. She took the entrance exam on Saturday and started school on Sunday. Although there were at least twenty people ahead of her on the waiting list, and she said she probably did not do any better on the exam than the other students, she got in

immediately because she held the US passport. The rest of the students had to wait until mid-year at the earliest to possibly get in.

This scenario supports the development of another scarce resource these privileged Egyptians are exploiting which is citizenship. It is becoming more and more common that privileged Egyptians obtain a foreign citizenship, such as the US or Canadian passport which are the most common in IAS. “As a form of capital, citizenship serves as a strategy of accumulation that is deliberately deployed and can be exchanged into other forms of capital.”¹⁶⁹ The scarcity of this resource, the privilege it indicates though, for example, avoiding the daunting process of obtaining visas and the possibility to leave Egypt to seek refuge elsewhere, inflate its value. Even in the elementary school, Egyptian IAS students understand the exclusivity and distinction attached to their passport. They understand it separates them even further, not only from most Egyptians, but also from other Egyptians in their exclusive circle. As the elementary teacher Mrs. L explained: “They [the students] would say ‘We’re American!’ And he has brown hair with curly hair and his name is Mohamed or something. And then he tells you ‘I’m American!’ and that’s how bad it is. And I tell them we should be proud I said, and he says, ‘Yeah, but I’m American!’” For the students it is different to have two passports she explains. This is an additional resource increasing the privilege of the already privileged class. Formal citizenship in these cases can be strategically used for the “purposes of distinction, reproduction and accumulation.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Harald Bauder, “Citizenship as Capital : The Distinction of Migrant Labor,” *Alternatives* 33 (2008): 315-333, 316.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 321.

When I asked the students why their parents chose to send them to IAS they all answered because of its reputation. IAS is highly valued for symbolic capital through its prestige and social capital. A faculty member remarked: “It is like a social network, and they know each other and go to clubs together you know they kind of socialize together.” It is known to be the best school and offer the best education according to students and staff. The students liked the freedom of choice in terms of classes they were given and the creativity the school promoted, which they felt was absent in most of the other schools. For most, the choice of attending IAS was obvious as their plans were to go to university abroad or at least to a foreign university in Egypt. Going to IAS was a sure bet for getting in particularly to a foreign university in Egypt. As the former ELS teacher told me:

It is true when you graduate with a degree, a diploma from IAS you are looked upon differently. I can tell you when my son graduated I was sending him to the States to go to university but at one point we weren't sure his green card was going to come in time, so I thought I had to make alternative arrangements. So I applied to [a foreign university in Egypt] and they just, this was *way* past application time, no they just gobbled him up! They said, yes, yes, yes and we will give him a scholarship too. I was so shocked and I was like now I understand why parents make that investment and sacrifice and whatever.¹⁷¹

Students and parents alike realize the privileges they have from receiving a degree from IAS. Some students see it as a sure thing when applying even to universities in the United States. Language also plays a large role in their future college careers. Students and their parents often want their children to graduate with a multilingual degree. As speaking multiple languages increases the value of their linguistic capital and subsequently increases the possibility of acceptance into a prestigious university.

¹⁷¹ It must be stressed that this is not the opinion of the author but of one former faculty member of IAS.

Once in junior high, students get to choose what language they would like to take. Most of the decisions come from the parents and not the students themselves. The students in Arabic were generally forced to take Arabic by their parents. Those in either Spanish or French took these languages because their parents told them it would be good for them to have a third language. Some of the students who take French and Spanish also did so because, they said, they do not intend on staying in Egypt, so it did not matter. Others choose to take Arabic at home with a tutor because they know the Arabic at IAS is so poor, and some parents see it as necessary “to keep a whole cultural base with Arabic still without losing it completely to the international schools” (eighth-grade student). The parents navigate this educational field influenced by the supply and demand for differing forms of capital. Another eighth-grade student explained his mother’s choice of his language classes:

I take Spanish and that is because I prefer Spanish more than any other language probably. Like I tried taking French private lesson and I didn’t enjoy that and Arabic my mom said it is easy to get an Arabic tutor to teach me at home. Then she was like what I think is more useful is you take Spanish at school cause you are interested in it and maybe later on you can take Arabic at home. And then I think she forgot about that Arabic thing and then recently she told me about Arabic and she started getting Arabic tutors.

Presently, more and more parents choose to send their children to IAS in junior high and high school in order to provide their child with a stronger background in Arabic, which they find superior in other international schools. Afterwards, they move their children out of these schools into IAS because of its reputation as being one of the best. Interestingly, however, the parents generally chose to send their child only to one of a few French, German, American or British private, international schools, whose language of instruction is still not Arabic, to give their children a stronger background in Arabic.

Public and lower to even mid-level private schools are out of the question for many of these families. Recently, a couple of private Arabic and religious schools have been opened to cater to some of the need for Arabic and religious tuition.

The parents are further empowered by their access to choice in where to send their child as long as they have or are capable of having the right capital for this educational field.¹⁷² However, it appears that parents are not often aware of their role and impact on students' linguistic perceptions and subsequently the students' linguistic capabilities. As the home environment plays a significant role in this process, and as many teachers complained, the parents place full responsibility on the school. Parents are denying the role they play in this whole process and legitimizing the judgment of an educational institution that is not necessarily equipping Egyptian students with the reality they will face living in Egypt after they graduate or enter university. Parents merely resort to using financial resources by hiring tutors to compensate for the lack of Arabic in the school curriculum.

Students are also very well aware of the economic capital or benefits that can be accrued from their acquisition of cultural capital, specifically linguistic capital, at IAS. They are aware that it is, as one eight-grade student put it, "a much higher class school and [that] there are many more possibilities in IAS than in other schools." One junior high school student who wanted to follow her father and grandfather's footsteps and become a lawyer, knew exactly the path she had to follow. She takes private Arabic lessons at home because she has to pass the middle school government exam in Arabic.

¹⁷² Diane Rey, "Cultural Reproduction: Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Primary Schooling," in *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, ed. Michael Grenfell and David James, e-Library. (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 56.

“I want to work in Egypt because I wanna be like a lawyer in Egypt, and when you are a lawyer you need really strong Arabic, and like you need Arabic and English and even another language. Like I take French in school.”

This is a perfect example of the reproduction of a social class from the *effendiya* to present day. She is aided greatly through the economic capital her family possesses to pay the high fees at IAS, and the knowledge passed down to her of the exact path she must take in order to be successful. In school, she also has the ability to polish her skills by taking part in extracurricular activities like debate and the model United Nations. This is a privilege not offered even in many private schools in Egypt. She is aware of the audience she will be speaking to as a lawyer. “You have to write a lot of things down, and it has to be very formal and your Arabic has to be good. Like you would be a joke if you had a mistake on there and so then...you really need to have this strong, spoken formal Arabic unlike the one you speak with your friends.” She is also aware of the process of transforming cultural capital into economic capital. “Even my dad was telling me like how he wants me to take French, because my grandma she gets more money for speaking another language. So for example, if you speak English and Arabic so you can translate this paper or send this paper to different people in different languages. So if you speak French, it’s like another bonus like you can do another thing.”

An alumnus also expressed the requirement of the “right” English skills and how it aided his career. “*Ya ‘ni* (like) you have to be able to read and write and understand well. It has to be in your system. It has to be in your blood, because it is required of you later. Imagine now if I couldn’t read or write English. Imagine, I could never have been in my job right now, no way, your career is limited.” The ability to read or write Arabic

is not a concern for him, because that is not what the market demands. However, another female alumnus I spoke with was slightly limited in what areas she could work in after graduating from a foreign university in Egypt. She worked in a financial firm, and because of her poor Arabic skills she was delegated to work only with the foreign clients. She said she could tell she was stigmatized by her fellow colleagues as one of those Egyptians from IAS that couldn't speak Arabic.

The exclusive nature of IAS and the linguistic habitus at home and at school that maintains the inferior position of Arabic reproduces barriers to upward mobility of others wishing to join this highest echelon of society. It further reinforces barriers between them and the rest of Egyptian society. When I asked three junior high school boys if they feel they can relate more to foreigners than Egyptians they all answered yes. "Yeah, [...] I also think I can relate better to foreigners. It's just me. Like I don't like most Egyptians, I don't feel like, I can't relate to most of them. They don't have the same common interests as me." A similar reply: "If you have been around foreigners most of your life and ever since you started school, and you don't have the language, it's hard to maintain speaking with them."

This was a theme repeated amongst alumni who felt they were in some kind of grey area in Egyptian society in terms of identifying with the majority of the population. For many, it is a place in society that they are born into, and that is reinforced through these educational institutions. Likewise, those from less privileged backgrounds are also born into their habitus, which will remain with them despite their hardest efforts to be upwardly mobile. The Mrs. L expressed this through a story about the son of her driver:

Mrs. L: He has a son who took a scholarship with the Fulbright and he went to New Jersey and he stayed there for a year and a half or something like this. He

came back, decided he wanted to do his PhD and applied. He was accepted to the US and in Germany but the program in Germany was better so he is in Germany now for two years.

Q: So he will be fluent in English and German?

Mrs. L: Yeah, yeah

Q: But do you think he will always be categorized in a lower position? Once you are in that place you are kind of in that place right?

Mrs. L: Yeah, Yeah. I remember when I graduated from [a foreign university based in Egypt] someone came and spoke. It was probably the president of [this university] and he said 'you will always' and this was in the early '80s 'you will always be dancing on the ladder.' You will always not be a foreigner, you will not be an American, and you will still not be a full Egyptian and will not be you know walking in the streets like everybody else and mingle and not be noticeable. Right, you will always be in the middle and that is what he meant by dancing on the ladder. You know you won't be there and you won't be there so that will always remain, right?

Mrs. L brought up two important points in her response to the question concerning societal barriers to upward mobility. First, she agreed with my assessment that once you are born into a particular social milieu, it is very difficult to overcome the stigma attached to that social position. Even though her driver's son travelled abroad for higher education, and acquired linguistic capital perhaps more valuable to the job markets abroad, to privileged Egyptians his less privileged background will always be detected. Second, her discussion of "dancing on the ladder" re-introduces the topic of cosmopolitanism, and this privileged classes attempts to appropriate imported and established forms of cultural capital.

4.5.1. Dancing on the Ladder

This story of dancing on the ladder leads to the last area of inquiry. What role does the institution play in the transnational exchange of capital and the students' struggle to absorb and balance the dualism of their Egyptian, Arabic identity within the international context of their school? There are undoubtedly many areas that could be explored when trying to answer this question. Of course the parents make the initial choice of sending their child to the school knowing the international context their child will constantly be in. In my experience at the school, the school perpetuated the differences between the Egyptian students and the rest of society. Their language policy was probably the most detrimental. If you attend a school where all classes are taught in English except your foreign language class, which does not have to be Arabic, and even the Egyptian students, along with many of their parents, speak a mixture of English and Arabic, you do not often associate with students from outside a similar educational background and the only contexts you speak only Arabic in are with the security guards, janitors, and workers at home, you will undoubtedly perceive Arabic as having an inferior status; and culturally, your place within a Arabic-speaking country will be uncertain.

Throughout my time in the classroom, teachers rarely made connections between the subjects they were teaching and the host country they were in. The students learn more about US and European history than anything related to Egypt or the Middle East. I often noticed scenarios in the lesson where a very viable opportunity presented itself to reference Egypt, but it was always overlooked. For example, the seventh-grade class was exploring a unit on culture. In trying to define sub-culture, the teacher, an Egyptian-American who is also a graduate of IAS used an American example of hippies for sub-culture. The first thing that came to my mind was to mention the Bedouins or numerous

other sub-cultures within this region instead of using American references. By constantly relying on references to the US, and expecting the students to know these references, the teacher makes it difficult for Egyptian students to relate their education to the country that they live in. Another example is when the same teacher asked her class, “What is democracy?” One American student patriotically blurted out the exact answer she was looking for, “by the people for the people!” The teacher valorized his response as exactly correct. Yet, how could one expect the Egyptian students to come up with that answer? Furthermore, why is the US example of democracy the only form discussed and encouraged in class? In essence, what the Egyptian students know about their own country is devalued, as it is not useful for answering the teacher’s questions.¹⁷³

What is significant about this teacher is that she is an Egyptian-American who was educated at IAS and now teaches there. She is an example of an IAS alumna with poor Arabic skills and a disconnect with the rest of Egyptian society. Her experience and inculcation at IAS is now reproduced through her pedagogic style and is inculcating these students in a similar manner. As a teacher in this field, she is participating in setting the value system in which students must work¹⁷⁴—values which are a reproduction of her own learning experience at IAS.

The unit on culture was interesting because it brought to light many of the differences the students acknowledge exist between themselves and the majority of Egyptian society. While filling out a worksheet on their culture, many Egyptian students were stumped while trying to answer questions concerning the culture of Egypt. In

¹⁷³ Grenfell, “Language and the Classroom,” 85.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 85.

response to describing clothes one student answered, “I wear normal clothes,” rather than the traditional Egyptian galabiya. Displays of culture through consumption associated with Europe and the US are often associated with being “normal.” I helped one particular student with his worksheet who did not know how to answer the questions. He said he does not feel like his parents raised him in the traditional way. He could not answer “Beliefs About Raising a Child,” because he does not think his family raises him like the rest of Egyptian families, who in his view, are often mean and hit their children, unlike his parents. When answering about music, he enthusiastically wrote Amr Diab, an Egyptian pop star who had just been a guest performer and judge at their junior high talent contest. However, when I asked him if he listened to Amr Diab he shyly replied no, and that neither do his parents, because they listen to songs in English.

Although the school does have units and discussions on what it means to be a “third culture kid,” the lessons are generally geared towards the foreign students who are constantly moving around with their parents. They are not necessarily developed to assist students who feel like a third culture kid in their own country. Often these students answered that they are not third culture kids because they are Egyptians, so it is just not possible. Thus, “when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself ‘as a fish in water’, it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted.”¹⁷⁵ However, I would guess that as many alumni expressed, when encountering a social world outside the walls of IAS once they graduate and are further faced with an increased numbers of participants who share a similar social

¹⁷⁵ Bourdieu in interview with Wacquant, in Pierre Bourdieu in L. Wacquant, “Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu,” *Sociological Theory* 7, (1989): 26-63, 43, quoted in Grenfell and James, “Theory, Practice and Pedagogic Research,” 15.

position, students must adapt to the changes in their social and educational worlds. Yet, the cultural distinctions and vast quantities of capital they possess from their familial and educational habitus make “them better players than others in certain field games.”¹⁷⁶

4.6 Summary of Ethnographic Fieldwork

The aforementioned fieldwork not only provides a glimpse into the apex of this educational field, showing how the privileged, dominant class today as in the past reproduce and reinforce their position in society through an exclusive education system. Acceptance into schools such as IAS depends on and reinforces the same cultural capital that many of these students acquired via their familial habitus. The students have similar linguistic capacities as their parents. Parents often try to provide their children with similar educational upbringings as their own. Their social world is largely occupied by peers who attend similar prestigious private, international schools. Students have similar linguistic capacities and largely occupy the same social space. These trends, along with the interpersonal function English has assumed in the lives of these Egyptians as previously discussed, support the dominance of English in these schools and in the linguistic habitus of their students and graduates. Furthermore, the subordinate position of Arabic in the lives and habitus of these students, their parents, and the field further reinforces this point by valuing English more as an indicator of social status.

There no doubt exist numerous socio-political processes that have affected the status of Arabic within Egyptian society. In the context of my fieldwork, multiple reasons were presented by the students and the school. First, the role parents play in valuing or devaluing Arabic linguistic capital is extremely influential on the students’

¹⁷⁶ Grenfell and James, “Theory, Practice and Pedagogic Research,” 21.

perceptions and motivation to learn Arabic. Children are often taught a foreign language first even at home before Arabic. Second, the social market in which these students and parents participate in is often less concerned with written abilities in Arabic or English. Placing a participant into the hierarchical structure is much easier by valuing spoken communication. Furthermore, the Arabic the students are often exposed to is in the form of linguistic exchanges from nannies, workers, and television. The opportunities and contexts students often experience exchanges in Arabic are often with those associated with inferior jobs and less privileged positions in society such as the maid or gardener. Finally, students and parents are well aware of the economic benefits associated with acquiring and transforming English linguistic capital into economic capital and vice versa. They do not see similar benefits through Arabic. Even when they are presented with contexts in which they are devalued to an audience because of their poor Arabic skills, the students are unperturbed. They understand to some extent the privileged position they hold because of their English skills and education. Students believe and accept the rule that language plays a large role in determining individual's social position.

Additionally, students are aware of the subtle differences they were privileged enough to acquire at home and through IAS, differences that depend crucially on possessing the "right" forms of linguistic capital. They are also enabled through their dominant position with the ability to detect those who do not possess the "right" cultural capital to play in their social field. They can determine who belongs and does not belong, as shown in the linguistic experiment. Furthermore, one subtle difference plays a particularly important role in this process. Accent was proven to be more important to those in less privileged classes. This was supported by the interview with a tenth-grade

student whose relatives insisted she spoke with their children so they could acquire the *American* accent. She did not believe it was important. However, her opinion is largely due to her privileged position within society. She has the authority and capital to make such statements. However, her lesser-privileged relatives understand that the value of having a good accent could compensate for their lack of economic capital. They must strategize their capital in order to meet the demands of the market.

In exploring how linguistic capital structures students' perceptions of life opportunities, higher education abroad as seen with the *effendiya* is valued most. Enrollment in higher education is not even a question for these students. Furthermore, their job possibilities are seemingly endless—some hoping to follow in their fathers' footsteps and others hoping to become fashion designers and interior designers.

Certain highly exclusive forms of capital serve to maximize the benefits that students can gain from attending IAS. Maintaining the exclusivity of these resources is what maintains the reputation and exclusiveness of IAS. Citizenship through ownership of foreign passports is one such scarce resource. IAS is also known to guarantee admissions to foreign universities based in Egypt and other prestigious universities abroad. Furthermore, the barriers to admission such as needing *wasta*, having to pass an entrance exam, the long waiting list, the profile parents and students must fit into, and the exorbitant fees parents must pay, all filter even further members within this privileged class, thus increasing its exclusivity.

Parents navigate the field of private, international schools largely based on acquisition of linguistic capital. A recent trend is that parents are often choosing to send their children to IAS in junior high or even high school so the student can acquire a

background in Arabic or another foreign language such as French or German. However, the choice of schooling is still one of a handful of private, international schools with instruction in a foreign language.

Lastly, the institution does play an important and influential role in the students' ability to balance their Egyptian, Arabic identity within the international context of the school. Although multiple areas of inquiry exist related to this statement, I often observed instances within the pedagogic aims of the teachers that further devalued their Egyptian, Arabic identities. The students themselves took part in negating characteristics of Egypt by deeming things not traditionally Egyptian as "normal" or those with poor English accents as "really Egyptian." Additionally, their habitus at home and at school for many made it difficult to relate to the majority of Egyptians. Simultaneously, the older students know they are not American, despite some holding the US passport, and cannot fully relate to foreigners. Although they hold very privileged positions, the sense of belonging for many of these students is uncertain. Language no doubt plays a large role in this process, which deserves further examination.

5. Conclusion

Misrecognition of the social determinants of the educational career—and therefore of the social trajectory it helps to determine—gives the educational certificate the value of a natural right and makes the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order.¹⁷⁷

As this study has shown, the educational system in Egypt plays an influential role in maintaining the inequality that exists in the social order of Egypt. The maintenance and reproduction of this social order was largely made possible through the two transformations in Egypt's educational system. First, the *effendiya* emerged, maintained and reproduced their social positions through the education system. Beginning with Mohamed Ali's modernization project, members of the *effendiya* were sent to Europe and European-inspired state schools for education whom were subsequently facilitated into prestigious careers in the state bureaucracy. The privileged cosmopolitans of today inherited similar strategies of the *effendiya* as a result of the reproduction of an exclusive educational trajectory. Similarly, they too hold influential positions within Egypt.

These practices and strategies appear even more natural in today's privileged class as students exemplify these pre-existing distinguishers which have been transmitted through generations. I observed a visible example of this transmission on the first day of my fieldwork. The students were asked to bring in an artifact to class that reflected their culture. One particular student described a tarbush which he explained had been passed down from his great grandfather to his father preserved inside a case. The importance of such preserved distinguishers, which bear the traces of location of acquisition, were often seen at IAS. However, today they are not always as blatant as a tarbush. They can exist

¹⁷⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, 387.

in much more subtle but easily detectable ways in accents, mannerisms, and styles of dress. Transmission of value judgments related to language is also seen as the students at IAS tended to reflect similar linguistic perceptions as their parents. Furthermore, most of the parents of the students interviewed had similar upbringings in foreign-language schools.

Second, the need to maintain the bifurcation of Egypt's education system to ensure the pathways to privileged and influence are kept exclusive. This field of private, international schools still reflects the long established socio-historical process of educational bifurcation. The inequality of such bifurcation has only been exacerbated in the last two decades with the passing of Law 306 allowing for the establishment of private, international schools. Not only has this led to an increase in Egyptian's themselves investing in the inequality of Egypt's education system but also compelled the most privileged class to find new ways of excluding the growing number potential participants in their social space. Just as the exclusive and profitable educational trajectory of the primary-secondary-university ladder was the pathway for the *effendiya* of the past, admittance to one of Egypt's handful of exclusive private, international schools like IAS is now the pathway to influence and prestige for most. Admittance has become more difficult as demand grows. As the number of participants in this privileged social space increases, new ways are always found to exclude those who do and do not belong. As in the past, access to these educational institutions is largely dependent upon social, economic and cultural capital. Successful participation in this social space largely depends on capital attained through these institutions and their subsequent ability to strategically convert or transform one form of capital into another.

English has not only become increasingly important in this filtering process but has become a defining characteristic of the linguistic habitus of these students, their parents, and these educational institutions. English, rather than Arabic, is a more distinguishable social indicator to members of this class. English linguistic capital is sought after more than Arabic to improve future life opportunities. Maintaining the exclusivity of this system is necessary to the reproduction of this social class and their privileged positions in society. The language of this dominant class is defined by speaking English in some form, whether purely English or code-switching. This development necessitates academics give greater attention to studying the effects of English-language education on Egyptian society.

As this is an exploratory study, many areas of further research should be investigated. Examination of elementary education as a sub-field would provide very interesting information about the early socialization of these students. Further emphasis on the familial habitus and parents is also needed for a more comprehensive approach to the claims made. A study of curriculum and the value system structured by the teachers and the international schools would also expand upon the role of institutions in legitimating forms of knowledge that often devalue their knowledge of Egypt. Expanding upon the linguistic experiment could provide statistically significant evidence for the ways in which students categorize participants based on subtle linguistic differences. Finally, further research should focus on the role of foreigners and citizenship as capital as well as the value placed on foreign teachers, students, and even caregivers in the home.

Studies as the one I have undertaken and the further areas of inquiry just discussed are important to uncovering the covert networks and structures of power relations that define the social order in Egypt. Education in Egypt is not a neutral space for student learning, but a powerful institution that plays a significant role in the reproduction and reinforcement of class structures and barriers to upward mobility.

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