

## Brother Citizens: Divided WE Stand, United I Fall Deictics and Anaphors of the Arab Spring Speeches of Mubarak

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**ABSTRACT** This paper investigates how power was linguistically represented, marked, negotiated, and stripped down in strategic discourse, according to the dictations of the dialectic socio-political relations of power. More specifically, it problematizes the relations of power held between the ousted President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, on the one hand, and the Egyptian people and protesters on the other, as expressed and suppressed in the three speeches he delivered during the 25 January 2011 Egyptian *Arab Spring* Revolution. The paper consists of four sections: The first is a literature review that lays necessary theoretical foundations, critiques previous literature, and applies the new concept of *Classifying WE* which can account pragmatically for the ‘problematic’ behaviour of the deictic pronoun *WE*. The second section chronicles the most significant socio-political events in the course of the Egyptian revolution and how they tipped the balance of power before and after each speech. The third section explicates how Mubarak responded to those events deictically and anaphorically. The paper concludes with a cursory glance at the cognitive processing load created by deictics and anaphors.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper maps the micro linguistic features in texts on the macro socio-political relations of power in society, by investigating the deictic and anaphoric pronominal system employed by the ousted president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, and the pragmatic functions it performed, in the three speeches he delivered during the 25 January 2011 Egyptian *Arab Spring* Revolution. The paper consists of four sections. The first is a literature review that compares *reference*, *indexicality*, *deixis*, and *anaphora*; critiques the only one study of the *person deixis* of Mubarak, i.e. [Maalej \(2013\)](#); and applies the new pragmatic concept of *Classifying WE* which provides systematic explanations of the problematic shifts in the pronominal references of the deictic pronoun *WE*. The second section chronicles the most significant socio-political developments, in the course of the Egyptian revolution, that tipped the balance of power before and after every speech. The third section explicates how those relations of power were reflected on the deictic and anaphoric decisions made by Mubarak. The fourth section glances at the cognitive processing load created by anaphors and deictics.

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## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Deixis, anaphora, indexicality, and reference*

*Deixis* is an important linguistic phenomenon in the study of political discourse (van Dijk 1995, Fairclough 2001), because it is the ‘single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected in the structures of language themselves’ (Levinson 1983: 54). It proves descriptively essential to start with positioning *deixis* within its broader and narrower contexts of *reference*, *indexicality*, and *anaphora*.

*Reference* studies how linguistic forms are used to designate entities in the world (Matthews 1997: 312); it has been closely associated with *indexicality* and *deixis*: philosophers, e.g. Peirce (1955, as cited in Levinson 2003), argue that the former represents the route into *reference*, and linguists, e.g. Bühler (1934), contend that the latter is the source of *reference*.

*Indexicality* refers to the ‘broader phenomena of contextual dependency’ (Levinson 2003: 2) and can be defined in terms of four main characteristics: existential relationship between the indexical sign and its object of reference, semantic deficiency, attentionality, and intentionality. In other words, although the indexical sign is in a relationship of ‘dynamical coexistence’ with its referent, the descriptive content of the former is insufficient to identify the latter without resorting to contextual support, i.e. ‘funneling’ the attention of the addressee to spatio-temporal contextual clues that enable the addressee to reconstruct the referential intentions of the speaker (ibid: 08–13).

*Deixis* denotes the ‘narrower linguistically-relevant aspects of indexicality’ (ibid: 2): it ‘encodes’ extra-linguistic aspects of the context, whose analysis is required for the proper understanding and interpretation of the utterance (Levinson 1983: 54, 62, 68; Mühlhäusler & Harré 1990: 9–10). Deictic expressions, also known as *deictics*, are thus ‘ready-made’ indexical expressions that have ‘a contextual variable built into their semantic conditions’, hence they necessarily invoke features tied directly to the context of utterance (Levinson 2003: 14, 21). Deictics exhibit a gradient of contextual dependency, ranging from pure or *dedicated deictics*, i.e. exclusively deictic expressions that have no anaphoric use, to *weak deictics*, i.e. deictic expressions that can be used demonstratively for emphasis (ibid).

*Deictics* are classified into the five categories of person, place, time, discourse, and social *deixis*: *Person deixis* encodes the roles of participants in the speech event; *place* or *space deixis* encodes spatial locations relative to those of the participants in the speech event; *time deixis* encodes the temporal points and spans anchored to the time at which an utterance was spoken; *discourse* or *text deixis* encodes references to prior segments in the unfolding discourse within which the utterance occurs; and *social deixis* encodes aspects of the social identities, status, and rank of participants (Levinson 1983: 62–90). This paper focuses on *person deixis*, because it is implicitly or explicitly present in every utterance (ibid: 62; Lyons 1977: 638).

The last referentially related concept is *anaphora*, which signifies a relationship of co-referentiality, i.e. picking out the same referent, between two elements in the

discourse: an anaphor and an antecedent, where the former is unified with the latter and depends on it for the determination of its semantic value (Levinson 1983: 67).

In spite of these definitions and distinctions, *deixis* is still considered one of the most puzzling and understudied core areas of linguistics: it has no adequate metalinguistic apparatus, no coherent cross-linguistic typology of most of the types of its expressions, no clearly defining boundaries, and no consensus on whether the whole topic belongs to semantics or pragmatics (Levinson 1983: 61, 68, 92; 2003: 1, 5). Following are some of the most problematic issues relevant to the topic of this paper.

First, the broader class of indexical expressions is itself not very clearly demarcated: on the one hand, some of the inherently deictic expressions 'can be used non-deictically, e.g. anaphorically [...] or non-anaphorically' (Levinson 2003: 30–31); on the other, some deictic terms can be interpreted as both deictic and anaphoric at the same time, in the same sentence (Lyons 1977: 676; Levinson 1983: 67).

Second, although *anaphora* is prototypically categorized as non-deictic (Levinson 1983, Diessel 1999), anaphoric expressions 'with their directional specification from the current point in the text, make clear the underlyingly deictic nature of anaphora' (Levinson 2003: 49), that 'clear conventional deictic component' renders *anaphors* so closely related to *deictics* that it is not always possible to distinguish them (ibid). Furthermore, many of the standard anaphoric expressions 'like third person pronouns in English, are general purpose referring expressions – there is nothing intrinsically anaphoric about them, and they can be used deictically [...] or non-deictically but exophorically' (ibid: 49). Finally, and most importantly, 'the property of indexicality is not exhausted by the study of inherently indexical expressions [i.e. *deictics*]. For just about any referring expression can be used deictically' (Levinson 2003: 8).

This paper shall therefore investigate both the deictic and anaphoric decisions made by Mubarak, in an attempt to accurately detect and maximally represent as many linguistic instantiations of contextual dependency, power, and ideology as possible.

## 2.2 Maalej (2013)

The only study that investigated the *person deixis* of Mubarak is Maalej (2013): It considered him the deictic center and concluded that he used pronouns as 'individuated frames', filled them with cognitive content, and surrounded them with lexical items that misrepresented the revolution and framed it as 'demonstrations', not 'peaceful protests' (ibid: 633). Maalej (2013) is an important and pioneering study, conducted by an eminent scholar; nevertheless, a few comments need to be pointed out about it.

First of all, the study was not very precise in calculating the exact frequency of almost all the pronouns it investigated: It claims that there is only one occurrence of *YOU* in the antepenultimate speech (ibid: 634), but I think there are two; that the penultimate speech counts thirty-one occurrences of *I* versus nine of *WE* (ibid: 646), but I think these are thirty-nine versus eleven; that the last speech included sixty-one instances of *I* compared to twenty-eight of *WE* (ibid: 655), but I think

these are seventy-seven and forty-two; and that the three speeches included one-hundred and twenty-one instances of *I* against sixty-five of *WE* and fifteen of *YOU* (ibid), but I think these are one-hundred and forty-seven against ninety and twenty, respectively. Finally, it might be relevant to point out that Mubarak delivered his second speech, on 1 February 2011, not 2 February, as the study claims (ibid: 645).

Second, the study assigned references to some pronouns in a decontextualized and hence not very convincing manner. For example, Maalej argues that the deictic pronoun in 'our armed forces' in the penultimate speech is 'ambiguous' and could be a 'royal-WE' that refers to Mubarak to the exclusion of the people (2013: 648). This interpretation might have been plausible if the relations of power were not against Mubarak when he delivered that speech; I think that this specific instance is one of the *Third Class WE*, in which Mubarak attempted to legitimize himself by associating himself with the armed forces 'which many Egyptians respect highly' (El Manawy 2012: 155).

Moreover, Maalej argues that the *WE* in 'history will judge me and the others for what we have done' is 'inclusive of the leadership, i.e. the DPE [Mubarak], his government, and the ruling party' (ibid). I think the most accurate translation of that utterance is 'history will judge me as well as the others for our merits and demerits'. I also think that the possessive pronoun *OUR* is a derivative instance of the *Third Class WE*, through which Mubarak attempted to relinquish his power strategically and assimilate himself into the people by equating himself not only to ordinary Egyptian men and women, but also to his political opponents.

Furthermore, Maalej argues that the last *WE* in the penultimate speech is 'ambiguous between two readings: A royal-WE and an inclusive "WE"' (ibid) and concludes that it 'cannot be inclusive of the Egyptians or the people because the DPE [Mubarak] was talking about a peaceful transfer of power in the hands of the sons of the people' (ibid). I think this sentence is self-contradictory and this *WE* is an instance of the inclusive *Third Class WE* through which Mubarak attempted to establish a bond with the people in order to hold them co-responsible for finding an 'honourable' solution to the problem of transferring power.

In addition, Maalej argues that, in the ultimate speech, the filling of the two *OURs* in 'our economy' and 'our international self-image' is ambiguous and 'seem to be cynical and outrageous, and do not include the Egyptians' (ibid: 652). I think these two occurrences of *OUR* are derivative instances of the *Third Class WE*; they do include the Egyptians and try to establish a bond between them and Mubarak on the grounds of common economic loss. Similarly, I claim that all the occurrences of *WE* and *OUR* in that utterance are instances of the inclusive *Third Class WE*, not the exclusive *WE*, as Maalej argues (ibid: 653).

Third, the study assigned functions to some deictic pronouns in a non-holistic manner. For example, Maalej considers the utterance in which Mubarak said to the people 'I am speaking to you not only as the president of the republic but also as an Egyptian man ...' as a 'gesture to seek closeness to and communality with them' (2013: 644). I think the second part of that utterance is too significant to be overlooked, because Mubarak says in it '...as an Egyptian man whom Fate has decided to assign the responsibility of this homeland'. I think it might be more

plausible to argue that Mubarak was attempting to double his legal presidential authority, which he foregrounded in the first part of that utterance, by assuming an extra layer of spiritual authority that would appeal to the religious subconscious of the poorly educated people. He was implicitly arguing that if God did not want Mubarak to be the President or did not consider him fit for the job, He would have never chosen him for presidency; consequently, if the people were questioning the fitness of Mubarak for presidency, they would be questioning the judgment of their God.

Second, Maalej argues that the 'imbalance between "I" and "WE"' in the penultimate speech 'suggests a clear persistence on the part of the DPE [Mubarak] to stick to individualism, egocentrism, and self-centeredness [...] All the "I" instances were "presidential-I"' (2013: 646–647). Maalej draws the same conclusion after analysing the ultimate speech, contending that Mubarak was 'a self-centered, individualistic, and egocentric old man who did not feel the need to make communality with the rest of Egyptians' (ibid: 655). These two conclusions might have been plausible if the relations of power were in favour of Mubarak when he delivered those two speeches. Mubarak, the veteran politician, was watching his thirty-year-old power collapsing rapidly and taken from him by the very youth he had always ignored; it is unlikely that he would employ *I* to express his individualism and presidential ego-centrism and detach himself from the people at that particularly critical time, as Maalej (2013) maintains. I think that Mubarak did exactly what any other politician would do in such a situation: he abandoned *WE* and employed *I* strategically, in order to represent himself positively as a modest ordinary man who deserves the sympathy of the people.

Third, Maalej contends that 'when it comes to political responsibilities, achievements and commitments, the DPE [Mubarak] used "I" (2013: 648). I think this was not the case at all. Mubarak employed different deictic and anaphoric tactics in order to evade responsibility and commitment: he first used the *Second Class WE* to insert his cabinet with him in the same deictic field and blame responsibility on them, then he twisted the *Third Class WE* in order to hold the people co-responsible for finding a solution, as I will explicate in my analysis.

Fourth, Maalej argues that the function of framing Egypt as the mother, Egyptians as the sons, and Mubarak as the father is to create 'an emotive blend between Egypt and President [...] which establishes a close link between the DPE [Mubarak] and Egypt' (ibid: 650). I think this Conceptual Metaphor performs a more strategic function: it imposes a religious, parental authority whereby the children, i.e. the revolutionary youth, became religiously obliged to obey their metaphorical father, i.e. Mubarak, otherwise they would be committing the second gravely sin after disbelief in God, i.e. ingratitude to parents.

Fifth, Maalej (2013) did not only reduce the most 'complex' and 'problematic' deictic pronoun, i.e. *WE*, to a simple, binary pronoun consisting of an 'inclusive *WE*' and 'exclusive *WE*', but also was not very consistent in the references he assigned to each *WE* of them. For example, Maalej argues in some instances that the referents of the 'inclusive *WE*' are the president, his government, and ruling party (ibid: 644

& 648), then in other instances, the president, his government, his ruling party, and the people (ibid: 645).

Sixth, the study concentrated mainly on the two pronouns *I* and *WE*, to the exclusion of other significantly revealing pronouns, e.g. *HE* when used by Mubarak to encode himself; *THEY* when used to strategically reference the protesters, then to inadvertently detach Mubarak from all the Egyptians; and *ITS* when used to detach Mubarak from Egypt and 'its people'.

Finally, the study was unable to identify the referents of many instances of *WE* and considered them 'ambiguous' (ibid: 648 & 652).

### 2.3 *Classifying WE*

In an attempt to fill in the theoretical and methodological gap identified by Levinson (1983, 2003), i.e. in order to be able to 'capture the social aspects of deixis, we would need to add at least one further dimension, say of relative rank, in which the speaker is socially higher, lower or equal to the addressee and other persons that might be referred to' (1983: 64), I have introduced the new concept of *Classifying WE* which accounts pragmatically for the 'problematic' behaviour of the deictic pronoun *WE*, in terms of relations of power.

The new pragmatic concept of *Classifying WE*, as illustrated in Figure (1) below, encodes the hierarchical relations of power holding between speaker(s) and addressee(s) in socio-political coordinates anchored to the context of utterance. The *Classifying WE* consists of four classes: the *First Class WE*, which grandly encodes the Speaker (S) (in this study, ousted president Mubarak) to the exclusion of everyone else; the *Second Class WE*, which encodes the Speaker (S) and their Cronies (C), to the exclusion of everyone else (i.e. ousted presidents Mubarak and his government); the *Third Class WE*, which assimilates the Speaker (S) into the Addressee (A), to the exclusion of the Other (O) (i.e. combining Mubarak and the non-protesting people, to the exclusion of the protesters); and the *Fourth Class WE*, which although it semantically assimilates the Speaker (i.e. Mubarak) into the Addressee (i.e. the people), it pragmatically encodes the Addressee and the Other only (i.e. the non-protesting people and the protesters), to the exclusion of the Speaker (i.e. Mubarak).

The *Classifying WE* corroborates the argument advanced by Fairclough (1989: 127–128), i.e. pronouns have 'relational values' that play an important role in the construction of social relationships and consequently in the exclusion and inclusion of others with ideological ease. Hence, the four classes correspond to four levels of power, social status, and intimacy, the *First Class* being the highest and the *Fourth Class* the lowest, and perform the strategic functions of inclusion, exclusion, marking/ceding power, threatening, criticising, bonding ... etc.

The *Classifying WE* addresses the shortcomings of the 'wandering we' (Petersoo 2007), in terms of the six aspects of socio-political contextualization, hierarchical structure, pragmatic function, semantic scope, power relations, and underlying ideologies.

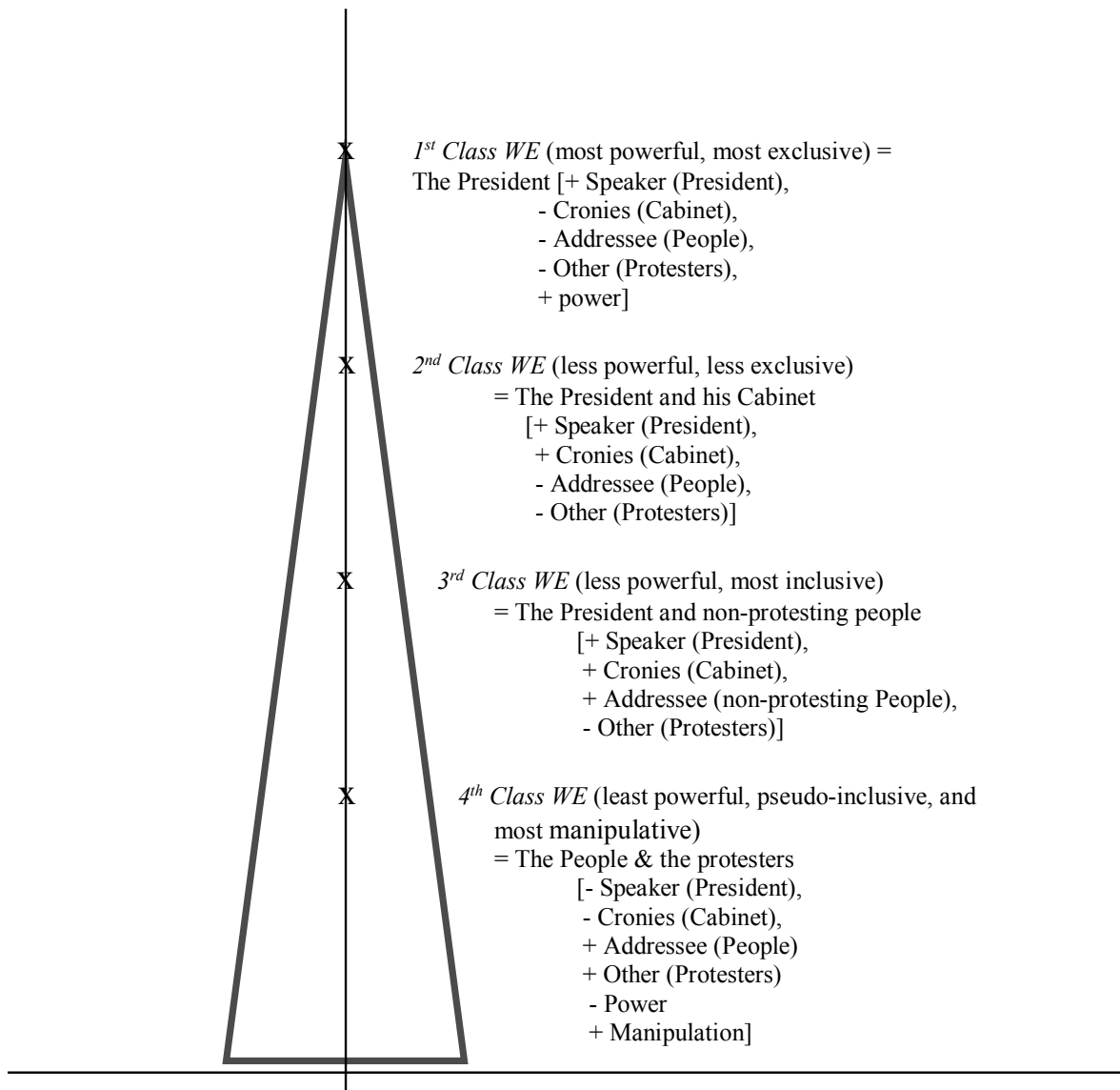


Figure (1): Structure, Referents, and Features of the *Classifying WE*

### 3 DIALECTIC SOCIO-POLITICAL RELATIONS OF POWER

#### 3.1 *First speech of Mubarak*

Mubarak delivered this speech in the evening of 28 January 2011, i.e. three days after the beginning of the protests. Up until the afternoon of the day of delivering this speech, Mubarak and his senior ministers were confident of their full control over the situation (El Manawy 2012: 63, 86–87, 106, 134): they believed that the Egyptian people were ‘a dead body’ that would never revolt (ibid: 17, 68, 74); if they dared to do so, security forces were too strong to allow them to ‘move a single one hair in the body of the regime’ (ibid: 77). Hence, the Minister of Interior Habeeb el Adli announced on 23 January that ‘everything is under control’ (ibid: 64), then repeated on 25 January that ‘the security apparatus is capable of deterring any protests’ because ‘Egypt is not Tunisia’ (ibid: 75, 88), and confirmed in the morning of the day of delivering this speech that he was controlling the streets of Egypt ‘as if he were playing a video game’ (ibid: 138–139).

Contra to these official expectations, around 20.000 Egyptians protested on the Police Day, i.e. 25 January, which they dubbed ‘The Day of Anger’ (BBC News 2011, January 26), repeating the slogan ‘depart’ (Ghonim 2012a: 284, 287–288).

Mubarak, his regime, and a third party dealt with the protests from the perspective of power: they imposed a media blackout (Ghonim 2012a: 293, 299; El Manawy 2012: 79); blocked Twitter, Facebook, and many other online news websites; cut off all communication services, including landline calls, cell phone calls, text messaging, and Internet services across the country (Reuters 2012, January 24; Ghonim 2012a: 287, 299, 301, 325; El-Amrani 2011, January 28; Finley 2011, January 28; El Manawy 2012: 78); kidnapped and detained prominent activists and protesters (AFP 2011, February 9); fired tear gas bombs and rubber bullets intensively to disperse a sit-in, of ten thousand protesters, as estimated by the government, in Tahrir Square after the mid-night of 25 January (Ghonim 2012a: 287–288); clashed violently with hundreds of thousands of peaceful protesters in Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and other cities (Reuters 2012, January 24; Fahim & El-Naggar 2011, January 25; The Daily News Egypt 2011, January 28); created a state of chaos and security disarray by withdrawing the police forces, suddenly and completely, from the streets and police stations (Ghonim 2012a: 342); ordered snipers to shoot protesters dead, military vehicles to run over some protesters in central Cairo, and security forces to bombard peaceful protesters with Molotov bombs (ibid: 327–328, 334); opened many prisons and facilitated the escape of thousands of prisoners who committed acts of looting, robbery, arson, and sabotage (Reuters 2012, January 24; Steinvorth & Windfuhr 2011, January 30); and sent generic text messages to all cell phone numbers, asking the people to evacuate the streets immediately, return to their houses, and protect them from thugs (The Daily News Egypt 2011, January 28). A few hours before delivering this speech, Mubarak ordered the deployment of the army and imposed a curfew from 06pm till 07am (Reuters 2012, January 24; CBS News 2011, January 28; Ghonim 2012a: 329).



### 3.2 *Second speech of Mubarak*

Although the second speech was delivered three days only after the first, that relatively short interval was very eventful that it changed the relations of power drastically in favour of the protesters.

The first speech of Mubarak failed: it did not only disregard the demands of the protesters for dissolving the parliament, dismissing the cabinet, and amending the constitution (El Manawy 2012: 177, 183, 204, 244), but also demonstrated that Mubarak and his regime were 'so stubborn and disrespectful of the people that they could not understand the gravity of the situation' (ibid: 255).

Thousands of people responded to the first speech by joining the protesters; Mubarak replied by extending the curfew twice; the people reacted by taking over the streets (Reuters 2012, January 24) and starting an open sit-in in the heart of Cairo, i.e. Tahrir Square, in defiance of Mubarak and the curfew (Ghonim 2012a: 343). Opposition forces called for a country-wide public strike and a million-man-march to the presidential palace, the Parliament, and the TV headquarters (Ghonim 2012a: 345; Associated Press 2011, January 31; Al Jazeera English 2011, February 10).

Mubarak was not losing power over the street only, but also on other important fronts: Head of the State TV News Sector, Abdul Lateef El Manawy, reports that Mubarak suspected a military coup was underway and blamed the Minister of Defence, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawy, for not deploying the army forces in a timely manner and for not taking decisive measures to stop the protests on their first two days. Mubarak thus ordered State Security to tap the phones of all the members of the Military Council and asked his close man and Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Sami Annan, to truncate his visit to Washington D.C. and return to Cairo immediately (Bumiller 2011, January 28; El Manawy 2012: 223).

Those unfavourable developments forced Mubarak to adopt a carrot-and-stick strategy: He dismissed his Prime Minister, ordered a cabinet reshuffle, and appointed a Vice-President, for the first time in his thirty-year rule (Reuters 2012, January 24). At the same time, he deployed more military forces in Cairo, including helicopters and military fighters over Tahrir Square (ibid); blocked more news websites and stopped the broadcast of Al Jazeera Channel in Egypt; closed all the roads leading to the capital Cairo; and shut down railroads all over the country (Ghonim 2012a: 345). Thousands of prisoners continued to escape and spread chaos and terror (Ghonim 2012a: 342). Those measures proved unsuccessful; hundreds of thousands of people kept joining the protesters in Cairo and other cities, demanding the departure of Mubarak.

On 1 February, i.e. the day of delivering the second speech, protests were massive: AP described them as the largest and most organized since the beginning of the revolution; Reuters estimated the number of the protesters in Tahrir Square by more than 200.000 and the BBC reported that it was between 100.000 and 250.000; and Al Jazeera reported that the number of the protesters in Tahrir Square and central Cairo was more than one million (Reuters; BBC; Al Jazeera Live Blog 2011, February 2). Similar massive protests took place in Alexandria, Suez, and other governorates all over the country (Reuters; BBC; Al Jazeera Live Blog 2011, February 2). By the

time Mubarak delivered this speech, the death toll among the protesters was at least 100 (Reuters 2011, January 29).

### 3.3 *Third speech of Mubarak*

Mubarak survived the attempts of his ouster by his second speech which was ‘cleverly crafted’ and ‘ugly divisive’: it touched ‘a lot of hearts’ by its ‘emotional tone’ (Ghonim 2012a: 392); won the sympathy of ‘millions of Egyptians’, in a manner that surprised even the power centres in the regime itself (El Manawy 2012: 286); and caused a ‘clear rift’ in the front of the protesters in Tahrir Square, convincing some of them to leave the square and call for giving ‘the old man’ one last chance (El Manawy 2012: 292; Ghonim 2012a: 392, 354).

Shortly after the second speech, thousands of pro-Mubarak protesters demonstrated in Mostafa Mahmoud Square in Cairo (Ghonim 2012a: 355; El Manawy 2012: 382). Although some online activists, international correspondents, and senior officials in the regime confirmed that the pro-Mubarak protesters were a mixture of policemen, government workers, and ‘hired muscle’ (CNN 2011, February 2) who were paid 400 Egyptian pounds each (Ghonim 2012a: 356–357) and ‘assigned’ to demonstrate in ‘pre-arranged and coordinated protests organized by the Presidency, the ruling NDP party, and some of its affiliated businessmen’ (El Manawy 2012: 282–284, 301), it cannot be denied that some of those protesters were sincere supporters of Mubarak moved by his emotional second speech.

The positive effects of the second speech did not last long: the government forces, supported by thugs, started attacking the protesters in Alexandria, Port Said, Suez, and other governorates with live ammunition. The most significant incident, which was later called the Camel Battle, took place in Cairo on 2 February 2011: the unarmed sit-ins in Tahrir Square were attacked by more than five hundred thugs, riding camels and horses, and armed with knives, swords, and Molotov cocktails, at around three o’clock in the afternoon. At eight thirty in the evening, Head of the State TV News Sector, Abdul Lateef El Manawy, was ‘ordered’ to switch off the live broadcast cameras in Tahrir Square ‘because the picture is going to be ugly’ (El Manawy 2012: 308); after mid-night, ‘snipers, stationed on the bridge, started targeting the protesters and firing live ammunition at them’ (Ghonim 2012a: 359). The clashes continued until the morning of the following day, without interference from the police or the army forces which were surrounding the Square (CNN 2011, February 2; AP 2011, February 2; RT 2011, February 2; Ackerman 2011, February 2; Owen 2012; Ghonim 2012a: 356–357; Gelvin 2015: 53).

On the following day, the protesters in Tahrir Square displayed the ID cards of the attackers they had managed to capture, confirmed that they were police officers and members of the ruling NDP party, and accused the police and NDP of orchestrating the Camel Battle by clothing police officers in plain clothes, backing them with thugs, and admitting them into the Square to attack the protesters (CNN 2011, February 2; Ghonim 2012a: 356). The death toll among the protesters rose to more than three-hundred (Human Rights Watch 2011, February 8; Williams 2011, February 1; South African Press Association (via News24) 2011, February 1).

It was widely believed that Mubarak, his son Gamal, or their supporters were responsible for the Camel Battle, until the March 2018 presidential elections campaign, when Mubarak's Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Sami Anan was detained on 23 January after expressing his intention to run against the incumbent Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in the presidential elections. Anan's Counsellor, Judge Hisham Genena, a former lawyer, police officer, prosecutor, and head of the Central Auditing Organization, confirmed in an interview with HuffPost Arabic that he feared for Anan's life and threatened that if Anan was subjected to bad treatment or torture, he would release 'dangerous top secret' files, kept outside the country, that would 'implicate' current 'government leaders' ([The Telegraph 2018, February 13](#)) who were involved 'in the deadly events that have unfolded in Egypt since 2011' ([Middle East Eye 2018, February 13](#)). Genena himself survived an 'assassination attempt' with serious injuries on 27 January, then was detained on 13 February 2018 (*ibid.*).

The Camel Battle signalled the end of Mubarak regime, in spite of the fact that the official announcement of that end came nine days later ([El Manawy 2012: 9](#)). More than a million Egyptians responded to the Camel Battle by joining the sit-ins in Tahrir Square in a million-man-march on 4 February, which they called the 'Friday of Departure', demanding Mubarak to step down immediately ([Press TV 2011, February 2](#); [Bodenner 2011, February 4](#)).

The numbers of protesters in Tahrir Square kept increasing; the areas they were sitting in expanded to include the TV building, Abdeen presidential palace, the streets surrounding the two chambers of parliament, and the Cabinet; and their demands rose to the dissolution of the cabinet and the two chambers of parliament, in addition to the immediate departure of Mubarak. More than 20.000 workers, across the country, staged general strikes in solidarity with the protesters ([Muir 2011, February 8](#); [AFP 2011, February 9](#); [VOA News 2011, February 9](#); [Al Jazeera English 2011, February 10](#)), who called for a million-man-march to the presidential palace, on 11 February, in order to force Mubarak out of power ([Ghonim 2012a: 433](#)).

Mubarak continued to lose power over the military. El Manawy reports that the stance adopted by the military was baffling not only ordinary people but also many officials in the regime itself: the armed forces announced, from the beginning of the protests, that they were protecting the protesters; nevertheless, they did not take any firm measures to stop the clashes between the protesters and the police. That puzzle was however solved, El Manawy argues, after the convention of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) in the absence of its Supreme Commander, i.e. Mubarak, on 09 February; the announcement of Communiqué Number 1, on 10 February; and the many video-taped visits of the Minister of Defence to the protesters in Tahrir Square, and his friendly talks and hand-shakes with them (2012: 337, 338–339, 389, 398). Those manoeuvres made it clear to all political forces that the 'contradictions' in the behaviour of the armed forces and the intelligence were due to the fact that 'their real aim was not to protect the protesters as much as to intensify the pressure on Mubarak and force him to resign, hence abort his project of bequeathing presidency to his son Gamal' (*ibid.*: 399–400).

Mubarak was thus forced to sacrifice the heads of higher senior officials in his regime, in order to keep his own head safe: He dismissed his son Gamal from his two top positions in the ruling NDP party; his loyal ex-Minister of Media, Safwat el Shereef, from the general secretariat of the ruling NDP; his Minister of State for Legal Affairs, Mufeed Shehab; and his Presidential Chief-of-Staff Zakarya Azmy (Ahrām Online 2011, February 5; El-Hennawy 2011, February 5). Shehab and Azmy were publicly known as the ‘Private Legal Tailor’ of Mubarak and the Crocodile, respectively.

In an attempt to further appease the protesters, Mubarak did not only dismiss the backbone of his regime, i.e. the Minister of Interior, Habeeb el Adli, but also charged him with causing breakdown in public order, firing live ammunition at the protesters, releasing prisoners (Reuters 2011, January 29), and masterminding the bombing of the Two Saints Church in Alexandria, which resulted in killing twenty-four Egyptian Copts and injuring ninety others (Copts United 2011; Ismail 2011, February 7).

That last accusation corroborated the claims that Mubarak divided the Egyptian people and created a ‘sectarian congestion’ between Muslims and Christians in the interest of the survival of his regime (Qandil 2008: 6). Many Egyptians considered that accusation an indictment of Mubarak himself and of his whole regime, because el-Adli was unlikely to act without the permission of Mubarak. Furthermore, the specifics of the charge of bombing the Two Saints Church were shocking: Interrogations referred to leaked reports, based on UK intelligence services, that el-Adli had built up ‘a special security system that was managed by 22 officers and that employed a number of former radical Islamists, drug dealers and some security firms to carry out acts of sabotage around the country in case the regime was under threat to collapse’, in order to ‘gain increased western support for the regime’ (Ismail 2011, February 7). The Coptic Church Attorney, Joseph Malak, accused el-Adli of criminal responsibility and collusion on more than one ground: the security forces guarding the church were withdrawn nearly one hour before the blast; the Prosecutor General froze investigations into the case and imposed a media blackout on it; no one was formally charged in that case; and although all the twenty arrested Muslim suspects were exonerated by the Prosecution, they were not released and had been held as ‘political detainees’ (Copts United 2011).

#### 4 DEICTICS AND ANAPHORS OF MUBARAK

Mubarak responded to the rising power of the protesters, as chronicled in the previous section, by ceding his power strategically; this was reflected in the deictic and anaphoric pronouns he employed, the pragmatic functions he assigned them, and the number of times he repeated them.

First, when Mubarak was still powerful, i.e. in his first speech, he employed the first-person singular pronoun *I*, in thirty-one instances, to perform three functions: representing himself positively, marking his power, and issuing indirect threats. When he became less powerful, i.e. by the time he delivered the second speech, Mubarak dropped the threatening function completely, decreased the number of

the instances that marked his power, assigned *I* the two new functions of stirring the pity of the people and instructing the cabinet to serve them, and retained the function of representing himself positively.

In the third speech, Mubarak was forced by the looming success of the revolution to double the frequency of *I* from thirty-nine in the second speech to seventy-seven in the third; to retain the function of positive-self representation and abandon all the other functions he had assigned the pronoun in the previous two speeches; and to assign the pronoun five new functions that contradicted its previous ones: employing his executive powers to meet the demands of the protesters, in sixteen instances; flattering the protesters, in seven instances; entreating the people indirectly, in six instances; assuming the emotionally, morally, and religiously loaded role of the old father of the protesters, in five instances; and ceding his power by excluding himself altogether from the struggle over power and denying to have any role to play in it, in one instance.

Mubarak thus manipulated the frequency of the deictic pronoun *I* and the functions it performed according to the level of power he had at the time of delivering every speech: He marked his power and threatened the people when he was powerful, and twisted, reversed, and dropped those functions when he lost power. The only one function Mubarak allowed *I* to retain throughout the three speeches was positive-self representation, a deictic tactic he drew heavily upon in order to legitimize himself.

Second, Mubarak made the anaphoric third-person singular pronoun *HE* referentially synonymous with the deictic first-person singular pronoun *I* by employing the former to refer to himself twice in the first speech, thrice in the second, and thrice in the third. In the first speech, Mubarak referred to himself in the third-person in order to claim the moral authority of the leader chosen by fate to rule Egypt and the Egyptians. In the second speech, he reversed that function by assigning *HE* the three new functions of ceding his power, assuming the role of the civil servant, and saving the face of Mubarak-the-President when Mubarak-the-man appealed to the pity of the people and requested to be treated like any ordinary Egyptian man who wanted no more than being allowed to die on the soil of his country. In the third speech, Mubarak employed *HE* to assume the role of the old father who was pained by the ill-treatment of his ingrate sons and daughters, a role that is not only emotionally loaded, but also one that religiously dictates the immediate obedience (surrender) of those sons and daughters (protesters).

Mubarak thus manipulated the semantic content, anaphoric referent, and pragmatic functions of the third-person singular pronoun *HE* in order to assume moral authority, relinquish it, then appeal to the pity and religion of the people, according to the level of power he had at the time of delivering every speech.

Third, Mubarak employed the 'most problematic pronoun', i.e. *WE*, in a revealing manner. In terms of the grand *First Class WE*, which encoded him exclusively, Mubarak employed it in the first speech to mark his executive and legal powers as the President. In the second speech, he mitigated that powerful function to be anchoring his moral and spiritual authorities. In the third speech, he further

softened the function to be representing himself as the old father whose only one reason for staying in power was to protect his family (country).

Mubarak thus manipulated the grand *First Class WE* to suit the persona he was impersonating: the powerful President, the spiritual leader, then the protective old father.

The *Second Class WE*, which encoded Mubarak and his cabinet and combined them in the same deictic field, to the exclusion of the people, was employed in four instances in the first speech, to establish a bond among Mubarak, his government, and his police apparatus and represent them as a harmonious body that had been working hard in the best interest of the people. Mubarak was forced by the continuous collapse of his power, at the time of delivering the second and third speeches, to abandon the *Second Class WE* completely, in both speeches, in an attempt to sever any relation between himself and his cabinet and police, and accuse them of killing the protesters and causing the security disarray.

The *Third Class WE*, which is supposed to be the most bonding class of *WE*, as it assimilates the speaker into the addressee, was employed by Mubarak in the first speech to perform the two principal functions of polarizing the people into good-us and bad-them and assimilating Mubarak into the good-us pole. With the rise of the power of the protesters and the failure of the first speech to divide them, Mubarak assigned the *Third Class WE* four new functions in the second speech: endearing himself to the protesters, ceding his presidential power, saving his presidential face, and holding the people co-responsible for exiting the crisis. In the third speech, Mubarak increased the frequency of the *Third Class WE* to forty-one instances, compared to eight in the second speech, in an attempt to establish a bond with the increasingly powerful protesters and people.

Mubarak thus manipulated the *Third Class WE* according to the level of power he had: he employed it to polarize the people, then decreased the frequency of its polarizing instances; used it to establish a bond with the people, by increasing the frequency of its bonding instances, then assigned it completely new functions and widened the scope of its semantic content to include not only the people but also his political opponents.

Mubarak employed the *Fourth Class WE*, which semantically assimilates the speaker into the addressee and pragmatically encodes the addressee only, in six instances in his first speech, in order to accuse the protesters and all the Egyptian people indirectly. In the second and third speeches, Mubarak was forced by the changing relations of power to abandon the *Fourth Class WE* completely, because he was in no position to accuse the people or the protesters, even indirectly.

Finally, the second-person singular pronoun *YOU* was used by Mubarak only twice in his first speech, in order to mark his legal power. In the second speech, he assigned the pronoun the third function of infusing fear in the people, in order to justify the two other functions of marking his legal and spiritual powers.

In the third speech, the looming success of the revolution forced Mubarak to not only increase the frequency of *YOU* to sixteen instances, but also to change both the referent and function of the pronoun. All the sixteen instances of *YOU*, in the third speech, encoded the protesters, not the supporters of Mubarak as was the case

in the previous two speeches. *YOU* was also assigned, in the third speech, the brand new single function of flattering the protesters excessively, with no marking of any sort of power. That diametric reversal in the reference, frequency, and function of *YOU* reflected a parallel diametric reversal in the relations of power: Mubarak was forced in this speech to acknowledge the spatial-temporal existence of the protesters as an important player worthy of acknowledgement, repeated direct address, and excessive praise.

In terms of the systems of address Mubarak employed, he addressed the people with a vocative that appealed to his legal power, anchored his authority, and established his superiority, i.e. 'Brother citizens', in the first speech. He then mitigated the sharpness of that appeal by preceding it with the particle 'O' which denotes personal closeness in Arabic. In the third speech, the looming success of the revolution forced Mubarak to not only single the protesters out for the endearing vocative 'the sons, male and female youths of Egypt', but also to call them the 'symbol' and 'pride' of Egypt, not the traitors they were in the first two speeches.

## 5 DEICTIC AND ANAPHORIC INCONSISTENCY

Mubarak employed *person deixis* and *anaphora* inconsistently; the more he lost power, the more pronominally inconsistent he became.

In the first speech, he assimilated himself into the people in thirty-two instances, by using the *Third Class WE* and the *Fourth Class WE*; nevertheless, he could not maintain that bonding throughout the speech and distanced himself from all the Egyptian people, in thirteen instances, and from the protesters, in seven, by referencing both of them with the obviative *THEY*. In a similar vein, he detached himself from Egypt, 'its people', and their sons in sixteen instances. Mubarak thus established a bond with the Egyptian people in thirty-two instances and detached himself from them in thirty-six, leaving the people wondering which of the two stances was his genuine one.

In the second speech, the deictic inconsistencies of Mubarak became clearer, at the levels of the utterance and the sentence. Not only did Mubarak start an utterance with a bonding *Third Class WE*, in the first sentence, then switched to the absenting *THEY* or the detaching *ITS*, in the second, but he also switched among the three pronouns within the same sentence, while indexing the same referent. For example, he assimilated himself into the protesters, by using the *Third Class WE*; distanced himself from their 'message', by using the obviative *THEY*; polarized them into well-intentioned protesters and traitors, by using *THEY* again; then detached himself from both poles, by using *ITS*, all within the same sentence.

Mubarak was inconsistent not only in his switching among different pronouns, but also in his employment of the same pronoun to encode different referents. For example, he first employed the obviative *THEY*, which is called in Arabic the Pronoun of the Absent, to refer to his 'unpatriotic' political opponents who 'exploited' the protesters, in two instances; to the protesters themselves, in five instances; and to all the Egyptian people, in nineteen instances, in a manner suggesting that he was holding his political opponents, the protesters, and all the Egyptian people

at the same distance. That detachment was further reinforced by the possessive pronoun *ITS*, which he employed in eleven instances to refer to 'Egypt and its people' and 'Egypt and its sons', denoting that those Egyptian people and their sons were detached from him.

Moreover, Mubarak assimilated himself into the protesters in one instance, detached himself from them in five, bonded with the Egyptian people in seven instances, and detached himself from them in forty. Some conceptual consistencies can be sketched out of those pronominal inconsistencies: Mubarak distanced himself from the Egyptian people when he talked about the dangerous consequences of the protests, implicating that he was immune to those consequences; separated himself from the Egyptian people when he talked about 'their' fear of the future, implicating that he was not afraid; and assimilated himself into the Egyptian people on no specific grounds, but detached himself from them, in the same sentences, when he talked about 'their rights', 'their freedoms', 'their dignity', 'their interests', 'their demands', 'their aspirations', and 'their future', implicating that he had rights, freedoms, dignity, interests, demands, aspirations, and future different from those of the people.

That inconsistent employment of the *Third Class WE*, *ITS*, and *THEY*, which detached Mubarak from the protesters in five instances and from all the Egyptian people in forty, suggested that the disconnect between Mubarak and the Egyptian people was wider and deeper than that between him and the protesters.

In the third speech, Mubarak was more deictically and anaphorically inconsistent in his employment of the *Third Class WE*, *THEY*, and *ITS* to encode the same referents. Although he employed the *Third Class WE*, in forty-one instances, to assimilate himself into the people, he detached himself from them in eleven instances, within the same sentences and phrases. He assimilated himself into the people when he talked about 'our economy' (thrice), 'our armed forces', 'our international reputation', 'our society', 'our citizens', and 'our existence'; he detached himself from the people when he talked about 'their youth' (thrice), 'their killed and injured protesters', 'their demands', the Egyptian street, and the Egyptian Muslims and Christians.

On the higher levels of the utterance and the speech, Mubarak employed the distancing *THEY* to refer to the perpetrators who killed the protesters, in three instances; the killed protesters, in four instances; and the Egyptian people, in one instance. His usage of the same absencing and detaching pronoun to reference the killer, the victim, and all the people resulted in deictic inconsistency, which in turn casted doubts on the sincerity of his utterances.

Finally, Mubarak employed *ITS* in sixteen instances, none of them was successful: they further detached him from 'Egypt and its people' (six times), 'Egypt' (twice), 'the Egyptians' (twice), 'its current crisis' (twice), 'its identity', 'its history', 'its honour', 'its present', and 'its sons' and their demands and future (four times).

Those deictic and anaphoric decisions suggested that Mubarak was not detached from the protesters only, but also from Egypt and the Egyptians, an argument corroborated by the incident reported by El Manawy that Mubarak and his regime were living in a world so different from that of the Egyptian people (2012: 47, 273,



387–388) to the extent that his son Gamal hired two famous American and British companies, specializing in public relations and media, to advise him on how to deal with the protests in Egypt (ibid: 142–143).

## 6 COGNITIVE PROCESSING

The 'semantic deficiency' of deictic expressions, i.e. the insufficiency of their descriptive content and semantic conditions to identify a referent, forces a pragmatic resolution, first in the discourse and failing that in the spatio-temporal circumstances of the speech event (Levinson 2003: 10). That built-in semantic vacuity as well as the three-level cognitive processing efforts consumed in failing to identify a referent semantically, then in attempting to resolve it pragmatically render deictic expressions cognitively taxing.

Moreover, deictic expressions involve the embedding of existential, subjective, context-dependent, deictic systems in symbolic, objective, context-independent, descriptive systems, a process that results in a hybrid system that cannot be reduced to either. The decoding, then interpretation, of that mediated, complex, emergent system are costly in terms of the cognitive processing efforts they consume: the deictic meaning of the utterance must be translated into deicticless absolute coordinates, by first mapping contexts into the proposition, then casting the contextualized proposition in a non-indexical *lingua mentalis* that expresses the full propositional content of the utterance and makes sense of it. Given that deictics have attentional, intentional, and subjective features that resist any cashing out of their content in objective descriptions, the developed metalanguage will fail to depict the deictic content of the original deictic expression, in spite of the cognitive efforts invested in generating it (Levinson 2003: 4–5, 19).

## 7 CONCLUSION

This paper problematized how power was pronominally expressed and suppressed in the last three speeches of ousted president Mubarak, according to the socio-political exigencies of the Egyptian Arab Spring revolution.

Within this context, I have attempted to fill in the research gap identified by Levinson (1983, 2003), in the theory and methodology of *person deixis*, by successfully applying the new concept of *Classifying WE* which accounts pragmatically for the problematic behaviour of the deictic pronoun *WE*.

Analysis demonstrated that Mubarak reinforced, twisted, dropped, and (or) reversed the semantic contents, pragmatic functions, and frequencies of the pronouns he employed according to the level of power he had at the time of delivering every speech. The more Mubarak lost power, the more he abandoned the pronouns that marked his legal, presidential, constitutional, and executive powers; the more he adopted the pronouns that foregrounded his human, moral, and spiritual personae; the more he decreased the frequency of the pronouns that threatened and (or) criticised the people; and the more he increased the frequency of the pronouns that flattered them and addressed them endearingly.

Mubarak aimed at performing four principal strategic functions: dividing the people into good people and bad protesters; further dividing the protesters into well-intentioned protesters and traitors; delegitimizing all his opponents; and legitimizing himself legally, constitutionally, professionally, spiritually, and morally.

The most salient characteristic of the pronominal system employed by Mubarak is inconsistency, at the levels of the pronoun, the referent, the phrase, the sentence, and the pragmatic function. Mubarak used the same pronouns to encode more than one referent, encoded the same referents with more than one pronoun, assimilated himself to the people in seventy-nine instances, and detached himself from them in one hundred and eleven instances. Those inconsistencies casted doubts on the truth value and sincerity of the speech acts of Mubarak, resulted in the failure of the pronominal system to perform the strategic functions he assigned it, and led to the failure of the speeches and their ultimate rejection by the protesters and the people.

In conclusion, Mubarak did not only employ a linguistic feature characterised by being semantically deficient, pragmatically complex, and cognitively taxing, i.e. deictics, but also manipulated its content, functions, and frequency in order to achieve his principal goal of dividing the people and maintaining his own power. Van Dijk argues that exercising power in the interest of the powerful and against that of the powerless is 'power abuse' and the discourse used to reproduce it is ideological and manipulative (2006: 360). The pronominal system employed by Mubarak was thus ideological and manipulative.

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