Creating Stereotypes and Negatives Indexes of the Nubian Language in Egypt

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For generations, Nubians (both Fadija and Kunuz) have been stigmatized and ridiculed in the Egyptian media. Nubian speakers of the Fadija and Mattoki vernaculars in Egypt are associated with unintelligible or incompetent Arabic, dark skinned people, working lower-class jobs, and so on. Among the negative indexes used in Egyptian media to refer to Nubians are *barbari* 'barbarian,' *bijurtˤun* 'speaking gibberish,' or *bijtkalem ʕarabi mekasar* 'speaking broken Arabic.' These pejorative and prevalent images are extensively emphasized by the media. These constant negative indexes have influenced some Nubians to speak Arabic with their children to avoid mockery, prejudice, and discrimination. In spite of the stigmatized portrays, there are Nubian speakers that have a positive attitude to learn their mother tongues to preserve their languages, identities, and ideologies. This study examines data from the media, including films and soap operas, to explore the indexical attitudes towards Nubians established in these media discourse. To investigate the metalinguistic discourse of Nubians in the media, I utilize the indexicality theory. More specifically, I demonstrate different linguistic elements that are accompanied by noticeable patterns such as dress code, work type, skin color, and character traits. Media makers use these linguistic resources to create and spread indirect negative racial and social indexes by alluding to linguistic and non-linguistic attributions that are featured in their produced films or soap operas. The need of fluency in Arabic that carries power and prestige on several domains such as education, religion, and public media cannot be denied. However, public awareness and counterstereotypes are strongly needed among Egyptians, Nubians and non-Nubians, to construct positive stances and provide authentic representations of the Nubian language and culture.