

*Received 13 August 2020.*

*Accepted 5 December 2020.*

*Published 30 January 2023.*

DOI: 10.1344/DIALECTOLOGIA2023.30.1

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE RURAL/URBAN OPPOSITION IN ARABIC SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Magdalena AL-SAYADI \*

Kazimierz Wielki University

aylulah@ukw.edu.pl

ORCID 0000-0002-4272-9268

### Abstract

Linguistic diversity of the Arab world presents diglossic features of Modern Standard Arabic and dialects. This research is focused on the interference of linguistic varieties related to rural and urban society. The language of urban centers in majority of Arabic countries is related with prestige and prosperity. Bidialectal switch between language codes is resulted by such criteria as migration, age, gender and education level. Big urban centers provide many institutions, which are attractive for citizens from rural areas, willing to develop educational level or good job opportunities. Nevertheless, main issue refers to the problem of social identity and its impact on the language change. Distinct community division of Arabic countries (tribal) makes dialectal diversity more complex.

**Keywords:** codeswitching, dialects of Arabic, rural and urban, colloquial Arabic, diglossia

### L'APARICIÓ DE L'OPOSICIÓ RURAL/URBÀ EN LA LLENGUA PARLADA ÀRAB

#### Resum

La diversitat lingüística en el món àrab presenta trets diglòssics entre l'àrab estàndard modern i els dialectes. Aquesta investigació se centra en la interferència entre varietats lingüístiques relacionades amb la societat rural i la urbana. L'idioma dels centres urbans a la majoria dels països àrabs està relacionat amb el prestigi i la prosperitat. El canvi bidialectal entre els codis lingüístics es deu a criteris com ara la migració, l'edat, el sexe i el nivell educatiu. Els grans centres urbans tenen moltes institucions que atrauen els ciutadans de les zones rurals, els quals estan disposats a desenvolupar el nivell educatiu o obtenir bones oportunitats laborals. Tot i això, el tema principal incideix en el problema de la identitat social i el seu impacte en el canvi lingüístic. La divisió comunitària diferent dels països àrabs (tribals) fa que la diversitat dialectal sigui més complexa.

---

\* Chodkiewicza 30 St. 85-064 Bydgoszcz.

© Author(s)



**Paraules clau:** canvi de codi, dialectes de l'àrab, rural i urbà, àrab col·loquial, diglòssia

## LA APARICIÓN DE LA OPOSICIÓN RURAL/URBANO EN LA LENGUA HABLADA ÁRABE

### Resumen

La diversidad lingüística en el mundo árabe presenta rasgos diglóticos entre el árabe estándar moderno y los dialectos. Esta investigación se centra en la interferencia entre variedades lingüísticas relacionadas con la sociedad rural y la urbana. El idioma de los centros urbanos en la mayoría de los países árabes está relacionado con el prestigio y la prosperidad. El cambio bidialectal entre los códigos lingüísticos se debe a criterios como la migración, la edad, el sexo y el nivel educativo. Los grandes centros urbanos tienen muchas instituciones que atraen a los ciudadanos de las zonas rurales, que están dispuestos a desarrollar un nivel educativo o a tener buenas oportunidades laborales. Sin embargo, el tema principal incide en el problema de la identidad social y su impacto en el cambio lingüístico. La división comunitaria distinta de los países árabes (tribales) hace que la diversidad dialectal sea más compleja.

**Palabras clave:** cambio de código, dialectos del árabe, rural y urbano, árabe coloquial, diglosia

### 1. Introduction

Diglossia in Arabic language today is mainly associated with Modern Standard Arabic (*fuṣḥā*) and various dialectal forms. Modern Standard Arabic is a contemporary formal variety, descended from Standard Arabic, which is the language of the Quran and Arabic literature. In Arab world, books, newspapers and media broadcasting<sup>1</sup> is presented in formal variety. However, there is a distinct difference between multiple dialectal forms, thus the necessity to analyze mixing language codes within rural and urban colloquial Arabic. The division for the city and the village is characteristic especially when it comes to dialects. These two settlement units differ from each other substantially. The village is associated with quiet, less built-up area, usually located close to nature. Due to small number of inhabitants, rural community know each other well and take care about family relations. The main job of rural community is agriculture. While in urban environment, the noise comes from the streets, with tall and densely spaced buildings and busy residents, who are indifferent to each other. What impact have these factors on dialects? Are urban dialects more positively

---

<sup>1</sup> The language of media usually diverges from standard language variety, since not every interlocutor uses pure formal language.

evaluated than countryside varieties? What are the motivations of using specific linguistic variety?

According to Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi (2016: 1) the contrast between city and countryside is visible not only in vocabulary, but also in the social attitudes of communication.<sup>2</sup> Many linguists concentrate their research exclusively on the urban dialects. The justification for this situation is that cities are usually more accessible. By studying the dialect in the city, you can easily listen to utterances, even on the street, in restaurants, on the bazaars or at any other place of public use. Britain (2009: 225) believes that linguistic research has focused on large urban areas because of the large cultural diversity. City, in contrast to the village, is identified with progressiveness, prosperity and easy access to work. These are the reasons that often encourage both rural population and foreigners to settle in the cities. This phenomenon contributes to the development of multiculturalism, which also affects the multilingualism of the city. It is worth mentioning here the division of languages into sedentary and nomadic. Language used by sedentary population include the city and the countryside, while the nomadic dialects are used by the Bedouins. In Arab countries, often instead of urban dialect, the Bedouin dialects are more significant (Bassiouney 2009: 19). In Arab world Bedouin (*badāwī*) dialects are associated with masculinity.

## **2. Geographical diversity of the language use**

Usually, the leading language of each Arabic country is the dialect of capital city, e.g. Egypt (Cairene dialect), Yemen (Sanani dialect), Syria (Damascene dialect). Big urban centers are related to prestige and prosperity. It is also more convenient to study a language of a big city, which is easily accessible. Insufficient linguistic research can be the consequence of unstable political situation in the region of Arab countries such as Syria, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Palestine and Iraq. Rural and urban dichotomy

---

<sup>2</sup> Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi mention the use of related lexical items, i.e., 'urbain', 'citadin' or 'rural' which are rather neutral definitions and 'paysan', which has negative connotations.

presents many diverse aspects of life, including living conditions, historical background, medical treatment access, work opportunities etc. Anthropological criterion refers to the historical settlements of Bedouins and sedentary people (Bassiouney 2009: 19). Sedentary dialects can be divided into urban and rural varieties. According to Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi (2016), in most varieties of spoken Arabic, there is no standard equivalent for 'rural' or 'countryside' language. "An equivalent for 'urban' and 'town/city' is extant and derived directly from a Classical Arabic cognate" (Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi 2016: 148).<sup>3</sup> The communicative division for 'rural' and 'urban' probably had arisen from contact with Western colonizers (Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi 2016: 1). Migration, age, gender and education level can also affect word-formation and lexical variety. According to Heller (1988, 1992), language manner cannot be fully understood without examining the historical and social dimensions of the location in which it occurs. She also claims that code switching is only effective where interlocutors consider the significance of the pool of communicative resources from which it is drawn (Heller 1988: 1).

Process of migration depends on historical and social settings. Number of studies indicate that Bedouin and rural speakers adopt urban dialect features which are often associated with "prestige", "beauty", "sophistication" and "femininity" of the urban dialects (Albirini 2016: 249). Language attitude is remarkable feature of Arabic nation. Usually, sedentary speakers are convinced about the significance of their dialect, however in some circumstances they admit the Bedouin dialects are more prestigious (Ferguson 1968: 379). According to Nader (1962: 24), the definition of prestige should be more precise in particular cases. She also noticed that her informants would defend their dialects if they were outside their towns, as a form of loyalty. In many cases, speakers of provincial vernaculars usually adapt themselves to capital city dialect, since there are many incomprehensible words in the rural variety. Middle Eastern communities have experienced sudden urbanization processes, which affected the settlement in the cities. According to Haeri (1997), in Cairo social class correlates with linguistic variation, blurring the divergences of the ethnic or regional origin. Another

---

<sup>3</sup> Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi note that in the past there was no urgent need to rise the idea of 'rurality' or other concepts connected with communicative structure.

content is creating social networks by linguistic behavior. Social identity is the essential issue, especially in the Arab world. It is worth to mention, due to economic and social reasons, the discrepancy of sedentary and Bedouin dialects is obliterated (Tyler 2014: 24). Bedouin dialects have certain features such as velar /g/ — reflex of uvular /q/, interdental consonants and feminine forms in plural. The contrast between nomadic and sedentary varieties is identified with many linguistic features, for instance Bedouin dialects are claimed to be more archaic (Cuvalay 1997: 12). However, Cadora (1989, 1992) opposes to the mentioned statement by the affirmation that Bedouin dialects were more innovative than sedentary in the pre-Islamic period. The gradual change was initiated by the end of this period especially with urbanization process. According to Miller (2004: 180), urban vernaculars have many features related to koineization, simplification and innovation, while Bedouin dialects are claimed to be conservative and are congenial with classical Arabic.

The contractual phenomena resulted from migration had influenced the ecological structure. Bedouin settlements were created near villages, and rural settlements were agglomerated near urban centers. Linguistic transformation for example from rural into urban forms are known as *ecolinguistic rules*.<sup>4</sup> Contact between nomadic and sedentary tribes was eased by wars, marriages, trade caravans and religious pilgrimages. Therefore, the linguistic boundaries were not the same as geographical (Cadora 1992: 3). Each tribe should be investigated by both structural and ecological division (Cadora 1992: 3). In contrast the traditional dialectology concentrates on geographical coverage than levels of particular locality (Britain 2009: 226). Miller (2004: 180) argues that language change is not directed from dialects to formal language, but also from colloquial language to urban or regional standard. Each Arabic urban dialect cannot be analyzed in isolation without sociolinguistic background, like status, structure and evolution.

Many cities went under bedounization process, which was followed by population movements and the settlement of Bedouin/rural communities in towns.

---

<sup>4</sup> According to Sibata (1978-1979: 337), “human interaction in relation to speech variation, especially taken in the context of being part of the process of urbanization in human change, may prove to be untapped gold mine of sociolinguistic understanding and of theoretical insights in language sciences”.

Historical linguistic layers in the same city had been brought out in cities with religious varieties (Miller 2004: 182). In some cases, religious minorities – Christian or Jewish – were using old urban dialects, while Muslims, especially men, were speaking more bedouinized and koineized dialect.<sup>5</sup> The attrition of old-urban dialects, as well as the processes of bedouinization/koineization has historical layers and indicate the changes of population in political contexts. The city culture interrelated with particular urban groups, such as religious minorities or women, can be describes as ‘new social forces’, which are subjected to some degrees of exclusion or segregation in public spaces (Miller 2004: 185). Religious minorities speak more or less the same urban/sedentary dialects (Miller 2004: 185).<sup>6</sup>

Since industry gained more importance over agriculture, rural varieties tend to be marginalized. Urban vernaculars are identified more prestigious. In Arabic society there are many different connotations of people equated with agriculture, like *fallāḥ* ‘person practicing agriculture’ (Egypt), *dayṣaji* ‘person living on a farm’ (Syria). On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia the nomadic way of life was predominant, so the word *badawiy* ‘Bedouin’ is rather evaluated positively and not related with rurality, which is usually stigmatized. However, the Saudi term for ‘rural’ is *laḥaji* from *laḥaj*, a tribe from Yemen, which migrated to Saudi Arabia (Ech-Charfi & Azzouzi 2016: 3). In Yemen ‘people who live in cities’ are called *al-ḥaḍar* الحضرة ‘civilized’ or *al-madaniīn* المدنيون ‘urban’, while *al-garawīn* القرويين ‘villagers’ or *al-gabā’il* القبائل ‘tribals’ are those living in country sides.

Britain (2009) criticizes the attitude of many linguists who have studied exclusively urban dialects with the following statement: “rural areas are not free from mobility and contact, the effects of language contacts both rural and urban areas are typologically the same” (Britain 2009: 238). Nowadays this argument seems to be true, albeit if such study would be carried out 20 years ago, it would not be acceptable. Technological developments of the last two decades caused that the ubiquity of

<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon occurred in Baghdad and in some North African cities (Tripoli, Algiers). Cf. Abu Haidar (1991), Blanc (1964), Cantineau (1939) and Cohen (1977).

<sup>6</sup> According to Blanc (1964), the cities of Greater Syria, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula and Upper Iraq (Mosul) are distinguished by minor religious contradistinction and the difference is reported at the lexical level.

Internet networks and smartphones in rural areas are not surprising. However, the choice of large agglomerations for the research of dialects is not accidental. Urban conditions conducive to networking and thus carrying out a more detailed analysis of language. Calvet (1994) believes that urban multilingualism and mixing of dialects can spread to other regions of the country. Another reason of research, mainly concentrated over urban dialects may be, in the case of Arabic dialects, is their rapid urbanization in the second half of the twentieth century. The regaining of independence had an impact on population growth, industrialization and migration. The sudden urbanization of Arab countries has enabled deep research on urban dialects (Miller 2007: 8). Among other things, this is the main reason that linguists often focused their research on large metropolitan areas. However, analysis of the dialects of rural areas is just as important as in the case of urban dialects because *"no matter how small and seemingly homogenous communities are, the differences of social status play a crucial role in shaping differences in dialect and never can be fully omitted"* (Wolfram, Hazen & Schilling-Estes 1999: 32). Another important issue are origins of these linguistic varieties. For instance, in rural population story telling played a significant role and was the easiest way to get people to speak (Behnstedt 2013: 313).<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Code switching**

Cognitive aspect of code switching examines mechanisms of language acquisition and production. Gardner-Chloros (2009) is deliberating over a question of "what a language is, in the mouth and mind of a code-switching speaker"? Another issue is that code switching can be divided into conscious and unconscious linguistic modification. Such features are investigated by the psycholinguistic approach.

Gumperz (1982: 59) distinguished code switching as "borrowing which introduces single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one variety into the other".

---

<sup>7</sup> Story telling was usually based on fairy tales and folk poetry of old times.

Expressive behavior of a linguistic change includes social and stylistic language variation (cf. Labov 1972: 271). For the comprehensive research in the field of code switching some aspects should be considered, such as:

- origin of linguistic variations
- spread and propagation of linguistic changes
- regularity of linguistic change (Labov 1972: 1)

Multilingual model of certain domains, presented by Fishman (1971: 437), constitutes to contexts which refers to different parameters: interlocutors, occasion and topics. The use of particular variety is also dependent on age. Here I present the example of young woman,<sup>8</sup> in the age of 26, who was born in Ṣanʿāʾ (capital of Yemen), but her family comes from little village of Xubān region (central Yemen). Living in Ṣanʿāʾ she admits using a variety, which is a mix of Ṣanʿānī and Xubānī. At home, the utterances with her mother or siblings are strictly Xubānī. However, the use of Ṣanʿānī is more often, since Xubānī is not well understood by the citizens of the capital. She also admitted, the lack of understanding of several words from Xubānī. She was born in the capital and some occasional and antediluvian words, such as: *gurṣah* فُرْجَة 'unripe fruits' or *masab* مَسَب 'skin of cow or sheep' are understood only by her parents or grandparents, whose origin is Xubān. According to my observation, young girls, living in big cities while talking with them parents or siblings, they use their dialect from rural regions. However, while speaking with their school friends from the capital city, they try to use either the dialect of a capital, the Gulf dialect<sup>9</sup> or they switch to English. This phenomenon is common within Arabic youth and is undertaken to become more prestigious among the peers. This could be an example of a conscious use of different varieties in order to rise one statute. Another problem is that young generations do not feel strong attachment to Arabic identity and tend to depreciate it. Albirini (2016: 152) suspects it is a result of growing frustration with the economic, political and social situation, what influence the attitude towards the language. There are some characteristic varieties of the linguistic behavior, e.g. young generation use the new forms more often than the older generation. According to Dendane (2013:

<sup>8</sup> The example from local survey in the Republic of Yemen.

<sup>9</sup> The dialects of Gulf are associated with prestige and modernity due to economic progress.

37), younger speakers shift away more often from their native speech.<sup>10</sup> It is usual among all cultures in the world that youth combine new words for their use only. In Arabic dialects the word *rahīb* meaning 'marvelous' or 'excellent' is used very often by young people as 'awesome' (Al-Wer 2016: 5). The youth usually prefer to use trendy expressions and new incoming forms as well, especially English loanwords.

Code switching within old generation is not common. They keep their dialect, even while talking to another dialect speaker. Citizens in the provincial areas, approximately above the age of 60, usually do not change their native dialect to any other. Though such linguistic behavior leads to misunderstandings, which can occur sporadically. According to Hudson (1998: 15), the age-grading is described as "a pattern of use in which linguistic items are used by people of a particular age, who then stop using it when they grow older". Older generation, especially in rural environment, is more static, they do not travel as younger society, therefore their language remains unchanged. Arabs as a tribal society represent strong ethnic and national values, which is common especially among older generation.

Gender distinction on the linguistic level is a complicated and disputable issue. According to Lakoff (1973: 64), "men are defined in terms of what they do in the world, women in terms of the men with whom they are associated". Usually, men and women live together and there is no reason to differentiate their speech. According to Trudgill (1995: 63), "in most societies men and women communicate freely with one another, and there appear to be few social barriers likely to influence the density of communication between the sexes". The circumstances in the Arabic world are different and in some countries the life of men and women is separated by cultural reasons. Some researchers prove that women use more linguistic variants, which are closer to the standard and prestigious language more often than men (Al-Wer 2016: 5). Al-Essa (2009) investigates the accommodation of linguistic patterns between Najdī and Ḥijāzī community in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). According to this research, old women tend to be more conservative and respect the Najdī traditional features (Al-Wer 2016: 6). Other

---

<sup>10</sup> Based on the empirical observation of a number of male speakers from different age groups in the research of the Tlemcen (Algeria) society.

investigation proves that women have a neuropsychological advantage over the men, i.e., females have an innate linguistic advantage (see Chambers 2003, chap. 3). In conservative communities there is a subdivision of gender features in the field of urban and rural diversity. Considerably in Yemen men and women live separately. The contact of men and women is limited due to cultural restrictions. In Arabic society men are assigned to public space and women to private space. Sadiqi (2006: 645) claims not only about spatial, but also linguistic and symbolic dichotomy. Women tend to use more selective words, such as euphemisms, emotions, intensifiers and diminutives (Albirini 2016: 191). Standard Arabic as a language of the public sphere is associated with religion, politics or law, which is less accessible by women. According to Ibrahim (1986: 14), women tend to adopt features from prestigious dialects, since prestige is not restricted to Standard Arabic, but to varieties of the urban centers (see also Miller 2007, Vicente 2009). Albirini (2016: 198) suggests men favor Bedouin and rural dialects, since it is associated with masculinity. According to my research, men from rural areas, often switch to urban dialects. In Arabic society women usually depend on men, who are responsible for families and travel to big urban centers seeking for work opportunities. In the same time women remain at home, without any chance of contact with the other dialects. The situation becomes different while entire family decides to move from rural area to the city. Arabic society is distinctive in view of social division (men/women), which brings more linguistic results in the field of dialectology. Women society is hermetic and it is hard to obtain permission for an interview and further data publication. Nevertheless, Arabic women have less opportunities to undergo linguistic changes.

In sociolinguistic research the high level of education leads to more innovative and less conservative linguistic patterns. In Arab counties, the opportunity of education is related to many changes, i.e. leaving one's hometown and interaction with the speakers of other dialects. People from rural or small communities travel to larger cities to achieve educational benefits. In the Middle East this occurrence is common, since many young people from the province wish to explore bigger cities for educational and work purposes. Education level improvement would also help in acquiring knowledge about other dialects.

This dialectological research focuses on dialects of Arabian Peninsula; however some features of linguistic change for Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Saudi Arabia will be presented.

#### **4. Libya**

The population movement in the second half of the twentieth century was an important period of urban transformation in Tripoli. The dialect of the capital of Libya had been bedouinized because of the settlement in the city of Bedouins and people from villages. In addition, the dialect of Tripoli is linguistically hybrid, so we can talk about koine version, which has been changed by:

- borrowings from Turkish and Italian – traces of the significant Ottoman and Italian occupations

- language being replaced by terms from Classical Arabic, more recently by borrowings from Egyptian and other Arabic dialects and from Standard Arabic.

- borrowings from foreign languages, especially English, resulting from Libyan students in higher education, where English plays a prominent role, as well as involvement with the new technologies – computing, internet, mobile phones, etc.

In this case, urbanization process had led to emergence of koine version of Tripoli dialect (Pereira 2007: 91).

#### **5. Syria**

In Syria the dropping of [h] in the suffixes (possessive pronouns) in the third person singular feminine suffix /-ha/, and the third person plural, masculine and feminine, suffix /-hon/ is a characteristic feature. In suburban dialects, e.g. dialects of Horan, in the south of Syria, [h] assimilates to [f, t, s, ʃ, c, x], therefore, /xaru:fha/ becomes /xaru:ffa/ 'her sheep' and /fra:xha/ /fra:xxa/ 'her chicken' (Ismail 2007: 198).

Linguistic innovation can spread from city to city, then to smaller towns and finally to rural areas, regardless of the distances between these regions. According to Behnstedt (1997), Damascus is an [h]-variable zone. In the city, [h] is used interchangeably with zero [h] forms. In the area of Greater Damascus, [h] is present only after vowels (Ismail 2007: 199). In towns located to the east of Damascus (Ḥarasta, Arṭōz), [h] can be included after a consonant and after a vowel. Towards the south of Damascus, few towns retain [h] only after vowels (Dēr ʔAlī, 25 km to the south of Damascus, and Salxad, 34 km to the south) (Ismail 2007: 199).

In the country as a whole, the h-zero pattern predominantly extends along the western part of Syria. Ismail (2007: 199) suggests the heartland of h-less dialects are the coastline cities, from where the feature has spread to inland dialects. Economic migration and daily commuting from these h-full towns into the capital can offer an explanation for the variation found in the city. The city of Aleppo in the north shows a similar pattern to that found in Damascus (Ismail 2007: 199).

## 6. Lebanon

In Beirut, the expression of greetings depends on social factors, as the gender, age or social groups, living in urban areas. Greetings must be considered as sociolinguistic markers, sometimes referring to the identity of a group. Since informants are aware of the existence of such markers and tend to categorize them, they can also sometimes be considered as stereotypes (Labov 1973). According to Germanos (2007: 161), some informants in her research claim as linguistic forms allow them to identify someone as “Shiite” or other member of social community. ‘*Bonjour*’ and ‘*hi*’ are considered as more “feminine”, and ‘*hi*’ as “younger”. Usage is also linked to the situation – *bonjour* is more formal than *marḥaba*. Territorial factors can influence the usage the greetings. *Bonjour* (Christian), ‘*as-salāmu aleykūm*’ (Shiite) and ‘*barew/bari irikown*’ (Armenian) (Germanos 2007: 161).

## 7. Yemen

Yemen as a tribal society represent strong ethnic and national values. Historical events shaped the nation's consciousness of tribal integrity particularly in the linguistic sphere.<sup>11</sup> The example of urban variety of Ṣanṣāʔ and rural dialects of Xubān region can be considered in political dimension. Before the unification in 1990, Ṣanṣāʔ was the capital of Northern Yemen. Although the approximate borders of the segmented country went through Xubān region, it was always considered as part of the South. Apart from current political situation, the antagonistic attitudes within two former countries were visible through years. Linguistic features were often stigmatized, what affected the use of language.

The divergence of some words in each dialect of Yemen is too extensive for drawing a right context. There are words and expressions in Xubān Arabic, which are not comprehensible for Ṣanṣāʔ residents, e.g.: *ṣābī* صابي 'empty', *mā ṣalā gūbālī* قوبالي 'I don't care', *yā jillī!* يا جلي 'oh my God!', *ṣumruṭī* عمرطي 'corn', *ṣurm* عرم 'edge'. Such words are unknown for Ṣanṣāʔ Arabic speakers. Presumably native users of XA interject parts of their speech into ṢA unconsciously, regarding the linguistic issue, but intentionally regarding the context.

## 8. Saudi Arabia

Urbanization, modernization, education and acceptance of official language policy had resulted in language modification. The change considers a switch from the old dialectal features of *kaškašah* to the dialect-neutral suffix /k/ to indicate second feminine object/possessive pronoun. According to Al-Azraqi (2007: 243) people from Riyadh and Dammam have adopted the /k/ form more than people from other cities. The suffix form /k/ is not identical to the Classical form since it lacks the final vowel,

---

<sup>11</sup> People in Yemen can define an interlocutor's origin, whether he or she speaks Bedouin, rural or urban vernacular. They can easily point the geographical region, since many dialects in Yemen have typical linguistic features, e.g., past form of -t changes to -k in the region of Ṣbb.

but it is similar to the dialectal form that is used by many dialect speakers beyond the Arabian Peninsula. However, if the /k/ form is the result of greater ease of communication, why the Gulf countries, which became urbanized before Saudi Arabia, did not adopt this form?

For the last 20 years or more, one observes that this feature is variable and may be undergoing change throughout Saudi Arabia, particularly among educated speakers, resulting in a single koineized reflex of the second feminine singular object/possessive morpheme with two contextually determined allomorphs: /ki/ in suffixation to a vowel-final word, and /ik/ in suffixation to a consonant-final word (Al-Azraqi 2007: 243). Thus, *bētik* ‘your f.s. house’ (or *bētak* ‘your m.s. house’) and *ʔabūki* ‘your f.s. father’ (cp. *ʔabūk* ‘your m.s. father’) (Al-Azraqi 2007: 231). Since we cannot precisely date the beginning of the shift from *kaškašah* to /k/, it seems to be a rather rapid phenomenon, leading among some educated speakers to the exclusive use of /k/. This shift could have been motivated by a number of modernizing factors, namely urbanization and education.

The study shows that although an increasing number of people are shifting to /k/, some people still use their original dialectal forms or alternatives to the suffixed pronouns. Shifting to /k/ could be interpreted as a sign of urbanization and social development as indicated by the comparison between the different cities. There is a probability that high social status and education must also play a role, but this needs to be confirmed by additional research. The analysis of the results shows that the informants from Riyadh and Dammam have a higher rate of use of /k/ than informants from the other. These two cities enjoy a high level of modernization, despite the nomadic backgrounds of the inhabitants.

## 9. Conclusions

In geographically limited region, urban, rural and Bedouin societies may have their own recognizable local dialects. Linguistic coherence may not always exist within local vernaculars, but it might share mutual history and some linguistic features. Urban

dialects are considered as national standards in most Arab countries (see also Haeri 1991, Vicente 2009). Therefore, the dialect of capital cities is the most familiar and investigated variety.

In Arab world, the dialect of capital city is the most comprehensible, which is significant due to countless dialectal varieties. The identity of tribal partition shows very strong attachment to linguistic traditions, but at the same time switching from rural to urban dialect of the capital city is inevitable. The main reason for this is communication purposes, however Arabic society manifest strong pride of their dialects.

The level of education corresponds with code switching aspect not only within mixing dialectal forms but also using English language during conversation. Educated speakers switch between English and urban dialects, since English is the expression of educational skills. Big urban centers provide many educational institutions and new opportunities, which is very inviting. Within Arabic society the most significant factor is identity. Code switching is used as a tool of communication, and it is not stable. Each region of Arab world proud of their dialect and not inclined to change it. Switching the language code is common, since citizens from rural areas, willing to develop educational level, undergo linguistic change. Switching codes between dialects reveal intentions of communication and attachment and loyalty against native dialect as well.

Between 1960s and 1970s the dialects of Arabic were under the influence of Arab media and increasing contacts with other Arab countries. This caused the emergence of the Middle Arabic (*al-ṣarabiyya al-wuṣṭā*), which was first introduced among intellectuals, then spread among several young urban students. The traditional Arabic education system, based on the memorization of the Quran left very limited room for free expression, particularly at the oral level. The great novelty then was to follow an intermediary path between colloquial and Standard Arabic, by dropping those grammatical complexities which did not serve the purposes of communication. This selection of Middle Arabic would involve “purifying” the lowest variety through the removal of its stigmatized features of rural origin. Middle Arabic can thus appear as a semi-literary variety; however “national koine” is not imitated throughout the

countries. Nader stated Arabs defend their local dialect, while they are in another dialectal as a form of loyalty. On the basis of field observations and conversations with my informants – every speaker is proud of his or her origins and dialect and does not seek to imitate the other vernacular.

## References

- ABU-HAIDAR, F. (1991) *Christian Arabic of Baghdad*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.
- AL-AZRAQI, M. (2007) "The use of kaškašah/kaskasah and alternative means among educated urban Saudi speakers", in Catherine Miller, Enam Al-Wer, Dominique Caubet (eds.), *Arabic in the City. Issues in dialect contact and language variation*, London-New York: Routledge, 230-245.
- AL-ESSA, A. (2009) "When Najd meets Hijaz: Dialect contact in Jeddah", in *Arabic Dialectology. In honour of Clive Holes on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, Series: Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics, Volume: 53, Al-Wer and de Jong eds., 201-222.
- ALBIRINI, A. (2016) *Modern Arabic Sociolinguistics: Diglossia, variation, codeswitching, attitudes and identity*, New York: Routledge.
- AL-WER, E. (2016) "Variation", *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, Managing Editors Online Edition: Lutz Edzard & Rudolf de Jong, 627-636.
- BASSIOUNEY, R. (2009) *Arabic Sociolinguistics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- BEHNSTEDT, P. (1997) *Sprachatlas von Syrien*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- BLANC, H. (1964) "Stylistic (Style) variations in Spoken Arabic: A sample of interdialectal educated conversation", in C. Ferguson (ed.), *Contributions to Arabic Linguistics*, Cambridge, Massachussets: Harward University Press, 3-77.
- BRITAIN, D. (2009) "Big bright lights versus green and pleasant land?: The unhelpful dichotomy of urban versus rural in dialectology", in Enam Al-Wer & Rudolf de Jong (eds.), *Arabic Dialectology*, Leiden -Boston: Brill, 223-248.
- CADORA, F. J. (1989) "Linguistic Change and the Bedouin-Sedentary Dichotomy in Old Arabic Dialects", *Anthropological Linguistics*, 31 (3/4 Fall - Winter), 264-284.
- CADORA, F. J. (1992) *Bedouin, Village and Urban Arabic: An Ecolinguistic Study*, Leiden: Brill.
- CALVET, J. L. (1994) *Les voix de la ville: Introduction a la sociolinguistique urbaine*, Paris: Payot & Rivages.

- CANTINEAU, J. (1940) "Les parlers arabes du Departement d'Oran", *Revue Africaine*, LXXXIV, 220-231.
- CHAMBERS, J. K. (2003) *Sociolinguistic Theory (Language in Society)*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- COHEN, M. (1977) "Notes on Sociolinguistics", in O. Uribe-Villegas (ed.), *Issues in Sociolinguistics*, The Hague: De Gruyter, 45-56.
- CUVALAY, M. (1997) *The Verb in Literary and Colloquial Arabic, Functional Grammar Series*, vol. 19, Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- DENDANE, Z. (2013) "Linguistic variation and the age variable in an urban context: Tlemcen speech community", *Scholars World*, I (3), 37-45.
- ECH-CHARFI, A. & L. AZZOUZI (2016) "Ethnic Stereotypes and Lexical Semantics. The emergence of the rural/urban opposition in Moroccan Arabic", in Augustin Emmanuel Ebongue & Ellen Hurst (eds.), *Sociolinguistics in African Contexts*, Switzerland: Springer, Multilingual Education, 147-169.
- FERGUSON Ch. (1968) "Myths about Arabic", in J. A. Fishman (ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Language*, Berlin-Boston: DeGruyter, 375-381.
- FISHMAN, J. A. (1972) "Domains and the relationship between micro- and macro-sociolinguistics", in J. J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (eds.), *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 435-453.
- GARDNER-CHLOROS, P. (2009) *Code-switching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GERMANOS, M. (2007) "Greetings in Beirut: Social distribution and attitudes towards different formulae", in C. Miller, E. Al-Wer, D. Caubet, J. C. E. Watson (eds.), *Arabic in the City Issues in Dialect Contact and Language Variation*, London & New York: Routledge, 147-165.
- GUMPERZ, J. (1982) *Discourse Strategies*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- HAERI, N. (1991) "Sociolinguistic variation in Cairene Arabic: Palatalization and the 'qaf' in the speech of men and women", University of Pennsylvania ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- HAERI, N. (1997) *The sociolinguistic market of Cairo: Gender, class, and education*, London: Kegan Paul International.
- HELLER, M. (1988) *Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistics Perspectives*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- HELLER, M. (1992) "The politics of codeswitching and language choice", *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 13, 123-142.

- HUDSON, R. A. (1998) *Sociolinguistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- IBRAHIM, M. (1986) "Standard and prestige language: A problem in Arabic sociolinguistics", *Anthropological Linguistics*, 28(1), 115-126.
- ISMAIL, H. (2007) "The urban and suburban modes: Patterns in linguistic variation and change in Damascus" in Catherine Miller, Enam Al-Wer & Dominique Caubet (eds.), *Arabic in the city. Issues in dialect contact and language variation*, London-New York: Routledge, 189-212.
- LABOV, W. (1972) *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- LABOV, W. (1973) *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- LAKOFF, R. T. (1973) "Language and Woman's Place", *Language in Society*, 2(1), 45-80.
- MILLER, C. (2004) "Variation and Changes in Arabic Urban Vernaculars", in M. Haak, K. Versteegh & R. Dejong (eds.), *Approaches to Arabic Dialects: Collection of Articles presented to Manfred Woidich on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, Amsterdam: Brill, 177-206.
- MILLER, C. (2007) "Arabic urban vernaculars: development and change", in Catherine Miller, Enam Al-Wer & Dominique Caubet (eds.), *Arabic in the city. Issues in dialect contact and language variation*, London-New York: Routledge, 1-31.
- NADER, L. (1962) "A note on attitudes and the use of language", *Anthropological Linguistics*, 4(6), 24-29.
- PEREIRA, Ch. (2007) "Urbanization and dialect change: the Arabic dialect of Tripoli (Libya)", Catherine Miller, Enam Al-Wer & Dominique Caubet (eds.), *Arabic in the City. Issues in dialect contact and language variation*, London-New York: Routledge, 77-96.
- SADIQI, F. (2006) "Language and gender", in K. Versteegh, M. Eid, A. Elgibali, M. Woidich & A. Zaborski (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic language and linguistics*, Leiden: Brill, 642-650.
- SIBATA, T. (1979) "Urbanization and Linguistic Variations", *Language Sciences*, 1(2), 325-338.
- TRUDGILL, P. (1995) *Sociolinguistics: an introduction to language and society*, London: Penguin Books.
- TYLER J. & I. THEODOROPOULOU (2014) "Perceptual Dialectology of the Arab World", *Al-'Arabiyya- Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic*, 21-39
- Vicente, A. (2009) "Gender and language boundaries in the Arab world: Current issues and perspectives", *Estudios de dialectología norteafricana y andalusí*, 13, 7-30.

WOLFRAM W., K. HAZEN & N. SCHILLING-ESTES (1999) *Dialect change and maintenance on the Outer Banks*, Publication of the American Dialect Society, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.