

***CAIRENE ARABIC: BETWEEN MODERNIZATION AND THE RUSTIC  
VILLAGE***

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**Abstract**

The speech community in Cairo, the biggest city in the Arab world, is described from a sociolinguistic perspective looking at some features of the two-way inter-relationship between language and society. By discussing the complex diglossic language situation in Cairo, this literature review shows how the Cairene community has undergone language shift and language accommodation. Moreover, an examination of the male/female use of the phonetic variable (q) /ق/, indicates that gender-based differences in male/female linguistic behaviour can also be found in the Cairene speech community, and thereby corroborates the sex-based hypothesis.

**Key words:** *sociolinguistic, Cairene Arabic, Classical Arabic, language shift and accommodation, genderlects*

**Introduction**

The present literature review examines the Arabic-speaking community in Cairo, the capital of Egypt and the biggest city in the Arab world from a sociolinguistic perspective by looking at some features of the two-way inter-relationship between language and society. This Middle Eastern community has been selected for discussion because it provides a good example of language shift and

language accommodation. Moreover, it signifies how modernity, urbanization and nationalism are mirrored in language (Armbrust, 1996, p. 8).

Due to the fact that Egypt is situated in the middle of the Arab world in a sub-region of Africa-Eurasia, its language has been influenced not only by other geographically related Arabic communities, but also other more remote nations. The Egyptian community, like other Arab communities, is considerably distinct from the Western world, especially in its approach to gender and the social roles of men and women (Hudson, 2001). Therefore, the speech community in Cairo has been examined to find out whether gender-based differences in male/female linguistic behaviour also hold in an Arabic community. Accordingly, we can either challenge or corroborate the sex-based hypothesis.

### **Sociolinguistic research on Arabic-speaking communities: studies from the Middle East**

Haeri (2000) notes that the interest in Arabic sociolinguistics, which was inspired by Ferguson's (1959) article on diglossic Arabic communities, began in the 1970s. From the sizable research into the Arab world, Egypt has had the lion's share, presumably due to its long history and relations with the Western world which created an interest in its language while neglecting that of some other Arabic communities (Suleiman, 2000). Nonetheless, this body of research is relatively humble compared to studies carried out in America, Europe and some other parts of the world. In fact, most studies on Arab speech communities have not given primacy to comprehensive field research into the linguistic processes and ideologies of individuals or groups. Researchers have been interested only in the analysis of different syntactic, morphological, or phonological aspects of the language and "...no linguistic

ethnographies appeared offering a more detailed, complex, and realistic analysis of the language situations ... to date” (Haeri, 2000, p. 67). The in-depth database search done for this literature review has yielded only a few recent sociolinguistic studies.

In the subsequent sections, sociolinguistic features of the Cairene speech community will be depicted first in terms of its language system and then by examining one case of how language and gender reciprocate.

### **The speech community in Cairo: sacred language, mundane people**

The sociolinguistic pattern of code, i.e. the various language patterns for different classes in the society in Cairo is complex and has been described using the term diglossia which is used to describe the presence of two often closely-related languages, one of high prestige which is generally used formally and the other of low prestige and is usually the spoken vernacular tongue. Thus, in a diglossic situation, which is also a remarkable feature of most Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern states two or more language varieties or codes co-exist. These communities have a peculiar sociolinguistic pattern due to their stable diglossic nature, (Holmes, 2001; Ferguson, 1959); (Wardhaugh, 2006; Chambers 2003). The official superposed high (H) or formal variety is Classical Arabic, the language of the Koran and the sayings of the prophet. This variety is used mainly in formal and official situations, in writing, in print and in prestigious domains such as education, literary works and religious ceremonies. The other spoken or low (L) varieties are used in informal situations of everyday life and include a range of vernacular varieties of modern colloquial Arabic (Stockwell 2002; Holmes 2001). These regional dialects vary according to different social groups or geographical regions, but in general, as Kirchhoff and Vergyri (2005)

point out, they are classified into four main groups: North African, Levantine, Egyptian in which Cairene Arabic fits and Gulf Arabic.

The differences between all these varieties are visible on the phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexical levels. An example identified by Cowan (1966) is the varying use of the verbal prefix /b/ in different countries. Some Arabic dialects, including the Egyptian (*masri*) dialect, attach this prefix to verbs in order to indicate the present tense /*baktib*/ 'I write'. In contrast, the same prefix is used in Yemen and the Gulf states as a marker for the future: /*baktib*/ 'I will write'.

It is worth noting that the difference between Classical Arabic and other vernacular varieties is not associated with the notions of a better or a worse language. As a matter of fact, colloquial Arabic varieties have 'covert prestige' which keeps them alive, vital and autonomous, (Holmes, 2001, p. 344). The inferiority of a variety, as Trudgill (2000, p. 9) states, is merely due to its "...association with speakers from under-privileged, low-status groups". Historically speaking, the different regional varieties descended from Classical Arabic through the years and developed as accepted spoken regional varieties spoken by various groups in the society (Abuhamdia, 1988), while Classical Arabic was retained as the form with the highest profile.

Ferguson (1964, cited in Stockwell 2002) proposed the following characteristics of diglossia, to which the language system in Cairo could be compared:

- H is written;
- H is the medium of education;
- diglossia is a socially stable pattern;
- H has greater prestige than L;
- H vocabulary is often copied into L;

- repeated vocabulary often diverge in meaning and connotation.

Cairene Arabic (CA) can also be compared to Stewart's (1968) sociolinguistic typology of languages (see also Wardhaugh, 2006; Bell, 1976) in which colloquial Arabic is described as a vernacular that has three attributes:

- vitality – the existence of native speakers of a language;
- historicity – the development of a language over time through being used by a social group;
- Autonomy – users consider their language to be distinct from other varieties.

Looking at the works by both Ferguson and Stewart, we can see that the situation in Cairo fits all these criteria perfectly. Classical Arabic, *fus-ha*, is the H variety whereas the L varieties consist of regional colloquial dialects, Haeri (1997).

In the Cairene speech community, the degree of difference between H and L could be illustrated on the phonological level by the varying articulation of the sound (q) /ق/. In H, it is articulated using a voiceless uvular plosive, while in L it is represented by a glottal stop. H and L are also quite dissimilar grammatically since they use the Arabic complicated morphology differently, Holmes (2001, p. 82). The negation device in L used by educated middle class Egyptians in Cairo (Mughazy, 2003) is a case in point:

H: *ana lam aḏhab ila asūq*

L: *ana ma-roḥ-t-e] isū?*

'I didn't go to the market'

On the lexical level, similar vocabulary appears in both H and L; however, since L is used in informal domains, it contains more words for everyday objects. For instance, in H we use '*ḥaqībah*' for 'bag' which would not occur in casual conversation, where the word '*ʿanṭah*' is used from the L variety.

## Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Cairene Arabic (CA)

This diglossic situation in the Arab communities has led to a linguistic revolution attempting to bridge the massive gap between Classical Arabic and the various colloquial dialects on the one hand, and between those detached dialects on the other. It resulted in “A Modern Inter-Arabic” known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which is a simplified version of Classical Arabic with colloquial interference, Bishai (1966).

According to Haeri (2000), the speech community in Cairo, similar to other Arabic-speaking communities, went through the process of Arabization which encouraged the maximum use of Classical Arabic while restricting the colloquial. This was followed by the movement of pan-Arab nationalism, Haeri et al. (1997). As mentioned above, this movement called for language renovation or urbanization to establish equilibrium by simplifying and modernizing Arabic, although most state schools as Starrett (1998) and Wagner (1993) report, stressed the use of Classical Arabic in teaching. Today, the resultant MSA represents a language based on, and at the same time different from Classical Arabic. Kirchhoff and Vergyri (2005) list some examples of differences between MSA and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic used in Cairo (ECA) (see Table 1):

Table 1. *Linguistic Differences between MSA and ECA*

<i>Change</i>	<i>MSA</i>	<i>ECA</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
/ø/→/s/, /t/	/øala:øa/	/tala:ta/	ثلاث three
/ð/→/z/, /d/	/ ðahab/	/dahab/	ذهب gold
/ay/→/e:/	/Saif/	/Se:f/	صيف summer

Inflections	yatakallam(u)	yitkallim	يتكلم he speaks
Vocabulary	tawila	tarabeeza	منضدة table
Word order	VSO	SVO	

Miller (2005) notes that the urban and national status of CA has offered it a specific character. Despite the fact that it is not a nationally acknowledged standard colloquial variety, it is used in all spoken domains of life and in some written poetry, novels and advertisement, Mazraani (1997). Woidich (1994, p. 506) defines it as “a Central Delta dialect with an admixture of features pertaining to neighbouring regions”. CA, according to Miller (2005), is similar to the Central Delta dialect and has some features of the dialect of Middle Egypt, but is different from them in some specific features as follows:

1. no final pausal *imāla* (final [a] is raised to /i/ or /e/ as in CA *warda* vs. rural dialects *warde* 'a rose')
2. the 3<sup>rd</sup> sg. Perf. ending of the weak verbs is *-it* not *-at* as in CA *ramit* vs. rural dialects *ramat* 'she threw away'
3. the object suffixes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sg. m. have long allomorphs as in CA *ma ramahũ*] vs. rural dialects *ma ramah*] 'he did not throw it'

She adds that features of MSA mark CA at specific speech contexts, educational levels and in the upper and middle classes. Nevertheless, the concept of 'Standard Cairo Arabic' is contingent upon speakers' attitudes, and the present-day CA has developed as a consequence of urbanization and mass migration to Cairo in the 1950s and 1960s. Contemporary CA displays some new features such as the marginalization of some Cairene words, the elimination of many Osmani words and the inclusion of many English words. This change has occurred partly due to the influence of rural

dialects spoken by the migrants to Cairo, particularly those from the region of the Nile valley (Upper Egypt, known as *is-Sa'īd*). Miller poses three factors that have affected the linguistic adaptation and accommodation of the migrants in Cairo:

- media and urbanization (interaction with CA);
- education and mass media (influence of Classical Arabic);
- better means of communication and increased contact between regions (regional interdialectal levelling).

In her study, Miller (*ibid*) identified some of the distinctive features of CA which is a prestigious dialect, and the two Upper Egyptian Arabic (UEA) variants which belong to the latest waves of migrants. Both UEA dialects are so distinct from CA that they are usually unintelligible to Cairene people who associate them with derogatory stereotypes portraying their speakers as “poor rural migrants, often illiterate and extremely conservative”, Miller (2005, p. 909). Generally speaking, CA is described in all parts of the Arab world as soft, elegant and modern whereas UEA is dry, heavy, rough and closer to *fus-ha*. Table 2 illustrates the distinction and similarity between CA and the two dialects of UEA: UE1 and UE2 in four features from Miller's original 21-feature-list of the rural dialects of Upper Egyptian Arabic (UEA) in the Sohag-Qena bow of the Nile. These features sketch the Cairene speech community and indicate how in the case of CA/UEA contact, regional coinization and mixing processes might occur within an individual's speech. What has caught my attention in Miller's table is the similarity of some UEA features to the (*hidnazi*) dialect of the Western region of Saudi Arabia. This finding also elucidates the effect of language contact and dialect shift in societies since this part of the Arabian Peninsula is very close to the Egyptian land with only the Red Sea lying between them.

Table 2. *Some distinctive features between CA and UEA - adapted from Miller (2005)*

<i>Features</i>	<i>CA</i>	<i>UE1</i>	<i>UE2</i>
Q  'he said' 'now' 'Koran'	?  [q] (MSA words) <i>?ál</i> <i>dilwa?ti</i> <i>qur?an</i>	g [k] in some words [q] (MSA words) <i>gál</i> <i>delwakiti, adilwikit</i> <i>qur?an</i>	idem UE1
J  'camel'	  <i>gamal</i>	/g/, /dɣ/, /ɲ/; /d/ according to subvarieties and types of lexical items <i>gamal, dɣamal, ɲamal,</i> <i>damal</i>	idem UE1
Personal pronouns I, you (m.sg.), you (f.sg.), he, she, we, you (pl.), they	<i>Ana, inta, inti, huwwa,</i> <i>hiyya, ihna, intum, huma</i>	<i>Ana (ani), inti(a), hūwa,</i> <i>hīya, nahna(i),</i> <i>intum, huma</i>	idem UE1
Demonstratives 'this'  'that'	<i>Dukha, dikha, dukham</i>  <i>dawwat, diyyat, dōlat</i>	<i>Dakka, dikka, dakummóti</i>  <i>kidawáti, kidēti</i>	<i>Dukhu, dikhi,</i> <i>dukhumma</i> <i>kidawáti, kidēti</i>

### Other speech varieties in Cairo

In addition to the above mentioned varieties, CA has very localized accents used by uneducated groups in all the regions in addition to some foreign languages such as, French, English and Italian spoken by some of the educated people who attended missionary and secular foreign-language private schools, Haeri et al., (1997). Nonetheless, since Cairo, like other metropolitan cities in the world, is the terrain for civilization and the cradle for modernization, it is inhabited by the vast majority of the aristocrats and upper-middle classes and, in my view, its spoken variety stands a good chance of adoption as a lingua franca and a widely preferred prestigious model.

In general, UEA speakers prefer to speak CA in Cairo to be able to communicate with others, adapt to the environment and avoid discrimination and stereotyping. According to Miller (2005), the frequency of occurrence of either CA or

UEA features depends on variations in social networks, discourse topics, situational contexts and the influence of *fus-ha*.

I presume that any attempt at standardizing Arabic in Egypt or in any other Arab country and replacing it with an emergent new genre is barren for two reasons, Wardhaugh (2006); Allen (1997). The first is that the state itself is facing impediments concerning the reproduction of its official language, Haeri (1997). The second reason is that Egyptians, among other Muslims, consider knowing Classical Arabic to be an obligation of every Muslim and a means of constructing their Arabic identity, Ahmed (1999); Lynch (1999); Wagner (1993, p. 19). Hence, it is not surprising that they believe, as Haeri et al. (1997) inform us, that Classical Arabic bestows authority on those who know it and establishes their political unity and resistance to colonial domination. According to Hourani (1991, p. 68), Classical Arabic exerts religio-cultural credentials which have constantly generated a strong ideology that extols it and devalues the “living spoken languages”.

Let us now take the discussion on language and society interplay a stage further and examine an aspect of gender-related differences in CA.

### **Genderlects in the Cairene speech community: strangers in a tolerant land**

The study of language and gender has grown considerably in the last decades of the Twentieth Century (Wardhaugh, 2006). Traditionally, this type of research has focused on two issues: gender differences in language use and sexist language. Currently, more feminist language researchers, notably, Weatherall (2002a), Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (2003) and Cameron (1998), are concerned with the social construction of gender, i.e., viewing genderlects through a social lens. They perceive

gender to be relevant to any interaction (see Weatherall 2002b, 2000; Stokoe and Smithson, 2001).

According to Erlandson (2005) and Hirokawa et al. (2004), many gender-related differences in language use have been identified by exploring gender in relation to turn-taking (Romaine, 2000; DeFrancisco, 1991), questions (Todd, 1983), topic change (Dorval, 1990), self-disclosure (Tannen, 1991), conversational dominance (Leet-Pellegrini, 1980), face (Deuchar, 1988), conversational involvement (Tannen, 1990), verbal aggression (Eder, 1990; Labov, 1972a), verbal hygiene (Cameron, 1995), social attitudes (Trudgill, 2000), e-mail interactions (Colley and Todd, 2002), verbal tasks (Parsons et al., 2005) and so on.

Many researchers have examined features of genderlects of men and women. Scollon and Scollon (2001, p. 245) for example, outline nine closely related dimensions in the conversational styles of women and men respectively:

- intimacy – independence;
- connection – status;
- inclusive – exclusive;
- relationship – information;
- rapport – report;
- community – contest;
- problems – solutions;
- novice – expert;
- listening – lecturing.

As Scollon and Scollon's outline indicates, womens' communication patterns are distinct from those of men in form and substance. Their speech, as Lackoff (1975) suggests, reflects their socialization into subordinate roles. Labov (2001) notes that

women are superior to men “in all aspects of verbal behaviour”. But what explanations (Romaine, 2000) can be given for gender-based differences in linguistic styles in general? Wardhaugh (2006) explains gender differences in language behaviour in terms of the following claims:

1. A language can be sexist;
2. The biological and psychological disposition of men and women;
3. The hierarchy of power relationships between men and women;
4. The socially learned behaviour to which men and women are subjected and how they are taught to be gendered.

According to Swim et al., (2004), Stockwell (2002), Holmes (2001), Romaine (2000) and many others, some languages are described as sexist due to the way they express negative or positive stereotypes of women and men. Moreover, the structure of the lexicon has always been viewed by sociolinguists as the reflection of the social environment in language which usually denotes that men are superior to women. This discrimination against women can be exemplified in many aspects of a sexist language. For instance, animal imagery in English shows that less positive images are used for women than men – *cow* and *bitch* vs. *stud* and *wolf*, Holmes (2001, p. 305). In Arabic, the use of an additional suffix to signal feminine adjectives connotes that women are deviant or abnormal - *kabīr* vs. *kabīrah*.

Despite ample proposals to eliminate sexist language, this sexism is a controversial issue. In practice, as Wardhaugh (2006) argues, the differences are socially-based rather than linguistically-based. In other words, it is the way a language is used by people that informs gender-based variation. Consistent with this view is Harrison and Hood-Williams' (2002) description of how gender attributes are determined in people's interaction “the continuous interactive process whereby one

both presents oneself as gendered and is allocated a gender by everyone with whom one interacts” (p. 34).

Considering the different linguistic styles of men and women, Chambers (2003) indicates that several studies specifically those of Romaine (2000, 1978), Holmes (1997) and Labov (1972b) have indicated that in the same social group, women seem to use fewer stigmatized and non-standard variants than men do. Moreover, it has been found that in some societies, men's speech is marked by a larger repertoire of variants and wider stylistic shifting. This is evident in some studies of Middle Eastern societies which differ to a great extent, socially and culturally, from other societies in the world (Haeri et al., 1997). Although these differences provide some support for the sex-based variability hypothesis, they “...do seem to overturn the sociolinguistic roles of women and men” (Chambers, 2003, p. 154).

In a study of gender-based linguistic differences in Egypt and the Levant, Haeri (1987) examined the use of the phonetic variable (q) /ق/. This variable to which Elshafei et al. (2001) refer as 'Always Accented Consonant' is a pharyngeal phoneme that has three variants (Chambers 2003) and is used differently in the different varieties of Arabic. These variants are:

- The standard or classical variant: the uvular stop [q] - Arabic /ق/;
- The urban speech or spoken vernacular variant: the glottal stop (plosive) [ʔ] - Arabic /أ/;
- The low-level variant: the voiced velar stop (plosive) [g].

Thus, as Sallam (1980) illustrates, the word *qál* قال 'he said' has the following variants in Egypt: *qál* *ʔál* *gál*

The striking results of Haeri's study show that in some Middle Eastern communities, such as Cairo, Amman and an international group from Egypt and the

Levant countries, women use fewer classical forms and more colloquial varieties than men. Miller (2005) reached a similar result in her study mentioned above. She noticed that men tended to use [q] in words like *qurʿān* 'Koran' and *fiqh* 'jurisprudence' in formal and religious contexts.

The results of both studies seem to contradict the hypothesis related to sex-based variability. Although the group of interest to us in Haeri's survey is the Cairo sample, the other two samples have been included to emphasize the findings. However, for more clarity, the different groups have been separated in three graphs adapting Haeri's Figure 1 (p. 174) which represents proportions of (q) variants for women and men in the three Arabic communities:

- In the sample from CA, Figure 1 below, both men and women do not use the low-level variant [g], while women use a lower proportion of the standard [q] and a higher proportion of the urban variant [ʕ] than men do.

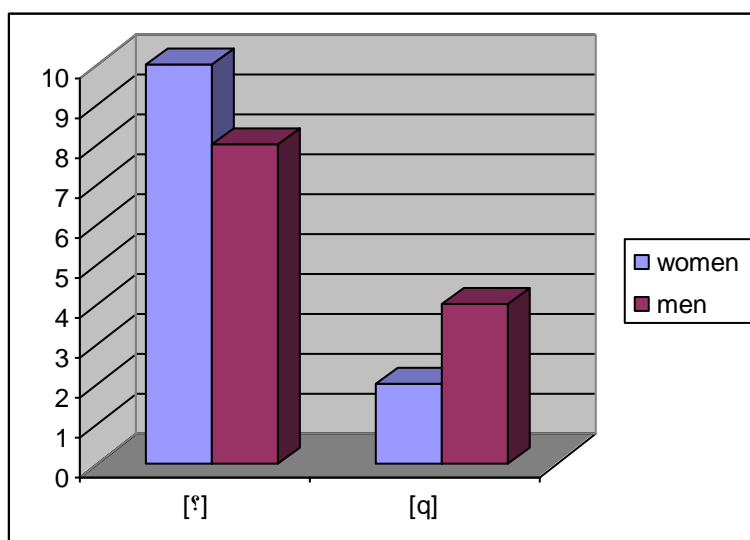


Figure 1. *Male/female use of the variable (q) /ق/ amongst the Cairo sample*

- The Amman sample, Figure 2 below, also shows a higher proportion of standard [q] used by men than women, who again score a higher proportion of the urban variant [ʕ] than men, and like Cairene women, score no proportion of the low-level variant [g] which is used by less than 10% of the male participants.

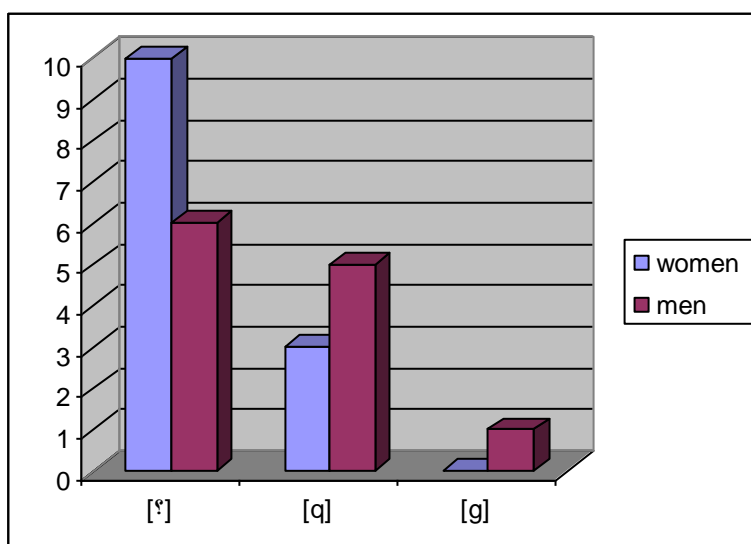


Figure 2. *Male/female use of the variable (q) /ق/ amongst the Amman sample*

In addition, Figure 3 indicates that in the international group a higher proportion of women use the urban variant [ʕ] than men, who score higher than women in using the other two variants [q] and [g].

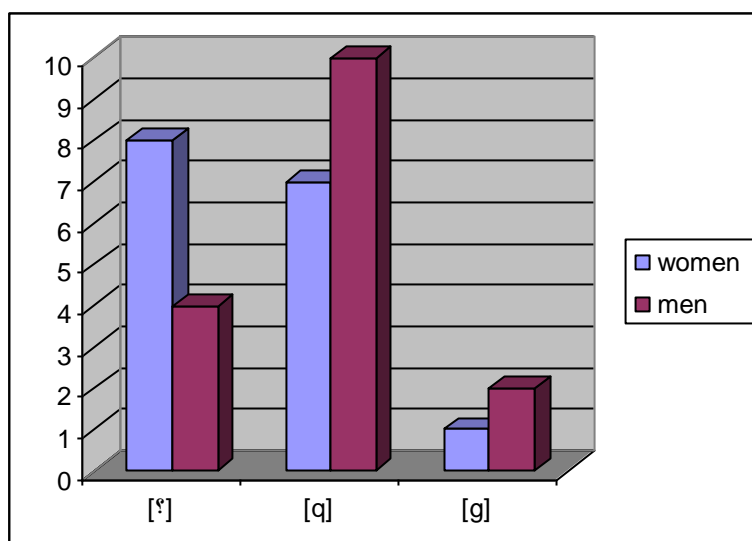


Figure 3. *Male/female use of the variable (q) /ق/ amongst the international group*

The most conspicuous result is that in all three surveys, males score higher than females in their use of standard [q] which indicates that the phenomenon of the greater female use of standard variants common in Western communities is reversed in Arabic communities (see also Labov, 1990; Abd-el-Jawad, 1981). This same conclusion is drawn in a similar study of sex variation in Basrah by Bakir (1986) who attributes the differences to gender-segregative social circumstances. He believes that Arab women lead more insular lives than men and thereby lack access to the standard variety as cultural and social beliefs restrict them from playing a major role in the community. Therefore, they are not motivated to use the “prestige” variety of the “public domain” (Abdel-Jawad 1981).

Arguably, Chambers (2003, p. 162) claims that the results are definitely consistent with the hypothesis of sex-related differences in men's and women's linguistic behaviour. In fact, the proportions of [q] demonstrate the variant used in Classical Arabic which is not the national preferred standard variety as it does not represent the ordinary means of communication of any social group or community. It has been noted in the previous section that the linguistic system in Cairo and other Arab societies is complex and Classical Arabic is not the real vernacular or preferred standard variety in everyday use. In Chambers (2003, p. 160) he says, “literary Arabic does not form part of the linguistic continuum in Arabic communities but is removed from it by a gap. As a result, it cannot fill the role of the standard variety in social stratification.” Therefore, if we look at the proportions of [ق] which represent the

variant used in the colloquial standard, we find that females score higher proportions than males in all the groups. Accordingly, we could conclude that women in these communities are still using fewer non-standard and stigmatized variants than men. Another crucial point to add to this case is the finding by Haeri (1996) that men from the upper classes in Cairo did not actually use forms of Classical Arabic as they thought they should.

It is true that women in the three samples do not use Classical Arabic forms - “forms that they consider to be better” - since they belong to the prestigious variety of their religion and the sacred Holy Book, Bakir (1986, p. 6). Yet, the appropriate variety for them is the urban colloquial which is the norm amongst people. Holmes (2001, p. 29) points out that Arabs proffer respect and admiration to a stranger who has a mastery of Classical Arabic, which is a difficult task even for an Arab (see Holes, 1995; Ibrahim, 1986; Bishai, 1966; Macdonald, 1910). However, in reality, and from my personal experience in Classical Arabic and most colloquial Arabic varieties, I have noticed that using Classical Arabic in informal situations is considered artificial, bizarre and by no means prestigious. Rather, it is like speaking Shakespearian English at the butchers (Holmes, 2001).

### **A final note**

By offering a sketch of the sociolinguistic situation in Cairo, this literature review has indicated that language shift and language accommodation are sociolinguistic phenomena which coincide with language contact. The sociolinguistic

perspective of the discussion highlights the relationship between language and society and attempts to provide the reader with some intuitions into sociolinguistic theory.

With gender as a variable, an aspect of the linguistic behaviour of men and women in the Cairene community, among some other groups, has been described to see to what extent it conforms to the hypothesis of gender-based variability. Research on the role of gender in linguistic choice in an Arabic-speaking community can yield fruitful grounds for analysing the relationship between form and ideology. It can also supplement crucial insights into social theory by depicting the real values and the actual functions that operate in such a community.

The Arab world has not yet been subject to sufficient studies to delve into realities about its sociolinguistic realms. What is needed then are more studies on stylistic variations and deeper ethnographic research on the real positions of Classical Arabic, the colloquials and genderlects in this part of the globe.

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## **Appendix 1: List of Abbreviations**

**CA** : Cairene Arabic

**ECA** : Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

**H** : High variety

**L** : Low variety

**m.** : masculine

**MSA:** Modern Standard Arabic

**Perf.** : Perfect

**sg.** : Singular

**SVO:** subject / verb / object

**UEA:** Upper Egyptian Arabic

**UE1:** Upper Egypt dialect 1

**UE2:** Upper Egypt dialect 2

**VSO:** verb / subject / object

## **Appendix 2: Pronunciation Conventions**

Brief conventions for reading the transcribed material employed are as follows:

### **Consonant letters**

**θ, ð** voiceless and voiced dental fricatives;

**ʃ, ʒ** voiceless and voiced palato-alveolar fricatives;

**r** an alveolar flap;

**ħ** a voiceless pharyngeal fricative;

**q** a voiceless uvular plosive;

**ʔ** a glottal plosive;

**g** a voiced velar plosive;

**S, dŋ, ʈ** emphatic pharyngealized consonants corresponding to non-emphatic **s, z, t**;

**d** a non-emphatic pharyngealized consonant.

### **Vowel letters**

**i** a half-close to close front spread vowel;

**u** a half-close to close back rounded vowel;

**a** a front open vowel;

**e, o** mid- to half-close front and back vowels;

**ī, ū, á, ē, õ** long realizations of the above vowels respectively.

**About the author**

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