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Abstracts

Abolaji Samuel Mustapha

Gender Variation in Negotiating Social Relationship

Studies of speech acts crucially invoking politeness norms - compliment exchange, apology, thanks and invitations - in US and New Zealand English speech communities (Wolfson 1981, 1983, Holmes 1995) suggested and support Wolfson's 'bulge theory' (1988) of speech act behaviour and social distance. This is akin to Brown and Levinson's positive face whose interpretations require that persons' face are not anointed "just by anyone, but by some particular others especially relevant to the particular goals"(1987). The frequency of exchanges between intimates and total strangers was less than for acquaintances, especially status-equals, hence the 'bulge'. However, it appears limited cross-cultural comparisons, have been made to date. Further insight might call for both qualitative investigation into "the way the social identities of interlocutors vis-à-vis one another condition what is said"(Wolfson 1988), and quantitative profiling of the distribution of such speech acts across the population of those "who ha[ve] the right or obligation to greet, thank, compliment" (Wolfson 1988).

This paper investigates interlocutors' compliment behaviour among educated speakers of Nigerian English – a speech community for which cultural norms appear to differ significantly from those cited above, but language form differs minimally. In particular it focuses on how men's and women's behaviour pattern differently.

In a corpus of 1200 compliment exchanges ethnographically collected in Lagos, Nigeria, the frequency of compliment exchanges between intimates rivals (for females) or surpasses (for men) that between casual acquaintances, which in turn surpasses that of strangers. While the general fit for the speech community to the bulge model is poor, women's norms are closer than men's. Results suggest a lack of universality to Wolfson's generalisation, and indicate some ways in which cultures may differ in classifying and linguistically acting on social relationships Holmes (1995).

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M. Lynn Landweer

Indicators of Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Papua New Guinea is almost as diverse as you can get. There are about 4.3 million people in living within her shores divided into about 822 groups each marked by distinctive language and cultural characteristics. These groups make their livelihood trading off and taking from the sea; along incredible rivers; and from an environmental ecology that is so rich in resources that you can literally stick a branch of a tree or plant in the ground and it will take root and grow. Papua New Guinea is also about as different from the countries of the first and second world as is possible. Not only does she host a phenomenal number of languages, but those languages tend to be small – 623 or 75% of them have 3,000 speakers or less. Further, over half of her total number of living languages have yet to be written. There is no pan-national dominant language, but a number of official, trade, and so called church lingua franca. Papua New Guinea's infrastructure characteristics are unique as well. There is no system of interlinking roads connecting all of the major commercial centers – but there are more airstrips per capita than any other country in the world. There is no universal access to any form of mass media, but communication with your neighbor is highly valued, leading to universal multilingualism. Finally, somewhere between 80 and 85% of the population still live in traditional village contexts. During the last 16 years I have been privileged to live and work among Papua New Guineans. My work has been to sociolinguistically profile targeted speech communities for potential language development projects. The purpose of each profile has been to assess the relative ethnolinguistic vitality of the speech communities I have visited to paint an overall picture of the language group in question. The nature of my work has constantly challenged me to find factors that are significant to the maintenance of cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of these groups. What I am about to present are some of the indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality that I have found useful in profiling languages in the Papua New Guinea context. It should be noted that these indicators are a collection of characteristics that seem to denote a stasis symptomatic of potential endurance or decline in the languages so profiled. They can not technically be considered causes for the stasis, but perhaps symptoms of it. In presenting the eight indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality I will introduce the theoretical base of the sociolinguistic factor(s) involved, present a practical scale for assessment for each factor, and apply each to two languages in the Papua New Guinea setting.

Michelle Straw & Prof. Peter Patrick

(T)-glottalisation among British Anglo and Afro-Caribbean speakers

British urban dialect studies often focus on diffusion and maintenance issues involving contact between local, regional and national varieties. We examine a well-known, though problematic, linguistic variable -- glottalisation of word-final /t/ -- in a situation of contact between an East Anglian (Ipswich in Suffolk) and West Indian varieties of English.

(T)-glottalisation is widespread in UK cities (Collins & Mees 1996, Fabricius 2000, various papers in Foulkes & Docherty 1999, Baker mss.), though its historical provenance and diffusion (from London, Wells 1996; Scotland, Andresen 1968; or E Anglia, Trudgill 1974) remain unresolved. No previous sociolinguistic study exists for Ipswich.

(T)-glottalisation is not reported as a characteristic feature for any variety of Caribbean English except Barbadian (Wells 1982), where it is ubiquitous but little-studied (Blake mss.).

This paper considers contact-induced dialect change among Afro-Caribbean speakers converging towards Ipswich speech. We compare elderly white speakers from Ipswich to first- and second-generation speakers of Barbadian, Nevisian and Jamaican backgrounds.

Docherty & Foulkes (1999) demonstrated that auditory coding is insufficiently accurate to distinguish glottal stops from other forms of glottal behaviour. This study employs both auditory and acoustic methods to analyse variation of word-final /t/ glottalisation, replicating the general point -- that auditory analysis overstates the frequency of glottal stops, while laryngealised variants (perceived as stops) are the most common variant. In addition, several environments often omitted in auditory studies due to potential mis-coding problems prove significant for estimating overall frequencies and sociolinguistic patterning.

We have found:

- Auditory analysis suggests that the order of environments for glottalisation hypothesised for diffusion in SE England (Fabricius 2000, Tollfree 1999) is reflected for both Ipswich whites and British-born Afro-Caribbean speakers (pre-consonantal is most favouring, pre-pausal intermediate, and pre-vocalic least favouring).
- Acoustic analysis, however, reveals a more complex relationship between pre-consonantal and pre-vocalic for /t/-glottalisation in which the order of these environments is reversed (pre-vocalic most favouring and pre-consonantal least favouring).
- The main competing non-standard variant, /t/-deletion or zero, is more favoured in pre-consonantal than pre-vocalic position for both Ipswich whites and Barbadian-linked speakers.
- Barbadians show distinct patterns of glottalisation generally (e.g., far less glottalisation in intervocalic environments), and a distinctive interaction with stress (more glottalisation in unstressed than stressed syllables).

While Caribbean-background speakers appear to follow native British patterns of diffusion, the security and regularity of those patterns -- based on auditory studies -- is open to question. Meanwhile, those speakers with strong dialect backgrounds of glottalisation show distinctive elements in the constraints governing variability.

Susan Fox

The Changing Face of London's 'East End'

The East End of London has always been, as one writer puts it, a 'point of arrival' for immigrant groups [Bermant, 1975]. First the Huguenots arrived between 1681 – 1700 and settled around areas such as Spitalfields, Wapping and Bethnal Green. Next, the Irish came to build the London docks and stayed to take up the ready employment that the docks afforded to them. Behind the Irish came the Jews and between 1881 – 1901, the East End became home for more than forty thousand Jews [Bermant, 1975:162]. Each of these groups has, in turn, either assimilated to the local community or, as they prospered, dispersed to other areas.

In our own time, however, the East End has experienced a major influx of immigrants from Bangladesh. This latest group has not only considered the East End to be a 'point of arrival'; it has laid and spread roots, to the extent that over 55% of all school-age pupils in Tower Hamlets are Bangladeshi in origin1. As a result of chain migration, the Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets nearly all originate from the district of Sylhet in North-east Bangladesh, and their

native language is Sylheti. This language has been maintained and continues to be used among the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets. Children - of Bangladeshi parents - born in London are generally simultaneously bilingual Sylheti / English.

This paper briefly examines the historical background of the Bangladeshi community settlement in Tower Hamlets [the heartland of the East End], from the first arrivals of the seafaring 'lascars' to the current day inhabitants. It also considers the linguistic implications for the well-known and well-documented local dialect variety of Cockney. Have the London born Bangladeshi children adopted the local vernacular or has a new variety emerged? If so, has this variety also influenced the vernacular of the indigenous population? The hypothesis of this research project is that Bangladeshi adolescents are leading significant changes to the local vernacular.

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Endnotes

1 Source: DfEE returns on ethnicity, 1998

Yun-Hsuan Kuo

The Missing Retroflex Initials in Taiwanese Mandarin: a Merger?

Before the present administration came to power, Taiwan had been governed by the Dutch, the Spanish and the Japanese. Following the end of World War II, Taiwan was reclaimed by the Chinese Nationalist Party ('KMT'), bringing with it more than 600.000 soldiers and 500.000 others from different parts of China.i According to the first Taiwan Population Census ('TWC') in 1956, the population of these immigrants amounted to 928,279, and these immigrants brought with them seven major dialects of China, namely Wu (14.71%), Min (18.67%), Yue & Hakka (6.70%), Xiang (9.78%), Mandarin (39.37%), Gan and a very few minor dialects, Tibetan, Mongolian, Miao, and Yao (10.77%)ii. Of the Mandarin group, 2.15% (7,850) were from Beijing, where the standard variety, Beijing Mandarin, is spoken.iii These new immigrants mainly settled in the northern cities, some in the southern cities, but very few in the central cities of Taiwan.

To promote communication between the local Taiwanese people and these new immigrants and to replace standard Japanese, standard Mandarin Chinese, known as 'Guoyu', and based on Beijing phonology, was implemented as the national language and taught at all school levels. At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party ('CCP') in China also promoted standard Mandarin Chinese, known as 'Putonghua'. Local people in Taiwan, however, continued to speak their inherited languages – either Southern Min (SM) dialects ('Taiwanese'), Hakka dialects, or aboriginal languages, as their vernaculars. The promotion of Mandarin was so successful, however, that people below the age of 55 use Mandarin and their mother tongue interchangeably, and those between ages of 45 and 25 typically use more Mandarin than their mother tongues as their vernaculars. Following the promotion of Taiwanese languages from 1993, parents now often choose to speak their mother tongues to their children instead of Mandarin. This results in students between 7 and 22 years speaking Taiwanese and Mandarin interchangeably as their vernaculars.

In 1987, martial law was lifted and communication between China and Taiwan was once again permitted after 38 years of separation. People from both sides of the straits immediately

noticed the dramatic differences between Taiwanese Mandarin ('TM') and Beijing Mandarin ('BM'). The first prominent and noticeable difference is the lack of retroflex initials: /t?/, : /t§?/, <s> : /?/, : /?/ and the final : /?/ in TM.[iv] Instead of realising the retroflex initials as [t?], [t§?], [?], [?] as taught at school, most Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin realise the retroflex initials as their dental counterparts: [t?], [ts?], [?], [?]/[?]/[?], while realising the retroflex final as a schwa [?] in contrast to BM [Œ«?]. This lack of distinction often creates ambiguities, with comprehension often reliant on contextual cues. Both the retroflex initials and their counterparts are traditionally treated as syllabic consonants that carry vowel quality (Chao, 1934; Cheng, 1973; Pulleyblank, 1984), as if they are realised as [t§//`], [t§'`], [§`], [¨?] and [ts`], [ts`'], [s`], [¨`?. This classification is also found in the TM school course syllabus, where both retroflex initials and their dental counterparts are represented by individual symbols and pronounced as syllabic consonants.[v] The vocalic quality embedded in these syllabic consonants is retroflex and dental apical vowels, transcribed here as [2] and [1] respectively. According to standard accounts, the presence of these apical vowels is dependent on the existence of a preceding retroflex or dental initial. Xue (1986: 70) wrote a rule for this: /?/ ?[1] / s _#, ? [2] / r_#. In this case, Xue (1986) treated apical vowels as a result of apicalisation of the high central vowel /?/. Huang (1995: 29), however, argued that treating the retroflexes and their dental counterparts as syllabic consonants is unreasonable and fails to explain actual language realizations, e.g. an isolated [1] is permissible in the An-Hui Mandarin ('AHM') dialect. Lin and Wang (2000) also proposed to treat the apical vowels as distinct vowels and not as part of the syllabic consonants. Since An-Hui Mandarin dialect constituted 12.25% of the original Mandarin population of Taiwan, it would not be too surprising if we found isolated [1] in the variety of Mandarin spoken in Taiwan today.

To investigate how these regional Mandarin varieties have developed into a locally distinctive TM, I collected data from Keelung, one of the northern cities where speakers from the Mainland concentrated (soldiers' villages: 1,287 families, 23 villages[vi]), which has also served as a transition city before most migrated to other parts of Taiwan. I present two research questions here: (1) The lack of retroflex initials and finals in TM is often regarded as being due to a merger in Taiwan with their dental counterparts. But, was it really a merger? Why are the retroflex initials and finals missing in Taiwan? Could it be possible that they were never actually brought to Taiwan by BM speakers? If they were introduced to Taiwan, is it possible that the number of BM speakers was too small for retroflex initials and finals to survive into TM? (2) If we were to accept that the retroflex initials were merged into their dental counterparts, we must also accept that the retroflex apical vowel was merged with its dental counterpart, since prescriptive grammars and phonologies of Mandarin suggest that both retroflex and dental apical vowels should always occur following retroflex and dental initials respectively.[vii] However, in Keelung TM, the retroflex initials have either been replaced by dentals, or have, occasionally, been entirely deleted, leaving an isolated dental apical vowel. Sometimes the apical vowels are deleted, leaving dental initials. Furthermore, sometimes, both the apical vowels and the initials are deleted. So, what is happening to the retroflexes, the dentals and the apical vowels?

This paper investigates the history and use of both retroflex initials and apical vowels in the Taiwanese dialect of Mandarin that has emerged since the arrival of Mandarin speakers from the Mainland after 1945. The questions serve to stress the importance of the population composition of the source language in relation to the newly emergent output language. The results support the 'founder principle' first proposed by Mufwene (1996, later revised in 2001) and confirmed by various scholars, who proposed that if one wishes to claim that a sound change from a conservative form to an innovative form has actually taken place, one must make sure that the conservative form actually once existed in the relevant speech community (Britain, 2000, 2001). Without investigating the composition of the founder population of Mandarin in Taiwan, one would easily come to the conclusion, as many have, that the deretroflexion process results from the influence of SM without being able to explain why an isolation of [1] is permitted (isolation of [1] is not found in SM, but found in AHM & Wu). This paper, thus, hopes to contribute to both dialect contact as well as language contact studies. It

is hoped that the process and the result of a both linguistically and sociohistorically informed investigation can promote our understanding of the emergence of a new variety in a contact situation.

Endnotes

* I'd like to thank the following people for their patience, help and useful comments on previous presentations of parts of this work: my supervisor, David Britain; colleagues at the Variationist Workshop at Essex University (May 2002); audiences at University Paris VII (May 2002).

i This is the figure claimed by most mainlanders but is not officially documented.

ii This percentage is derived from the first TWC in 1956 and from Norman's (1988) classification of Chinese dialects. Since TWC only provides us with population by provinces and cities, but not dialect population, I calculated populations from Norman (1988: 191; 197; 199; 204; 207).

iii From the TWC of 1956.

iv Following the Pinyin system, the retroflex initials are transcribed as <zh>, <ch>, <sh>, and <r>.

v ?- /t§/, ?- /t§?/, ? - /?/, ? - /?/.

vi http://library.taiwanschoolnet.org/cyberfair/C0112800150/story/ lit_story_11.htm.

vii Chao (1934: 374) described the sound quality of apical vowels as 'a vocalized prolongation of the preceding consonant.' Pulleyblank (1984: 50) described them as 'syllabic consonants' [z`] or [

Kana Suzuki

The Sequential Organisation of Telephone Openings in Japanese

Telephone conversation has received great attention from conversation analysis. On the one hand, observations of telephone conversation as one type of talk-in-interaction in which people commonly engage in everyday life has provided researchers with the grounds for discovering some central features of talk-in-interaction, such as "turn-taking organization" (Sacks et al. 1974) and "adjacency pairs" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). On the other hand, examination of phone calls also revealed that telephone conversation itself has a particular structure which is distinct from the ones in other types of talk-in-interaction (Schegloff 1968, 1979, 1986). In particular, opening parts of telephone conversation which have been viewed as simple and trivial routines in fact constitute highly and compactly organised phenomena for the interactional purpose of getting the conversation started in short time (Schegloff 1986). This paper reports how telephone openings in Japanese are sequentially organised. Comparison of the openings of both mundane and institutional telephone calls with reference to what Schegloff calls "core opening sequences" in American telephone conversation openings (Schegloff 1986) shows that Japanese openings share a similar structure of social actions being implemented within the sequences. Moreover, it is argued that this set of sequences is not

strictly fixed, but contingently deployed and achieved within each telephone call.

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Andromahi Koufogiorgou.

When a dying language becomes a Lingua Franca

This paper is based on my recent empirical research in the Greek village of Metsovo, whose population are originally speakers of Vlach-Aromanian, a Romance language of the Balkans. Vlach-Aromanian is loosing speakers. The younger generations speak it less frequently and less proficiently and it seems highly probable that it is heading towards total shift to Greek. The multilingual character of Metsovo is further complicated by the presence of Albanians since the early 1990s, with the influx of economic immigrants from Albania to Greece. There are two different groups in Metsovo; the Vlach-speaking, Christian Orthodox and the non-Vlach Muslim Albanians.The focus of this paper is the Vlach-speaking group. Many of them are bilingual in Vlach and Albanian and speak no Greek or at least they spoke no Greek when they first came to Greece. The interesting point in this case is the emergence of a situation of a dying language –i.e. Vlach-Aromanian- coming to be used as a lingua franca between Vlachs from Metsovo and Vlachs from Albania. Their presence appears to influence the patterns of use of Vlach in Metsovo, since the necessity for communications in Vlach arises. It also gives us some insight into the complex issue of the Vlach identity. Could this unlikely source offer a glimpse of hope for Vlach-Aromanian?

Christina Sarigiannidou

English Language competence among Runaway and Committed Slaves and Servants in 18th Century Virginia

Objectives:

To analyse the English language competence of Runaway and Committed Servants and Slaves in the 18th century, based on the data given by a collection of advertisements published between 1730-1769 regarding the escape or capture of the Servants/ Slaves. Further, to test any association between their English Language Competence and their age, origin, gender, status, profession, being runaway or committed and the rewards offered.

Method:

It includes three stages:

I. Obtainment of the data: I retrieved 360 advertisements, that had a reference to the Slave/ Servant's language, from a total of 800, published between 1730-69. I included them into a Word document, giving each one an identifying number suitable for their organisation.
II. Organisation of the data: Working on an Excel Document, I organised the information included in the advertisements into independent quantifiable categories, which would form the explanatory variables for the English Language Competence. In this Workbook each individual is recognisable by his/her identifying number.
III. Statistical Analysis: I transferred the relevant categories-variables of the Excel Workbook into an SPSS Workbook, using the SPSS Program for Windows 8.0. I calculated descriptive and inferential statistics to test the hypotheses, firstly in all samples and then separately for Servants and Slaves.

Results:

Descriptive statistics (graphs, figures) give detailed information of all the proportions about the age, origin, gender, status, profession, being runaway or committed and the rewards in the total amount of the samples and separately for the Servants and the Slaves. It is worth mentioning that 60% of all individuals are referred to as speaking "good/ pretty good" English. The inferential statistics proved significance between the English language competence and the origin of the Slaves. Also, bad English competence was associated with a bigger chance of being captured. No significant relation was proved between the English competence of the Slaves/ Servants and the rewards offered for their capture.

Yasemin Yildiz

Language contact and phonological adaptation: A sociolinguistic study of language use by three Generations of English-Turkish bilinguals living in London

Where languages are in contact, certain kinds of linguistic phenomena such as borrowing, interference and transfer will generally be found. Interference is one of the most commonly described phenomena of bilingualism. Previous studies in bilingual speech have mainly focused on grammatical or lexical interference- including my own previous research (Yildiz 2001)- yet little attention has been devoted to phonological interference. My aim, therefore, is to address language contact and its consequences, especially in terms of phonological interference, and the empirical evidence for this will be taken from English-Turkish bilinguals living in North London. This study will look closely at code switching and code mixing in order to trace the phonological and morphophonological influence of Turkish (e.g. vowel harmony, agglutination, etc.) on the English language of English-Turkish bilinguals. This study also intends to show certain similarities that exist between the study of lexical and grammatical interference in terms of theoretical issues. It is evident that age is a crucial factor in the acquisition of L2 phonology, hence most early bilinguals have no trace of Turkish accent while speaking English. But why it is that phonological interference is also found in competent bilinguals is the focal point of this investigation. Dorian (1981) has found that proficiency continuum may develop between two languages in contact and this is certainly the case with the second and third generations who can converge to Turkish pronunciation or diverge (neutralise Turkish words). We therefore surmise that phonological adaptation among the first generation is due to linguistic constraints; while for the subsequent generations other extra-linguistic factors (e.g. interlocutors) are in play. One way of accounting for the speech effects attributed to interlocutor differences is through Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Smith 1979). This theory has mainly been tested on monolinguals, but it would also be interesting to apply this theory to bilinguals in order to gain

a deeper understanding of how and when individuals monitor their speech behaviour. In order to capture all the extra-linguistic as well as the linguistic factors into account we will analyse a bilingual's speech behaviour primarily as a member of an ethnolinguistic group in an interpersonal communication setting, and the findings will be obtained from spoken data only. Assuming that there are similarities and variations between the first and subsequent generations micro-/macro-sociolinguistic analysis will also be incorporated into this investigation. (Bilingualism, bilinguality, phonological interference, intra-sentential and inter-sentential code switching, code mixing, Speech Accommodation Theory). Dorian, N. C. (1981) Language Death. The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Giles, H. and Powesland, P. F. (1975) Speech Style and Social Evaluation. London: Academic Press. Giles, H. and Smith, P. (1979) 'Accommodation theory: optimal levels of convergence'. In Giles, H. and St Clair, R. N. eds, Language and Social Psychology. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 45-65 Yildiz, Y. (2001) The Bilingual Speech of the Turkish Community (from Turkey) in London: a study of the first and second generations. Unpublished BA. English Language dissertation, University of Westminster.

Praparat Khamkhong

Mixing, levelling, simplification and reallocation: Dialect contact in the Ban Khlong-Sathon speech community, Thailand.

This paper studies the linguistic variability in the Ban Khlong-Sathon (BKS) speech community, a newly established village in Thailand. It takes into consideration the age group and birthplace of the speakers. The community under study is a clear example of a dialect contact community and a new town, settled about 40 years ago. Its population consists of people from various places speaking different regional dialects. This study is based on the diachronic approach using the inhabitants' casual speech between friends. The informants are divided into three age groups: old, middle-aged and young generations. The results are analysed and interpreted within the dialect contact and new dialect formation theoretical framework It is assumed that the dialect contact processes as proposed in Trudgrill (1986) must have taken or have been taking place in the speech community. That is, the process of koineisation: mixing, levelling, simplification and reallocation, should have occurred. Moreover the principles of koinisation proposed by Kerswill and Williams (1992 & 2000) could also be used to predict the outcome of dialect contact in the speech community. In short, the study aims to find out whether the speech community undergoes the process of koinisation; if it does, which processes are found and at which stage of koinisation it currently is in. The study also attempts to explore which principles of koinisation are at work in BKS speech community. The study investigates four variables in the BKS speech community: the negator variable, the (r) variable, the clusters, and the diphthong (ue) variable. It finds that there are two variants of the negator: [mai] and [bor]. The negators [mai] and [bor] have gone the process of levelling and reallocation. Although there is an increase use of [bor], [mai] is not levelled out. The two forms are refunctionalised. [mai] is used in a more formal context while [bor] in a more casual one. The (r) variable have three variants: [r], [l], and [h]. These variants have also undergone the process of levelling and focusing. The [r], [l], and [h] are competing leading to the reduction of [r] and [h], and the adoption of [l], because [l] is the majority variant. In terms of clusters, the (r) and (l) clusters have undergone the cluster dropping change, which involves the deletion of the second consonant of the clusters. The (w) cluster is the only cluster that is adopted into the speech community. For the diphthong (ue), it has [ue] and [ia] as its variants. [ia] is levelled out, leaving [ue] to be the sole survivor. The disappearance of [ia] comes from the fact that it is highly restricted, marked and stereotyped.

Hanadi Ismail

"We Shaghoris" and "We in Dumar" A Sketch of the Social Make-up and Types of Affilliation in Two Neighbourhoods in Damascus City

Arabic sociolinguistics had traditionally focused assumed some form of approximation to the Standard. Propositions of the existence of more than one linguistic variety such as Educated Spoken Arabic have led to further investigations. Understanding the mechanism of variation in diglossic Arabic demanded a more realistic approach through scrutinizing the spoken vernacular and the local prestigious forms (Abdel-Jawad 1987, Al-Wer 1997, Haeri 1994).

The structure of Arab society has been characterized in sociological studies as embracing ' a strong sense of belonging through sustained commitments and loyalties to family, community, and friends', (Barakat 1993:24). Such a claim was a motive, among others, to investigate the existing types of networks today in Damascus, and if these have implications on the linguistic behaviour along with other social factors as gender, education and age.

This talk sets out a few issues of my research study in progress. It particularly draws on the classification of my subjects into neighbourhoods and the justification of a neighbourhood study of Shaghoor, a downtown area in Old Damascus; and Dumar, a suburban district which is 5 km to the west of the city. I am looking at the social make-up of neighbourhoods, what constitutes the 'traditional' vs. the 'suburban' Damascene, and whether the local identities and social values between both are defined in terms of class or communal cleavages. Brought into focus too are type of family structure, type of social networks, and personal activities in each neighbourhood. A Shaghoori is strongly affiliated to the 'descendents' local values and traditions', whereas in Dumar the affiliation is a class one, 'being a residence area for the elite Damascenes'.

Notwithstanding the prominent differences between Shaghoor and Dumar, affiliation in both is channelled through a great sense of belonging to Damascus.

I am considering four linguistic variables, namely palatalization of plain and pharyngealized /t//d/, trill /r/, fronted/backed/a/, and 3rd person feminine and plural pronouns /ha/ /hon/. Vowel /a/ will be particularly highlighted.

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