

LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES AND ETHNICITY IN ALGERIAN DIALECTAL CONTEXT: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The interaction between linguistic reflections and ethnicity has been considered in various studies on language variation in sociolinguistics (Labov, 1963). Accordingly, this research work is a comparative analysis which aims at describing the differences between the lexis of two Algerian social dialects co-existing in the same geographical space in Algerian West . These varieties are called after their indigenous ethnic groups: 'El- Ksour' and 'El-Amour'. This paper endeavours to consider the relation between linguistic behaviour and non-linguistic factors, specifically ethnicity. It tends to provide social interpretation to certain linguistic realities such as aspects of similarities, differences and reasons behind this distinction. Likewise, our concern is to draw attention towards individual ethnic identity negotiation and identification within multiethnic (multitribal) speech community.

Keywords: Ethnicity – language variation – social dialect –social factors.

INTRODUCTION

Remarkable linguistic achievements in studying language seem to have extensively flourished during the last century raising many questions in several fields of research. These works shed more light on different linguistic behaviours and to their social correlation. This has called for the progress of *sociolinguistics*.

As far as sociolinguistics is concerned, the investigators in such field relate the occurrence of the variants of the linguistic variable to a number of social factors within the same speech community (Labov's work 1966 in New York City, Trudgill 1974 in Norwich, and others). Thus, they were fundamentally interested in answering some questions such as: what are the factors that affect linguistic behaviour differences? Why and how do neighbouring varieties differ? Such questions open the doors for other important discussions and investigations.

Many sociolinguistic studies on the Arabic-speaking world have been interested in investigating different dialects in comparison with MSA due to the wide typical heterogeneity in the social organizations, national constructions, urban contexts as well as language situations. In this respect, many factors were taken into consideration such as: sedentary and nonsedentary (first recognized by Anis (1952) and later by Al-Jundi (1965)) and rural versus urban. The 'tripartite distinction' which is comprised by the stated factors (urban, rural and nomadic Bedouin groups) cannot be defined in purely social, cultural or even geographic items (Cadora, 1992).

However, in recent years, analytic investigations have tackled the description of the dialects in contact within urbanized contexts influenced by non-urban ones which are purely Bedouin (Miller *et al.*, 2007). In this sense, the current work explores the lexical differences between two Algerian social dialects in contact within an intricate linguistic profile. The investigation

has been carried out in Naama (Algeria), exactly Ain Sefra as a speech community in which many social and geographical linguistic varieties have coexisted for about a half century. Though the linguistic situation of this speech community is rich, the researcher tends to introduce two distinct varieties which are: El-Ksour and El-Amour varieties (henceforth, Ksr and Amr respectively) Thus, this study aims at investigating the following research questions: What does characterize the main linguistic differences between the Algerian varieties (Ksr and Amr) and according to what social factors?

As a way to facilitate the investigation, some questions related to the issue are put forward as follows:

- 1- How can one distinguish between the speakers of each dialect in one interaction?
- 2- On what linguistic level differences can occur ?
- 3- Why are these dialects still different though they coexist within the same geographical area of Ain Sefra?

SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

By the emergence of sociolinguistics, in the late 19th century, visions towards language manifestations (variations) had become much clearer. Sociolinguists attempt at developing the rules, differentiating between the terms and organizing the areas of their research methodology on social basis. In addition, the fact of including different social factors in the study of different linguistic behaviours had made the field of investigation richer and more complex regarding the methods and results (Miller *et al.*, 2007). Thus, sociolinguistics drew the attention towards a detailed study of language relying upon a multi-dimensional categorization of the informant's the social factors, such as age (older/younger), gender (male/female), context (rural/urban), and others. In addition, a comprehensive explanation of various distinct linguistic behaviours has almost been reached.

Language variation

As it has been widely noticed and linguistically agreed, one of the properties of language is its variability, as it is simply shown in Waurdhaugh (2006 p.04): "The language we use in everyday living is remarkably varied", he also asserts that variability, as a language stamp, offers the researchers several fields to discuss, since it is not that static phenomenon as it was seen. In the same line of thought, in Trudgill (1995 p.20), there is a noticeable stress on investigating language within its social scene of performance in correlation with its social components such as: age, gender and ethnic group (factors related to speakers), setting, language purposes, and others (contextual matters). These factors are important causes behind the linguistic variation which display under two general divisions which are *language* and *dialect*. This dichotomy is summarized in Haugen's view (1966) by referring to a language as a single or a set of linguistic norms and a dialect as one of these norms.

Moreover, there are other perspectives of division different in form but alike in function which classify dialects into:

- 1- Regional dialects (geographical varieties): the linguistic differences occur because of the geographical barriers. In other words, individuals living in urban cities speak differently from others living in rural regions. For instance, in the Arab world, their dialects are forms of the classical Arabic, indeed, the difference between them lies firstly on the difference between the geographical locations of the continents, the countries, the towns and so on. This is what makes the dialects on this level classified into a continuum of mutual intelligibility, i.e., the adjacent dialects geographically are the least different linguistically.

- 2- Social dialects (sociolects): linguistic differentiation is related to variables as social stratification and groups where there is no interference of regional factors (Chambers and Trudgill, 2004). In other words, there is no account for the speakers' regional belonging but rather their social membership, since speakers from the same social group may speak in the same way though their existence in different areas and vice versa.
- 3- Professional varieties (or registers): this sociolinguistic term refers to 'varieties according to use' (Hudson, 1996p. 45) i.e., the collection of terms and expressions used in certyai social networks, such as job

Ethnicity

The term *ethnicity* has been firstly introduced in the social science literature in the 1950s. Like gender and age, ethnicity has been considered as a key aspect of individuals' identity (O'Reilly, 2001; Good, 2008). In addition, language is considered as an ethnicity index, since it indicates the speaker's belonging to certain social group (Lyons, 1981; Coulmas, 1999). Belonging to one's ethnic group is not willingly or voluntarily, it is based on how the members who share the same way of life, traditions and behaviours define themselves and are defined by others, i.e., the way they distinguish themselves and are distinguished by the others is held through the appearance of cultural traits which identify people ethnically. As Crystal (2006 p. 302) shows, the ethnic group term can be used in order to identify many of the 'tribal divisions' by which numerous countries in Africa are characterized; however, both of the terms 'tribe' and 'ethnic group' are used alternatively in this research work with no different denotative meaning.

Bedouin/Urban/Rural classification

Speaking about this kind of classification within the Arabic context is clearly epitomised in Ibn Jinni in the tenth (10th) century and Ibn Khaldoun's *Muqaddima* in the fourteenth (14th) century. Many studies in traditional dialectology inherited from Ibn Khaldoun have revealed that the Arabic people patterns are typically divided into two types: Nomadic (Bedouin) and Sedentary (rural and urban). Accordingly, in correlation with this contextual classification, there are three different typological divisions of Arabic varieties: Bedouin (*badawî*) dialect and Sedentary (*hadarî*) dialect in which there are rural (*qarawî* or *fellâhî*) and urban (*madanî*) dialects (Cadora, 1992; Miller *et al.*, 2007). Many studies on the dialects of North Africa have followed Ibn Khaldoun's historical demarcations such as Ph. Marçais (1960).

In his description of Bedouin and Sedentary dialects, J. Cantineau (1937, 1941) distinguishes between the two categories of dialects by characterizing the bedouin as the one which keeps the realisation of the three interdentalals /e, ð, ð̣/ which are produced as the two dentals /t, d / in sedentary one. In addition, the voiced [g] which is the realization of /q/ in MSA is the most known feature within the bedouin dialects in cotrast with the voiceless [q], the glottal stop [ʔ] and the voiceless plosive [k] which are sedentary features, specifically urban ones.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of informants introduced in the current study includes 120 persons between the age of 10 and 98 years old. The following table summarises the categories in which the informants are stratified and distributed:

Age (years old) gender	Ksr variety		Amr variety	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
10 – 25	10	10	10	10
26 – 50	10	10	10	10
51 – 90	10	10	10	10
Total	30	30	30	30

Table 1: The Distribution of Informants in correlation with Age and Gender.

The research methodology has been conducted in a triangular series of data-collecting methods, so as to gather reliable quantitative and qualitative data serving the various requirements of the work. Such instruments of investigation are: recordings, word-list and interviews.

RESULTS

1. Questionnaire and recording results: ethnic linguistic peculiarities

• **Lexical variation**

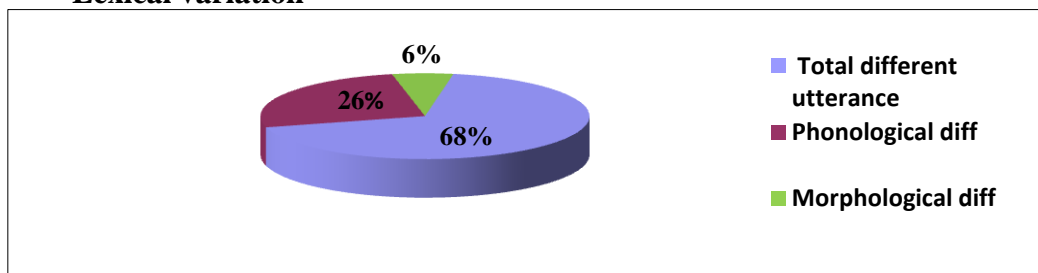


Chart 1: The Differences in the Lexical Relationship between Ksr and Amr

• **Consonantal comparison of Amr and Ksr vis-à-vis MSA.**

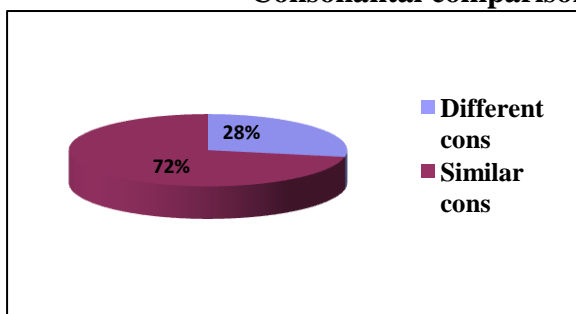


Chart 2: Amr Consonants Vs MSA

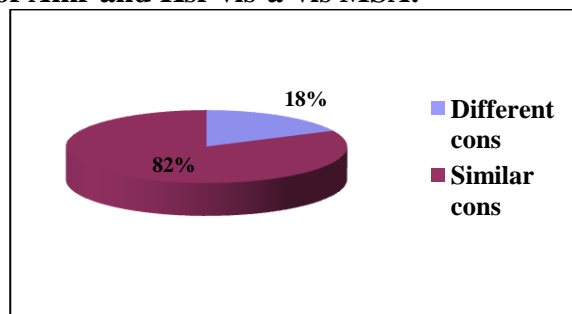


Chart 3: Ksr Consonants Vs MSA

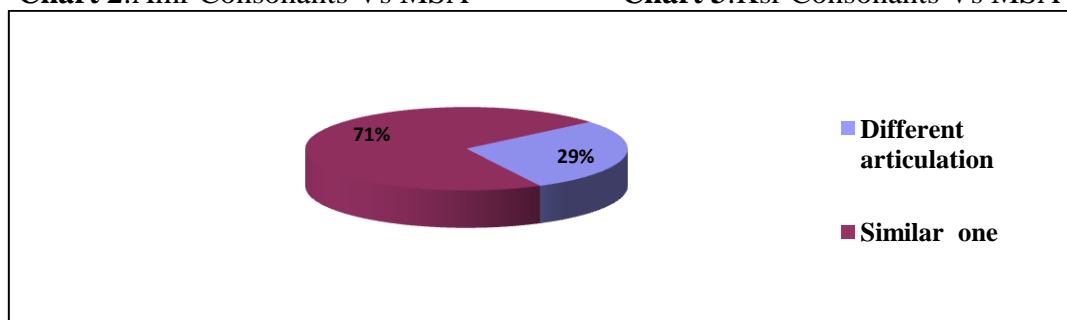


Chart 4: Amr Consonants Vs Ksr Ones

- **Vowels in Ksr Vs Amr vis-a vis MSA**

MSA	Amr Variety	Ksr Variety	English Gloss
/i:/ or /e:/	[ai] or [ei]	[i:] or [e:]	
/baʃi:r/ /ʔalhʃe:r/	[bæʃair] [læhʃairæ]	[bæʃi:r] [læhʃe:ræ]	Proper name 'bashir' Carpet

Table 2: Moving from a Long Vowel to a Diphthong in Amr Variety.

MSA	Ksr Variety	Amr Variety	English Gloss
/jadxulu/ /jubaddilu/	[jædxəl] [jæddəl]	[judxul] [jæddæl]	He enters He changes
/dʒabha/ /maqbara/	[ʒæbhæ] [mæqqæbræ]	[ʒæbhæ] [mærræbræ]	The front Cemetery

Table 3: The Decay of Short Vowels in Ksr Vs Amr.

- **Consonants in Ksr Vs Amr vis-a vis MSA**

MSA	Ksr Variety	Amr Variety	English Gloss
/t/	[t ^h]	[t]	She cooks He cancels
/taʃbuxu/ /jubʃilu/	[tʃ ^h bjuːb] [jbuːtʃ ^h ɪl]	[tʃæ bjuːb] [jættʃæɪl]	
/q/	[q]	[ɣ]	100 kg It shines
/qintʃæ:r/ /jæbruqu/	[qɪntʃæ:r] [jæbræq]	[ɣæntʃæ:r] [jæbræɣ]	
/ʔ/	[ʔ]	[ʕ]	Question Koran
/suʔæ:l/ /qurʔæ:n/	[suʔæ:l] [qurʔæ:n]	[suʕæ:l] [qurʕæ:n]	
/d/	[d]	[ð]	Silver Hyena
/fidqæ/ /qabʕ/ /θ/	[fɪdɔqæ] [dɔbæʕ] [t]	[fæ ðdæ] [ðbæʔ] [θ]	Revolution snow
/θaura/ /θaldz/	[tɔɪɹ] [d]	[θauræ] [θæɪɹ]	
/ð/	[dræ:ʕ]	[ðræ:ʕ]	Arm
/ðira:ʕ/ /ðahab/ /jaðu:bu/	[ðhæb] [jdæb]	[ðhæb] [jðu:b]	Gold It melts
/ð / /ðufr/ /ʔaððil/	[d] [d fɔr] [dɔðɪ]	[ð] [ðfær] [ððæ ɪ]	A nail Shade/shadow
/ʕ/	[ʕ]	[ʔ]	
/baʕi:d/ /ʔal ʕa:m/	[bʕi:d] [lʕæ:m]	[bʔeid] [lʔæ:m]	Far A year
/s/	[ɣ]	[q]	
/ʔalɣuba:r/ /ʔalɣada:ʔ/	[lɣæbræ] [lɔrdæ]	[lqæbræ] [læqdæ]	Dust Lunch

Table 4: Consonantal Distinction between Amr and Ksr Varieties.**2. Interview results: Morphological features**• **Reduplication**

Ksr variety	Amr variety	English Gloss
[j +dəq dəq]	∅	He is knocking or making a noise as knocks
[j+qəm qəm]	∅	He humiliates or insults someone
[j+kəh kəh]	∅	He is coughing without interruption
[j+ zər zər]	∅	He is pulling

Table 5: Reduplication Verbs in Ksr variety• **Plural**

Word class	word root	Ksr Plural	Amr Plural	English Gloss
Noun	<tjr>	[tɔjjær+æ :t]	[tjæje:r]	Planes
	<zrw>	[z ræw+i:n]	[zɜræ]	Puppies
	<ʃjn>	[ʃi:n+i:n]	[ʃ' ju:n]	Eyes
	<flh>	[l fəllæ :h+i:n]	[l fəllæ : hæ]	Farmers
Adjective	<xlʃ>	[mæxlœʃ+i:n]	[mxæ:leɪʃ]	Astonished
	<ʃbʃ>	[ʃəbʃæn+i:n]	[ʃbæ:ʃ]	Full up
	<ʃfr>	[ʃofr+i:n]	[ʃof ar]	Yellow(pl)

Table 6: The Plural in Krs and Amr Varieties.• **Phonologization**

[g]/[q] contrast	English gloss
a-[jqi:s]	To throw away
b-[jgi:s]	To try on clothes
a-[mæqro:d]	A kind of cake
b-[mægro:d]	Broken
a-[jqərqəb]	To make noise by hitting things
b-[jgərgəb]	To drink quickly

Table 7: The Contrastive Use of [q] and [g] In Ksr Variety**DISCUSSION**

This empirical research work exhibits the tight relationship between linguistic differences and ethnicity, in which the dialects under study referred to different ethnic groups which they still display outstanding differences despite of their existence within the same geographical territory. The ethnic groups are:

a) El-Amour (or ‘ ‘Amûr’ in some documents): it is a nomadic tribe who is believed to be from purely Arabic origins since Ibn Khaldoun states ‘El-Amour’ as a branch of Arabs of ‘Banu Hillal’. These nomadic groups were living in the countryside and in Amour Mountains which are the mountains between Ouled Naiel Mountains from the east and El-Ksour Mountains from the west.

b) Ksour (or ‘ qsûr’ in certain documents) : they are the inhabitants of the Ksour, the collection of ancient buildings, named so after the Arabs’ arrival meaning ‘castles’, they are said to refer approximately to the second (2nd) century AD. The majority of its settlers are Amazigh, Zenetes Ouacine tribe they were speaking only ‘Zenata’ or in other word ‘Chelha’.

In some cases, it is quite difficult to classify a dialect as Bedouin or sedentary because of the vernaculars which have been emerged from the process of bedouinisation and urbanisation (Miller *et al.*, 2007). Yet, by applying all the considerations (Cantineau 1937; 1941, & Ph. Marçais 1960) on the Ksr and Amr varieties, the former seems to be closer to a rural variety; while the latter might be classified as Bedouin variety due to the origin of its ethnic group.

The distinction between the two varieties lies on different lexical categories such as verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Concerning the definite article /ʔal/ in MSA, if it is followed by a consonant which is articulated in the same/or approximate area of articulation of /l/ (called ‘Ash-Shamsi’ letters), the latter is elided and the consonant is geminated as in: /ʔaʃʃams/; when the preceded letter is not Shamsi (called ‘Qamari’ letter), /l/ is pronounced as in /ʔalqamar/. Thereby, in both varieties the same rules are applied, but the ‘Hamza’ /ʔ/ is omitted with the two cases of consonants as in [ssəmʃ] (geminated /s/), and [lgæmræ] (pronounced /l/) correspondingly ([g] is the dialectal variant of the MSA variable /q/).

Besides similarities which gather both dialects in the same side of lexis, the other side of differences comprises categories of lexicon which are entirely different i.e. a ksr notion is expressed in totally different item within Amr variety, other lexicon are phonologically or morphologically distinct or both.

In addition, one can remark that Amr linguistic system consists of a great amount of different articulated consonants because of the operation of uttering a consonant instead of the other though the graphemes are alike i.e. their written forms are the same but their articulations are different. (*see table 4.*).

Moreover, among the morphological feature, Ksr variety in contrast to Amr one is characterised by the huge occurrence of the reduplicated verbs which refer to the action frequently repeated or which take a long time when it is happening (*see table 5*).

A salient morphological distinction between the dialects under analysis is the noun plural. The plural patterns in MSA are divided into two types: the irregular /dʒamʃ ʔattaksi:r/ and the regular /dʒamʃ ʔassalim/. The Amr is characterised by the irregular “broken” plural considering different patterns, such as [fæ ʃʃæ:læ] which is used for both of masculine and feminine; whereas Ksr speakers use the regular plural patterns, which is {stem}+/ æ :t/ (for feminine) and {stem}+/ i:n/ (for masculine). (*see table 6*)

Some items which occur in Ksr variety are sometimes articulated with the voiced velar [g] and other times with the uvular [q] to mean different things, this feature describes what Jakobson (1972) refers to as ‘*phonologization*’. Thus, the uvular [q] is a contextual variant of the velar /g/ since it occurs in the same structural environment and different contexts. This fact is not found in Amr variety. (*see table 7*)

The realisation of /ʁ/ as [q] and vice versa in Amr has created a considerable amount of **homophony**. This feature displays a great homophonic ambiguity between Amr and Ksr terms, consider the following representative examples: [qreɪb] (in Amr means ‘stranger’) and [qri:b] (in Ksr means ‘near’); Whereas [ʁreɪb] (in Amr means ‘near’) and [ʁri:b] (in Ksr means ‘stranger’), the verb [bqæ] in Amr means ‘he loved’; Whereas, in Ksr it means ‘he stayed’ and vice versa. The appropriate meaning is depicted from the context.

Furthermore, this paper and numerous studies has tackled the varieties based on the ethnicity criterion as ‘ethnic varieties’ which “may serve a full range of symbolic social roles and functions, from marking relations of social dominance and subordination to constructing and negotiating individual and group identities” (Llamas *et al.* 2007 p. 82). Thus, ethnicity is considered as an identity stamp for the individual to identify his individuality and be identified as a member among his group. In an attempt to explain the reasons behind the preservation of the differences between the social varieties, one can refer to the As it is the case of any linguistic behaviour, ethnic varieties supply social functions for denoting the identity of the individuals as well as the group.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the empirical research work is to find out certain aspects which present the lexical differences between two main social varieties among others of Ain Sefra which are El-Ksours and El-Amour (abbr. Ksr and Amr respectively). Ethnicity is the salient clue for the distinction which is indisputable on the lexical level. Each variety has its own distinctive features on different levels of analysis such as the phonological and morphological one, in addition to the lexical level which denotes different cultural and environmental heritage.

Since language is basically the outcome of culture, the different cultural realities of the two varieties are displayed in the different linguistic realisations between these two varieties. The distinctions on the lexical level are governed by the social factors such as age and gender. The field-researcher has pointed out that the lexical distinction existed between Ksr and Amr varieties is interpreted in totally different lexeme and utterances that show morphological or phonological contrasts (or both).

Eventually, the most important cause behind the distinction between the social dialects, is the individual’s sense of ethnic belonging to express, protect and maintain the own customs and traditions (Spolsky 1998 p. 57). As a matter of fact, various question have arisen during this investigation among which one can state the following: one can state among them the ones which are different in form but similar in aim for further research: within the process of dialect contact, do these varieties still display the distinction? does this sense of ethnic belonging resist in front of urbanization or bedouinization processes? What are the social factors which may influence the individual social identity?

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