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The Variables of the Second Person Singular Feminine Present Tense Morpheme Used by Housha Bedouin Female Speakers in Jordan

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Abstract:

The present study aims at analyzing and describing a variety used by the Bedouin speakers who live in one of the Jordanian villages that is located in the northern areas of Jordan, close to the Syrian borders. The inhabitants of this village descend from a Great Tribe (Bani Khalid) that originally relates to the Muslim leader Khalid Bin Al-Waleed; they communicate using a variety of the Bedouin dialect which is widespread in Jordan. The researcher analyzed the two variables of the second person singular feminine present tense morpheme used by female speakers in this village; these allomorphs are: (i:n& i) that are added to the present tense form of the verb when addressing a female. The researcher recorded some utterances produced by different female speakers in various situations and contexts, and she divided the speakers subject of the study into two groups: Group (A) and group (B) in which their ages differ. The study, which is based on direct listening to the speakers, revealed that younger females tend to use the less frequent variable since it is considered, in their view, as more prestigious than the more frequent one that is selected by older females and considered closer to Classic Arabic. Moreover, the study showed that younger females tend to use the less frequent variable in the presence of outsiders as a sign of convergence.

Keywords: Variables, Housha, Bedouin

1. Introduction

Dialects are found in all human languages to indicate an individual way of speaking. A certain dialect has its own idiosyncrasy in terms of: Vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation. In the Arabic language, there are hundreds of dialects that diverge widely from one another—both from country to country and within a single country. Arabic, in its native environment typically occurs in a diagnostic situation, which means that native speakers learn and use two substantially different language forms in different aspects of their lives. Variant dialects are used for nearly all everyday speaking situations or domains; on the other hand, Standard Arabic is learned in schools and is used for most printed material, TV news reporting and interviews, sermons and other formal situations.

Ferguson (1959) refers to the Arabic-speaking world as being characterized by the term *diglossia* since Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used only formally and is a shared written language. Arabs speak various dialects that differ according to geographical, social and gender factors; of course, there are other minor factors that contribute to speaking a particular dialect across the borders of the Arab World.

In Jordan, there are many various dialects spreading widely from the northern to the southern parts of the country. These regional dialects are highly indicative i.e., they distinguish the speakers from their way of using the language in its sounds or pronunciation, structure, and vocabulary. Bedouin tribes spread over the whole Jordanian regions: North, Middle, and South; and there are also certain varieties within each region which distinguish it from others and give it a kind of individuality and idiosyncrasy.

2. Literature Review and Empirical Studies

The study of age in relation to language, particularly the study of sociolinguistic variation, lies at the intersection of life stage and history. The individual speaker or age cohort of speakers at any given moment represents simultaneously a place in history and a life stage. Age stratification of linguistic variables, then, can reflect change in the speech of the community as it moves through time (historical change), and change in the speech of the individual as he or she moves through life (agegrading), (Eckert, 1997).

Mallinson and Childs (2005) present a paper on a study of variation in the speech of middle-aged and older women residents of Texana, North Carolina, a community of 153 African Americans situated in the Great Smoky Mountain of Appalachia. In general, the linguistic behavior of the community shows that most residents accommodate their language to the norms of the surrounding white Appalachian community, while at the same time maintaining linguistic variables associated with African American speech. Although the community indicates some shared dialect patterns, extensive subgroup variations also exist. The subjects were four women aged 39, 43, 46, and 57 (the porch sitters), and four women

aged 49, 68, 70, and 72 (church ladies). Data were collected from a series of interviews with these informants showing that the two groups of women represented distinct communities of practice and that the variable community of practice overweighs traditional demographic variables such as social status and age. The analysis suggests that as these women interact within their communities or practice, they use language to transmit symbolic messages about themselves to others and thereby construct social identities for themselves and for their groups.

Holmes (1992) indicates that women usually tend to use standard forms since the society tends to expect "better" behavior from women. Predictably then, society requires that women speak more correctly and in a more standard manner than men do, especially when they are serving as models for children's speech. Are the subjects of the study approaching the standard variety or being distant from it by choosing other variables which are less standard but viewed as more prestigious according to them?

Meyerhoff (2006) stresses the class as a factor in linguistic variation. She also gives pieces of evidence that variables are subject to quite systematic stratification in the speech of individuals and groups in terms of speaker's style and age. The researcher intends to investigate the subjects' choice of variables and their social class, and whether there is a relationship between their choices and the phenomenon of convergence, which is a very essential issue in the field of sociolinguistics. Do subjects try to accommodate with their interlocutors outside the borders of the small village they live in?

Labov (1966) conducted his famous 'The Fourth Floor' study in New York city. His purpose was to investigate the /r/ pronunciation of the speakers and their choices of the two variables: Rhotic and non-rhotic accents. When asked to read lists of words that included the phoneme /r/, most subjects pronounced the /r/ in final position since this was the prestigious variable which is associated with higher classes.

Abu Shareah et.al (2015) conducted a study that concentrates on dialect and language in general in which they explain the differences between standard language and dialect, and show how a particular dialect is used in a specific region. They also showed how dialects are considered as identities. In their study, the aim is to show how dialect's groups of one language may be considered mutual intelligibility or non-mutual intelligibility and this classification is based on the percentage of convergence and divergence among them.

Hoder (2015) refers to the fact that dialects diachronically become subject to convergence, in which they are exposed to acquiring, losing, or changing some properties. In this manner, they become similar to each other, or to the standard form. In the present study, the dialect being analyzed has become more distant from the standard form, which is Standard Arabic due to the speakers' using the less frequent form in their region which is (i), the one that differs from the Classic one (i:n).

2.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the frequency of using the two variables of the second person singular feminine present tense morpheme /i/ and /i:n/ by Bedouin females from two different age ranges in Housha which is a small village in the northern region of Jordan.

2.2. Subjects

The study consists of twenty females distributed into two groups. The first group includes ten females whose ages range from 15 to 40; the second group includes ten females whose ages range from 45 to 65. All the members of the first group are literate i.e., at school, university, and first and second university degree holders. Most of the second group members are illiterate. All the subjects in both groups have been living in Housha (a small village at the northern part of Jordan in which a Bedouin tribe has been residing for tens of years). They are randomly selected as a representative sample upon which the analysis will be based.

2.3. Definitions

Variables: In this study, the variables refer to the two allomorphs of the second person singular feminine present tense morpheme used by the subjects of the study. These two variables are (i:n) and (i) that are attached to the verb in the present tense when addressing females in Arabic language. The root in this case is prefixed by -t, a prefix that marks present tense, and suffixed by either (-i) or (-i:n).

- Housha: A small village located on the northern borders of Jordan close to the Syrian borders.
- Bedouins: A group of people descending from nomadic tribes who settled in certain regions in Jordan, among which is the community of the present study.

2.4. Importance of the Study

The study is significant, it is based on the assumption of the researcher that the study of this certain dialect of Housha's Bedouin in Jordan is unprecedented. In addition, the ultimate goal of this study is to boost the knowledge of Arabic speakers as well as speakers of other languages on this significant issue.

3. Methodology

In order to conduct the study, the researcher uses more than one data collection procedure. She formally interviews the local speakers, listens and talks to them informally; in addition to recording these interviews, dialogues, and conversations in order to listen to them later. Collected data are translated, transcribed, and compared in terms of the

degree of the studied variables' frequency. The researcher then discusses the results quantitatively through providing numbers and percentages. Next, she qualitatively explains and illustrates the factors beyond the differences (if found).

4. Results

After interviewing the subjects formally and informally, the researcher listened to the participants' speech paying attention to their production of the two variables that she intends to study. The researcher then recorded the frequencies of each variable in each participant's utterances followed by finding the corresponding percentages for each frequency. The mean of averages for each group was then estimated for the sake of general comparison. The researcher then transcribed the subjects' utterances using the International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) in broad and phonemic transcription. Translations of utterances into English were provided in order to illustrate the contexts in which variation was produced. In addition, speakers' ages, education, and degree of relation to the researcher were labeled in parentheses next to each participant's utterance.

The findings of the study indicate that three main factors affected the speakers' choice of the two variables (I, I:n) for the second person feminine present tense morpheme. These factors are: The age of the speaker, the educational level of the speaker, and the degree of relation to the researcher i.e., the social solidarity.

Subjects	Tokens	Variable (i) Frequency	Variable (i:n) Frequency	Mean of (i) Variable	Mean of (i:n) Variable
1	20	12	8	60%	40%
2	10	10	0	100%	0%
3	8	7	1	95%	5%
4	15	15	0	100%	0%
5	7	1	6	15%	85%
6	13	3	10	22%	78%
7	15	2	13	10%	90%
8	20	10	10	50%	50%
9	16	6	10	30%	70%
10	6	0	6	0%	100%
11	10	9	1	90%	10%
12	5	2	3	40%	60%
13	6	0	6	0%	100%
14	10	6	4	60%	40%
15	9	3	6	35%	65%
15	170	86	84	47.2%	52.8%

Table 1: Frequencies and Means of the Variables (I, I: N) for Subjects of Group a (15-40-Year-Old females)

Subjects	Tokens	Variable (i) Frequency	Variable (i:n) Frequency	Mean for (i) Variable	Mean for (i:n) Variable
1	17	0	17	0%	100%
2	10	0	10	0%	100%
3	5	0	5	0%	100%
4	12	0	12	0%	100%
5	8	1	7	5%	95%
6	3	0	3	0%	100%
7	10	0	10	0%	100%
8	11	0	11	0%	100%
9	6	0	6	0%	100%
10	4	0	4	0%	100%
11	2	0	2	0%	100%
12	9	2	7	15%	85%
13	10	3	7	35%	65%
14	7	1	6	7%	93%
15	4	1	3	35%	65%
15	118	8	110	6.5%	93.5%

Table 2: Frequencies and Means of the Variables (I) and (I: N) for the Subjects of Group B (45-65-Year-Old Females)

5. Discussion

The tables that show the study results clearly indicate the tendency of using the second person singular feminine present tense morpheme variable (i:n) by older females whose ages range between 45-65 years old in the Bedouin local speakers of Housha. The average percentages of the utterances' frequencies in this group were 6.5% and 96.5% for the (i) and (i:n) variables respectively. It is obvious that older females rarely, if never, use the (i) variable; instead, they tend to

use the most frequent variable used by most of the speakers in the study community which is (i:n). Most members of this group never produce the less frequent variable, which is (i), in their village.

Table (1), which shows the younger group results can be compared with Appendix (A) which indicates detailed information about the subjects in order to notice the relative relation between the age and the frequency of the variable usage. The investigation of the appendix and the table reflects the fact that the younger the subject is, the higher frequency of the (i) variable use is. In the same group, the level of education seems to be not very influential on the degree of choosing the (i) variable i.e., it is less effective than the variable of age in the speakers' choice of variables.

The degree of the relationship or solidarity with the researcher seems to play a very slight role. It is the most neutral factor among other factors that somehow affect the speakers' tendencies toward certain utterances. The interviews' analysis led to the finding that the context within the conversation occurs plays a significant role in selecting a certain variable, especially among younger participants. The degree of formality of the situation or the context in which the speech was conducted, and the presence of strangers played a very effective role in the selection of a certain variable. More formal contexts yielded (i) production, whereas less formal contexts motivated subjects to produce the (i:n) variable. Moreover, the less presence of strangers yielded more production of the most frequent variable (i:n).

5.1. Examples from Group (A)

Example (a):

Subject (9) in group (A) (40 years old, an MA holder, a sister of the researcher): "truḥi:n `aladaarxaalti?"

Translation: "Would you like to go to my aunt's house?"

In the example above, the verb 'to go' is expressed in 'truḥi:n' in which the variable (i:n) is used to indicate the second person singular feminine present tense morpheme. The speaker in this example is a 40-year-old feminine who is a sister of the researcher; they talk informally with a high degree of solidarity.

Example (b):

Subject (2) in group (A) (An 18-year-old public school student, a sister of the researcher): "tru:ḥinzu:rbalqi:s?".

Translation: "Would you like to go to visit Balqees?"

In example (b), the verb (to go) is expressed as 'tru:ḥi' in which the (i) variable is used to indicate the second singular feminine present tense morpheme. The speaker in this example is an 18-year-old girl who studies at a public school in Housha. She uses the (i) variable which is less frequent in the Bedouin dialect of Housha's residents.

Example (c)

Subject (1) in group (A) (a 16-year-old girl who studies at a private school outside Housha): "tidzibukra `alamadrasti?"

Translation: "Would you like to come to my school tomorrow?"

The subject in the previous example says: "tidzi" which means "to come" and she uses the (i) variant which is considered less frequent in the dialect subject to study. The girl is the researcher's daughter who studies at a private school in a city located in the northern part of Jordan in which no Bedouin dialect is used.

Example (d)

Subject (8) in group (A) (a 38-year-old public security female official, a cousin of the researcher): "tigdaritiṭla`iabkar?", "leiṢmatiṢtari:nsiyyarah?"

Translation: "Can you leave earlier?", "Why don't you buy a car?"

Example (e)

Subject (12) (a 40-year-old single woman who does not have a job outside the house, a cousin of the researcher): "simi`tinnitṢtigr:n."

Translation: "I heard that you are studying."

The subject used the verb "tigr:n" to express the verb "to study" using the frequent variable (i:n) when she talked to the researcher who is her cousin. The speaker here has neither a graduate degree nor a job.

The group that included older females, whose ages range between 45-65, yielded utterances in which the (i:n) variable was used in a very high percentage, 93.5%. Most members in this group (Group B) are illiterate or hold a low degree of education, the most educated one is subject number 5 who reached the twelfth grade without succeeding in Tawjihi examination (The Public Secondary Education Certificate).

5.2. Examples from Group (B)

• Example (a)

Subject (2) (a 65-year-old female, illiterate, aunt of the researcher): "IntikiljḌ:mtiṭbixi:n?"

Translation: "Do you cook everyday?"

• Example (b)

Subject (15) (a 52-year-old teacher, holding a BA degree, aunt of the researcher): "mitatirdza`i min addawaam?"

Translation: "When do you come back from work?"

The same subject: "ajsaa`atnaami:n?"

Translation: "What time do you sleep?"

Subject (15) in group (B) uses both variables (i) and (i:n) in different contexts. She uses the most frequent one (i:n) when the topic involves informal issues, while she uses (i) when the topic of the exchange is relatively more formal.

• Example (c)

Subject (6) (a 50-year-old housewife with low basic education, a cousin of the researcher): "tṢufi:nmali:ka?"

Translation: "Do you see Malika?"

- Example (d)

Subject (12) (a 45-year-old BA holder, a teacher in a public school, a cousin of the researcher): "tdawri:n `alabintitš?"

Translation: "Are you looking for your daughter?"

The same subject: "lammakintiwwiditštsaafri:n, rihti `assafaara?"

Translation: "When you wanted to travel, did you go to the embassy?"

- Example (e)

Subject (14) (a 47-year-old BA holder, a teacher at a public school, a cousin of the researcher): " gilt innitšmatigdari:ntidzi:n."

Translation: "I said that you won't be able to come."

As the examples from group (B) obviously illustrate, most utterances of the present tense in which second person singular feminine forms are formed include the (i:n) variant which is the most frequent morpheme used in the community of the study. Older females (45-65), regardless of their level of education or their solidarity degree with the researcher, tend to use this variant, thus the factor of the age can be viewed as the most influential one in the participants' selection and use of the variants.

The most significant findings of the study are summarized in the following points:

Generally, younger females (in the study) tend to use the less frequent second person singular feminine present tense variable (i), with an average of 52.8% and the most frequent variable (i:n) with an average of 47.2% of the total tokens.

This tendency can be explained by referring to the factors below:

- Some young speakers' mothers are originally not local inhabitants of Housha; i.e., they don't speak the Bedouin dialect the subject of study.
- Some of these younger females' study at private schools outside the community of the study, or at universities where Housha's Bedouin dialect is not used.
- Younger females are affected by each other's variant selection. This might be attributed to their tendency to form one group.
- The (i) variant is viewed, by most Jordanian speakers, as a more prestigious one than the (i:n) variant.

Most older females (group B, 45-65) tend to use the most frequent second personal singular feminine present tense morpheme (i:n) with an average of 93.5% of the total tokens, and the less frequent variable (i) with a low average of 6.5% of the total tokens.

The educational level of the subjects plays a minor role that affects their choice of the two variants. BA and MA holders used the (i:n) variant most of the time which indicates that age plays a more significant and influential role and impact on the selection of variants.

The degree of solidarity with the researcher i.e., the social intimacy and the kinship relation play a significant and major role in choosing either of the variants. Most speakers, from both groups, tend to use the most common variable in the community of the study (i:n) when they talk to the researcher since all of them are either daughter, sister, aunts or cousins of the researcher. In this case, the context is mostly informal and the degree of solidarity is high, which motivates the speakers to select the original and frequent variable used in their region or dialect, which is (i:n).

The nature of the topic or issue being discussed plays a trivial role on the variants' selection, especially in the second group (45-65).

Most young subjects and few older ones used the less frequent variable (i) in the presence of strangers or outsiders who speak a different dialect in which (i) is used, a tendency called *convergence*.

There is a vowel shift, in certain vowels, that results from the deletion of (n) at the end of the allomorph. For example, the present tense verb (tidzi:n) becomes (ti:dʒi), and (truhi:n) becomes (tru:hi); first, the short vowel in the root shifts to a longer one; second, the long vowel in the allomorph (i:n) becomes shorter (i).

Some sociolinguistic studies' findings on variants' choice are congruent with the findings of this research. For example, a study by Mallinson and Childs (2005), which examined the variation in the speech of middle-aged and older women residents of Texana, showed that traditional demographic variables such as social status and age, are significant factors that influence the speakers' choice of variants.

Meyerhoff's study (2006) intended to investigate the relation between variants' choice and the phenomenon of convergence in which speakers tend to accommodate with the addressee's speech features and style. The researcher thus raises the question: Do subjects try to accommodate with their interlocutors outside the borders of the small village where they live? This study about Housha's Bedouin dialect obviously shows that the subjects of the study, especially the younger females, try to accommodate with the outsider addressee by using their variant (i) which is considered less common in the community of the study.

Holmes' study (1992), which indicated that women usually tend to use standard forms, supports the findings of the current study about Housha's Bedouin dialect and the younger females' pronunciation. In this study, the subjects who are exclusively women, differ according to Holmes' findings. Older subjects (Group B) tend to use the variant which is considered by most Jordanians as less prestigious i.e., the (i:n) variable, whereas younger subjects tend to use the (i) variable which is viewed as a more prestigious utterance by most of the Jordanian people. Nevertheless, the (i:n) variable, used by the older females, is closer to the classic Arabic morpheme used to mark the second person singular feminine present tense; therefore, prestigious in this case does not mean standard.

6. References

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