Modern Standard Arabic: An Empirical Study on Saudis

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Abstract. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has always been a controversial issue in sociolinguistics. The findings of the present study suggest that there are strong emphases on education to account for the observed sociophonological variation in the SMSA. This finding is in line with a number of sociolinguistic studies such as Coulmas' (1997), in which he stated that the concept of "educatedness" is fundamental in sociophonology. It is interesting to note that the present study shows no sex-differentiated patterns of variation. Such findings reveal that the higher the level of education of the speakers of SMSA, the higher their tendency becomes to use the Classical Arabic (CA) variables /q/, /-ṣ/, and /-θ/) more frequently than the CHA variants /-q/, /-ṣ/, /-ṣ/, /-θ/. Therefore, it appears that the influence of education is evident and significant on language usages. As a result of the findings of the present study, there are three discrete Arabic varieties to be distinguished. 1 – First, /Al-ʔarabiah Al-FuSha/, "FuSha Arabic" or "Classical Arabic" (CA). Second, /Al-ʔarabiah Almiʔyariah Al-hadi;ʔah/, "Modern Standard Arabic" MSA. This Arabic variety combines linguistic aspects of both Classical and Dialectal Arabic, regardless of the nationality of the speakers of this Arabic variety. Third, /Allahjah Alʔa:mmi;ʔah Alʔarabiah/ "Colloquial Dialectal Arabic" (CDA), which is applicable to all Arabic dialects. Consequently, the variety of the present study SMSA is deemed to belong to the second variety, namely, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

1. Introduction

Arabic speaking communities differ from formal to informal, and from written to oral varieties. It would be appropriate to limit the linguistic domain of any study to only one variety. This empirical sociolinguistic study attempts to investigate certain phonological variations in formal oral variety of Saudi Modern
Standard Arabic (SMSA). It aims at accounting for the sociophonological variation of certain Classical Arabic (CA) varieties (namely, /q/, /c/, and /b/), and their Colloquial ri'izzi Arabic (CHA) variants (/q/, /z/, /s/ and /l/). It is worth noting that /q/ is phonetically defined as a plosive velar, while /q/ is an ejective velar allophone of the same phoneme /q/ (see Ingham 1982). Influential social factors, i.e., sex/gender and education of the subjects of SMSA, are taken into account. The study is based on a number of formal interviews and panel discussions, tape-recorded from Saudi radio and television.

This study reveals that the mingling of subjects, in the formal oral variety of SMSA, between CA variables and CHA variants or reflexes, is not haphazard or random. This mingling, we believe, is a systematic nature of variability that can be attributed to certain social factors i.e., education and sex. Honey’s concept of “educatedness” (which will be discussed in relation to the findings of the present study) reinforces such systematic nature of variability (for more see Coulmas, 1997:104). This concept reiterates linguistic variation to education. The diglossic situation of Arabic, which in this case involves the coexistence of the two discrete (i.e., distinct) varieties CA and CHA, has resulted in the existence of an indiscrète (i.e., a deviant) Arabic variety, which we tend to call SMSA.

The study aims at revealing that SMSA is considered to be a deviation of CA, and therefore it is considered to be an indiscrète Arabic variety. We tend to believe that the existence of certain types of language variation (e.g., phonological), involves a more or less an effect on large groups of people, up to entire societies, but does not, necessarily, lead to the discreteness of the newly emerged variety. Parkinson’s three views of Egyptian MSA, is discussed and analyzed with special reference to SMSA. The indiscrèteness of SMSA is argued in relation to certain aspects of Egyptian MSA as characterized by Badawi’s five levels of Egyptian Arabic, (see El-gibali, 1985). Relevant sociolinguistic studies, as for example Daher, (1998), are dealt with in terms of comparing results, for the purpose of seeking similarities and differences in the concerned sociophonological variation in oral formal Arabic varieties.

2. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)

The field of Arabic linguistics is rich with its Arabic language topics. Eid, (1990) says that Arabic linguistics has shown an enormous growth in the past few decades. Along with other prominent linguists, Eid indicates that Arabic linguistics (a sub-field of linguistics) functions as the interaction of linguistics and Arabic studies. Arab and Western linguists have, empirically, investigated a set of assumptions about inter-language and intr-language variation, in Arabic varieties as Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Arabic dialects (AD).
Empirical studies of sociolinguistic variations, in the Arab world, have generally been conducted base on phonological variables. For example, Haeri, (1990) tackles the nature of diglossic variables and the phonological process of borrowing from Classical Arabic (CA) Daber, (1998) analyzes gender differences in the usage of the phonological variants /q/ and /-between/ in Syrian Arabic. He illustrates, on a statistical basis, how certain sociolinguistic factors, as sex and education, have significant influence on the favoring and disfavoring of one variant over the other. It is a thorough, well presented study of a phonological variable widely used in diglossic communities, and exhibits interesting variations in Arabic speaking countries e.g., Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

As for the nature of an empirical sociolinguistic study on MSA, Parkinson, (1993) describes it as an Arabic variety that has two formally-used versions; written like the language usually used in newspapers, textbooks and other formal (or serious) writings, and its oral counterpart used in formally delivered radio and television programs. In relation to Egyptian Arabic, he describes the main aspects of MSA, in three view points, which are as follows:

1 – MSA is the variety that has a prescriptive system inherited from Classical Arabic, watched over by the language academy and taught at schools.

2 – MSA is partly a communicative continuum that comprises linguistic properties ranging from the deepest dialectal resources to the highest unique classical expressions. It is not evident to which part of the continuum MSA belongs i.e., it is characterized as an in-between Arabic variety which is neither classical nor dialectal.

3 – MSA is imperfectly known, but a fully functional variety and part of the communicative behavior of most Arabs. It is associated with a high degree of linguistic insecurity; revered to the degree of being viewed as a descendent of CA, denigrated to the degree that it is considered as a degeneration of CA.

Applying Parkinson’s views to the formal oral SMSA will shed some light on the reasons for the phonological variations of the CA variables /q/ and /-between/ and their variants. This study, assumes that certain phonological variations may partly be attributed to certain sociolinguistic factors (i.e., levels of education and sex of speakers) and partly to the inherited linguistic properties in CA. Parkinson’s first view of MSA’s inherited system from CA is a justifiable aspect because MSA is a formal variety used mainly by educated people who gain their education through formal learning of the Arabic language at schools and the only Arabic variety taught at schools is Classical Arabic simply because it is a grammaticalized (i.e., it has grammatical rules at all linguistic levels) Arabic variety and it is the only revered and respected variety of Arabic in the Arab world.
We argue that MSA is not the Arabic variety that is taught at schools, in any of the Arabic countries including Egypt, as Parkinson claims. In fact, previous sociolinguistic studies, including Parkinson’s second view, consistently reveal that MSA is an intermediate Arabic level that simply means that it is mainly de­pendent on CA in most of its linguistic aspects. In addition, none of the previous sociolinguistic studies claim that MSA has its own phonological, morphological, syntactic or grammatical rules that can be taught at schools. It can be described as an Arabic variety that has some of its predictable aspects borrowed from CA, with other aspects taken from a regional colloquial variety. So it is a mingled Arabic variety that has no discreetness or ever stability as Badawi, (1973) claims. He (Ibid) describes the contemporary diglossic language situa­tion in Egypt as one of a continuum between two opposing ends; “Classical Arabic” (which he tends to call “Fusha al-Turati”) and “Iliterate Colloquial” (which he calls “Aamiyyat al-Ash’ al Ummiyyin”) and in between these high and low levels, (according to Ferguson’s 1959 terms) Badawi says there are three middle levels: fuṣṣāʿ al-‘Aṣār “Modern Standard Arabic”, amiyyat al-muḥaṣṣaṭa “Educated Colloquial”, and aamiyyat al-mutanawwirin “literate Colloquial” (see El-gibli, 1985). Badawi’s five levels, for Egyptian Arabic, are, according to Ferguson, subject to close connections and interactions and the transition from the highest level of “Fuṣṣāʿ Arabic” to the lowest level of “Aaminyya” colloquial would be a continuous gradual flow. Badawi (see El-gibli, Ibid) argues unconvincingly, for the discreetness and stability of the three mid­dle levels. We believe that with the exception of “Fuṣṣāʿ” Arabic, Badawi’s sug­gested three middle levels of Arabic varieties are neither discrete levels nor stable for two rational reasons:

1 – The smooth flow of continuous unpredictable switching from one of the suggested three middle varieties (or levels as Badawi tends to call them) into another is a clear indication of their discreetness. Also, it is due to the fact that their boundaries are blurred, muddied and indistinct at all linguistic levels. In addition, the suggested three middle levels exhibit an overlapping of linguistic properties (at all linguistic levels) whether they are used in formal or informal occasions by iliterate, literate or even highly literate native speakers, in written and oral forms at all linguistic levels, and therefore can not be treated or con­sidered as discrete and stable levels.

2 – The interrelatedness of Badawi’s three middle levels, leads us to go back to Parkinson’s above stated second view, in which he later considers MSA, (which is one of Badawi’s three middle levels) as part of an indefinite com­municative continuum ranging from the most elevated classical level to the low­est colloquial linguistic properties. Parkinson, (1993) adds, in his second view, that it is not evident to which part of the continuum MSA is to be classified i.e.
as either classical or dialectal. The indefiniteness of Parkinson’s second view of MSA, as being unpredictable, along with the interrelatedness of Badawi’s view for his three middle levels, are, in fact, a clear and conceivable justification for the indiscreteness and instability of Badawi’s three middle levels.

We believe that MSA, or any dialectal Arabic variety for this matter, is a descendant and a degeneration of CA. This view drives us to discuss Parkinson’s above-mentioned third view, in which he describes MSA as a despised and a denigrated variety simply because it is a descendant and a degeneration of CA.

Most, if not all, Western and Arab linguists and sociolinguists who believe that Classical Arabic is undoubtedly the origin of all Arabic varieties including MSA, are denying Parkinson’s third view. In fact, the main reason behind labeling MSA as a standard Arabic is, as mentioned earlier, that it gained some of its linguistic aspects (i.e. phonologically, morphologically etc.) from the originally standardized CA through education (Daher, 1998, El-fayyad, 1982 among others). As for the process of modernization in Arabic, Daher, 1998, Hauri, 1990, Royal, 1983, believe that the frequent use of foreign words (e.g., beebi “baby”, nersat “nurses” etc.) by some men and women may be interpreted as their wish to be associated with modernized social groups as the advocates of modernization and westernization are at work in the region. Thus, the term “modern” in the modern standard Arabic variety is, probably, attributed to the process of modernization and the usage of foreign words in MSA.

Parkinson, (ibid) adds that Nuation or “Tanwin” is not viable in Egyptians MSA. Tanwin according to Haywood and Nahmad, (1984: 33) is the changing of vowel of the final consonant to indicate the three cases of nominative, accusative and genitive. This grammatical aspect is surely beyond the scope and objectives of the present study, yet it is worth noting that such aspect of CA is assumed to be unviable in the oral formal variety of SMSA. Moreover, it is believed that speakers of MSA, in the Arab world tend to avoid Tanwin; instead, they use Tashkin (i.e., sukun at the end of words) to avoid the complexity of the CA system of Tanwin compared to the simple usage of Tashka at the end of words.

On the basis of the above discussion of Arabic varieties, and for convenience of the present study, we propose to distinguish between three different Arabic varieties, which are as follows: Firstly, (Al-Fayyad Al-Fayyad) which is “East Sha Arabic” or “Classical Arabic” (CA), and it is the only discrete, rule-governed (at all linguistic levels) grammatically correct Arabic variety that is taught at schools. It has the prescriptive system used formally in both written and oral forms (see Cowan, 1983). Secondly, (Al-Fayyad Al-Fayyad Al-Fayyad), which is “Modern Standard Arabic” (MSA). It identifies any in-discrete and mingled Arabic variety in two forms; written (usually found in newspapers) and oral mainly used in formal television and radio news delivery.
interviews and panel discussions along with lectures in humanities. Thirdly, /Allahah Δ/αραβικά Δ/άραβικά “Colloquial Dialectal Arabic” (CDA). It refers to any indiscernible regional nonstandard dialect used informally. In this study, we are referring to colloquial Hijazi Arabic (CHA) as a regional dialectal Arabic spoken in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia. It is characterized as regional, social and non-standard stereotypically determined by the actual usage patterns (see for example, Ingham, 1982, Prochazka, 1988). It is to be realized that CHA is considered, in this study, as one of the CDA varieties.

3. Data Collection

A major reason for recent advances in variation studies is, according to Milroy, technological. (See Coulmas, 1997: 48). Milroy, adds that in the last 30 years, attention has been devoted to collecting tape-recorded data to describe language variation. As a method of collecting reliable and authentic tape-recorded data, to elicit formal speech styles, the investigator had to specify certain important limitations of data collection for the present study, which are: 1 – Types of radio and television interviews i.e., formal or informal panel discussions. 2 – Number of tape-recorded hours. 3 – Gender and number of subjects. 4 – Education Levels of the subjects. 5 – Linguistic aspects of variables, and the main objective of the study.

In a period of three months, in the year 2000, the investigator tape-recorded certain formal radio and television interviews, and panel discussions. Saudi television interviews, were the source of data for male speakers, whereas radio panel discussions were the source of data for female speakers of SMSA. Obtaining data from two different sources (i.e., radio and television interviews) is due to the religious and traditional situation, i.e., men and women do not appear together in the same radio and television interviews or panel discussions. The first source of data (i.e., male speakers of SMSA) comprises 20 tape-recorded hours of formal television interviews and panel discussions. The number of the male subjects (i.e., the host and quests of the 20 tape-recorded hours of T.V interviews) are 40; 18 of them are highly educated (Masters or Ph.D. holders), while the remaining 22 are treated as educated. The second source of data (i.e., female speakers of S.M.S.A) consists of, also, 20 tape-recorded hours of formal radio interviews and panel discussions. The total number of female subjects is 33; 14 of them are highly educated, while the other 19 subjects are considered educated.

The total number of subjects is 73, and they are divided, as rationally as possible, into four social categories on the basis of the two social variables taken into considerations, namely, sex (i.e., male vs. female) and the levels of education; i.e., educated for subjects with college or university education, and highly educated with masters and Ph.D. degrees. Therefore, the four social categories
are as follows: male educated ME, male highly educated (MHE), female educat-
ed (FE) and female highly educated (FHE). It is to be realized, that the educa-
tional background (or levels of education) of the subjects is being identified by
the host of the radio and television programs. The social variable of age is being
obliterated because it will be difficult for the investigator to anticipate the age
of the subjects.

The collected data were classified and tabulated in accordance with the con-
cerned linguistic and social variables. The different utterances, (or variants) of
each phonological variable, are statistically analyzed (i.e., in terms of the fre-
quencies and the percentages of the variants used by the concerned four social
groups). After specifying the limitations of the data collections, it is necessary
to state the main objective of the study, which aims at accounting for the so-
ciophonological variation, that occurs when CA variables /-Q/, /-d/ and /-B/) al-
ternate with the CHA variants in SMSA. These variables were chosen to be in-
vestigated, for a number of reasons, most important of which was the frequent
alternation with their variants. Also, such variables were the principal focus of
certain sociolinguistic studies, and this study hopes to add insight into this inter-
esting area of variation.

4. Sociophonology

Education is embedded in language, and it is believed that the standard
variety of a language appears to be taken as the only vehicle for educative.
Sociolinguists like Labov and Trudgill, among others, attempt to correlate phono-
logical variations with sociological variables. This correlation is termed "so-
ciophonology". A relevant situation of sociophonology is the phonological
variables /-Q/, /-d/ or /-B/) in SMSA, which are assumed to have phonological
variants and which may, in turn, be accounted for by certain social variables.
Milroy, states, in this regard, that phoneticians repeatedly indicate that no two
utterances of the same word by the same speaker are pronounced exactly alike
(see Coulmas, 1997: 48). Honey, believes that it is a commonplace of lin-
guistics that the spoken form of any language exhibits more variations than the
written form, and such variation in speech can be attributed to differences in (a)
region, (b) social group, and (c) situation (see Coulmas, 1997: 92-93). Honey,
(Ibid) adds that the speech forms of regional and social groups, not to mention
the pronunciation of particular words in distinctive manners, appear to be char-
acterized as the standardized sound features whose patterns are distinctive for
each social group whether that group is educated or highly educated, Honey,
(Ibid: 95) cites the speakers of British English, who receive higher (or ex-
tended) education tend to use more standardized variety (i.e., in terms of gram-
mar, vocabulary and pronunciation) than local variety of the language. This, in
fact, shows the significant influence of education on language usage. The following sociolinguistic analysis and discussions of variation in SMMA may shed some light on the socially conditioned phonological variants of the variables concerned.

5. Variation with /-Q/ and /-q/ in SMMA

Before we analyze and discuss the variation exhibited in the use of the variable /-Q/ and its variant /-q/ in SMMA, it is tenable to define a linguistic variable in sociolinguistic studies. Wardhaugh, (1992:139-40) states the following definition: "A linguistic variable is a linguistic item which has identifiable variants" (for more see Coulmas, 1997:130). He adds that linguistic variables are, traditionally, correlated with social categories, like sex (gender), age, social class, education etc.

Studies on Arabic diglossic speech communities have concluded that the sociolinguistic variables of sex and education appear to be significant factors in accounting for the exhibited variation in the use of the variants of the variable /-Q/ in Cairene, Kuwaiti and Damascene standard Arabic varieties (cf, Daher, 1998, El-gibali, 1985). Daher, (1998:184) argues for relating the observed phonological variation of the variable /-Q/ (Daher's symbol is /-q/) to the competition between two standards: The nationally and internationally recognized standard Arabic, and the prestigious local dialect of certain urban cities as, for example, Cairo and Damascus. This argument can not be taken for granted, because only one standard Arabic variety is being recognized to be used by educated speakers in formal situations (both written and spoken) in diglossic community. His view of considering the prestige local dialect, spoken in large urban cities, as for example, Damascus and Cairo, to be a standard variety might be the subject of considerable argumentation. That is because coming up with several standard Arabic varieties, might not reflect the real issue the Arabic varieties.

Our argument is that there is only one standard Arabic variety, taking into consideration the occurrences of minor linguistic variations (at the phonological, morphological or even the syntactic level) when spoken in different Arabic speaking countries. The existence of certain phonological variations in SMMA does not mean that it is a discrete variety, and therefore, different from standard Arabic used by Egyptians, Syrians or Jordanians. This study is meant to argue for the indecency of only one MSA variety, and to shed some light on certain phonological variations of MSA as it is used by Saudis, and such variations can be in congruent with similar variations in standard Arabic used by Egyptians, Syrians or any educated speaker of Arabic.
Since this study takes into account the sociolinguistic variables of sex and the levels of education of the speakers of MSA, it hopes to relate linguistic variation to the considered social variables. Daher, (1998) reveals that it has been broadly reported that educated Arabic speakers, in their oral use of the language, normally use the Arabic variety which includes mingled aspects (at all linguistic levels) from both CA and colloquial Arabic (Dafer 1998; Parkinson 1993, 1994, 1996; Meiseles 1980; Holes 1993; Hany 1996; Eid 1982).

A straightforward statistical analysis of the data was conducted taking into consideration the elements that are congruent with the objectives of this study. These elements are: The two social variables i.e., sex and the levels of education and they are categorized into four social categories: They include, the phonological variants of each variable; the frequency of occurrence of each variant for the same variable; the percentage of the frequency of occurrence of each variant; and the total frequency of variants for the same variable (these elements are tabulated in statistical figures). Each element of the following statistical tables in this section, is meant to provide answers (on statistical basis) to the variation observed with the phonological variable /-iQ/ and its variant /-qa/. That is to say, to account for such variation on the basis of the relevant sociolinguistic factors and the observed frequencies of the variants used and their percentages in relation to their occurrences. Two observed variations are recorded in this regard: One variation is recorded with the CA variable /-iQ/, while the other with the CHA variant /-qa/. The association of the variant /-iQ/ with CA is attributed to two main reasons: First, it is the only CA variable (i.e., it has no variants in CA) and Arabic dialects appear to have borrowed it from CA (see Rosenhouse, 1998; Abdel-Jawad, 1981 among others). Second, El-gibaly, 1985 and Daher, 1998, referred to it as a CA variant because it is only used in CA (For their convenience they used the symbol /-iQ/ instead of the present study's symbol /-Q/). We used the term "variable" instead of "variant" to refer to /-iQ/ simply because it is considered, in this study, as the original form of the derived variant /-qa/. El-gibaly, (1984) and Daher reveal sex differentiation is exhibited, whereby men seem to favor the use of /-qa/ more than the variant /-iQ/, while women favor the use of the variant /-Q/ in the Arabic varieties of Caïre, Kuwaiti and Damascusi. The symbol /-qa/ is referred to as a CHA variant. This is due to its frequent occurrences in this dialect, as it is observed in the present study and in several prior studies (see Bakalia, 1979; Prochazka, 1988; Ingham, 1982, Khessaifaty, 1993). The /-qa/ is an ejective velar phoneme, while /-Q/ is a plosive velar.

The scores of variations in Table (1) are quite informative. They indicate that while the CHA variant /-qa/ scored higher percentage (68%) by the social category ME, than the CA variable /-Q/ (32%), yet the variant /-qa/ scored lower percentage (24%) by the social category MHI; than the variable /-Q/ (76%).
which may probably be explained by educational differences. This may suggest that the variant /-q/ is more likely to be used in high frequency words, by the social category ME, than in a low frequency words, whereas the variable /-Q/ is more likely to be used in high frequency words, by the social category MHE, than in a low frequency words. The following is a representative sample (from data of the present study) of high frequency words in SMSA, which are pronounced as a plosive/-Q/ and as an ejective/-q/.

Since, the phoneme /-Q/ is referred to (in this study) as CA variable, and /-q/ is a CHA variant, henceforth, the observed variation in the use of both /-Q/ and /-q/ can be recognized as an indicative of SMSA (which borrowed /-Q/ form CA) versus CHA, respectively, and the use of /-q/ as a variant of /-Q/ is one of the prominent aspects of the SMSA variety. The choice of either /-Q/ or /-q/ appears to be a social marker of SMSA. That is to say, it serves to identify the speaker’s social group i.e., as either ME or MHE in relation to the present study.

Table 1. Male subjects and variation with /-Q/ and /-q/ in SMSA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social categories</th>
<th>Variants in SMSA</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total frequency of variants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Educated (ME)</td>
<td>/-Q/</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/-q/</td>
<td>1641</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Highly Educated (MHE)</td>
<td>/-Q/</td>
<td>2142</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>2818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/-q/</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining Table (2), it seems that two significant observations need to be emphasized. First, the scores in Table (2) support the educational differences, seen in Table (1), in using the variable /-Q/ and its variant /-q/. That is to say, there is a relatively high tendency (70%) towards the use of the variant /-q/ by the social category FE, compared to (40%) in using the variable /-Q/. Second, in contrast with FE, the social category FHE exhibits a noticeable tendency (66%) towards using the variable /-Q/, in comparison with the (54%) is using the variant /-q/.

In comparing the scores in both tables, it is noticed that the correlation between the use of the variable /-Q/ and advanced education is evident. In other words, highly educated (male and female) speakers of SMSA tend to favor using the CA variable /-Q/ more frequently (MHE 76%, and FHE 66%) than the CHA variant /-q/ (MHE 24% and FHE 34%). This result is in line with Dütter, (1998: 193-196) whose findings reveal a linear correlation between the use of
/q/ (which is symbolized as /i:/ in this study) and the speakers' level of education. This means that the higher the education of the speaker the more usage and the more favoring of the CA variable /i:/, such results support Daher's findings of the linear correlation between the use of /q/ and the speakers level of education. Daher, (P 196) adds that /q/ was replaced by /i:/ between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, according to Garbell, (1958: 313). However, Daher says the liable explanation for /q/ to reach Damascus Arabic, is the direct borrowing from standard Arabic. It is worth noting that standard Arabic, according to Daher, corresponds to Classical Arabic in this study, which is the formally prescribed variety taught at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social categories</th>
<th>Variants in SMSA</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Educated (FE)</td>
<td>/i:/</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/aq/</td>
<td>2201</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Highly Educated (FHE)</td>
<td>/i:/</td>
<td>3786</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/aq/</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bright, (see Coulmas, 1997: p 89) says that as written language generally changes more slowly than spoken language, it has been suggested that the influence of education might act as a "drag" to "retard" change in the spoken language. Bright's view supports the results of the present study, exhibited in Tables (1) and (2), whereby the highly educated social groups (namely, MHE and FHE) appear to be "dragged" (by their advanced education) and showed "retention" by using the CA variable /i:/ instead of the CHA variant /aq/. The fluctuation between the variable /i:/ and its variant /aq/ is, as we have just explained, neither random nor haphazard. The use of either /i:/ or /aq/ appears to be predictable through the relevant social factors. Wolfram, (see Coulmas, 1997: 113-114) says that although it is impossible to predict which variant might be used in a given utterance, there are social and linguistic factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood that certain variants will be used. This confirms the results of the present study in which the level of education seems to increase or decrease the likelihood of using either of the two variants.

The influence of the level of education on the speakers' use of the language, leads to another dimension into perspective on language variation, and that is the systematic nature of variability. Important discoveries emerged from detailed dialectal studies in the past several decades. They are related to the relative frequency found in different variants of the same variable (see Wolfram, ibid). For example, SMSA and CHA, are not differentiated by the discreetness or cat-
egorical use or nonce of /-Q/ or /-q/, but by the relative frequency of variants. Thus we found that SMSA is differentiated from CHA by the frequent frequencies of the CA variable /-Q/ by highly educated speakers of both genders. It is important to realize that all subjects of SMSA exhibit variation between /-Q/ and /-q/; but the systematic nature of variability is attributed to the influential social factor of education. Wolfram tend to use the technical term "constraints" to refer to influential "factors". He categorizes constraints into two types "external" factors (i.e., social factors) and internal factors (i.e., linguistic factors). Whatever the terms and terminologies used by different sociolinguists, such factors remain influential in inter-language and intra-language variations.

As it is known in sociolinguistic studies, Labov, in his (1966b) study was the first to notice the significant role of sex/gender as a social variable (see Corlmas, 1997: 133). Surprisingly, sex/gender difference, does not seem to exhibit noticeable variation in the fluctuated forms /-Q/ and /-q/ between male and female speakers of the same educational level or background. The statistical scores of the relevant social categories exemplify this. On the one hand, male and female social categories ME and FE scored (68%) and (76%) respectively, in using the same variant /-q/ in Tables (1) and (2), and on the other hand male and female social categories MHE and FHE scored (76%) and (66%) separately in both Tables in using the variable /-Q/. These scores indicate that sex difference per se, is not accountable for language variation in this study as is the case in other studies. Daher. (1998: 190) attributes the observed sex-based linguistic variation, (i.e., /-q/ is associated with men while /-?/ with women) to the historical greater access of secular education to men in Damascus. Thus, men seem to incorporate /-q/ into their speech before women did. In this study, the accountable justification, for favoring the same variant by both male and female speakers of SMSA can be attributed to the equal accessibility of education for Saudis in the past five decades. Henceforth, both men and women had encountered the same influence of education at the same period, and therefore favored the same variable /-Q/.

In view of the above analysis and discussion, it is understandable that the level of education per se, in this particular type of variation, appears to be an influential social factor in increasing or decreasing the likelihood that certain variants might be used by certain social categories.

6. Variation with /-?/ and /-z/ in SMSA

This section seeks to explore possible answers to the variation exhibited with /-d/ and /-z/ in SMSA, taking into consideration two important social variables i.e., sex/gender and the level of education of the speakers. In the past few decades education has certainly spread, in Saudi Arabia for both gender, and with it the knowledge of classical Arabic. As a result of this education fostering, in-
tactical production and communication, amongst educated and highly educated Saudis, was encouraged and the use of CA and MSA has been promoted. Al-Abed-Al-Haq (1998: 30) indicates that standard Arabic is viewed, in Jordan, as the means of wider communication or lingua franca among Arabs. The findings of his study reveal that oral communication across the Arab countries would be difficult without the use of standard Arabic.

It is believed, by educated Saudi speakers, that SMSA is the lingua franca of educated people in formal occasions. This Arabic variety appears to exhibit certain and this phonological variation. The situation of sociophonology, in this context, is relevant to the CA variable /-$\delta$/ which has no phonological variants in CA. Another way in which different varieties of the same language, may become mixed up with each other is through the process of borrowing. As it is the case with /-$Q$/ it is believed that /-$\delta$/ is borrowed into Arabic dialects and MSA including SMSA from CA. The variable /-$\delta$/ (borrowed from CA) seems to be used, in SMSA, in alternation with the CHA variant /-$\zeta$/ . The variant /-$\zeta$/ is not exclusively used in SMSA as a reflexive of /-$\delta$/ , but happens to be used in several Arabic dialects, including, Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, Sudanese and other dialects (see Badawi, 1973; Abd El-Jawad, 1981; El-Ghali, 1985 among others).

Tables (3) and (4) summarize the statistical analysis of variation with /-$\delta$/ and /-$\zeta$/ , and the effect of the concerned social variables. The scores of variation in both tables indicate that the level of education is a highly significant social variable, whereas the sex/gender variable has little effect. Looking at the results in more detail, Table (3) reveals that the social category ME appears to be more frequently using the CHA variant /-$\zeta$/ scores (74%) than the variable /-$\delta$/ scores (26%) of the total frequency of variation. These scores indicate that the social category ME maintain the local variant /-$\zeta$/ more than the CA variant /-$\delta$/ . However, the social category MHE in Table (3), seems to have a relatively high score (62%) in using the CA variable /-$\delta$/ compared with /-$\zeta$/ which scores (38%) of the total frequency of variation. This is perhaps to be explained by the speakers’ level of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social categories</th>
<th>Variant in SMSA</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Educated (ME)</td>
<td>-$\delta$/</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-$\zeta$/</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Highly Educated (MHE)</td>
<td>-$\delta$/</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-$\zeta$/</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>587</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Frequency</td>
<td>687</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The alternation between /-d/ and /-z/ reveals that highly educated Saudi speakers use the prestigious CA variable, which reflects their advanced education, more frequently than the nonstandard local vernacular CHA variant. Also, the mingling between /-d/ and /-z/ indicates that lesser educated Saudi speakers appear to be conservative by preferring to use the local vernacular variant /-z/. This variation amongst male speakers, of SMSA, as shown in Table (3), reflects once again the significant role of education. That is to say, the higher the education the more the tendency towards using prestige standard variable(s) i.e., /-d/, and the lower the education the more tendency towards using local nonstandard variant(s) i.e., /-z/.

The following is a sample of the most frequently used words in SMSA with their mingled pronunciation as an interdental /-d/ and as an alveolar phoneme /-z/:

/haaal/ "this" /daki/ "intelligent" /dakat/ "mention"
/lakaanah/ "memory" /laksala/ "book" /lanaa/ "since"
/?hazara/ "excuses" /hazara/ "a liar" /zakra/ "a remembrance"
/lazara/ "remember" /tazara/ "teacher" /lataxia/ "to decide"

The subjects of the present study use the SMSA variety with certain amount of ease. They are able to make themselves understood in a variety that is neither colloquial nor classical, i.e., the SMSA normally used in formal occasions. We can characterize the Saudi subjects using MSA as follows: The average Saudis with a college education, who are categorized in this study as EM or EF, can be described as competent users of the SMSA, while those with higher education, with an MA or a PhD, categorized as HEM or HET, are considered professional competent users of this variety and that is due to their ability to use the language effectively and efficiently, i.e., closer to CA. It is worth mentioning that the subjects of these social categories appear to know MSA certainly well enough for communicative purposes.

The statistics in Table (4) reveal that there is a noticeable tendency among educated female FE speakers to abandon the CA variable /-d/ in favor of the CHA variant /-z/. The variable /-d/ scores (76%) by FE, whereas /-z/ scores (24%) by the same social category. So, the nonstandard colloquial variant /-z/ seems to prevail in the variation used by female educated speakers. The prevalence of /-z/ by FE appears to be in contrast with the prevailing /-d/ used by the social category HFE. The score (61%) of the CA variable /-d/ indicates that it is used more frequently than /-z/ scores (39%). These statistical results, in Table (4), are in line with the those in Table (3), in terms of the significant influence of the levels of education on the speakers' usage of the language.
The fluctuations between /-d/ and /-z/ confirm again that the regional or local variant(s), (i.e., CA variants) can often compete with the standards (i.e., CA variables) in formal occasions. However, this competition appears to be socially conditioned by the level(s) of education of the speakers. More importantly, such fluctuation does not imply the stability or discreetness of SMSA. In fact, this variation, or any variation in any Arabic variety apart from CA, must not be taken beyond its objective and goal, which is an adequate sociolinguistic description of intra-language variation. Trudgill, (1983: 186-87) states that Standard English is spoken with a large number of different accents. He adds that accent and dialect usually go together to the extent that we consider an accent as an integral part of a particular dialect. Trudgill, (ibid) reveals that most speakers of standard English dialect speak it, usually, with a not too localized regional accent to the extent that their geographical origins are hidden in their standard English accent, which is known in British English as Received Pronunciation RP.

The main reason for citing Trudgill’s view, in this context, is to provide collateral accountable justification for phonological variation in Arabic varieties. That is to say, although English, just as Arabic, exhibits similar variation in pronunciation, yet sociolinguists do not take such variation as a justifiable excuse to establish a discrete and a stable English variety. They provide adequate description of the observed English variation, and account for it in terms of the relevant social variables i.e., age, sex/gender, literacy etc. However, in Arabic certain sociolinguists, (see Abdel-Jawad, 1987; Badawi, 1973 among others) tend to subclassify it into several levels (e.g., high level, middle levels and low level etc.) and their views are untenable and irrational. They, unsuccessfully, defended their views by describing certain phonological or morphological variations in Arabic dialects, and considering such variations as an evidence for their classified levels of Arabic. In fact, any variation in Colloquial Arabic can be justified sociolinguistically (i.e., by the relevant social variables) and incorporate such dialectal variations within the regional dialectal differences, as it is the case with English, without the need to create or posit an unstable or in-discrete Arabic level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social categories</th>
<th>Variants in SMSA</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total frequency of variants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Educated</td>
<td>/-d/</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(FE)</td>
<td>/-z/</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Highly Educated</td>
<td>/-d/</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(FHE)</td>
<td>/-z/</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In view of this discussion, we argue that the coexistence of two or more variants, at the phonological level, in an Arabic variety, does not necessarily mean the establishment or the postulation of a new standard Arabic variety. The adoption of such views, of having several standards in Arabic, may be taken as an attempt to literary damage the prestige, admiration, and the respect of Fusha or CA. We view colloquial Arabic varieties to be descendant or a degeneration of CA. We agree with what Trudgill, (1983) stated earlier about Standard English, and believe that most speakers of MSA have two identifiable aspects; First, they do not show their region in their accent. Second, they do not use too localized phonological variants. These two significant aspects are the most tenable and rational explanations for defining and identifying MSA and its speakers. Therefore, it is conceivable to have more than one standard variety in Arabic. We reiterate, once again, what we have stated earlier in this article that Arabic has three different varieties: First, Classical Arabic, or Fusha and it is the only prescribed Arabic variety taught formally at schools. Second, Colloquial Arabic, and it embodies all the Arabic dialects in all geographically distinctive areas. Third, Modern Standard Arabic, and it is a combination of both Fusha and Colloquial Arabic. Any sub-classification of Arabic into middle levels, as Badawi, (1973) among others claim, is, we believe, inconceivable and does not have stability or discreetness. Certain linguists, (see Ibrahim, 1986) make a distinction between standard and what they call prestigious Arabic. We tend to categorize these two and other similar varieties as colloquial versus standard Arabic, and this categorization is in line with our three-level classification of Arabic.

7. Variation with /-?/-/s/ and /-?/- in SMSA

In this section, the observed phonological variation occurs (in SMSA) between the variable /-/?/ and its variants /-s/ and /-?/, will be analyzed in association with the relevant social factors in an attempt to account for such variation. Before we proceed with the analysis, it is worth noting that Eid, (1988) reveals, in her study of principles for code-switching between standard and Egyptian Arabic, that lexical items are uttered with different pronunciations (i.e., switching between standard and Egyptian Arabic varieties) by the same educated Egyptian speakers in the same formal occasion. Eid distinguishes between two varieties, namely EsShug Arabic (she refers to it as standard Arabic) and colloquial Egyptian Arabic. She illustrates the observed phonological variation by citing the different pronunciations for the words “three” /talafs/ and “revolution” /hawra/. Eid points out that the alternation occurs when these words are pronounced either with the standard Arabic interdental fricative variable /-?/ (as in “three” /talafs/ and “revolution” /hawra/) or with the colloquial Egyptian alveolar variants /-s/ and /-?/ (as in “three” /talafs/ or /talafs/; and “revolution” /hawra/ or /hawra/). El-gibals (1985) agrees with Eid.
and states that there is a close correspondence, in Cairene Arabic, between Classical Arabic variants /-B/ and its correspondences /-/ and /-/ in formal and informal oral situations.

This means that Egyptian Arabic, according to Eid (1988) and Elgihali (1985), exhibit certain phonological similarities with SMSA. The similarity can be summarized in two respects: First, the two Arabic vernaculars (i.e., CHA and colloquial Egyptian Arabic) appear to be using the same phonological variants (i.e., /-/ and /-/). Second, the two standard Arabic varieties (i.e., Egyptian and Saudi) are exhibiting similar phonological alternations between what we tend to call CA variable /-/ (i.e., standard Arabic form according to Eid and Elgihali) and the colloquial variants /-/ and /-/ in Egyptian and Saudi Arabic varieties. It is worth noting, in passing, that Eid (1988) refers to its Arabic variety as Egyptian Arabic, while Elgihali, calls it Cairene Arabic. For convenience of the study, we will refer to the variants /-/ and /-/ as Colloquial Hijazi Arabic (CHA) variants. The above two fold similarities observed between the two Arabic varieties (i.e., Egyptian and Saudi) reinforces our earlier stated view regarding the indiscriminateness of regional standard Arabic varieties. Both, Eid’s and the present studies appear to be exhibiting similar phonological variations as the following tables show.

Training to the discussion of the results, Table (5) shows clearly the alternated CA variable /-/ and its CHA variants /-/ and /-B/. In analyzing the alternation, the statistics of /-/ table illustrates a clear higher tendency (57%), by the social category ME, towards using the CHA variant /-/B/, than the other CHA variant /-/ (75%). The CA variable, however, scores the lowest percentage of occurrence (18%) by the same social category. As for the social category MHE the table shows that the highest percentage of frequency (42%) is towards using the CA variable /-/B/; compared with the CHA variants /-/ and /-/ which scores (38%) and (20%) respectively. Although the difference in the frequency percentage between using the CA variable /-/B/ and the CHA variant /-/B/ is minor (i.e., only 4%), yet it still shows a prevalence of /-/B/ over /-/B/. It is worth noting, that /-/B/ seems to be a compatible variant to /-/B/ in both varieties (i.e., the informal CHA and the formal SMSA) regardless of the levels of education of the speakers.

Comparing the scores of the CHA variants /-/ and /-/B/ one can notice that the most frequently used CHA variant, by both social categories ME and MHE in formal occasions, is /-/B/, which simply means that it is competitive and preferable variant in SMSA, as it is the case in colloquial and standard Egyptian Arabic (see Eid, 1988). On the basis of our observations in the present study, it appears that the higher the frequency of using the vernacular variants /-/ and /-/B/, the more informal the mode of discussions becomes, and vice versa i.e., the higher the frequency of using the CA variable /-/B/ the more formal the mode of discussions will be. That is to say, the favoring or disfavoring of using vernacular
or standard variants is attributed to three main factors: First, whether the occasion, in which such alternation is used, is formal or informal. Second, whether the speakers, of the concerned Arabic variety, are educated or highly educated. Third, whether the alternated CA variable has one or more variants, frequently used in colloquial speech. Because of this mingling between Arabic varieties, (at all linguistic levels), which is due to the above-stated three factors in Arabic societies, one can say that the relationship between standard and colloquial Arabic varieties is very close, and our view in this regard is in line with El-gibali, (1985) amongst others, who repeatedly say that Arabic varieties are interrelated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social categories</th>
<th>Variants in</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total frequency of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SMSA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>variants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Educated</td>
<td>-/4/</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>(541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>-/s/</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-/v/</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Highly</td>
<td>-/4/</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>(1232)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>-/s/</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>-/v/</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interrelatedness of CHA and SMSA, is illustrated in the following words, from the present data, which show the alternative CHA variants -/s/ and -/v/, and CA variable -/4/ in SMSA.

- /ta stati/ “was affected” /tatattai/ “was affected”
- /ahl/ “a lot of” /kati/ “a lot of”
- /ahal/ “found” /tattai/ “found”

These extracted words, show clearly how the same word, is pronounced in three different ways by the same speakers of the concerned Arabic variety. Needless to say, however, that not all words exhibit the same alternation. On the one hand, there are words which are mingled between the variable -/4/, as for example, the words /bala/Qa’al “culture” /bawa:n/ “seconds” /ham:s/ “acting”, or the variant -/s/ /saw:a:n/ “seconds” /hashil/ “acting”. Words like these are not observed to be pronounced with the variant -/v/, even though they are amongst the most frequently used words in SMSA. On the other hand, there are other words which are alternated between -/4/ and -/v/ only, such as the numerals /bala:b/ /bala:rin/ /bala:mi/n/ “three”; “thirty”; “three hundred”, which are also uttered as /halat:ta:/ /halatk:/ /halam/ respectively. Kheshatify, (1997) indicates, in a comparative study between Classical and Colloquial Hijazi Arabic, that the -/v/ is used in numerals in CHA-
stead of /-Ø/ in CA. However, CHA, seems to be having distinctive forms of numerals. That is to say, the variant /-ø/, for example, is never used in CHA as an alternative for /-Ø/ as it is the case with Colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

This study reveals that there are many other words, apart from numerals, which are observed to be alternating between /-Ø/ and /-ø/ only, as for example, /Øcb/ or /Øb/ "men's gown"; /Øç/ or /Oç/ "a build". As a result of the diglossic situation in the speech of the relevant social categories, a "mingled variety" from CHA and CA, had given rise to a new but an unstable and in- discrete Arabic variety, and that is SMSA. As it is the case with MSA, used in other Arabic speaking countries, the indiscernibility of this new Arabic variety is due to its dependence on either CA or CHA, and the observed alternation between these two varieties is a clear illustration of our view.

By examining the results in Table (6), it seems that the fluctuation between /-Ø/, /-ø/ and /-t/ is not random or haphazard. The statistical results show that the variant /-ø/ scores (38%) the highest percentage, by the female educated FE social category, compared with the scores of /-ø/ (18%) and /-Ø/ (14%). As for the social category, Female highly educated MHE, it appears that the variant /-ø/, has, once again, the highest score (44%) compared with the scores of /-Ø/ (36%) and /-t/ (20%). The results, in Table (6), are interesting, and appear to be different from those in Table (5) in four sociolinguistic aspects: First, Table (5) exhibits education differences, whereby male educated ME, tend to favor using the variant /-ø/, whereas, male highly educated MHE, appear to be favoring the use of /-Ø/. Second, Table (6) shows no education differences, since the two social categories FE and FHE, appear to be using the variant /-ø/ more frequently than the other two variants /-Ø/ and /-t/. Third, the scores in both Tables (5) and (6) indicate that, whereas the two social categories ME and FE are congruent in favoring the use of /-ø/ (i.e., obliteration any sex/gender differences regarding the observed variation), the other two highly educated social categories are incongruent and exhibiting sex/ gender differences i.e., MHE favors the use of /-Ø/, whereas FHE favors using /-ø/.

Table 6. Female subjects and variations with /-Ø/ /-ø/ and /-t/ in SMSA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social categories</th>
<th>Variants in SMSA</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Total frequency of variants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Educated ME</td>
<td>/-Ø/</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/-ø/</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/-t/</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Highly Educated MHE</td>
<td>/-Ø/</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/-ø/</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/-t/</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This description of the socio-phonological variation mingling between /-d/, /-s/ and /-z/ yields two points: 1 - Sex/gender differences, coupled with education, appear to be influential factors in this type of variation. 2 - These two social factors are further reinforcements of the systematic nature of variability. That is to say, education and sex/gender appear to, systematically, increase or decrease the likelihood that one of the fluctuated variants will prevail.

The statistics in both Tables (5) and (6) indicate that even though SMASA, is dealt with in this study, as a spoken formal variety, we found that the most frequently used form was the informal variant /-s/, regardless of the sex and education of the subjects. Consequently, we can say CHA reflexes (namely, /-s/, /-z/) are highly competitive variants for the CA variables /-d/. This finding is in line with findings of the earlier discussed variations, in which informal CHA variants /-q/ and /-z/ are competing with the formal CA variables /-Q/ and /-D/ in the formal oral variety of SMASA.

8. General Findings

To summarize the findings of the present study, in view of relevant sociolinguistic studies, there are strong emphases on education, to account for variation in the formal speech style of educated people. Honey, (see Coulmas, 1997: 104), for example, states that the concept of "educatedness" is fundamental in sociophonology. Educatedness, he adds, is closely associated with the notion of being "well spoken", which appears to be shared by all languages, and also associated with formal styles of speaking. Applying Honey's concept, to the formal oral variety of SMASA, appears to be feasible on the basis of the earlier discussed findings. That is to say, it is evident that there is a connection between highly educated male and female speakers of SMASA, and the most frequently used CA variables, which are /-Q/, /-D/ and /-d/ compared with the lesser used CHA variants, namely /-q/, /-z/, /-s/ and /-j/. Thus, the notion of "well spoken" is represented, in the present study, by the frequent usages of the CA variables, and Honey's concept of "educatedness" can, therefore, be implemented to the formal speech style of SMSA, and is, in turn, shared by Arabic varieties, as it is the case with other language varieties.

It is interesting to note that the findings of the study show no sex-differentiated patterns of variation in the formal oral variety of SMSA. Figure (1), based on the scores of the two highly educated social categories, MHE & FHE, in Tables (1-6), illustrate, very clearly, the close tendency of both male and female subjects towards using the same CA variable. The figure presents the best summary of recurring tendency, towards using the same CA variables, by the two social categories MHE & FHE. Based on Tables (1-2), the Figure shows the recurring tendency of the CA variable /-Q/, which scores (70%) by
MHE, and (70%) by FHE. Similarly the case is with the CA variable /-ø/, based on tables (3-4), the figure appears to exhibit very close scores (62%) by MHE and (61%) by FHE. Also, on the basis of Tables (5-6) with respect to the recurring tendency of the CA variable /-ø/, the figure reveals that both social categories MHE and FHE scores (42%) and (36%) respectively.

C.A. Variables

Fig. 1. Frequency percentage of C.A. variables used by the social categories M.H.E. & F.H.E.

The scores, in figure (1), illustrate that sex/gender difference does not play influential role in the sociophonological variation of SMSA variety. Furthermore, the figure shows a tendency to close similarity between CA, and SMSA varieties. This similarity lies in the frequent usage, of the CA variables, by subjects of SMSA. These findings support our earlier stated view that SMSA (as it is the case with MSA used in any Arabic speaking country) is an indiscernible mingled Arabic variety, largely dependent on two main Arabic varieties, namely, CA and dialectal Arabic. This is explained in two respects: Firstly, figure (1), illustrates the mingled variation of SMSA (at the phonological level), and its dependence on certain CA variables. Secondly, figure (2) shows the indiscernibility of SMSA, by exhibiting the percentages of the competitive CHA variants used side by side with the CA variables in formal oral occasions.

The summarized recurring findings in Figure (2), which is based on Tables (1-6), reveal that, as it is the case in Figure (1), sex differences have no influential role in the observed sociophonological variation in SMSA. The competitive CHA variant /-ø/i, in Figure (2) based on Tables (1-2), has a lower percentage of occurrence, (32%) and (40%) for the two social categories FE and ME. This low occurrence is recorded when it is used in alternation with the CA variable /-ø/. Such close tendency between male and female (i.e., the two social categories FE and ME is recurring, in Figure (2) based on Tables (3-4), with the
competitive CHA variant /-d/, when it is mingled with the CA variable /-ð/. It is worth noting, in this respect, that by comparing the statistics in figures (1) and (2), it seems that the concerned four social categories appear to have two different tendencies. That is to say, the two social categories MHE and FHE in Figure (1), have high tendency towards using the CA variable /-ð/ scoring (62%) and (61%), and that is in contrast with the two social categories ME and FE, in Figure (2), which score (74%) and (76%) in using the CHA variant /-d/. This finding can only indicate that the favoring of /-ð/ and its variant /-d/ is mainly attributed to the level of education of the subjects.

![Graph showing frequency percentages of CHA variants](image)

**FIG. 2.** **Frequency** percentage of the competitive CHA variants used by the social categories M.E. & F.E.

Turning to the CHA variants /-t/- and /-t/ and their CA variable /-ð/-, it seems that there is general consensus amongst all four social categories, towards favoring the use of /-t/- in formal occasions on SMSA. It is to be realized that /-t/- exhibits the highest scores (57%) and (68%), by ME and FE respectively, in Figure (2) which is based on Tables (5-6), compared with the lower scores of /-t/- (25%) and (18%) by ME and FE in Figure (2), and the scores of /-ð/- (42%) and (36%) in Figure (1). Consequently, these scores lead us to conclude that the most frequently used variant, in this respect, is /-t/- and this finding applies to all four social categories.

The general findings of the present study can be stated as follows: Education is the most influential social factor in the sociophonological variation occurring in SMSA. This influence is illustrated in frequent usages of the CA variables /-q/, /-ð/ and /-ð/-, in association with the CHA variants /-t/-, /-t/-, /-t/-, and /-t/- by
educated male and female subjects in formal occasions. The findings reveal that the higher the education of the speakers of SMASA, the more he/she tends to use CA variables, and vice versa i.e., the lower the education level, the more he/she tends to use dialectal reflexes i.e., CHA variants. This finding is explained by the fact that, education includes and requires the knowledge and use of CA variables, in formal occasions of SMASA variety. Moreover, the stereotypical social status of Saudi women has changed from illiterate homemakers to educated persons of high calibre, and this is reflected in their use of the language, which to a great extent becomes similar to men's speech particularly in formal oral situations.

Consequently, this study shows no sex differences amongst educated speakers of both genders in SMASA. This particular finding is not in line with certain earlier sociolinguistic studies, which reveal that sex differences can be an influential social factor in linguistic variation in Arabic dialects. Rosenhouse, (1998) indicates that sex-based differences are possible in a language as long as the system of that language allows more than one structural solution, such for example, the use of standard versus dialectal phonological variants. Rosenhouse, (ibid) amongst others, as for example (Abdel-Jawad, 1981, Suleiman, 1985), described sex-based phonological variations in the usage of /-q/ and its reflexes /-j/, /-k/-/-q/ and /-j/-/-q/-/-j/ in Egyptian and Jordanian (rural and Bedouin) dialects of Arabic. Such sex-based differences may not be generalized to all Arabic varieties, and henceforth, do not necessarily apply to MSA varieties including SMASA.

9. Conclusion

We have argued in this empirical sociolinguistic study, that sociophonological variation may partly be attributed to certain sociological factors (namely education levels of speakers and sex) and partly to the inherited linguistic properties of CA variables and their variants. With this main conclusion, it appears that it is in agreement with the earlier discussed views of Parkison (1993) in which he describes MSA as having a prescriptive system inherited from CA. The findings of this study, are also in line with Parkison's view that MSA is an in between Arabic variety, which is neither classical nor dialectal.

The conclusion reached in this study, which are valid for most speakers of SMASA, argues for the indirectness and for the instability of any MSA variety including SMASA. This view is not in line with Badawi's (1973) proposed five levels of Egyptian Arabic. Badawi, (see Elgabali, 1985) suggests that three of the levels (which are Modern Standard Arabic, Educated Colloquial, and Literate Colloquial) are discrete and stable Arabic varieties. Badawi argues, unconvincingly, for the discreetness and stability of his proposed three levels. We believe that the smooth flow of continuous unpredictable alternation between
the three suggested varieties, is a clear evidence of its muddled and indistinct boundaries, and henceforth, of its indiscarnation.

Finally, we propose to distinguish three different Arabic varieties: Firstly, /Al-Qur'ān/Al-Ensāṣ/, which is "Ensāṣ Arabic" or "Classical Arabic" (CA), and it is the only discrete, role-governed Arabic variety and it is taught formally at schools. Secondly, /Al-Qur'ān/Al-Qur'ān Al-Dalīl/, and it is termed "Modern Standard Arabic" MSA. It identifies any indirecte and mingled Arabic and it is used formally in written and oral forms. Thirdly, /Allāhābād/Al-'Alamīyya Al-Qur'ānīyya "Colloquial Dialectal Arabic" CDA, and it refers to any indirecte region nonstandard dialect used informally.

References


اللغة العربية المعيارية الحديثة
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مستخلص:
تعتبر اللغة العربية المعيارية الحديثة من المسائل الخلافية الجدلية في علم اللغة الاجتماعي. تتاح هذه الدراسة وذلك من خلال تناولها وجود تركيز قوي على التعليم وذلك لتحرير الاختلافات الصوتية الراجعة إلى الاختلافات الاجتماعية التي تم رصدها في اللغة العربية السعودية المعيارية الحديثة. كما تظهر نتائجها اتفاقا مع العديد من الدراسات اللغوية الاجتماعية مثل دراسة كولمان لسنة 1997م والتي ذكر فيها أن مفهوم التعليم له أهمية في علم الصوتيات الاجتماعية. بينما من اللافت للنظر أن الدراسة المالية تبين عدم وجود تردد في التدريس للتبني الجنسي. كما تظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة أنه كلا ارتفاع مستوى التعليم لدى المتحدثين بالعربية السعودية المعيارية الحديثة، كما ارتفع معدل التوجه لاستخدام التغيرات الصوتية المتوافقة في اللغة الفصحى بصورة أكبر تردد عن مقارنتها بالمتغيرات المنطوية في اللهجات العربية الجوازية. ولذلك نرى أن التعليم تأثير فعال على نوعية استخدام اللغة. وبناء على هذه النتائج، فإن الدراسة توصي أن يتم التفريق بين ثلاثة أقطار: لغة العربية وخدمة اللغة العربية كلهما اقليمية: أولاً: اللغة العربية الفصحى أو كما تسمى لدى بعض اللغويين باللغة الكلامية. ثانياً: اللغة العربية المعيارية الحديثة، وهي تجمع بين خصائص لغوية تتنتمي إلى مطابق لغويين، كما الفصحى والعامية بصرف النظر عن الاتجاه الوظيفي للتحديدين بها. ثالثها: اللهجات العامية العربية وهذا النظام ينطبق على كافة اللهجات العربية. وبناء على هذا التصنيف النموذجي للغة العربية المفترضة فإن النطاق الذي تتنتمي إليه الدراسة الحالية هو النطاق الثاني أي العربية المعيارية الحديثة.