

Regional Variation

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Introduction

Arabic dialectology has a depth of tradition similar to the Western dialectological tradition. The roots of Arabic dialectology stretch as far back as the late nineteenth century (see Behnstedt and Woidich 2005, 2013) with early travelers and scholars documenting features of the varieties of Arabic spoken throughout the region. Even earlier, medieval grammarians were aware of differences between varieties of Arabic (spoken in the eastern and western parts of the Arabian Peninsula) (Rabin 1951). However, the Arabic dialectological tradition of the last, say, 150 years, differs from the English tradition when viewed alongside the more recent emergence of sociolinguistics.

When examining regional variation in English speaking communities, the realm of traditional English dialectology, it is possible to trace the natural progression and evolution of dialectology into what became modern sociolinguistics. Mainstream sociolinguistics grew somewhat organically out of English dialectology, with dialectology providing much of the foundation for early sociolinguistic work. The Arabic case differs in this respect (Al-Wer 2013).

While the study of variation in Arabic from a dialectological standpoint has been carried out since the late 1800s, the recent emergence of scholarship on Arabic sociolinguistics has grown largely out of the English sociolinguistic tradition. The result has been a situation where, since the 1970s when Arabic sociolinguistics began, Arabic dialectology and sociolinguistics have existed side by side, but rarely come into contact with each other methodologically or theoretically.

Dialectologists of Arabic have documented a great deal of the regional variation across spoken varieties of the language. The present chapter takes this dialectological work as its foundation and aims to illuminate how Arabic sociolinguists, through the application of sociolinguistic theory and method, have and continue to refine our understanding of Arabic varieties spoken around the world. The goal of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, we provide an overview of work conducted on regional variation in the Arabic-speaking world by highlighting a selection of linguistic features that tend to vary across the areas where Arabic is spoken. Secondly, we build on this discussion to show how sociolinguistic research can enhance the findings of Arabic dialectology and refine our understanding of spoken varieties of Arabic.

Classifying Arabic dialects

Arabic dialects are typically classified into five groups based on bundles of linguistic features. Versteegh (1997: 145) lays out these classifications, with further clarification provided by Al-Wer and De Jong (2018):

1. Dialects of the Mashreq (the eastern Arab World):
 - a. Dialects of the Arabian Peninsula (including Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, other Gulf countries, and some varieties found in the south of the Levant and Iraq)
 - b. Mesopotamian dialects (Iraq and southern Mesopotamia, as well as parts of Iran)
 - c. Syro-Lebanese dialects (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan)
 - d. Egyptian dialects (typically including the varieties of both Egypt and Sudan)
2. Maghreb dialects (the dialects of the western Arab World, viz., North Africa: Mauritania, Morocco, Western Sahara, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya)

Taken at face value, these regional classifications provide a seemingly straightforward picture of the diversity of spoken Arabic. Work within Arabic sociolinguistics takes these classifications as a starting point. However, as we show below, sociolinguistic research on Arabic shows how profound levels of contact, both between Arabic speaking communities (e.g. Palestinian and Jordanian) and language communities (e.g. Arabic and Tamazight in North Africa) have resulted in meaningful change in Arabic. Sociolinguistics opens the door to understanding how we can refine and improve our present knowledge about Arabic and the communities in which it is spoken. We begin our discussion of these issues by starting with the Arabic varieties of the Maghreb, before moving east across the Arabic-speaking world.

Arabic across North Africa

As we introduce above, Arabic dialects are often classified as either Eastern or Western. This geographic divide centers on the morphology of the 1st person imperfect singular and plural verb forms. In Western varieties, both the 1st person singular and plural are formed with an initial *n-*, while the plural in these varieties also takes a final *-u*, e.g. *niktib* ‘I write’ vs *niktibu* ‘we write.’ In contrast, in the varieties classified as Eastern, the 1st person singular is formed without an initial *n-*, being realized instead with an initial vowel, while the plural form also lacks the final *-u*, e.g. *a-ktib* ‘I write’ vs *niktib* ‘we write’ (Versteegh 1997: 134; Al-Wer and De Jong, 2018). The reality of course is that the split between these two groupings is not cut and dry. A small cone-shaped transitional area where we can note variation in these forms runs through the Egyptian Delta (Behnstedt and Woidich, 1985, Band 2, maps 210 and 211).

In addition to the *niktib/niktibu* verbal conjugation pattern that serves as a defining characteristic of Western Arabic dialects (including Maltese, though there are a good number of Levantine features exhibited in Maltese as well), one of the other typical distinctions within

Western Arabic varieties that further differentiates this grouping is the origin of a given dialect as being of either the pre-Hilali or Hilali type (Crossref Vicente and/or Messaoudi). Pre-Hilali varieties are predominantly sedentary, having arrived through waves of Arabization in the 7th century CE, while the Hilali varieties are of a rural or Bedouin type and arrived through a later wave of settlement in the 10-11th centuries (Versteegh 1997: 141).¹ One phonological distinction between these varieties is the realization of the Classical Arabic (CA) voiceless uvular stop /q/, which in Pre-Hilali varieties is typically realized² as a glottal stop [ʔ], while in Hilali varieties its realization is generally a voiced velar [g].

Viewing Arabic through this descriptive frame presents a straightforward picture of dialect diversity in North Africa, with variation being stratified by large-scale geographic distinctions and millennia-old migration patterns. However, this picture does little to enrich our understanding of how Arabic is actually used throughout North Africa today, presenting a fairly homogenous regional view of ‘Western’ Arabic dialects. By examining more recent Arabic sociolinguistic work we arrive at a more nuanced picture of variation across North Africa, and

¹See Cadora (1992) for an overview of the ecolinguistic taxonomy of Bedouin vs sedentary, and urban vs rural that is often used in classifying Arabic varieties. (CR Herin)

² Since we cannot definitively prove that – in this case – the glottal stop [ʔ] *developed from* the Classical Arabic /q/, it is customary in dialect studies of Arabic to speak of a “reflex” (in this case [g]) of a certain CA phoneme, or as being “realized” as a phoneme in a particular dialect. The reason is that in Arabic dialect studies “Classical Arabic” is only used as a common frame of reference, and is not generally accepted as an earlier form of spoken Arabic, let alone as a shared common ancestor.

taking social factors into account can enhance our understanding of Arabic in a broader context (CR Sayahi and/or Messaoudi).

While early migrations out of the Arabian Peninsula into North Africa have resulted in some of the major forms of variation discussed above, more recent migrations within North Africa have resulted in ongoing processes of variation and change in these communities. From a linguistic standpoint, the results of much of this migration have been cases of koineization (Trudgill 1986), or new dialect formation. Laila Messaoudi's (this volume) analysis of koineization in Morocco provides important insights into how these processes have played out.

Additionally, Hachimi's (2007, 2012, this volume) work on variation in Morocco has shown how, as processes of koineization play out, language variation becomes enmeshed in broader identity projects at an individual and community level. Hachimi (2007) shows that as economic power shifted to Casablanca, large portions of Morocco's population migrated to this coastal city. The result was the "disruption of the rural/urban dichotomy that once dominated Moroccan dialects and identities" (97). While old urban dialects (e.g. the dialect of Fez) have endured as local prestige forms indicative of bourgeoisie identity, migration has also resulted in the development of new koineized dialects (e.g. Casablanca) which are linked to the emergence new forms of urban identity (Hachimi 2007: 97-98).

Hachimi's (2012) more recent work grounds this broader discussion of the outcomes of koineization in the specific case of two Fessi women in Casablanca: one born in Casablanca, the other a migrant to the city, although both are of a Fessi background. By highlighting this case, what Hachimi shows is how dialect differences carry differing forms of social meaning (Eckert 2008, 2012, 2018) and can index different lifestyles, identities, and forms of morality. In this

respect, Hachimi shows how Fessi and Casablancon dialect features serve as sites for the emergence or proliferation of language ideologies which are linked to issues of identity.

While work like that of Messaoudi or Hachimi has primarily focused on the results of Arabic dialect contact, North Africa has also been a robust site of contact between different language communities. Hoffman (2008), who focuses primarily on Tamazight language maintenance in Morocco, highlights extensive contact between Arabic varieties and Tamazight that have taken place on a larger scale across North Africa. Hoffman's ethnographic account in the Middle Atlas of Morocco foregrounds how the Arabization of North Africa has affected local indigenous populations, resulting in female Tamazight speakers bearing much of the responsibility for language maintenance in their community, while male speakers work in predominantly Arabic-speaking cities.

In addition, sociolinguistic research in North Africa has also stressed the centrality of code-switching to the linguistic practices of many Arabic speakers throughout this region. Recent work by Sayahi (2011) and Post (2015) has highlighted the vitality of contact between French and Arabic across North Africa and has shown how sociolinguistic approaches to understanding language contact have enriched our understanding of the outcomes of language contact happening in the Arabic-speaking world. Sayahi's (2014) recent work has also shed additional light on the issue of diglossia, moving beyond what are now somewhat tired discussions of the dichotomy between spoken varieties of Arabic and "Standard" varieties by showing how diglossia interacts with sociolinguistic phenomena in North Africa. In this case, sociolinguistic research has refined both our understanding of how language contact has played out across the region, and enriched our understanding of how speakers navigate the reality of diglossia in their day-to-day lives.

Egypt

As we noted above, the transitional area between the East and West of the Arabic-speaking world runs through the heart of Egypt. This makes Egypt an important and unique site of linguistic diversity and variation. Given that the majority of Egypt's population in the Nile Delta, a great deal of the country's linguistic diversity emanates from this region. Although not exclusively the case, the majority of the Bedouin dialects in Egypt are located outside of the Delta, either to the west or east into the Sinai Peninsula. Behnstedt and Woidich (1985) divide the non-Bedouin varieties of Egypt along lines of Lower Egyptian (including Cairo and the Central Delta), Middle, and Upper, with additional distinctions between Northern and Southern varieties in each grouping.

One of the most prominent features of the dialects of the Central Delta, Cairo, and the areas directly south of the capital is the voiced velar realization of CA /dʒ/, realized in these varieties by [g]. Outside of these areas, however, /dʒ/ is often realized as [dʒ], which is common, *inter alia*, in Bedouin varieties of Arabic. In the area around Asyout and towards the south, /dʒ/ can also be realized as [d]. Similar to other Arabic varieties, another feature that defines varieties of Egyptian Arabic are the variable realizations of CA /q/. In the areas of the Central Delta, and in particular Cairo, /q/ is realized as a glottal stop [ʔ], whereas in most other areas of the country /q/ is realized as a voiced velar [g].

In addition to its wealth of typological diversity, Egypt, and in particular Cairo, has been the site of some of the major foundational work on Arabic sociolinguistics. Haeri (1994, 1996, 1997) has extensively documented sociolinguistic variation in Cairo. This work has been influential not only because it provided one of the more in-depth accounts of variation in the Arabic-speaking world, but also because it has pushed back against earlier misconceptions about

diglossia in Arabic-speaking communities (Haeri 2000, CR Haeri & Cotter, building on earlier work by Ibrahim 1986). This work has reoriented our understanding of what constitutes “standard” language in the Arabic-speaking world. These discussions have prompted a shift towards understanding that Classical Arabic cannot be taken as a default standard code, and that the dominance of capital cities or socially influential groups can result in the emergence of regional or localized standards.

Miller’s (2005) more recent work in Cairo has further refined issues initially raised by Haeri by examining communities of Upper Egyptian migrants living in Cairo. Miller’s analysis suggests that speakers in her sample show relatively slow processes of accommodation to Cairene Arabic, despite its prestige within Egypt. The extent of accommodation in this case depends on the type of linguistic feature in question, and is further influenced by speakers’ social networks, social ideologies that circulate in Cairo about Upper Egyptians, and fairly marked typological differences between these two varieties. Miller’s work foregrounds the broader range of contextual and social factors that can condition processes of language variation and change, stressing that situations of contact between dialect communities are rarely straightforward.

As one moves east of the Nile Delta, Egypt’s Sinai desert forms a linguistic bridge to the Eastern Arabic varieties discussed in the following section. The foundation of this transitional area are the Bedouin varieties of the Sinai, considered to be varieties of Northwest Arabian Arabic (Palva 2006), a dialect area hypothesized to continue through the northern Ḥijāz province of modern day Saudi Arabia (De Jong 2000), which in turn differs noticeably from the varieties of the Delta. As Al-Wer and De Jong (2018) note, the major distinguishing feature setting these varieties apart from their Delta counterparts is a voiced velar [g] realization of CA /q/, a

phoneme that has a glottal [ʔ] realization in the sedentary dialects of the area (such as Cairo), e.g. *galb* vs *ʔalb* for ‘heart’ (cf. CA *qalb*).

Another major feature of the Bedouin dialects east of the Delta and throughout Sinai that distinguishes them from sedentary Egyptian varieties is the realization of CA /dʒ/, realized in the Sinai as a voiced post-alveolar affricate or fricative (i.e. [dʒ] or [ʒ]). As we noted above, in the central Delta and Cairo, this segment is realized as the voiced velar [g]. This creates an alternation across dialects that manifests in examples like *dʒamal* vs *ʒamal* ‘camel’ in Bedouin varieties, while in Cairo and the central Delta the form *gamal* is heard (Al-Wer and De Jong, 2018). The phonology of these Bedouin varieties is further defined by the retention of the interdental /θ, ð, ðˤ/ as opposed to the stop realizations found in the vast majority of urban varieties of the area. This results in alternations across Bedouin and sedentary communities such as *θala:θa* vs *tala:ta* ‘three’, *ðahab* vs *dahab* ‘gold’, and *ðˤarab* vs *dˤarab* ‘he hit’. Bedouin varieties lack the pharyngealized stop /dˤ/ as a phoneme (see Al-Wer 2004 for a discussion of /ðˤ/ and /dˤ/ in Arabic dialects).

As our discussion above suggests, the dialectological record of the Sinai is quite robust. However, sociolinguistic research in this area remains lacking. Given that the Sinai represents a linguistic bridge, a transitional space between dialect varieties, sociolinguistic work, were it to be conducted, would likely uncover a form of socially stratified variation that could in turn help refine our understanding of what these transitional zones look like and how changes progress across these linguistic boundaries. As one exits the Sinai region moving into the Levant, a similar transition takes place within the varieties of Arabic encountered in these areas.

The Levant

From a linguistic standpoint, dialectologists have typically subdivided the Arabic varieties spoken in the Levant into three primary groupings (Versteegh 1997: 153)

- the dialects of Lebanon and central Syria (including the capitals of Beirut and Damascus).
- the dialects of northern Syria (including the area of Aleppo).
- the dialects of Palestine and Jordan (including the Horan³ region)

Lebanese and Central Syrian dialects are often distinguished from the other two groups by their realization of the 1st and 3rd person singular verb forms, as in the example below. The resulting variation distinguishes Central Syrian varieties like Damascus, which realize these forms as *bəktob/bjəktob* ‘I write/ he writes’, from varieties like that of Aleppo which realize this form as *baktob/bəktob* (Versteegh 1997: 153). An additional distinction between these two particular Levantine varieties concerns forms of vowel raising that are common in the varieties of this region (Owens 2006). As Versteegh describes for North Syrian and Lebanon/Central Syrian, in North Syrian varieties vowel realizations have shifted from *a:>e:* in the environment of an *i* vowel. The result is a shift that manifests in cases such as *lisa:n > lse:n* ‘tongue’ in Aleppo. In Lebanese dialects the vowel is sensitive to the phonological environment such that it is usually raised, but before emphatic consonants it remains low and is rounded (Versteegh 1997: 153-54).

In Lebanese dialects, the historical diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ are also typically retained, distinguishing these varieties from others in the Levant. As Al-Wer and De Jong (2018) note, these diphthongs are not only manifestations of the CA diphthongs but can also occur as

³The Horan region extends across modern political borders and includes areas in the south of Syria and a great part of modern day Jordan.

diphthongizations of the long vowels /i:/ and /u:/. This is particularly noticeable in areas near Zaḥle in the Beqā‘ Valley of Lebanon. The result is a change in lexical items such as *mnajḥ* (< *mni:ḥ*) ‘good, well’ and *mabsawtʿ* (< *mabsu:tʿ*) ‘happy’.

Building on these descriptive foundations, a great deal of the work in Arabic sociolinguistics has focused on varieties of Arabic spoken in the Levant. Beginning with Abdel Jawad’s (1981) study on sociolinguistic variation, Jordan has been a major site of research. This has particularly been true from the 1990s onward, with Al-Wer (1991) leading the way in the investigation of sociolinguistic phenomena in the country. Al-Wer’s (1997) work has also helped to further reorient notions of diglossia in Arabic sociolinguistics towards more locally based ‘standard’ varieties of the language and away from the super-imposed Standard Arabic as the major point of reference.

Al-Wer’s later work (2002, 2003) contributed to our current knowledge of the outcomes of dialect contact in the Arabic-speaking world, culminating in the emergence of a new dialect in the Jordanian capital of Amman (2007). What Al-Wer’s more recent work has shown is that major city dialects are becoming regional standards. In the case of Amman, a dialect which has as its input both Jordanian and Palestinian dialects, contact between these varieties has resulted in the solidification of a new dialect in the capital which has come to act as a local standard within Jordan. This work has also shown the centrality of Palestinian Arabic dialects to the current dialect makeup of Jordan, the result of decades of early migration into the area, followed by larger waves of refugee migration into Jordan after the creation of Israel in 1948. More recently, sociolinguistic work in Jordan has expanded outside of the capital, Amman, to investigate variation and change in traditional Jordanian Arabic varieties (Abu Ain 2016; Al-Hawamdeh 2016; Herin and Al-Wer 2013).

Jordan has also been a site for research (Al-Wer et al. 2015) that has investigated the subtle links between religious affiliation and linguistic variation, adding to previous work in Arabic sociolinguistics that had highlighted these links (CR Holes; see Germanos and Miller 2015 for a recent survey). What this work shows is that religiously stratified language variation can provide a potential window into understanding the history of Arabic speaking communities, with Al-Wer et al. (2015) showing that in the case of Jordan, Christian speakers appear to retain older features of their Arabic varieties. This enriches our understanding of Arabic dialects by showing how geographic variation also intersects with, and is influenced by, social factors.

Although we know comparatively little about the sociolinguistic situation in Syria, important research has been conducted providing the foundation of an account of sociolinguistic variation in the capital of Damascus. Work by Ismail (2007, 2008, 2009) investigates sociolinguistic variation in two Damascus neighborhoods. Ismail's research has focused predominantly on two variables, (h) and (r); the former is described as being in stable variation, while the latter is undergoing change in progress towards a limited variant of /r/. Work by Habib (2010, 2014) has also attempted to investigate sociolinguistic variation in Syria, particularly dialect acquisition in the rural area surrounding Homs.

Similarly, sociolinguistic variation in Lebanon represents another area where additional research is needed. Early work by Naïm-Sanbar (1985) provided an account of variation in Beirut. Much more recently Germanos (2007, 2009, 2011) revisited sociolinguistic issues in and around the Lebanese capital. One area in this context that had been treated only very limitedly is the sociolinguistic situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Hennessey (2011) provided a useful attempt at documenting sociolinguistic variation in the Palestinian refugee camps of Beirut, utilizing methodologies which assess social network strength in these communities.

This represents an important area of research throughout the Levant due to the large number of Palestinian refugees that have been long term residents of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Hennessey foregrounds that importance of both physical and social mobility for Palestinian refugees and the effect of those mobilities on language variation and change. As Hennessey describes, in the speech of refugee speakers who orient their lives towards Lebanese society in the capital, the traditional features of their regional Palestinian varieties of Arabic have begun to recede, with their dialects changing towards the dialect of Beirut. Conversely, for those refugees who maintain close social network ties within their Palestinian communities, they retain features of their traditional Palestinian dialects. This suggests that as Palestinian refugee populations have migrated, new instances of language variation and change in the communities in which they live have emerged. However, as we show below, even for Palestinians who remained in Palestine after the *Nakba* of 1948, decades of contact have influenced language variation in these communities.

Although it falls firmly within the larger Eastern subgrouping of Arabic dialects, Palestinian Arabic runs the full gamut of the ecolinguistic taxonomy of Arabic varieties laid out by Cadora (1992). The major urban varieties of Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus, Jaffa, and Haifa all bear the hallmarks of urban Levantine Arabic dialects. In this regard, these dialects feature a glottal [ʔ] realization for the historical voiceless uvular stop /q/, a trait common to the major eastern urban dialects in other areas as well, like Beirut and Damascus. In addition, the major urban centers of Palestine also show conditional raising of the feminine grammatical gender marker *-a*, typically to a vowel in the neighborhood of [e], but as high as [i] in some northern varieties of Palestinian Arabic in the Galilee (Shahin 2007). Raising of the feminine ending is another a hallmark feature of many of the Arabic varieties of the Levant.

In addition, the Arabic of Palestine's urban centers typically also replace the historical interdental fricatives /θ, ð, ðˤ/ with their stop counterparts [t, d, dˤ] (Shahin 2007). In certain lexical items, the interdentals are also replaced with the sibilants [s, z, zˤ]. Like the features discussed before, the merger of interdentals with their stop counterparts is a trait common to urban varieties of eastern Arabic, with similar patterns found in Damascus and Beirut and emerging in Amman. However, in rural and Bedouin varieties of Palestinian Arabic the interdentals are often retained in much the same fashion as in other dialects of the same type throughout the region.

While they have been covered in some of the earliest dialectological and descriptive work on Arabic varieties, the Arabic-speaking communities of Palestine have also been an important site of sociolinguistic research on Arabic, much of it occurring in the past decade. In reality, Blanc's (1953) work on the Druze communities in the north of Palestine represents a very important precursor to modern Arabic sociolinguistics, given its focus on a specific confessional community which highlights variation across religious lines. Despite this early work, sociolinguistic interest in Palestinian Arabic began in earnest much later. Henkin's (2010) research on Negev Arabic has provided sociolinguistic insight into the communities of the Negev Desert in the south of Palestine. This work has shown how dialectal or grammatical descriptions of a given Arabic variety can be situated alongside sociolinguistic discussions, with sociolinguistic and stylistic treatments of Negev Arabic informing our understanding of how the dialect is actually used today.

Henkin (2011) has also shown how contact between different languages influences language change in Palestine. Uniquely to the case described by Henkin, however, for speakers of Palestinian Arabic in what is today Israel, they must navigate a complex and hierarchical

system that places Palestinian Arabic within an asymmetrical power relationship with Modern Hebrew. Horesh (2015) further highlights the outcomes of this contact between Hebrew and Arabic, this time in Jaffa, showing how Palestinian Arabic has undergone substantial change as a result of language contact and increased bilingualism within the Palestinian community inside Israel.

Additional sociolinguistic research has treated variation among Palestinian Arabic speakers in the Gaza Strip. Cotter (2016; Cotter and Horesh 2015), has investigated the feminine gender marker and variable realization of /q/ in the speech of Palestinians in Gaza City. This work investigates the outcomes of dialect contact between indigenous Gazan Palestinians and Palestinian refugees originally from the city of Jaffa. Beyond its sociolinguistic implications, this work provides a more up-to-date account of the current status of Gaza City Arabic from a descriptive standpoint. Gaza City was first mentioned in Bergsträßer (1915), but this early work provided limited information on the dialect. Today, as a result of decades of occupation and over a decade of military blockade, Gaza remains incredibly isolated to outside researchers. Cotter has shown that decades of dialect contact and mixture in the city have resulted in substantial change to its traditional dialect, with De Jong (2000) noting a number of additional features in Gaza City that appear to be of Bedouin origin. In this case, again, dialect contact in Gaza has influenced the current trajectory of the dialects spoken in this area.

In addition, Cotter and Horesh (2015) provide a comparative sociolinguistic investigation of speakers from Jaffa, including a sample of Jaffans who have remained in their native city and others who had been expelled to Gaza as refugees. This work argues that as a result of forced migration and ensuing dialect/language contact, we can identify how the traditional dialect of Jaffa is diverging and changing as a result of the different factors influencing the lives of

speakers who have been forced to move around the region. As this recent work suggests, Palestine represents a rich site of research that has drawn on a rich body of descriptive work to inform Arabic sociolinguistics, while at the same time this sociolinguistic research has informed the current state of Palestinian Arabic dialects and how they have been influenced as a result of migration and contact.

The Arabian Peninsula

The varieties of the Arabian Peninsula have been classified by Ingham (1982), Procházka (1988) and Palva (1991). Within these works, these varieties are typically compartmentalized into four separate groups (from Versteegh 1997:148):

- Northeast Arabian: Varieties of the Najd; including the ‘Anazī dialects, which incorporate the varieties of Kuwait, Bahrain (Sunnīs) and the Gulf states, as well as the Šammar dialects and the Syro-Mesopotamian Bedouin dialects (including the Bedouin dialects of northern Palestine and Jordan)
- South(west) Arabian: Varieties of Yemen as well as the Shi‘ite Baḥārna of Bahrain
- Hijazi (West Arabian): Bedouin varieties of the Hijaz and Tihama
- Northwest Arabian: Varieties of the Negev, Sinai, southern Jordan, and north-western Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia

As Versteegh (1997: 149) notes, the Bedouin varieties of the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the Najdi varieties, are especially conservative as they do not participate in the leveling and innovation found in related dialects outside of the Peninsula proper. One example of this

conservatism discussed by Al-Wer and De Jong (2018) concerns the verbal imperfect endings with a final *-n*; the 2nd person fem. sg. *-i:n* is retained in Najdi while the *-n* is absent in other varieties, resulting in *-i*. In addition, Najdi retained the 2nd and 3rd person masc. pl. *-u:n*, while in other varieties its equivalent is *-u*.

However, as Al-Wer and De Jong note, Najdi is not without linguistic innovation. One primary area of innovation stems from environments with close front vowels, where many Najdi dialects affricate [g] (itself a realization of CA /q/), realizing it as [dʒ] or [dz]. /k/ also becomes affricated in these environments in other varieties, being realized as [tʃ]. This type of affrication is not common in the Northwest Arabian varieties found throughout the Sinai and Negev. Examples of this process can be seen in the case of *be:tik* > *be:tif* ‘your (fem. sg.) house’ and *gili:l* > *dzili:l* ‘little’ (Al-Wer and De Jong, 2018).

Furthermore, some of the Bedouin varieties of the area also have as part of their dialect what has been termed the *gahawa*-syndrome (CR Holes, Grigore), which involves resyllabification by the insertion of an intrusive [a] vowel following back fricatives (below indicated as X, i.e. [h], [ħ], [x], [ɣ] and [ʕ]), when these are themselves preceded by [a]. The primary example of this is the insertion of [a] in CA /qahwa/ ‘coffee’, *gahwa* > *gahawa* or in /baħr/ ‘sea’, *baħr* > *baħar*. This is a feature common to numerous other Bedouin varieties of Arabic and has become somewhat emblematic of these dialects, although it does occur in some sedentary dialects, like those of Upper Egypt, which have been influenced by Bedouin dialects. In many dialects, this originally intrusive [a] has become part of the morphophonemic base (i.e. it is not an epenthetic vowel), as is evidenced by the fact that it can be stressed in strings CaCáCv. Thus, CaXáC(v) (in which v = a short vowel). In Najdi, which does not allow CaCaCV (in which V = any short or long vowel), so that the first [a] is dropped, the *gahawa*-syndrome

provides the input for this rule (of phonotactic constraint), so that *gahawa* becomes *ghawa* ‘coffee’, *naxala* becomes *nxala* ‘palm tree’, etc.

Recently, substantial sociolinguistic research has been conducted in Saudi Arabia, both in major urban centers and historically rural communities (Alessa 2008, Alghamdi 2014, Al-Qahtani 2015). A number of these studies (Alghamdi 2014, Al-Qahtani 2015) have shown how the dialects of speakers in the Peninsula are converging in line with local or regional norms. In this respect, Alghamdi (2014) shows that migrants in Mecca are seen to be converging towards the urban dialect of the city, despite being speakers of a traditionally different Arabic variety. Similarly, Al-Wer and Al-Qahtani (2016) shows how rural speakers in Saudi Arabia appear to be orienting towards the dialect of the city of Abha. Al-Wer and Al-Qahtani’s work is also important because it has also resulted in the documentation of the lateral fricative /ɬ^s/, a phoneme lost in most Arabic dialects, which is actively undergoing sociolinguistic change in the direction of the emphatic interdental [ð^s] in this community. As the work cited above describes, major urban varieties in each part of the country (East vs West) have emerged as localized standards and speakers appear to be converging in their realizations of those features investigated towards these urban norms (Al-Ammar 2017; Al-Bohnaya XXXX; Al-Odini XXXX; Hussain 2017). However, a great deal of work is still to be done on the sociolinguistic situation of Saudi Arabia, especially given the amount of economic migration into the country by speakers of other Arabic varieties over recent years.

Yemen, Oman, and the Arabian Gulf

Behnstedt (1985: 30-32) provides an initial classification of Yemeni dialects that divided up the area into: the Tihama dialects, the *k*- dialects, the South-east Yemenite dialects, the dialects of the central plateau (Sanaa), the dialects of the Southern plateau, the dialects of the Northern

plateau, and the Northeast Yemeni dialects (Versteegh 1997: 150). As this list suggests, what is today Yemen represents a complex and dynamic dialect area with a great deal of internal variation.

One of the distinctive features of this area is found in the realm of verbal morphology, mainly in the dialects of Yemen's western mountains, and has been termed the 'k-perfect' or 'k-dialects' (Versteegh 1997, Behnstedt 1985, Al-Wer and De Jong, 2018). In these varieties, the perfect form of the verb is realized with *-k*, where other dialects realize these forms with *-t*; the result is a distribution where a form like 'I wrote', which in many dialects would be realized as either *katabt* or *katabtu* is realized in *k*-perfect dialect areas as *katabk^w*, *katabku*, or *katubk* (Versteegh 1997: 150). Despite the immense dialect diversity of Yemen, to date no sociolinguistic research has been conducted in the country.⁴ What sociolinguistics offers in cases like this is an avenue through which to investigate this typological diversity and the ways in which it may have changed as a result of broader changes in Yemeni society. This is especially important when considering the recent history of Yemen, which is marked by large-scale and continual political upheaval that has resulted in internal displacement throughout the country.

While the *gahawa*-syndrome is quite widespread in Bedouin dialects throughout the region, in Oman it is confined to the northwest of the country. In addition, while it is quite common to see variation in the historic interdental fricatives across Bedouin and sedentary linguistic communities, in Oman this is not the case. Omani Arabic varieties of both Bedouin and

⁴ Although sociolinguistic research on Yemen is non-existent, Sana'ani Arabic has been analyzed extensively by Watson (1993, 2007).

sedentary provenance retain the interdental [θ, ð, ð^ʕ] realizations of CA /θ/, /ð/, and /ð^ʕ/. In these varieties we also see a merger of /ð/ and /ð^ʕ/ which is pronounced [ð^ʕ] (Holes 2006).⁵

Similar to the case of Yemen, sociolinguistic research on the varieties of Arabic spoken in Oman remains limited. Holes (1989) provides initial commentary on the larger sociolinguistic situation in Oman, with additional discussion offered in Holes (2011). Bettega (2015) has also suggested that dialect differences are used as a salient feature in Omani media and television. For instance, in animated Omani television series different dialects are used as a resource for portraying stereotypical subsets of Omani society. Bettega's (2015) work highlights that dialectal variation in Oman is a source of metalinguistic commentary. Speakers are aware of variation and attach social meaning to that variation, treating it as a reflection of specific types of personas that are believed to be salient in Omani society. Further research in Oman will likely uncover a rich base of sociolinguistic variation, a point that Holes raises, which will help to fill the sizable gaps in the sociolinguistic record of the Arabian Peninsula while showing how dialects are being portrayed and circulated in the media.⁶

The Shi'ite dialect of Bahrain is related to the Yemeni and Omani dialects, and Bahrain generally provides what is perhaps the best example of sociolinguistic variation in the Arabic speaking world that is tied to religious or sectarian divisions (CR Holes). Extensive work by Holes (1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1986, 1987) has shown a clear relationship between linguistic

⁵The entry in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* on Oman has erroneously been attributed to Lutz Edzard, but was actually authored by Clive Holes.

⁶ Ongoing research by Sara Al-Sheyadi at the University of Essex, which investigates sociolinguistic variation in Oman will likely help to fill in some of these gaps.

variation and religious identity between Sunni and Shi'a speakers in Bahrain. However, as Holes has documented, the speech of the Baḥārna has shifted towards the predominant urban dialect. Holes highlights in particular a shift that has taken place for the voiceless uvular stop /q/ in the speech of rural Baḥārna speakers, resulting in their traditional realization, a voiceless retracted velar [k^ʰ], giving way to the predominant voiced velar [g] realization. Holes' work and the case of Bahrain provide another example of how, as a result of contact between different Arabic dialects, we can identify changes taking place throughout the Arabic speaking world.

Iraq and Mesopotamia

The primary area of division and classification for the Arabic varieties of Iraq and greater Mesopotamia rests on their realization of the differing verb forms for, e.g., 'I said', *qaltu* in CA and realized in these varieties as either *qəltu* or *gilit*. As Blanc (1964) has detailed in his study of communal dialect variation in Baghdad, we are dealing with linguistic variation as a result of differing waves of migration in to the area that have created effectively different layers to the dialect map (Versteegh 1997). Blanc's findings for Baghdad and its three religion-based sub-varieties, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Baghdadi, have provided one of the clearest pictures of the distribution of these dialects.

Although not billed as such, Blanc's (1964) study represents what could be considered one of the first major works of Arabic sociolinguistics. It is, alongside the research conducted by Holes in Bahrain, one of the most well documented cases of sociolinguistic variation stratified along religious lines in the Arabic speaking world. It seems clear that today the situation described by Blanc has changed dramatically. The account of the Christian dialect of Baghdad provided by Abu Haidar (1991) notes a small collection of features from the dialect that

appeared to show substantial variation within her corpus of data. This included vowel raising of long /a:/ to [e:] word-medially, as well as variation between a realization of /r/ as [r] ~ [ʁ] (Abu Haidar 1991: 146). Abu Haidar notes that many of these features appeared to be undergoing at least limited degrees of leveling at the time of her interviews. These features of Christian Baghdadi Arabic may have today become obsolete as a result of Christian migration out of Iraq, which has scattered the community around the world.⁷ Blanc's research suggests that the Muslim variety, itself a Bedouin variety related to those of the Arabian Peninsula, represents one layer of this overlaid mapping of dialects, with Christian and Jewish varieties, both sedentary Arabic varieties, representing another layer. However, the distribution of these varieties is complex across Mesopotamia and as earlier work has suggested, further variation exists between sedentary and Bedouin varieties with respect to these forms. This variation is exemplified in the distribution of CA *qaltu* across these varieties (Versteegh 1997: 156, Blanc 1964: 6, Jastrow 1973: 1).

<TABLE 1 HERE>

The *qaltu* varieties have been further classified and divided by Jastrow (1978) into three types: Tigris, Euphrates, and Anatolian. The Tigris group is primarily spoken in and around the areas of

⁷ Note also (as Holes reminds us in this volume) that already in Blanc's (1964) time, most of the Jewish Iraqi speakers and many Christian speakers had already left Iraq. Blanc had actually interviewed his speakers in North America and Israel. Abu Haidar similarly conducted some of her interviews in London, in addition to fieldwork conducted in Baghdad itself.

Baghdad by Christians and (historically) Jewish speakers,⁸ as well as north of Baghdad in areas near Tikrīt and south of the city by Christians. The Euphrates group is spoken in Ḥīt and ‘Āna by Muslims and (historically) by Jews. The Anatolian variety is spoken historically by Jewish communities in the northeast of Iraq, itself a predominantly Kurdish speaking area, as well as throughout parts of Turkey. However, as Jastrow (2006: 87) notes, some of these Anatolian varieties spoken by Christians and Jews throughout the region can now be considered extinct. The *gilit* sub group is itself divided into two groups based primarily around the rural areas of northern and central Iraq, the Sunni area around Baghdad, and by Muslims in the city. The *gilit* variety is also spoken in southern Iraq in both urban and rural areas (Al-Wer and De Jong 2018).

In addition to the primary *qeltu/gilit* distinction, many varieties of Iraqi Arabic also include an extra phoneme, /p/, not common in Arabic varieties elsewhere. This has been attributed to contact with Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, and English (Al-Wer and De Jong 2018). In Iraqi Arabic perhaps, a majority of the varieties have also retained the interdental realizations of /θ/ and /ð/, while the pharyngealized interdental /ðˤ/ and the pharyngealized alveolar stop /dˤ/ have combined into [ðˤ]. However, this is not completely uniform, in that some varieties, particularly in the north, realize the interdentals as their stop counterparts: [t, d, dˤ] (Jastrow 1978, 2006). Despite the thorough dialectological documentation of Iraq and Mesopotamia, as our discussion here has highlighted, sociolinguistic investigation of Iraqi Arabic varieties remains limited. Blanc’s foundational discussion on Baghdad Arabic and Abu Haidar’s work on

⁸ In fact, already in the late forties and fifties of the twentieth century, many Jews left Iraq after “the impossibility of Arab-Jewish coexistence became a narrative that shaped the past and affected the present”, i.e. after the state of Israel had been created, see Bashkin 2012 (228).

Christian Baghdadi Arabic represent what are perhaps the only two available sociolinguistic discussions of language variation in modern day Iraq. As with the case of Yemen noted above, renewed sociolinguistic focus on Iraq will likely provide us with a better picture of the current dialect distribution in the country, while also highlighting changes that have taken place as a result of mass migration which has been a notable feature of the demographic makeup of Iraq over recent decades.⁹

Conclusion

One of the primary goals of this chapter has been to highlight regional variation in the Arabic-speaking world. In addition to this exposition, we aimed to highlight those areas where sociolinguistic research, much of it done within the past two decades, has been able to inform earlier dialectological and descriptive accounts of the language. In doing so, we have endeavored to show how sociolinguistics can enrich our dialectological and typological understanding of the Arabic language, the distribution of its varieties, and how it has changed throughout the areas in which it is spoken. Although research on Arabic sociolinguistics is on the rise and the Arabic dialectological tradition remains strong, today there is still little discussion taking place across the boundaries of these disciplines.

As sociolinguistic research on Arabic varieties continues, a great deal of which is investigating varieties of Arabic previously undocumented, it remains crucial for sociolinguists and dialectologists of Arabic to work closely together in an effort to not only provide

⁹ Ongoing research by Wisam Alshawi at the University of Essex provides a sociolinguistic account of variation in a southern Iraqi Arabic variety.

sociolinguistic accounts of these Arabic speaking communities, but also to document to the greatest extent possible the dialects themselves. This is especially the case in a region that has undergone and continues to undergo massive social and political change in a very short period of time, which is certain to have linguistic ramifications that could result in the loss of traditional dialects of the area.

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