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The Origin-Affiliation effect on Dialect Maintenance

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Abstract. This paper aims at finding out if the Syrian refugees' dialect in Irbid is in a process of maintenance or in a process of being transformed or modified. In this paper, the data were collected via a questionnaire, interviews, and recording for some meetings. The study investigates the Syrian dialect use, domain, and the Syrians attitude toward their dialect. The results indicate that the Syrians are in the process of maintaining their dialect.

Keywords. Attitude, community, dialect, maintenance, shift, Syrian

1. Introduction

In recent years, there is an increased interest in the phenomenon of language maintenance and language shift. Language shift or change is the process when a language goes through phonological, morphological, semantic, or syntactic change. This could happen when a group abandons its native variety of languages and uses a new variety of language which is spoken by a larger, more powerful, or more economically dominant. There are two ways for this to happen; the first is called internal change when a language has some variation throughout time because of social, economic, or political reasons. The second is called external change which happens because of borrowing new words from other languages. "The process of language shift does not finish at the end of the life of a person or of a group; rather it gradually develops from generation to generation (Fasold, 1984).

On the other hand, language maintenance is the phenomenon when a small group (minority), lives among a larger group (majority) that speaks a different variety of language, preserves their variety of language from being changed. Many sociolinguists focused on studying this phenomenon such as (Clyne, 2003; Filipović, 2001, 1996, 1986; Hatoss (2006); Holmquist, 2003; Kipp, 2002; Kloss, 1966; Lipski, 1994). Some sociolinguists explained why the minority tend to preserve their variety to different factors. For example, Kloss (1966) justified the reason for maintaining such a variety of language refers to what he called "religious and societal insulation". This means that the reason for such maintenance is a religious feeling that pushes the speakers of a particular language to upkeep their dialect to protect their beliefs. Weinreich (1974) in his study *Language in Contact* found that there was a relationship between ethnic languages and extra linguistics factors such as social, historical, and psychological processes. He also defined, what is called language loyalty, "as the principle which people will rally themselves and their fellow speakers to resist change". (Conklin and Lourie, 1983) proposed that the reason for the maintenance of languages are linguistic districts which help in

establishing a value of the immigrant language in public domains. Taylor and Francis (2018) concluded that the parents' use of their language is a very important factor in maintaining and transmitting their language to the next generation. Stopping speaking their languages leads the next generation to shift to another language. Parents who speak their mother tongue at home as they speak English succeed to transmit their native language to their children. Shen and Wenying (2017) also focused on the importance of the parents' roles in maintaining their native language by creating the appropriate environment at home for their children to use their native language, especially when their children are living and being educated in a different language environment.

In the past twenty years, many Jordanian linguists studied language and dialect maintenance and shift in Jordan dealing with different minorities who live in Jordan for example, (Abd-el-Jawad, 2006; AL-Khatib & AL-Ali, 2005; Al-Khatib, 2001; Dweik, 2000). Al-Khatib and AL-Ali (2009) found that the Kurds who live in Jordan cannot read, write, speak, or understand Kurdish, but they have a better ability to speak. Although they can speak, read, write, and understand Arabic. And this indicates that they could not maintain their language and have shifted to substitute it with Arabic. Abu-Shihab (2015) concluded that the people of Irbid have been through a continuous shift in their dialects and culture. Also, he found that there is a tendency among the younger generation to use urban dialect because of the increasing number of urban dialect speakers and direct contact with them. Al-Khatib (2009) concluded that the Druze dialect in Um Al-Quttain is not displaced by Jordanian Arabic which is the dialect of the majority and they are experiencing a process of maintaining their dialect and culture. He explained that the reasons for such maintenance refer to the religious climate that the Druze live in and the closure that they have to their community, for example, forbidding marrying to non-Druze people. Aldweik (2000) concluded that the Chechen of Jordan through the longtime of their existence in Jordan succeeded to maintain their language and culture. The new Chechen generations feel proud of their new nationality, Jordanian nationality, and their origins. They are now bilingual, they speak Arabic and Chechen.

The purpose of this study is to determine if the Syrian refugees' dialect is in the process of being transformed and assimilated or if it is being maintained through their living in Jordan. In this study, the data will be collected using a questionnaire, interviews, and audio recordings to some everyday interactions. The study investigates dialect proficiency, domains of dialect use, and linguistic attitudes towards both the mother tongue dialect and the dialect spoken by the larger speech community. In this paper, the researcher will try to answer the following questions: Does the dialect of the Syrian refugees transform or maintain through living in Jordan? What are the reasons for that?

2. Who are the Syrians?

Syrians are the people who inhabit The Syrian Arab Republic in The Middle East and are known as the Syrian people too. Syria which bordering Jordan and Palestine to the south, Iraq to the east, Lebanon and the Mediterranean to the west, and Turkey to the north. It was established after declaring independence in 1946. The Syrian population is Semitic and heterogeneous mostly consists of Arabs and a minority of Kurds who speak Kurdish, Armenians, and Turkmens who speak south Azerbaijani dialect. They are divided into big city dwellers such as Damascus which is the capital city and Aleppo which is the biggest city, country dwellers who live in the country especially in Al-Ghouta, and Bedouins who live in the eastern and southern areas. Most of the Syrians depend on agriculture for the living. There are also industrial cities such as Aleppo. The majority of the Syrian are Sunni Muslims, a minority of Alawy who has the authority and Christians. Arabic is the official language and also the lingua franca because

of the diversity of the people. Most of the Syrians speak French as a second language because it is taught at schools. The Shami dialect, which is a variety of the Levantine Arabic, is the dialect that is used by most of the Syrians in everyday communication. The Syrian dialects maintain most of the Classic Arabic consonantal sounds except for the /θ/ which is pronounced /t/, /d̥/ which is pronounced /d/, /ð̥/ which is pronounced /z/, and the /q/ which is pronounced /q/, /g/, /k/ and /ʔ/. They also maintain the vowel sounds except for some changes to the short vowel /ə/ and /ɪ/ which are pronounced /e/.

In the last years, a huge number of Syrian came to live in Jordan because of the Syrian Crisis and the civil war in their country. Around a million or more Syrian refugees are living in Jordan. Many of them live in camps, but also hundreds of thousands of them live in the Jordanian cities. Most of them live in northern cities specially Irbid. This leads them to deal with the Jordanian people every day and exposed to new dialects and cultures.

3. Methods and data collection

The data were collected by the means of a questionnaire, interviews, recordings for everyday meetings, and observation. The aim of the data collection via questionnaire is to collect quantifiable data on who speaks, what dialect, to whom and when (Fisherman, 1965). The sample which has been chosen for this study is limited to the Syrians who live in the city of Irbid. The researcher managed to select one hundred respondents for the study. Fifty male respondents and fifty females. Their age range between fifteen and sixty and one female respondents who are ninety-seven. They are from different educational backgrounds. Many are school students, BA holders, MA holders, Ph.D. holders, and illiterate. They also form different occupations; school students, workers, housewives, engineers...etc.

The questionnaire employed in this study was taken from Al-Khatib (2001). The first section of the questionnaire is designed to obtain the demographic data of the respondents' age, gender, occupation, and education.

The second source of data is interviewing which the researcher conducted himself with the participants. The different topics were discussed especially those relating to Syria, friends, families, neighborhoods, and jobs. Because of sociocultural and religious constraints, interviewing females were not allowed. Some recordings were not in the form of interviews, it was recorded in meetings where ordinary speeches occurred, and there were no asking and answering acts.

4. Results and discussion

Fishman (1972a) defined domains of language use "in terms of institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences". He added, "domains enable us to understand that language choice and topic are related to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectation". Holmes (1992) contended that there are two advantages to using the information that related the domain of language use which are, capturing a broad understanding of the speech community and summarizing the norms of language use for that speech community. The four domains of language use in this research were family, friendship, education, and neighborhood.

Table 1 shows the response percentage of dialect use in the four different domains.

Question	Syrian	Jordanian	Syrian and Jordanian	Not relevant	Sum %
What dialect do you use when you speak with your Syrian neighbors?	100				100%

What dialect do you use when you speak with your parents?	100				100%
What dialect do you use when you speak with your brothers and sisters?	99	1			100%
What dialect do you use when you speak with your relatives?	99	1			100%
What dialect do you use when you speak with your Jordanian neighbors?	73	14	13		100%
What dialect do you use when you speak with your friends in school, college, or work?	81	8	10	1	100%
What dialect do you prefer when you outside the home?	83	9	6	2	100%
What dialect do you prefer when you are at school, college or work?	82	11	6	1	100%
What dialect do you use when you are angry?	93	3	1	3	100%
What dialect do you use when you are very excited?	96	1	3		100%
In what dialect do you dream?	77		1	22	100%
What dialect do you use in ceremonies?	89	3	3	5	100%

The result of the data analysis as seen in the table shows that the Syrian dialect is used in a wide range of domains. While the Jordanian dialect is used in restricted domains, such as in social contexts like socializing with the neighbors, schools and colleges, and workplaces. This table shows that the Syrian dialect is in maintenance. This can be supported by respondents' answers to the first, second, third, and fourth questions, which show that 100% of the Syrians tend to use their dialect with their parents and their Syrian neighbors and use 99% of their dialect with their brothers, sisters, and relatives. Even in the rest responses, the percentages are very high according to the use of their dialect in different domains. There is a low percentage that they tend to use the Jordanian dialect in some domains such as in the context of speaking to Jordanian people, being outside home, or being at school or work. This can be supported by respondents' answers of the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and tenth questions. This shows that

14% of the Syrians could use the Jordanian dialect when speaking with Jordanian neighbors. 8% could use the Jordanian dialect when being at school or college and 9% could use the Jordanian dialect when being outside the home. Based on these findings the Syrian dialect in these domains is in a maintaining process.

Table 2 shows the response percentage of dialect use by sex of the speaker

Question	Gender	Syrian	Jordanian	Syrian and Jordanian	Not relevant	Sum %
What dialect do you use when you speak with your Syrian neighbors?	M	50				100 %
	F	50				
What dialect do you use when you speak with your parents?	M	50				100 %
	F	50				
What dialect do you use when you speak with your brothers and sisters?	M	50				100 %
	F	49	1			
What dialect do you use when you speak with your relatives?	M	50				100 %
	F	49	1			
What dialect do you use when you speak with your Jordanian neighbors?	M	33	9	8		100 %
	F	40	5	5		
What dialect do you use when you speak with your friends in school, college, or work?	M	35	7	7	1	100 %
	F	46	1	3		
What dialect do you prefer when you outside the home?	M	41	7		2	100 %
	F	42	2	6		
What dialect do you prefer when you are at school, college or work?	M	40	9		1	100 %
	F	42	2	6		
What dialect do you use when you are angry?	M	48	2			100 %
	F	45	1	1	3	
	M	48	1	1		

What dialect do you use when you are very excited?	F	48		2		100 %
In what dialect do you dream?	M	40			10	100 %
	F	37		1	12	
What dialect do you use in ceremonies?	M	45			5	100 %
	F	44	3	3		
Which dialect do you find more useful?	M	48		1	1	100 %
	F	46		4		
Which dialect do you find more beautiful?	M	46			4	100 %
	F	44		3	3	
Which dialect do you express yourselves better with?	M	50				100 %
	F	48		1	1	

Table 2 shows that the sex of the speaker shows the variation tendencies between sex groups. It is clear from the answers of questions five and six that men tend to use Jordanian variety more than women. This could be caused by the fact that women are less exposed to outside interactions like men. Men go out to work so they are more exposed to interact with Jordanians. And as it is against the law that they get jobs in Jordan, they use the Jordanian dialect as possible as they could.

Fasold (1984) assumes that the attitude toward an ethnic group reflects the same attitude toward their language. Edwards (1982) also assumes that there is a relationship between understanding speakers' language and the reaction from the people toward that language. This means there will be a better relationship between the people and those who speak a new variety if the people get a better understanding of that variety. Lambert (1974) proposed two basic motives; the instrumental and integrative "an integrative orientation is sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group, while an instrumental orientation emphasizes the practical value and advantages of a new language".

Table 3:

Question	Gender	Yes	No	Excluded	Sum %
Is it important for you to use your Syrian dialect?	M	44	6		100%
	F	47	3		
Is the Syrian dialect dying or might die in your home?	M	13	37		100%
	F	5	45		
Is the Syrian dialect dying or might die in the local community in Jordan?	M	23	27		100%
	F	7	43		

According to table 3, the Syrians have a positive attitude toward their dialect. 94% of them find that their dialect is more useful than the Jordanian dialect and 90% found it more beautiful than the Jordanian one. The Syrians also find it important to use their dialect and they are not going to use a new one. As in table 3 below three 93 % of them find it important to speak their dialect while 7 % find it not that important. The responses to this question indicate that the Syrians are aware of the fact of the importance of using the Syrian dialect. The answers of the second and the third questions show that the majority of the Syrians believe that their dialect will not die either in the community they live or at home. The general attitude here is that the Syrians love their dialect and they are in the way of maintaining it.

Weinreich (1974) defined, what is called language loyalty, “as the principle which people will rally themselves and their fellow speakers to resist change”. This phenomenon was so clear while observing how the parents, who the researcher spent some time with them at home. Their kids are in private schools in Irbid and they have been exposed to a lot of interactions with Jordanian colleagues. And what is obvious that the boys speak the Jordanian dialect at school and in many times they speak the Jordanian dialect at home. What is interesting is the reactions of the parents who keep saying “you are at home not at school, so stop. Speak Syrian.” And in one of the interviews, one of the interviewees commented angrily on how his son nearly spoke Jordanian instead of Syrian, “baba la tinliwi?” بابا لتتلوي . Another sample commented with a laugh how his wife astonished horribly when she heard her son spoke the Jordanian dialect, he said she opened her eyes widely, slapped her face with her left hand and said “wili ġala amti” ولي على امتي. Another father said that his wife started crying when she heard her son using the /g/ in his speech instead of /e/. One of the samples said that his wife started yelling at her son when she heard him speak Jordanian in the first time. None of the fathers mentioned that one of his daughters spoke Jordanian. As appears here that the parents have a negative attitude toward hearing their children speaking another dialect. And how they try to prevent them from using the new dialect. It is a type of resisting change and maintaining their dialect as a result of their positive attitude toward their dialect.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the researcher is trying to add a small contribution to the sociolinguistic theory by shedding the light on the dynamic relationship between language and culture concerning the Syrian speaking community in Irbid. It supports what Fishman claimed about the intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighborhood-community as the basis for community dialect transmission and as the most suitable context for its continued use.

The analysis of the results of the questionnaire shows that both dialects are used by the Syrians in different percentages and different situations. The Jordanian dialect is used in the presence of Jordanian people and the Syrian dialect is used in both situations; the presence and absence of the Jordanians. But the clearest result of this study is that the Syrians who live in Irbid are in a process of maintaining their dialect. Their dialect is considered by them as a symbol of their identity and this increases the attitude to stick strongly with it and makes shifting to the Jordanian dialect slower and even impossible. Using the Syrian dialect at home, with Syrian neighbors, and with their children is a key factor in maintaining their dialect. Parents' use of their Syrian dialect and preventing using the Jordanian dialect at home create an environment which is a very important factor in maintaining their dialect. The less interaction with the Jordanians and the absence of shyness of using the soft dialect especially for women make it easier to use and be more faithful to their dialect than men. Identity and origin-affiliation has a very essential role in the process of the maintenance of the Syrian dialect, as

the Syrian are still considered refugees and are not recognized as a big new layer of the population.

On the other hand, many sociolinguists who researched the field of language maintenance and shift concluded that language loyalty is strong and has an effect on maintaining the language only among the first and second-generation immigrants (Fishman 1966; Kloss 1966; and Weinreich, 1974). An example of this is the maintenance of Arabic by the Arabic immigrants in the United States, they succeeded in maintaining Arabic by the first and the second generations, but the third and the fourth generations could not preserve it. The reasons for such a shift to English were economic and social rewards that they gain of using English (Aswad 1974 and Daher 1988). So it is expected that the Syrians after two or three generations shift to the Jordanian dialect for economic and social benefits. Some signs lead to that the next generation could be more tolerant toward their children if they shift to use the more dominant dialect. For example, many of the Syrians children use the Jordanian dialect when they are away from their parents as already mentioned above.

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