



## Stigmatized Identities and Phonological Accommodation to the Urban Dialect in Palestine: A Sociolinguistic Study

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### Abstract:

Communication accommodation is concerned with people's linguistic behavior during oral interaction with others. Convergence with the listener is one of the most salient features of accommodation that is determined by various contextual, regional, social and psychological factors. This paper investigates the tendency to use the urban phonological and non-rural features in the speech of villagers who come from rural settings for educational purposes in the town of Abu-Dees in Palestine. It also attempts to reveal the potential goals behind this accommodative linguistic behavior. The study traces how nine phonological rural sounds in the speech of the target group are shifted to the urban varieties. Through quantitative data, the study found that villagers accommodate to the urban dialect in different degrees. Rural phonemes, mainly the palatal affricate /tʃ/ and the interdental /ðʃ/, are missing the ground to the urban equivalents, and from a sociolinguistic perspective, the results are significant and interpretable. The significance of the study arises from the fact that the findings showed that some villagers relinquish their rural varieties for the sake of imitation, prestige, softness and bullying avoidance.

**Keywords:** *Accommodation; Urbanization; Dialects; Identity; Prestige.*

## الهويات الموصومة والتكيف الصوتي مع اللهجة الحضرية في فلسطين: دراسة لغوية اجتماعية

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### ملخص:

تهتم أماكن التواصل بالسلوك اللغوي للأشخاص أثناء التفاعل الشفهي مع الآخرين. يعد التقارب مع المستمع أحد أبرز سمات التكيف التي تحددها عوامل سياقية وإقليمية واجتماعية ونفسية مختلفة. تحقق هذه الدراسة في الرغبة في استخدام السمات الصوتية المدنية وغير القروية الملاحظة في خطاب القرويين القادمين من مناطق ريفية لأغراض تعليمية في بلدة ابو ديس في فلسطين، وتحاول الدراسة أيضًا إظهار الدوافع المحتملة لسلوك التكيفي لهم. ويتناول البحث كيفية تحوّل تسع أصوات قروية لدى المجموعة المستهدفة إلى نظيراتها المدنية. ومن خلال المعطيات الكمية، توصلت الدراسة إلى أنّ العينة تبنّت في محاولتها التكيف مع اللهجة المدنية بدرجات مختلفة، وبناءً عليه تلاشت المميزات الصوتية القروية تحديدًا "تش" و"ظ" لصالح نظيراتها المدنية، ويدل هذا من منظور اللغويات الاجتماعية على أهمية النتائج وقابليتها للتفسير، تتبع أصالة الدراسة من أن النتائج قد أظهرت بأن بعض القرويين يتنازلون عن لهجتهم الأصلية تقليدًا وإظهارًا للفخامة والرفق وتجنبًا للتمتر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التكيف؛ التمدن؛ اللهجات؛ الهوية؛ الفخامة.

## 1. Introduction

The Palestinian 1948 Catastrophe, Diaspora and the process of mixing with various nations have united people on standardized ways of living; the geographical boundaries between cities and villages are disappearing due to the expansion of settlements on the Palestinian land that is shrinking day after the other. Palestinian towns particularly the ones with educational centers are becoming heterogeneous destinations that gather people from all over the country functioning as a 'lingo-diversity' blender.

To be more specific, Abu Dees is a meeting point for miscellaneous regions or origins: villagers, urbanites, and Bedouins, who come for educational purposes at Al-Quds University. In this hybridized space, dialects contact and compete in such an invisible cold war that renounces the consequences too late. Of course, the sociolinguistic process of changing over the course of time has naturally culminated a winner; that winner supposedly complies with the context with its social, psychological, mental and attitudinal ramifications creating a new linguistic environment. In support of this, Miller (2007) pinpoints linguistic variety standardization that involves a process of planned regulation and is closely connected to social modernization, which means that the common dialect develops from urban varieties.

That said, the town embraces the Palestinian urban dialect as a winning, leveling and fascinating variety. Even the newcomers don't lose track of the frenzy prototype: *Do what Romans do*. This fertile sociolinguistic environment has attracted the co-researchers to carry out this quantitative study. The paper seeks to scrutinize the phonological behavior of villagers who were brought up speaking the rural variety (the dialects of villagers) but have come to Abu Dees for educational purposes. It also aims to investigate the urban phonological features these villagers accommodate to in their casual and formal speech as well. Further, the goals and factors behind these villagers' accommodative linguistic behavior are under the scope of the study.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Villagers started to avoid using certain forms and features that are very common in the rural dialect. According to Trudgill (1986), awareness is attached to forms that are overtly stigmatized, and whose variants are phonetically different. Scholarship or research has concentrated on analyzing urban communities believing they are undergoing constant changes as a result of modernization, selecting urbanites or city dwellers as members of the focus, whereas Palestinian villagers have received little research (Abdel-Jawad, 1986). To bridge the gap, this study is dedicated to investigating rural linguistic accommodation to the urban dialect. The study stands out as the researchers contact very often with the rural sample in different situations to tackle their actual linguistic behaviors when involved in communication either in urban or non-urban contexts. Therefore, this study is devoted to investigating villagers' linguistic speaking practice tendency to the urban dialect in the community of Abu-Dees. Various underlying factors may come into play and need to be discussed to clarify such a linguistic phenomenon thoroughly.

### 1.2 Objectives of the study

The paper aims to explore how villagers accommodate or switch to the urban dialect. Mainly, it has the following objectives:

- 1-To trace villagers' linguistic accommodative practices to the urban dialect.
- 2-To identify, through quantitative data, the urban features the villagers seek to adopt instead of the original ones.
- 3-To reveal the goals behind this linguistic accommodation.

### 1.3 Questions of the study

The researchers posit these questions to be answered in the study:

1. How do villagers accommodate linguistically to the urban dialect?
2. Which rural features are abandoned in favor of urban ones?
3. What goals do villagers achieve through accommodation to the urban dialect?

## 2. Theoretical background and Literature Review

### 2.1 The sociolinguistic situation in Palestine

The Palestinian society is categorized into "madani", "fallah", "refugees" and "badawi", according to Abdel-Jawad (1986), based on not only economic and spatial elements but also on social factors. Ech-Charfi (2020) opines that the process of rural migration to the city brings different families to settle side by side in the same neighborhood. In this vein, he confirms that villagers and urbanites are not socially recognized groups in the Arab world, and their classification into the village or the city is, indeed, a result of socio-economic factors, basically urbanization.

As a matter of fact, Palestine is an Arabic-speaking country. Classical Arabic is the official language used in sermons, newspapers, and media. Yet Palestinians speak various colloquial varieties based on geographical, historical and social implications: urban, rural, and Bedouin, which, to a certain extent, are distinct from each other phonetically, morphologically and lexically. This linguistic phenomenon occurs naturally due to continuous migrations and invasions over the course of time.

### 2.2 Rural and Urban dialects

Language distinctions between villagers and urbanites are branded through speaking practice. Urban sounds are similar to the northern Levantine Arabic in Syria and Lebanon (Milhem, 2014). Even though there are different rural dialects in Palestine, villagers nearly share certain common phonological features. Some villagers started looking for more prestigious dialects. They might believe that the rural dialect reflects the hard life in the village. The urban dialect spreads in the main cities like Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus. It is distinct with its /ʔ/ in the place of /q/. The rural dialect is spoken in the villages and towns of the main cities in Palestine. Here are the phonological variables that have various variants among Palestinian villagers and urbanites:

1. The /q/ sound is represented by four variants (allophones): post-uvular plosive [q] used in formal contexts, a glottal stop urban [ʔ], the rural voiced velar plosive [g] and the voiceless velar plosive [k].
2. The variable interdental fricative /ð/ is articulated as a voiced alveolar stop [d] in the urban variety, and realized as [ð]=(ذ) by villagers.
3. The interdental fricative /ðʕ/=(ظ) has four variants: [ðʕ] in villages, and corresponds as a voiced alveolar stop [d], [ðʕ]=(ض) or [z] in the urban variety.
4. The voiceless interdental non-sibilant fricative /θ/=(ث) is articulated as it is by villagers but as a voiceless alveolar stop [t] by urbans.
5. Urbans soften some sounds like /T/=(ط) and /r/.
6. /k/ is pronounced as [k] in cities and villages as well; some villagers in Palestine utter it as [tʃ]=(تش).

### 2.3 Communication Accommodation Theory

Since communication involves at least two humans, it naturally entails cross-points whereby they either harmonize or face interactive dissonance. This phenomenon was curiously initiated by investigating inquiries of how and why communicators change their normal way of talking, and it was exactly the intensive focus of Howard Giles when he offered a pioneering contribution in underpinning the fundamentals of Communication Accommodation Theory in 1973. Zhang and Giles (2018, P 2) define language accommodation as "the ability to adjust, modify, or regulate one's

language use and communication behaviors in response to their conversation partners" making linguistic and paralinguistic communicative moves. These communication moves underlie either agreement or disagreement with interlocutors.

Zhang & Giles (2018) conceptualize two communication strategies in speech accommodation: convergence and divergence. Convergence, the first form of accommodation, is a type of modification during an interaction that fosters similarities between the speaker and the interlocutor connected to a desire for social harmony, through reducing distinctions. This connotes that social approval is a motivation for accommodative linguistic behavior under the slogan of *do what Romans do when in Rome*. Conversely, divergence is another interactive form that communicators use to highlight differences in speech. It occurs when people stick to their own dialect in communication to sustain their identity.

Correspondingly, and using sociolinguistic terms, accommodation theory is meticulously connected to dialect contact, which is aptly stated by Trudgill (1986, P 1) as "intelligible dialects do have an effect on one another in contact situations". This process of dialectal contact results in, as summarized by Kherbache (2017), linguistic accommodation that occurs among speakers of different social and regional backgrounds by reducing linguistic differences, and consequently adopting the other's linguistic patterns. Trudgill (1986) explains that people accommodate each other by dropping linguistic differences and adopting, instead, varieties of the listeners.

More specifically, one might posit a question about the features that are dropped and the ones that are replaced. Trudgill (1986: 11) pinpoints that "speakers modify those features of their own varieties of which they are most aware of". Awareness is attached to forms that are overtly stigmatized, and whose variants are phonetically different. According to Trudgill, accommodation falls into long-term and short-term accommodation. While the latter is temporary, the former is permanent. In temporary accommodation, people reply to their interlocutors in certain situations., but it does not affect their way of speech lastingly. If people keep meeting, short-term turns into long-term accommodation. Moreover, when a speaker employs new features in the absence of speakers of the original features, accommodation becomes permanent.

#### **2.4 Urbanization and the prestigious dialect**

The urban lifestyle challenges people to modify their linguistic behaviour. Ech-Charfi (2020) contrasts the social identities of old generations and younger ones during the massive urbanization of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, believing in linguistic changes bound to the young in the new urban centers. In her contribution to *The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, Theodoropoulou (2018) defines urbanization as migration from rural to urban areas seeking jobs or better circumstances. In this context, modernization brings with it new lifestyle practices, and above all, linguistic innovations.

Abdel-Jawad (1986) construes a gradual urbanization due to cultural and social powers which lead to linguistic standardization involving the emergence of a spoken dialect at phonological and lexical levels. Likewise, Miller and Caubet (2010) opine that globalization and new technologies, along with urbanization and education, are the main social changes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Arab World. The current situation of witnessing new urban culture has been enhanced by the spread of the internet and new world trends of rock music, hip-hop, video, etc. At the oral level, one of the evolving trends is the 'youth speech' with features of code-mixing and the demise of language boundaries (Gordon, 2019, P 444) also adopts the same stance stating

Urbanization brings people of different regional and social backgrounds into geographic proximity and thus facilitates contact between different languages and different varieties of the same language. This trend underlies social change from rural simple way of living into urban style.

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Theodoropoulou (2018) argues that the dominant belief is that Arabic prestigious dialects are associated with urban centers. Regardless of social or regional variations, the hint is always at the social status of the speakers in a social hierarchy and also into how people reflect upon prestige and how they think it has a bearing on their stylistic choices.

Taking this issue, a stage further, Al-Tamimi (2001) contrasts between prestigious and non-prestigious dialects, believing that the prestigious one is the dialect of the dominating class that exists in Arab capitals. Miller and Caubet (2010, P 241-242) refute a controversial assumption that "the closer the variant is to fushaa (Standard Dialect), the higher it's prestigious, while the stigmatized forms are always associated with the dialect". The authors tend to emphasize, depending on previous Arabic studies, that the urban variety is being selected over the standard variety.

## 2.5 Previous Studies

Sociolinguists worldwide have studied the relationship between linguistic varieties and other variables like age, education, and gender. What seems to be appealing and convincing are the ones that are based upon the linguistic accommodation to the urban dialect.

In her doctorate thesis, Kherbache (2017) investigates the linguistic consequences of long-term dialect contact of three rural in-migrant groups in Beni Hammou village following quantitative and qualitative data. The study has revealed that some social factors are behind the linguistic accommodation to urban speech including the villagers' positive attitudes towards urban speech, eagerness to grasp a significant social position, and the stigma associated with some particular local forms. These all have led to the reduction of some salient rural linguistic features.

Similarly, Milhem (2014) seeks the relationship between the use of Palestinian dialect among Palestinian refugees in Jordan and the sense of identity. The study finds that the percentage of the Palestinians who accommodate the Jordanian dialect is substantial, suggesting that they may comprise their national identity to feel safe.

Amara (2005) confirms that females in Bethlehem adopt the urban dialect, while men prefer to speak Standard Arabic. In particular, Christian men and women use urban variants. This distinction between men and women was the motivation to distinguish between identity and dialect and to stress the impact of urban variety on the linguistic variables including /q/. Al-Tamimi's (2001) doctorate dissertation is a look at the orientation of phonological change and aims to hypothesize some correlations. He discusses in detail the phonetic and phonological variation among rural migrants in Irbid, a city in Jordan, focusing on four social variables: social class, education, age, and gender. He confirms that gender and social class are the most salient variables behind language contacts and shifts in Jordan.

It is the same interest that attracts Abdel-Jawad (1987) in one of his seminal quantitative works to study the interaction among the rurals, urbans and beduins with up-to-date corpus-based research. The prolonged study contrasts between urban forms [q] and [ʔ] and rural ones [k] and [g] among rural Palestinians and Jordanians. Connecting these sounds with social variables, it states that the Jordanian urban dialect is the most prestigious dialect, and this is adopted by even rurals whose original variety is stigmatized.

To sum up, it is clear that neither of the above reviewed studies tackled the use of urban dialect by villagers in the academic context in the city of Abu-Dees. The authors tend to emphasize, depending on previous studies, that the urban variety is being favored and selected over the standard and the rural varieties. Therefore, this study is different since it attempts to reveal the way villagers accommodate linguistically to the urban dialect by revealing the most common rural features that are



abandoned in favor of urban ones. The study also attempts to show the goals villagers achieve through accommodation to the urban dialect

### **3. Methodology**

To achieve the aims of the study, the researchers present a sociolinguistic survey (spontaneous conversations) among 25 rural young people who come from various towns or villages and have rural backgrounds but reside in the town of Abu Dees temporarily for the sake of studying in Al-Quds University. The researchers randomly select friends, colleagues and acquaintances as the target sample taking into consideration frequent face-to-face contact and easy access to them in lectures, campus and even the dormitory. They are not aware that dialect accommodation is the focus of the dialogues in order to scan the intended features as reliably as possible in an attempt to gather naturally-occurring data. Audio recordings are used to record the samples' speech, and later transcribed, and cited with English translation. Another substitute technique to collect data is based on note-taking. The researchers depend on categorizing the sample according to the degree of accommodation to answer the first question. The researchers quantify the sample that accommodate certain features in percentage to answer the second question. Concerning the final part, interviews are conducted with the informants to elicit data to tackle the motives behind linguistic accommodation.

Abu-Dees is particularly interesting because it is a quite an expanding town with about 25,000 population, including the 10000 students. It has been a magnet for Palestinian students who have extremely diverse origins: camps, cities, and villages. Widespread accommodation to the urban variety in the form of phonology is normally reinforced by the phenomenon that these students spend at least a four-year stay for educational purposes.

### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

#### **Part One: How do villagers accommodate linguistically to the urban dialect?**

The dominant question that has been posited at the beginning of the study is to grasp the reality of the linguistic accommodative behavior occurring in face-to-face communications with regard to the theory of accommodation. To answer the question of the study, exemplified evidence functions as tangible signs for rural linguistic accommodative behavior.

Rural dialect is noticed to lose its marked linguistic characteristics like /q/, encouraged by rural people's tendency to accommodate the urban dialect in a sociolinguistic accommodation process called urbanization. The findings of the study that unearth the linguistic features found in rural dialect and that are basically borrowed from the urban dialect confirm the belief that features move from a high-status dialect to a lower one.

Participants tend to converge to the urban variety in miscellaneous situations including lectures, chatting with friends and colleagues, phone calls, and intimate contexts through adopting new varieties, attrition of interdental, softening some sounds and the use of the glottal stop, to name just a few. The target sample varies in terms of how much and how often they accommodate. Some of them stick to the new dialect with all its nuances to the extent that the hearer suspects their originality as the case of Dr. T. T (see below). The majority of the subjects don't accommodate entirely with the new variety; they adopt only the most marked features of the urban dialect. Although the informants seek to adjust their speech to the urban variety, their accommodation is still partial. They try to imitate, but it seems that in some crucial utterances that have /ʔ/, they find it hard or embarrassing to alternate the rural /q/ to the glottal stop.

While concentrating on the target variations, the researchers consider only the words that are vulnerable to the possible accommodative varieties. To better illuminate the sociolinguistic

investigation, the target sample is classified into the following groups based on their modified phonological performances that dissent linguistic rurality toward urbanity:

**The first group (complete accommodation):** shows a full phonological accommodation behavior to the urban dialect in a process called long-term accommodation as they stick to all urban phonological characteristics in all contexts, either formal or casual, away from the tongue they were brought up with. It is such an entire shift that people around may not doubt their originality. They are so proficient in uttering the urban varieties including a sharp use of the glottal stop instead of /q/ or /g/, in addition to alternating /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ðˤ/, /r/, /T/, /d/, into /t/, /d/, /k/, /Ḍ/, soft /r/, /t/, and a midway between /t/ and /d/, respectively. To exemplify, Dr. T. T., from a village near Bethlehem, is the only male in the study whose given name contains the Arabic sound /T/ (ط) and the family name refers to a Bedouin tribe in Bethlehem. He utters his name with a /t/ instead of /T/. The university documents are signed with his given and father's name, but missing the surname which attests as the merely evidence, among his students, his rural originality and might bring in inferiority. His students had thought he was an urbanite due to his urban dialect before discovering the fact. R., is another example with refuge originality who lives in Om Al-Sharayad in Ramallah and wields the urban dialect in its true copy of original.

**The second group (mixed dialects):** includes the ones who modify their rural varieties either partially or temporarily. To clarify, some of this group excel in uttering a number of features from the urban dialect but maintain few because they don't want to be fully urban and consequently preserve their identity, or they feel embarrassed by their in-group. Plus, others stick to the urban tongue on campus, but in the dormitory or online lectures during the Gaza War, 2023/2024, the origin dialect comes over, particularly, in front of their family members. For more illustration, consider these different utterances by S., a 22-year-old girl from Bayt Seera, a village near Ramallah, whose original dialect is marked by the use of /ʃ/, /θ/, /k/ for /q/.

In the dormitory: "*Kalbi boujɕni*" (My heart hurts) and "*Aʃlt ʃθeer*" (I ate a lot).

On campus: "*Allah aliha ʔallbha kbeer kteer.*" (God, her heart is too big).

Noticeably, the rural variants /ʃ/, /θ/ and /k/ are opposed by the urban ones /k/, /t/, and /ʔ/, respectively. Moreover, A. is from Bayt Fajjar, a village near Bethlehem known for all the marked features of rural dialect. She knows where to be herself; the native rural, and where to show up elegant feminine. To clarify, she utters "*kteer*" (a lot) at university, but "*kθeer*" (a lot) while chatting with her roommates. A. also undergoes a linguistic dichotomy between a reality she can't take off completely and a wish she can't resist. S. is from the village of Bani Naim near Hebron. She converges to all the markers of the urban varieties, in addition to softened /d/ on campus mainly when talking with lecturers. For example, /d/ in "doctor, please?" is in the midway between /t/ and /d/. Conversely, she mixes between the two varieties in the dormitory.

**The third group:** (tiny flavor) includes the informants who stick to their rural dialect, but they change some sounds like /ðˤ/, /l/, soft /r/ and /ʃ/. To exemplify, D. is a dentistry student from Fawwar camp whose dialect is pure rural. She visited the orphans' house in Al-Ayzarya to deliver a talk about how to keep healthy teeth. Unconsciously, she says "*Sin Ḍaeef*" (a week tooth). Here, the standard Arabic sound is /Ḍ/, in the colloquial dialect it is uttered as /ðˤ/ not /Ḍ/. However, she accommodates to the urban variation /Ḍ/. /r/ is also said lightly. Another example is M., a senior dentistry student who softens /r/ and /T/. Y. is a rural student at Abu Dees University. She sticks to her native tongue except for some tiny changes like "*mneeh*" which means (okay); the /l/ sound is changed to /n/. More importantly, the rural sound /ʃ/ is replaced by /k/.



**The fourth group (code-switching to English):** are the ones who insert English phrases in daily speech. Look at these tangible examples:

1. M. is from a neighborhood near Nablus; she not only accommodates the urban dialect with all its markers, but she also switches English phrases like "*Istanini fife minutes*". (Wait me for five minutes). Here, the request statement is made up of only three words, the imperative word is Arabic and the other two words are switched to English. Although M. is not qualified enough to communicate in English perfectly as shown in the /f/ sound that replaces /v/ in *five*, she tends to flavor her speech with English.
2. H., from Imtain, a village in Nablus, often repeats "*Bye the way*".
3. B., from Bedo, often says "*Ya Allah Sho Inha cute!*". (O, my God. How cute she is!).
4. R., from Al-Izaryyah, is addicted to the thermal verb "*appreciate*" and "*come on*".
5. R. H. speaks the native-accent English. She switches (*okay*, and the jargon *Um*) in her speech.

On the whole, the sample reflects accommodation to the urban dialect in different degrees, in addition to some switching to English phrases in some cases. Undoubtedly, all the subjects of the sample are fascinated by the modern urban lifestyle including dialect on the top list. Some dissent their native tongue for the sake of the urban one permanently either in formal or casual contexts, at university or dormitory, with strangers or acquaintances. Moreover, others mix between the two dialects for reasonable justification. They can't give up their feeling of being rural as part of their identity or they are torn between two crisscrosses: in-group and out-group. Therefore, they keep some features and dissent others in an attempt to please the self and the others. The third group is proud of its originality, but they are affected by the changing context, so they embed tiny changes. The final group, also contains some members from the previous groups, are the ones who switch English terms in their speech to reflect an elegant status. Since they differ in the kinds of features they modify and index in their linguistic competence whether the shift occurs temporarily or permanently, the persistent curiosity underlies in finding out which features remain and which are unable to resist change. This is why the paper moves to the second question, which is which.

**Part Two: Which rural features are abandoned in favor of urban ones?**

As has been stated above, a number of rural variants are replaced by urban counterparts. The following table shows the rural features that are missing ground to the urban variations:

Table 1: Phonological rural features accommodated to urban ones

| Disappearing rural features among rural speakers | Equivalent urban features  |
|--|----------------------------|
| /q/  | /ʔ/                        |
| /θ/  | /t/                        |
| /ð/  | /d/                        |
| /tʃ/   | /k/                        |
| /ðˤ/   | /Ḍ/                        |
| /r/  | Soft /r/                   |
| /T/  | /t/                        |
| /d/  | Merged between /t/ and /d/ |
| /l/ in restricted phrases                        | /n/                        |

The following graph shows the percentage of the accommodated phonological features by villagers:

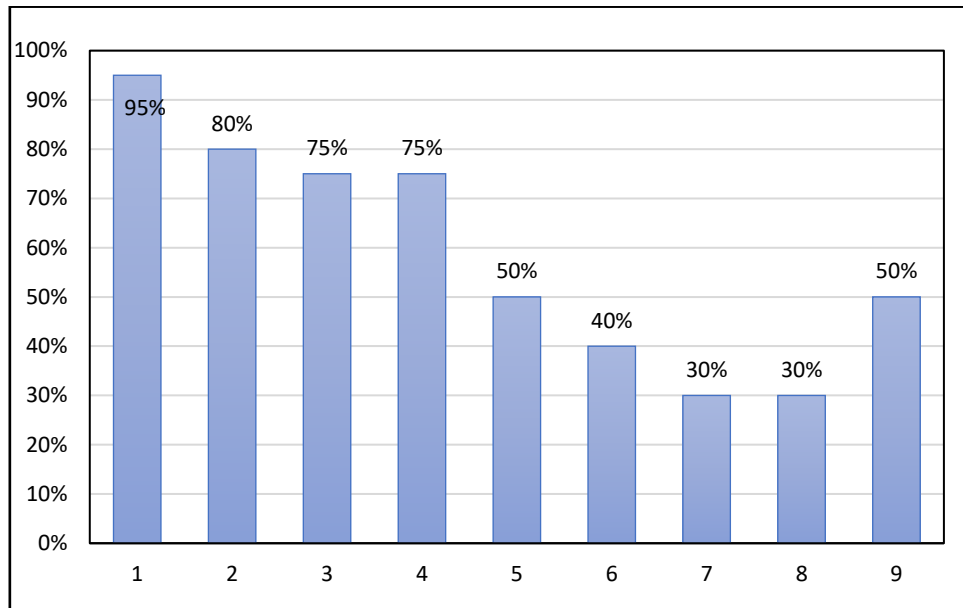


Figure 1. Percentage of accommodation to urban variants among villagers

On the basis of its 95% shift to /k/, as well as its rare existence in the corpus, it could be debated that /tʃ/ gets the lion's share since it is missing track to the more prestigious /k/, which spreads in the mainstream Palestinian Arabic. The researchers encountered very few occurrences while chatting with roommates of rural originality in the dormitory. It is worth mentioning that this affricate sound is obviously devalued by the rural speakers who identify it as being antique.

Other phonological features that are attributed to urban Arabic are the interdental /θ/, /ð<sup>s</sup>/ and /ð/ which are shifted to the voiceless alveolar stop /t/, the emphatic voiced alveolar stop /Ḍ/, and the voiced alveolar stop /d/, respectively. /ð<sup>s</sup>/ has not been adopted in the speech of the informants in university contexts; the accommodation to /Ḍ/ scores 80%. For example, "ð<sup>s</sup>ahri inkasar" is realized as "Ḍahri inkasar" (my back broke). /t/ constitutes a replacement for /θ/ in words like "tub" instead of (θub meaning a dress), and "tamanya" instead of (θamanya meaning eight). Plus, /ð/ is alternated to /d/ as shown in "dibla" means (a wedding ring), with a percentage of 75% for /θ/ and /ð/ alike.

Noticeably, the voiceless uvular stop /q/ is the most recognizable parameter of urban/rural division. It remarkably encompasses the originality of the speaker as it is shown as normally urban since it spreads in the inherently linked city dialects across Palestine. However, as the informants show, the variants of /q/ including /g/ and /k/, are shifted to /ʔ/ realization. It is obvious that the ones who accommodate to /ʔ/ sound stick to it completely in all words that have the [q] sound even in words like [Quds] which is repeatedly realized as [guds or quds] among urban. Put simply, "ʔuds" is produced by the ones who are supposed to say it 'quds, guds, or Kuds'. Since the main concern of the study is tracing the urban variants in the speech of villagers, it could be noted that 50% of the sample use the /ʔ/ variant. Yet, it is important to mention here that although this variable has four variants, and shifted to /ʔ/ in accommodative context, it cannot be taken over by any of them. In other words, they can be used in complementary distribution.

An abnormal phonological feature is the emergence of softened sounds like /d/ to a midway utterance merged between /t/ and /d/ (40%), softening /ɾ/ (30%), and /T/ is softened to /t/ (30%). To exemplify, A. calls the lecturer saying "toctor, please" in a soft tune with the hope of attracting his attention to listen to her carefully. /l/ is changed to /n/ (50%) in restricted cases like "mneeh" instead of (mleeh meaning fine).

In a nutshell, some conclusions can be stated from the above-mentioned analysis. Undoubtedly, the phonological segments are not resilient enough to face change. It is surprising to report that the /tʃ/ scarcely does appear in the corpus. It is replaced by /k/ in most of the cases. What's more, the three interdental sounds come second, and then /q/ comes next. The rest of the sounds are not rural- restricted variants, but they are softened to more effeminate tunes. It could be indicated that the study findings match former sociolinguistic studies mainly Trudgill's (1986) pioneering acknowledgment that in speech contact, people accommodate to each other by dropping linguistic differences and adopting, instead, varieties of the listeners. Apparently, these speakers are losing some phonological markers of their original dialect. We can't, indeed, deny the effect such people have in forming a new dialect over the course of time. Trudgill (1986, p. 11) frames expressively the linguistic features that often undergo accommodation

Greater awareness attaches to forms which are overtly stigmatized in a particular community. Very often, this overt stigmatization is because there is a high-status variant of the stigmatized form and this high-status variant tallies with the orthography while the stigmatized variant does not.

What the quotation straightforwardly indicates is that the process is not arbitrary, on the contrary, it occurs as an outcome of a mixture of factors whether individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously. Consciousness of the previously-mentioned defamed sounds as hallmarks of rurality is behind their attrition. The following section illustrates directly the reasons and the goals that motivate people to give up their dialect and converge to others' speech instead.

### **Part Three: What goals do villagers achieve through accommodation to the urban dialect?**

The deliberate choice of a certain variety over the other has interpretable considerations and it is initiated by impetus. Due to the social and economic status, some of these linguistic varieties are stigmatized, and, consequently, others are highly appreciated. In this vein, certain varieties are destined to evolve and prosper as standardized for all, whereas other varieties are sidestepped. Relatedly, Trudgill (1986) construes phonetic distances, phonological contrast and stigmatization to people's awareness of a certain feature that triggers them to alternate their pronunciation in certain contexts. Based on this, the researchers seek to notice the informants' speech in formal and casual contexts, in in-groups and out-groups, to grasp their actual attitudes for the sake of getting reliable data.

In the situation at hand, an interview with each informant offers the researchers insightful comprehension about their –the informants'- attitudes toward the variants of the two dialects, the reasons behind accommodation to the urban dialect, and what goals they achieve through accommodation. They feel that the rural variety is substandard to the esteemed urban, and thus they try to avoid it. For them, it is an issue of personal freedom to open their mouth and speak the way others do without self-remorse or hesitation. In other words, it is not against the law or the social traditions and morals. There is no point in following their parents' steps and inherent things that had been imposed on their ancestors who lived in simple houses and spent time just grazing animals and cultivating lands. Their mothers used to wear long dresses, but today they are allowed to put on jeans. So, modification in language keeps up with other modern alterations. There is no fear of others' mockery or bullying because accommodation is spreading everywhere as a natural phenomenon of social and linguistic change. In fact, they don't degrade their grandparents' lifestyle, but the whole society is changing.

With regard to the interviewees' attitudes to the rural hallmarks, they confess that the salient features, mainly the interdentals, are heavy compared to their urban counterparts. To dig deeper, the process of articulating the interdentals involves more organs and requires more pressure during the

manner of articulation. Concerning the affricate sound, it is obvious that /tʃ/ is explicitly devalued as it refers to archaic or invalid fashion that once suited the agricultural civilization. This negative connotation with /tʃ/ is strengthened by the findings concluded by Abdel-Jawad and Abu Radwan (2013) about the same sound that is often stigmatized, and so people shift to the standard and socially accepted /k/. One of our informants aptly frames her point of view in these expressive words: "I speak the 'chaf' at home just the way my parents do, but on campus or with out-groups, it automatically disappears. It is not standard, so how awful it will be if I deliver a presentation with 'chaf'! How could my colleagues or the lecturer comprehend me, particularly, the ones who are not accustomed to it? The urban dialect is a representation of social prestige and makes speech more convincing. I can't bear being mocked. Yet, it is not the case at home".

In support of this, the researchers' daily contact with the sample provides insight into the actual way of speaking. To illustrate, M. is from Al-Jeeb village near Jerusalem. Compare her speaking practice in these two distinct settings:

The first situation- At the end of an exam, she pledges the doctor to give her another two minutes saying "*Aṭteena daʔeeʔteen*" (Give us two minutes).

The second situation- While talking with her friends who are all villagers, she says "*Bas dakeekteen*" (Only two minutes).

These two extreme contexts embody a formulaic saying: "*Each author table seats*". In the first situation, the speaker is conscious of her utterances, so she selects the urban variety to appear soft and prestigious to solve a problem of timing. However, in the second situation, she harmonizes with her group and forgets about softening. Overt prestige is used here, and in other cases as well, to guarantee a full understanding and empathy from the interlocutor. Therefore, accommodation here may be labeled as a type of concession whereby she shows up her grandeur via the 'soft variety' to achieve a fruitful reply.

Surprisingly and as is normally the case in various dialects, the rural variety is viewed negatively. Villagers themselves undervalue their rural variants, and thus move to more prestigious ones. Doing so, they fulfill a desire to approach urbanization lifestyle, away from the stigmatized world of peasantry and roughness. Contrary to expectations and out of strong belief and confidence in their free personal choices, the informants won't feel embarrassed to utter the urban varieties in front of others: rural or urban communicative contexts.

Other informants agree that they love each other as they spend several years together mainly in the dormitory sharing the same piece of bread. They are involved in permanent contact with people from different places across Palestine, and so they imitate others' speech as a way of reinforcing intimate relationships. Put simply, they are attracted to experience and taste a new way of speaking that evolves slowly into a habitual custom.

However, to give this issue its full share, it is of paramount significance to present the attitudes of the group who don't switch to the urban variety, except in a few cases; the ones who cherish their original rural dialect and consider dialect as a "speaking identity" as exactly labeled by Milhem (2014). They take a different position, favoring authenticity. According to them, the ones who change are described too outgoing for the conservative Palestinian society which adores social traditions and norms that have been going on for ages. "It's imperfect to cling to this modernized frenzy of urgent change," one of them reports. When we are satisfied with our identity as villagers, there is no reason to waive or compromise it in favor of prestige along the way. Some may debate that those villagers

are to surrender their dialect in front of city dwellers to avoid face tarnish, and consequentially they are in an urgent need to shift.

Concerning the group who stuff English terms in their speech, they naturally insert foreign phrases as they get used to it over the course of time, and so it turns into a linguistic habit they can't dissent easily; it happens automatically. Speakers elevate their words into presence through an artistic use of language. Language is a tool that contributes as a dart to the messages pursued to be revealed. All possible means of language are employed in a creative manner to reveal the intended meaning. Simply, switched words emphasize revealing an idea that is hoped to be understood as quickly as possible. Additionally, the ones who alternate to the urban variety have also a tendency to code switch.

In essence, the target group confesses that they tend to adopt the urban variety to satisfy the social requirements of this constantly -changing society that adores modernity and disguises itself behind prestige. It is a must, according to them, to be accepted socially to live safely in such a dichotomous community that declares crucial judgments on humanity based on superficial tests. Most strikingly, linguistic prestige is like an ornament that can be worn, but cleansed in crucial moments and thus the cover reveals. Incidences, like online lectures where the so-called prestigious individual participates in the presence of her family, or in an intimate closed in-group chatting, or even in anger cases when what is said is more important than how it is said, elevate spontaneity on top of the shreds of hard evidence that uncovers the hidden goals behind accommodation, that undermines the frenzy myth of prestige labeling it a new brand or something else.

## 5. Conclusion

Thus far in this study, it has been shown that the informants who are all of rural origin show various degrees of linguistic accommodation to the urban dialect. Some switch entirely to the new variety, the majority of them mix between the two varieties, and a few stick to their native dialect except for tiny shift mainly /ʃ/, and the interdental sounds /θ/, /ð/, and / ð<sup>s</sup>/ which reflect excessive degree of accommodation by all the groups. What's more, a group of the sample switches some English phrases in their daily speech. It turns out that this accommodation occurs either permanently or temporarily, and deliberately and unconsciously when comparing a person's linguistic behavior in different statuses. The interviewees reflect a tendency to use the urban dialect to be more fashionable, and socially accepted, away from satire and mockery.

With these findings laid, it is worth mentioning that the attrition of the linguistic rural hallmarks in favor of the urban equivalents, or even mixing between both regardless of the degree of usage might become paramount impetus to dialectal alteration. This new phenomenon underpins the sociolinguistic ground to turn over to more linguistic variation. The study recommends studying the linguistic space in terms of variation, whereby people have various linguistic items from which they choose and mix according to social, stylistic and linguistic factors instead of setting boundaries between them

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