

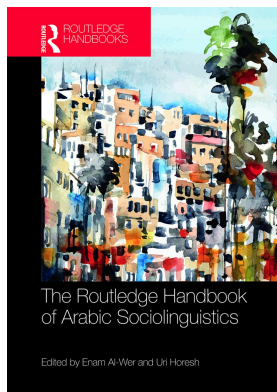
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### Phonological and morphological variation

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# 11

## PHONOLOGICAL AND MORPHOLOGICAL VARIATION

*Aziza Al-Essa*

Sociolinguistic research conducted in Arabic-speaking societies to analyse linguistic variation and change for the past four decades has shown that Arabic manifests in three linguistic types: (1) Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), (2) a standard local/regional variety usually used in the capital city of the country or a major urban centre (Ibrahim 1986) and (3) local non-standard dialects.

Early sociolinguistic studies adopted the framework of Ferguson's (1959) diglossia model and therefore focussed on the interaction between MSA and spoken dialects. These studies investigated the use of MSA versus dialectal features or the degree of MSA-dialect mixing, and concluded that education, social class and gender were the main determining factors of the use of MSA features (Miller 2004). More recent sociolinguistic studies, on the other hand, focussed on the local dialects and examined the interaction between linguistic and social variables. These studies found that sociolinguistic variation is constrained by factors attributed to the native Arabic dialects of each community, not by the structures or features found in MSA (Al-Wer 2013, Al-Wer & De Jong 2018). These studies focus on the locality and the local dialects in various communities, most notably urban centres, in the Arab world where speakers of different dialects interact with one another. The urbanisation process has led to a change in the linguistic norms in different parts of the Arab world. Empirically and statistically tested data from different sociolinguistic studies have provided evidence of the emergence of koinéised dialects. These dialects have assumed the role of local standards in many cities, e.g. Manama, Amman, Jeddah, Riyadh and Casablanca, and emerged as a result of the operation of regional koinéisation processes, which include, inter alia, simplification and levelling out of marked variants.

Most of the variationist sociolinguistic research in the Arab world has focussed on phonological variation, and to a lesser degree, on morphological or morphophonemic variation (cf. Choueri, this volume). In this chapter I will present some of the most representative phonological and morphological variables shared amongst a good number of Arabic vernaculars across the Middle East and North Africa, and demonstrate how the levels of analysis are intertwined. The first part of this chapter surveys the major phonological variables that have been subject to variation and change. The second part outlines the morphophonemic variables.

## Phonological features

### *The phoneme /q/*

There are different realisations of the phoneme /q/ across the Arabic-speaking world. The typical distribution of the various realisations of this phoneme is as follows: glottal stop [ʔ] in city dialects in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. In rural dialects in Egypt, /q/ is realised as [g] – also typical of Libyan and some other North African dialects; and as [g] or [k] in the rural Levantine dialects. The uvular voiceless stop [q] exists in a few places in northern Iraq, parts of Oman, Yemen and in some Syrian and North African dialects. In southern Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf countries, /q/ is realised as [g], with [dz] or [dʒ] as potential allophones (Holes 2004). Synchronic data from various sociolinguistic studies conducted to examine the variable usage of /q/ in different countries have shown that variation is mainly attested between the variants [g] and [ʔ] in e.g. Jordan. In the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia, [g] is the underlying value of this phoneme. It does exhibit some variability, but in a much more restricted fashion, between [g] and its palatalised variants [dʒ] and [dz] (see below).

In some regions, especially in the Levant and Iraq, the variable (q) is considered to be the most salient of all investigated variables because its variants are traditionally used to classify dialects into urban-rural-Bedouin norms (Al-Wer & Herin 2011). Whereas [q], [k] and [ʔ] mark the speech of sedentary populations, the remaining variants are mainly used by Bedouin populations. For example, Blanc (1964) distinguishes between *qeltu* and *gilit* dialects within the Mesopotamian dialect area, the former being typical of the sedentary norm and the latter of the Bedouin norm (see Vicente, this volume). Similarly, Al-Wer (2013) notes that the variants of /q/ are used to label dialects in Palestinian Arabic: [ʔ] dialects (e.g. Jerusalem) and [k] dialects (e.g. rural central/northern Palestinian) to refer to dialects that use [ʔ] and [k], respectively.

(q) has been investigated as a sociolinguistic variable in a good number of studies. Some studies investigated stylistic variation within the diglossic framework, examining speakers' choice between Standard and non-Standard variants (Sallam 1980; Abdel-Jawad 1981; Al-Khatib 1988; Daher 1998; Al-Amadidhi 1985). Education was established as the social factor that determines the variable use of the Standard variant [q]. Sallam (1980) examined the use of [q] in the speech of educated speakers from Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Palestine. He reports that educated speakers use a higher proportion of [q] than [ʔ] in informal conversations. Abdel-Jawad's (1981) study in Amman and Al-Khatib's (1988) study in Irbid (Jordan) found a correlation between the use of [q] and the speaker's level of education; the highest educational group used Standard [q] most frequently in both studies. Al-Wer's (1991) study in Jordan found the same pattern. Haeri's (1994) study of Cairo analysed the variable use of /q/ in the speech of men and women as a case of lexical borrowing and the results of her study showed that men's speech contained lexical items with [q] more frequently than women's in all educational levels and social classes. Daher's (1998) study of Damascus found that educated men use Standard Arabic [q] more than educated women who opted for the Damascene variant [ʔ].

Al-Wer (2013) explains that the use of Standard [q] is predictable in the speech of highly educated speakers who, by definition, have a higher functional knowledge of the Standard variety, and therefore were able to integrate lexical items with Standard [q] into their speech more than the less educated speakers. She argues that studies conducted to investigate the use of (q), particularly in Jordanian Arabic, clearly show that while the use of Standard [q] is predictable, since it is constrained by stylistic factors such as the topic discussed or the mode of

interaction (reading versus speaking), the vernacular variants are constrained by the social and contextual factors, particularly the dialectal background of the speaker.

I will now survey studies that examined (q) as a sociolinguistic variable where the attested variation is between locally based vernacular variants of (q) in different Arabic-speaking communities, for example between [g], [k] and [ʔ] in Levantine dialects (Palestinian and Jordanian), [g] and [dʒ] in Gulf Arabic and al-ʿaḥsāʿ Arabic in Saudi Arabia. The results of these studies show that it is the regional standards that determine the trajectory of change in this feature.

The variation in the use of (q) in Amman and other Jordanian localities involves two variants: [g] and [ʔ]. Whereas [g] is typical of the traditional dialects of Jordan, e.g. Sult, Irbid, and Karak, the glottal stop [ʔ] originates in other Levantine dialects, especially those of Palestinian cities. The variant [k], while present in the dialects of speakers of rural Palestinian origin, has been reported by Abdel-Jawad (1981) to be recessive in Amman. This is confirmed by Al-Wer (2007). [ʔ] is considered the supra-local variant since it is found in major dialects in the Levant region, e.g. the dialects of Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo and Jerusalem. On the other hand, the variant [g] is characteristic of less dominant, more provincial dialects, although it can be found in all of the dialects in southern Syria. In Jordan, the variability between [g] and [ʔ] resulted from frequent face-to-face interaction in the capital city of Amman between speakers of [g] dialects and speakers of [ʔ] dialects who immigrated to Amman from Palestinian cities in the aftermath of the 1948 and 1967 wars. Al-Wer & Herin (2011) maintain that Amman is the linguistic centre out of which the linguistic innovation [ʔ] radiated to provincial towns such as Sult and Ajloun. Abdel-Jawad (1981) showed that female speakers adopted the use of the urban variant [ʔ] and dropped the rural variant [k] and Bedouin variant [g]. Although Abdel-Jawad did not factor in the dialectal background of his speakers as a social constraint to account for the pattern of linguistic variation, results from his study indicate a change in progress from [g] to [ʔ] in Amman.

Al-Wer (2007) traces the linguistic features of the newly formed dialect of Amman. She states that data from youngsters in Amman confirm that the change from [g] to [ʔ] is at an advanced stage, possibly completed, in the speech of women. She maintains that the shift from [g] to [ʔ] may be accelerated by regional koinéisation. Data from her study show that use of [ʔ] among third-generation speakers born in Amman has increasingly become more constrained by social factors such as gender, ethnic background and contextual factors. The male Jordanian speakers in Amman continue to use [g], often as a marker of Jordanian identity, regardless of their traditional dialectal background. Herin (2010) found that in Sult, the use of [ʔ] is present in the speech of mobile and relatively young members of the community. The use of the non-local variant [ʔ] did not diffuse across to other social groups or older age cohorts (cf. Al-Wer & Herin 2011). Although the empirical data from various Jordanian towns strongly suggest that the [g] ~ [ʔ] variation has spread, data show that outside Amman, the variant [g] remains the linguistic norm in Jordan (Al-Wer & Herin 2011: 74).

In Palestinian Arabic, Cotter & Horesh (2015) and Cotter (2016) examined the variation in the use of (q) in Gaza where [g] is the traditional local variant. Their sample included refugees from the city of Jaffa, where /q/ is realised as [ʔ]. The analysis of data has shown that female speakers in Gaza, especially those of Jaffan descent, favour the use of the glottal variant [ʔ] and male speakers, regardless of dialect background, favoured the use of the local variant [g].

While in the Levant, the variant [g] is localised, in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia it is the supra-local variant. The variation in the use of (q) in this region involves four variants: [g], [dʒ], [dʒ], and [q]. The palatalised variants [dʒ] and [dʒ] are, for the most part, used in the environment of front vowels. This variation has been found to be constrained by many social factors in

different studies. I will first survey studies that examined variation in the use of (q) in the Gulf, and then in Saudi Arabia.

In Gulf dialects, [dʒ] is in a state of regression, with [g] replacing it in most instances. In Bahrain, Holes (1983, 1987) examined (q), among other linguistic variables, in the speech of the 'Arab and Bahārna groups in relation to three social factors: sectarian affiliation (Sunni/Shiites), literacy (literate/illiterate) and region (town/village). The study found the local variants of (q) to be socially stratified: it was realised as [g], or [dʒ] in the environment of front vowels, among Sunnis; as [g] or [k] (a slightly more fronted voiceless stop than the uvular [q]), among Shiite village-dwellers; and as [g] among urban Shiites. Holes addressed the issue of a potential change to [q] in words exhibiting morpho-semantic congruity with MSA. His data, however, show that in the speech of the literates, [g] was the most frequently maintained variant. Holes explains that [g] showed a higher rate of occurrence because it is the variant associated with the most socially prominent group, i.e. the 'Arab Sunni group, and possibly because it is more common and shared by all social groups. In a follow-up study, Al-Qouz (2009) confirmed the status of this variable to be in line with Holes's findings.

Dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia show similar patterns of variation with regard to the use of (q), where sociolinguistic variation is not motivated only by social factors, but also, and sometimes primarily so, by linguistic factors. The formulated phonological rules to account for the surface realisation of phonemes are subject to variation and to interaction with social variables. This is true for some of the other variables discussed in this chapter as well. In the case of (q), we firstly need to point out the absence of a voiceless variant in the vernaculars, and hence the occurrence of the variant [q] is to a large extent confined to items and expressions borrowed from the Standard variety. In view of this, we must assume that the affricated variants [dʒ] and [dʒ] are allophones of /g/ (rather than /q/).<sup>1</sup>

Studies that examined variation in the use of (q) in the dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia have shown that [g] is increasingly replacing the affricated variants and is considered the supra-dialectal form. Data from my study of the linguistic change in the speech of Najdi speakers living in Jeddah (Al-Essa 2008) show that the affricated variant [dʒ], which usually occurs in the vicinity of front vowels, is recessive. A few instances of the affricated variant [dʒ] were mainly found in the speech of elderly Najdi speakers who had little contact with local Hijazis. Al-Mubarak (2016) found that in the al-'Aḥsā' dialect, which is spoken in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, the rate of deaffrication of the variant [dʒ] (which is the local realisation of /g/ in front vowel environments) is more advanced than in Gulf countries such as Bahrain (Al-Qouz 2009; Holes 1987) and Qatar (Al-Muhanadi 1991). However, within Saudi Arabia, it lags behind the level found in the contact situation of Najdis living in Jeddah (Al-Essa 2008). Al-Mubarak adds that Sunni speakers of the al-'Aḥsā' dialect adopt the supra-local form [g] at a higher rate compared to Shiite speakers. Her data show that deaffrication is adopted by adolescent, young, middle-aged and educated elderly Sunni females. The change in progress from the affricated variant [dʒ] to [g] indicates that speakers of the al-'Aḥsā' dialect seem to be orienting towards the linguistic norm shared by speakers of most other dialects in Saudi Arabia.

Although many sociolinguistic studies conducted in Saudi Arabia claim Riyadh, the capital city, to be the locus of change with regard to this and other variants, without a detailed investigation of the history of the dialect of Riyadh itself, such claims remain impressionistic. With respect to this feature in particular, we can for instance observe that affrication of /g/ is characteristic of the central region in which Riyadh is located, as well as the nearby eastern region; therefore, the proposal that deaffrication of /g/ in eastern cities is precipitated by the influence of the dialect of Riyadh would first have to establish that this feature is indeed characteristic of the dialect of Riyadh. If it is so synchronically, a process of levelling out of this feature in

Riyadh must have occurred at some stage. Furthermore, it is perfectly possible, in my opinion, that the source of innovation in the use of /g/ is not local, but that it was a feature that was imported from the western cities where affrication of /g/ is absent; in other words, it may be suggested that the long-term contact between Najdi speakers and urban speakers in Hijaz initiated the process of this linguistic change in the speech of Najdis who in turn transmitted it to their home localities in the central and eastern regions. The migration of Najdi families to urban centres in Hijaz started near the end of the Turkish rule of Hijaz during the second decade of the 20th century (Altorki 1986). Nevertheless, it is only after the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 that Najdis came in large numbers to settle in the city of Jeddah. The deaffrication of /g/ in front vowel environments in the speech of Najdis may have started among the migrants as a direct influence of the speech of Hijazis, the majority group.

A detailed study of the use of variants of (q) in Morocco is Hachimi (2005) (see also Hachimi 2007). In the Maghreb in general, historically, the variant [q] is characteristic of the pre-Hilalian group of Arabic dialects, i.e. urban/sedentary dialects, whereas [g] is characteristic of the Hilalian group of Arabic dialects in this region. Hachimi (2005) investigated the sociolinguistic outcome of dialect contact between Fessi, an urban dialect, and the 'hybrid' Casablanca dialect, which contains many rural features, including [g], in the speech of three generations of Fessi women living in Casablanca. She notes that the internal immigration to large cities in Morocco, such as Casablanca, has disrupted the usual urban-rural dichotomy, and has led to the emergence of newly formed koinés shaping a new brand of urban identity. With regard to the variable (q), the main finding in her study is that all 15 speakers maintained the Fessi variant [q] in all lexical items except for the verb /qa:l/ 'to say'. Drawing on the model of 'community of practice', whereby speakers are viewed as using linguistic forms to construct their social identities, Hachimi maintains that for a Fessi woman to be Casablančan, she needs to adopt the koine form /qa:l/ instead of Fessi forms /qa:l/ and /ʔa:l/ (see Messaoudi, Vicente, this volume).

### *The phoneme /dʒ/*

Arabic /dʒ/ is another highly salient variable. The main variants of /dʒ/ are [dʒ], [j], [g] and [ʒ]. Stereotypically, the realisation of /dʒ/ as [g] is considered a marker of Egyptian speech, [ʒ] is associated with Levantine Arabic and glide [j] with Gulf Arabic. Nevertheless, there are different patterns of variation in the use of these variants in different regions. For example, in the Arabian dialects of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf and lower Iraq, affricate [dʒ] is variably used alongside glide [j]; in Levantine dialects, fricative [ʒ] is used in the major cities, such as Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem, but not for instance in Aleppo where [dʒ] is used (Behnstedt 1997). In the Bedouin and rural dialects in the Levant [dʒ] is the traditional variant. Studies that investigated variation in the use of /dʒ/ in modern Arabic dialects include Al-Wer (1991, 1999) in Jordan; Holes (1980) and Al-Qouz (2009) in Bahrain; and Al-Shehri (1993) and Husain (2017) in Saudi Arabia.

In the Gulf region, a regional standard variety is in the process of formation based on the speech of urban areas such as Kuwait City, Manama, Doha and Dubai (Holes 2011). Part and parcel of this regional standard variety is the pronunciation of /dʒ/ as [j]. Studies that have investigated linguistic variation in the Gulf states show that there is a shift from the affricate variant [dʒ] to glide [j]. Holes (1987, this volume) reports that in Bahrain, where linguistic variation and change is constrained by speakers' sectarian affiliation, the Baḥārna Shiite speakers replace their traditional affricate variant [dʒ] in core dialectal lexical items with the glide variant [j], which is characteristic of the dialect spoken by the dominant Sunni Arab group. Al-Qouz



(2009) provides a real-time analysis of Manama 30 years on from Holes's study. She notes that the interaction between the 'Arab and Baḥārna groups has increased considerably, as they are no longer segregated in different neighbourhoods, and their children go to the same schools. Data from her research show that the shift from [dʒ] to [j] is complete; the use of [j] has become the norm in the speech of the young Baḥārna; the affricate variant is only found fossilised in a few lexical items. A similar development has occurred in Kuwait. Taqi (2010) examined the use of /dʒ/ between two ethnicities: Najdis and Ajamis (of Persian descent). Results from her study show that young speakers from the Ajam group are replacing their heritage variant [dʒ] with the glide variant [j] which is used by speakers of the dominant urban dialect of Kuwait. In Qatar, data from Johnstone (1967), Al-Amadidhi (1985) and Al-Muhanadi (1991)<sup>2</sup> report that the glide realisation [j] is the shared variant among the sedentary population in Doha, which comprises different social groups (tribal, Hwala [returnees] and Ajam); the Bedouin population in Qatar are distinguished by their realisation of the affricate variant [dʒ]. The variant [j] is considered to be the locally prestigious form. Al-Muhanadi (1991:189) noted that in Doha, educated Bedouin female speakers used the variant [j] instead of their heritage [dʒ] in the conversational style. It is clear that [j] has become a component of the regional standard in the Gulf region. Holes (2011:134) describes this standard variety as follows:

With minor variation, it is spoken in relaxed public speech contexts from Kuwait in the north to the UAE in the south, and is even now making inroads into Oman, where the historically prestigious dialect, that spoken in the Capital Area, was originally very different. On TV and radio, it is this homogenised form of speech which is heard in Gulf soap operas, talk shows and vox-pop interviews.

In Saudi Arabia, /dʒ/ is realised as [dʒ] in most dialects, as a glide [j] in some dialects spoken in southern Najd, southern Hijaz and the eastern region, and as [ʒ] in the Ghamid dialect, south-western Hijaz (Procházka 1988:16) and in the dialect of Banu Sālim of the Ḥarb tribe, in north-western Hijaz (cf. Il-Ḥazmy 1975). The sociolinguistic variation in the use of /dʒ/ has been investigated by Al-Shehri (1993) in the city of Jeddah and Hussain (2017) in the city of Medina. Al-Shehri examined the variation in the speech of urbanised rural/tribal immigrants from the south-western area of Southern Hijaz in the city of Jeddah. Data from his study documented a shift from the speakers' heritage variant [j] to the local variant [dʒ]. Hussain (2017) reports that in Medina, the local variant [dʒ] is being vigorously replaced by the innovative [ʒ] in the speech of the urban Hijazi population and the Bedouin population of Banu Masrūḥ of the Ḥarb tribe. The use of [ʒ] is constrained by social and linguistic factors. Young speakers in both social groups prefer [ʒ]. With regard to linguistic factors, the use of [ʒ] is favoured after high front vowels and /j/, low front vowels and back sounds, and in unstressed syllables. Hussain ascribed the adoption of the incoming variant [ʒ] to the influence of the city of Jeddah. My personal observation confirms that the innovative variant [ʒ] is currently prevalent in Jeddah. However, more studies are needed to investigate the variation in the use of (dʒ) in Jeddah, especially since the only description of the Jeddah dialect is provided by Omar (1975) where /dʒ/ is reported to be realised as [dʒ].

While Gulf Arabic dialects are identified with [j], and Saudi dialects with [dʒ], generally speaking, in the majority of urban Levantine dialects, [ʒ] is the norm. Al-Wer (1991) reports that both variants, [dʒ] and [ʒ], are heard in Jordan. While [dʒ] is the local variant used by the indigenous population of Jordan in provincial towns, [ʒ] is the variant usually used by Jordanians of urban Palestinian origin. Her results show that [ʒ] occurs most often in the speech of the most educated young speakers who have frequent and extensive contact with speakers from

other urban communities, particularly Amman. In her analysis of the newly formed dialect in Amman, Al-Wer (2007) states that data from youngsters show that [ʒ], along with other features (see previous section dealing with the use of (q)), has become a focussed feature of the Ammani dialect, which aligns more closely with other Levantine city dialects.

### ***The interdental phonemes /θ/, /ð/ and /ðˤ/***

There are three interdentals in Arabic: /θ/, /ð/ and /ðˤ/. In many Arabic varieties, the plain interdentals have merged with the stops /t/ and /d/ or the sibilants /s/ and /z/, respectively. The emphatic interdental changes to its stop or sibilant counterpart /dˤ/ or /zˤ/ (see Al-Wer 2004). Whereas stop variants are associated with particular standard regional varieties, e.g. Egyptian and Levantine, the fricative variants are generally found in the Arabic varieties spoken in the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf region and Iraq.

The interdentals have been investigated as sociolinguistic variables in studies which focus on contact between varieties that employ different sets of the interdental variables. Different linguistic patterns of variation were found to exist in these contact situations, and the direction of linguistic change takes a different course in different regions.

In the Levant, data from Jordanian Arabic show that the stop variants are expanding at the expense of the interdental fricative variants (Abdel-Jawad 1989; Al-Wer 1991, 1999, 2004). Al-Wer (1991) investigated the variation in the use of the traditional fricative variants [θ] and [ðˤ] and the incoming (urban Palestinian) variants [t] and [dˤ] in the speech of 116 indigenous Jordanian women in three different towns in Jordan. Her data show that the younger and more educated female speakers of indigenous Jordanian varieties gradually adopt the stop variants. Al-Wer (2004) provides information in real time on the progression of the change from interdental to stop in Jordan. She revisited the town of Sult, one of the towns investigated in her 1991 study, to collect data from a smaller sample of speakers. The data show that the interdental variables have undergone a dramatic change. Whereas the change from local [ðˤ] to urban [dˤ] is near completion in the speech of young women, the rate of use from [t] has risen from 28% to 45% (Al-Wer 2004). Al-Wer explains this difference in the rate of progression by maintaining that in the case of the plain interdental the change results in a phonological merger, which delays progression (cf. Trudgill 1986); whereas the change which affects the emphatic /ðˤ/ is a straightforward phonetic change from fricative to stop. She further explains the disappearance of the emphatic fricative variant [ðˤ] in terms of sociolinguistic stereotyping. She argues that, unlike plain interdentals [θ] and [ð], [ðˤ] is extremely stigmatised in Jordan. In her study of the dialect of Amman, Al-Wer (2007) reports that youngsters in Amman consistently use the stop variants [t], [d] and [dˤ], and occasionally the sibilants [s], [z] and [zˤ]. With this change affecting the interdentals alongside other consonants, [ʔ] instead of [g] and [ʒ] instead of [dʒ], the dialect of Amman as used by third-generation speakers has become more similar to other Levantine city dialects.

In the Gulf region, urbanisation and dialect contact between different ethno-linguistic groups have led to the rise of a regional standard which is characterised by the use of fricative variants [θ], [ð] and [ðˤ]. Holes (1995) points to the emergence of new patterns of dialect use in Bahrain and Iraq. The contact situation in Bahrain between the Baḥārna group and the 'Arab group in Manama led to the rise of a new standard based on the dialect of the more dominant 'Arab group. The change in the Baḥārna speakers' realisation of the interdentals, from [f] to [θ], [d] to [ð], and from [dˤ] to [ðˤ], is one of the features which are changing towards this new standard which is the product of the fusion of 'Arab and Baḥārna dialects in Manama. Holes also examines a similar case in Iraq which was documented by Abu Haidar (1989,



1991). Christian Baghdadis, who speak a sedentary dialect which employs stop variants of the interdental variables, invariably style-shift when they interact with Muslim Baghdadis. On the other hand, Muslim Baghdadis do not change their normal dialectal realisations, viz. the interdental variants, in any context.

In Saudi Arabia the majority of the dialects spoken in different regions use the fricative variants of the interdental variables. The stop variants are used in the cities of Mecca, Jeddah and Medina. In the dialect of Qaṭīf (in the eastern region), the reflexes of /θ/, /ð/ and /ðʕ/ are [f], [d] and [dʕ], respectively (cf. Watson 2011). Variation in the use of interdentals in Saudi Arabia has been studied in the cities of Mecca and Jeddah. No research has been conducted to investigate the variation in the use of the interdentals in the eastern region.

Extensive internal migration of speakers of dialects that contain the fricative interdentals to major cities in Hijaz, whose dialects lack the interdental sounds, has triggered koinéisation, thus leading to the rise of supra-local linguistic forms. In the city of Mecca, Al-Jehani (1985), Al-Ahdal (1989) and Al-Ghamdi (2014) investigated the use of interdentals in Mecca, where the population is ethnically divided into tribal and non-tribal groups. Whereas non-tribal Meccans, locally referred to as *ḥaḍar*, use the stop/sibilant variants of the interdental variables, the tribal group use the fricative variants. All three studies reported a general low rate of transmission of the stop and sibilant variants in the speech of the tribal population. They found that the fricative and stop/sibilant variants of the interdental variables function as ethnic markers: the former for the tribal group and the latter for the non-tribal group, hence the general low rate of convergence among both groups in the case of the interdentals.

Nonetheless, data from Al-Ahdal's study indicate reciprocal accommodation among the tribal and non-tribal groups in the use of the interdentals. His results show that non-tribal speakers use the fricative variant [ð] rather than the stop [d] 20% of the time, and tribal speakers use the sibilant variant [s] rather than [θ] 20% of the time. Based on this reciprocal convergence, Al-Ahdal predicted that tribal and non-tribal variables would be moving towards each other, and therefore the diffuse variety in Mecca would have a chance of focussing. He further predicted that the target model for this focussed variety would be the Najdi variety, which, he suggests, symbolises the 'national identity' of the country. Al-Ghamdi (2014) examined the variation in the use of the interdentals in the speech of Ghamdi migrants from Al-Bāḥa who settled in Mecca. The data from her study show a high rate of maintenance of the interdental fricatives and a low rate of accommodation to the stop variants. The use of the stop variants was found to be significantly correlated with the integration of the Ghamdi community in Meccan society. The integration of the Ghamdi migrants was measured by an index of regionality and locality, i.e. place of birth, whether in Mecca or Al-Bāḥa, and proximity of residence to the Holy Mosque. The data in this study indicate that the attested transmission of the local stop variants was found in the speech of integrated young female speakers. More research is needed to examine the complex sociolinguistic situation in Mecca to trace the rate of transmission of either type of variants of the interdental variables in the speech of young Meccans.

The low rate of convergence towards the stop variants of the interdental variables is similarly reported in two studies conducted in the city of Jeddah. Al-Shehri (1993) examined the variation in the speech of rural migrants originally from the south-western region of Saudi Arabia in Jeddah. He found that accommodation by urbanised rural speakers to the urban usage of the stop variants [t] and [d] was extremely low, and no accommodation to the sibilant variants [s] and [z] occurred. Like Al-Jehani and Al-Ahdal, Al-Shehri drew upon the concept of ethnicity to explain the lack of accommodation to the urban stop variants. He explains that the stop variants are the most salient phonological features of the urban Hijazi dialect because "linguistically speaking these variants represent radical phonetic distance from the local norm

(i.e. interdental variants) of the indigenous Arabian dialects, and thus represent a marker of unindigenous speech” (Al-Shehri 1993:119). The fricative interdentals have become markers of ethnicity and the indigenesness of the rural immigrants vis-à-vis the urban Hijazi locals.

My research (AlEssa 2008), which examined the use of interdentals, among other variables, in the speech of Najdi speakers in Jeddah, has shown that the distribution of the stop variants of the interdental variables across the age groups indicate a low rate of variation although the majority of the participants were born and raised in Jeddah or other Hijazi cities, namely Mecca and Medina. Data in my study indicate steady decline in the use of the stop variants across the age groups. In the analysis, I proceeded to trace the transmission of the stop variants in three generations from three different families. The results show that the stop variants were adopted by the first- or second-generation speakers, but their transmission was reversed in the following younger generation in the same family. Although socialisation patterns that are characterised by a high level of contact and strong social networks with Hijaz locals emerge as the most significant social factor determining the diffusion of the stop variants in the speech of Najdis, the low rate of use of the stop variants in the second generation of the young high-contact speakers, who were born in Jeddah to mothers who themselves were born in Jeddah, remains remarkably low (1%). I ascribed the high degree of maintenance of the fricative variants in the speech of Najdi speakers in Jeddah to the saliency of the stop variants as markers of the Hijazi dialect, and to geo-demographic factors related to the fact that the fricative variants have a wider regional distribution in Saudi Arabia in contrast to the stop variants, whose use is restricted to major cities in Hijaz. In a cosmopolitan city like Jeddah, where speakers from different regions and who speak dialects that employ fricative interdentals come to live and interact with Hijazi locals, the fricative interdental variants emerge as the supra-local variants in contrast to the stop variants which are salient markers of the local urban Hijazi speech. In the complex sociolinguistic scene in contact zones in Saudi Arabia, the fricative interdentals seem to be the winning forms so far, at least in the speech of the migrants and their descendants in Hijaz. The question remains whether a dramatic decline in the number and socioeconomic status of the speakers of dialects that contain the fricative interdentals in the Jeddah would trigger a merger between the fricative and stop variants in their speech.

Finally, in a remote southern location in Saudi Arabia, Tihāmat Qaḥṭān, one of the features studied by Al-Wer & Al-Qahtani (2016) concerns variation in the use of /dʕ/ which in this region preserves the ancient lateral realisation of this phoneme, namely [ḷʕ]. Al-Wer & Al-Qahtani found this feature to be used variably with the emphatic interdental [ðʕ] (the supra-local and majority realisation in Saudi Arabia). The data strongly suggest that there is a change in progress from the old variant (the lateral) to the koinéised feature (the interdental). This change appears to be led mainly by younger women in the two villages they investigated. They add that this change is socially motivated by the presence of speakers from outside these villages, which could have influenced the local dialect and raised the locals’ awareness of this variant as a ‘minority feature’ vis-à-vis other Saudi dialects (see also Alqahtani 2015).

The studies outlined above indicate that the linguistic change affecting the interdental phonemes in different regions in the Arab world shows different directions and linguistic outcomes depending on different region-specific sociolinguistic factors.

### *The phoneme /y/*

In some Arabic dialects, /y/ may be realised as voiced velar/uvular fricative [ɣ] or voiceless uvular stop [q]. This feature can be found in eastern Arabian Gulf dialects (Johnstone 1967), in the dialect of Hufūf in Saudi Arabia (Procházka 1988), as well as in Sudanese Arabic (Dickins 2007).

Studies that examined the variation in the use of /y/ in the Gulf region include Holes (1987) and Al-Qouz (2009) in Bahrain, Taqi, (2010) in Kuwaiti dialects and Al-Mubarak (2016) in al-'Aḥsā' dialect in Saudi Arabia. In all these studies, it has been reported that the variation in (y) is not phonologically conditioned; the use of the variants [ɣ] or [q] is rather determined by different social factors: ethnicity (Najdi vs Ajami) and gender in Kuwait, sectarian affiliation (Shiite vs Sunni) and age in Bahrain, and by gender in Saudi Arabia. In Bahrain, the variant [ɣ] is used by the Shiites categorically; on the other hand, [q] is the dialectal variant used by Sunni speakers. Data from Holes's (1987) study in Bahrain reveal that literate Sunnis are replacing dialectal [q] with standard [ɣ]. Three decades later, data from Al-Qouz (2009) show a general decline in the use of the heritage [q] variant among Sunni children. She ascribes the decline in [q] use to contact with Shiites and other social groups living in Manama, such as Hwala and Ajam speakers, all of whom use the [ɣ] variant. Taqi's (2010) study in Kuwait found that male Najdi speakers use less of their dialectal variant [q] than both Najdi and Ajami female speakers. Analysis of data from al-'Aḥsā' region in Saudi Arabia indicate that the use of [q] is extremely recessive and the pattern of variation is similar to that found in Kuwait, in that the use of [ɣ] is constrained by gender, such that male speakers are more likely to use the [ɣ] variant than female speakers.

Generally speaking, these studies all indicate a shift from [q] to [ɣ].

### ***The phoneme /k/***

/k/ has different realisations in Arabic dialects: it is realised as [k] or [tʃ] in some rural Levantine dialects, lower Iraqi dialects and Gulf dialects; or as [tʃ] in Najdi Arabic (see About 1979; Ingham 1994). The affrication process affects /k/ in the word stem and in the feminine suffix *-ik*. Holes (1991) states that all dialects which have conditioned affrication of /k/ also have an affricated second feminine singular enclitic. Since this section of the chapter deals with phonological features, I will discuss the affrication of /k/ in the word stem only, while affrication of /k/ in the suffix is discussed in the second part of this chapter, which deals with morphophonemic features.

/k/ is affricated within the stem in rural and Bedouin Arabic dialects, for example /ke:f/ 'how' is produced as /tʃe:f/ or /se:f/. Most of the affricating dialects that have been investigated affricate /k/ conditionally, mainly in front vowel environments. The general tendency is to deaffricate /k/. Furthermore, this feature has been examined in relation to different social and linguistic factors, including sectarian affiliation (Sunni vs Shiite) in Bahrain (Holes 1987) and Saudi Arabia (Al-Mubarak 2016); age, education, gender, phonetic environment (high front environment vs elsewhere), contact and social network. Among the studies that have dealt with (k) are Abdel-Jawad (1981), Herin & Al-Wer (2013) and Al-Hawamdeh (2016) in Jordan; Al-Essa (2008), Al-Rojaie (2013), and Al-Mubarak (2016) in Saudi Arabia. All of these studies have reported that the localised affricated variants of /k/, i.e [tʃ] and [ts] are giving way to the urban and supra-local deaffricated variant [k].

## **Morphophonemic features**

### **The second person feminine singular suffix *-ik***

In some Arabic dialects, the /k/ in the 2f.s. object pronoun *-ik* is realised as *-iʃ*, *-if*, *-its* or *-is*. The use of the affricated suffix form *-iʃ* is attested in rural dialects in Syria, Palestine, Jordan, southern Iraq, Khuzestan, throughout the eastern side of the Arabian Gulf and in Yemen

(Herin & Al-Wer 2013; Holes 1991; Ingham 1982; Watson 2011). The use of *-if* is found in Yemen, southern Saudi Arabia, Oman (Holes 1991, 2013; Al-Azraqi 2007, Watson 2011) and within al-ʿAḥsāʾ, specifically in al-Hufūf (Procházka 1988). Dialects that use *-its* are spoken by various Najdi groups (Al-Essa 2008).

The decrease in use of the affricated suffix forms is reported in different regions in the Arab world: Herin & Al-Wer (2013), Al-Hawamdeh (2016) in Jordan, Al-Azraqi (2007), Al-Essa (2008), and Al-Mubarak (2016) in Saudi Arabia. The affricated suffix forms are described as stigmatised forms and therefore replaced by the more standard and supra-local forms *-ik* ~ *-ki*.

Compared to the deaffrication of /k/ in the word stem, which is reportedly a recessive variant, only found in the speech of the elderly (see above), the deaffrication of /k/ in the suffix shows a higher rate of maintenance in some dialects, particularly in the dialects spoken in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and Jordan. In my research (Al-Essa 2008; Al-Essa 2009), I investigated the linguistic change affecting the use of the second person feminine suffix *-its* in the speech of Najdi migrants in the city of Jeddah. Results from my study show that the affricated variant occurs in the suffix at a higher rate (22%), than in the word stem (6%). I have argued that the deaffrication of *-its* is sensitive to the morphophonemics of gender marking in the dialect. In other words, the higher rate of maintenance of the affricated form in this suffix may be motivated by the fact that it serves a morphosyntactic function.

The dialect contact situation in Jeddah between Najdi dialect speakers and Hijazi locals has produced intricate linguistic outcomes as a result of the difference in the morphophonemic system of gender marking between the Najdi dialect and the target dialect (urban Hijazi), as illustrated below:

	Najdi	Hijazi
Masc	<i>-ik</i>	<i>-ak</i>
Fem.	<i>-its</i>	<i>-ik/C_</i> (post-consonantly), <i>-ki/V_</i> (post-vocally)

Notice that whereas Najdi relies only on the consonant distinction, [k] – [tʃ], to denote gender distinction, the urban Hijazi dialect, on the other hand, relies on vowel distinction to indicate gender.

In their attempt to approximate the urban Hijazi system of gender marking, the Najdi speakers in Jeddah are required to make three changes simultaneously: deaffricate [tʃ], acquire the vowel distinction (absent in their native dialect) and observe the phonological conditioning of realising the suffix as *-ik* post-consonantly but *-ki* post-vocally.

The analysis of data shows that there is a significant correlation between the use of target forms and the level of contact with Hijazi locals. To maintain gender distinction and achieve maximal comprehension, some low-contact speakers, who have abandoned [tʃ] to mark the feminine gender, fail to observe the phonological conditioning and extend the Hijazi variant *-ki* to both consonant and vowel final words. Another new form to both dialects emerges, as a minority of speakers use the suffix *-k* post-vocally and thus neutralise gender in words such as *ʔabu:k* ‘your father’.

Further data from Jordanian Arabic support the aforementioned postulate about the higher rate of maintenance of the affrication of /k/ in the feminine suffix *-ik* compared to /k/ in the stem of words. Al-Hawamdeh (2017) examined variation in the use of the feminine suffix *-ik* in the traditional dialect of Sūf, a Ḥōrāni town in northern Jordan. Data from her study show a relatively high rate of usage of the affricated feminine suffix *-if* (70%) compared to only 11% of [tʃ] in the stem. Across all age groups, female speakers favoured the use of *-if* more than male speakers, who favoured *-ik*. Al-Hawamdeh argues that social factors, especially social

networks of men and mobility, can explain the higher rate of innovation on the part of men. In this community, women are either unemployed or work locally, and travel less than the men. The men, on the other hand, have a considerably wider network of contacts with people outside their community, and many of them commute for work to large cities.

### ***Loss of gender distinction in the plural suffix***

Gender distinction in the second- and third-person plural forms is absent in several Arabic dialects. In some of these dialects, we assume that this distinction was never present, as it does not exist in the traditional dialects as we know them (e.g. Damascus and Cairo). What will be surveyed below are dialects for which traditionally such a distinction exists, and which recent studies show are undergoing change, such that the feminine plural forms either have been lost, or are recessive. Only a small number of studies have examined gender neutralisation in Arabic dialects, and these are predominantly dialects of the Bedouin and rural norms.

Al-Wer (2003) reports on gender neutralisation in the dialects spoken in Jordan. While the traditional Jordanian dialects maintain gender distinction in all forms, the modern koinéised dialects tend to neutralise gender in the plural forms. Thus, traditional 2.pl.m. is *-ku* and 2.pl.f. is *-kin* are both rendered as *-ku* in the new koiné. Similarly, in the third-person forms, 3.pl.m *-hum* is traditionally distinguished from 3.pl.f. *-hin*, but in the koinéised city dialects only *-hum* is used for both genders.

In the newly formed dialect of Amman, a further development that affects the second person singular suffix results in the emergence of a totally new form, *-kum*. This innovative form does not occur in the input varieties (Jordanian and urban Palestinian, for the most part). Rather, these input varieties had *-ku* (from Jordanian) and *-kun/ -kon* (from urban Palestinian). The data from Amman show that the third-generation Ammanis consistently use this new form.<sup>3</sup>

Gender neutralisation in the plural suffix has also been documented in my study of Najdi as spoken in Jeddah (AlEssa 2008). In traditional Najdi Arabic and in most of the dialects spoken in the Arabian Peninsula, except for urban Hijazi, gender distinction is maintained in the plural suffixes; different suffixes are used to mark the masculine and feminine gender (Aboud 1979; Procházka 1988; Ingham 1971, 1994). Whereas the feminine gender is marked by the suffix *-in*, the masculine gender is indicated by three suffixes in Najdi Arabic; *-ūn* is used to mark the masculine plural in the imperfect verb, and the suffixes *-aw* and *-u* are used with perfect verbs. On the other hand, in urban Hijazi, which is spoken in the cities of Mecca, Medina and Jeddah, gender distinction is neutralised in favour of the masculine form *-u*. Data from my study of the dialect contact situation in Jeddah show that Najdi speakers use the masculine suffix *-ūn* in place of the traditional feminine suffix *-in* 87% of the time. Apparent-time data show a steady decrease in the use of *-in* across generations. All young speakers aged 10–24 categorically used the third-person plural suffix *-ūn* to indicate both the masculine and the feminine gender. Najdi speakers relied on their own linguistic resources to substitute the marked feminine form *-in* with the Najdi masculine form *-ūn* instead of the urban Hijazi form *-u*, which shows that dialect convergence does not necessarily entail the adoption of exactly the same form in the target dialect. In this case, convergence is manifested in neutralisation of gender.

### **The second-person singular feminine subject clitic *-i***

Gender distinction is lost in the second-person singular in the old urban dialects in Morocco and North Africa in general (Hachimi 2007: 110). However, in the Casablancon dialect, gender distinction is maintained in the imperfective and imperative forms through the use of clitic *-i*



to indicate the feminine. Hachimi's (2007) study of the speech of Fessi women in Casablanca reports that the majority of Casablancon-born Fessi women in her study (n=15), who show convergence towards other Casablancon phonological features (see above), maintain gender neutralisation in the second person singular imperfective and imperative verb forms. Hachimi maintains that the behaviour of Fessi women can be explained in two ways. First, the process of regularisation and neutralisation of gender affecting object and possessive suffixes is widespread in Moroccan Arabic dialects. Secondly, Hachimi draws on one of the principles of dialect contact, according to which simpler uninflected neutralised forms tend to win out when in competition with complex forms that show gender distinction. The failure of Fessi women to acquire Casablancon gender distinction is in line with Herzog's principle that mergers tend to expand at the expense of distinction (Labov 1994: 35).

### **h-dropping in the pronominal suffixes *-ha*, *-hon***

Variation in the presence of [h] in the pronominal suffix in Syrian Arabic, particularly in Damascus, has been investigated in many studies (Bergsträsser 1924; Cowell 1964; Grotzfeld 1965; Lentin 1981; Behnstedt 1997, as cited in Ismail 2008). The third-person singular feminine suffix *-ha* and the third person plural, masculine and feminine suffix *-hon* can be realised without [h] as *-a*, and *-on*, respectively. Ismail (2008) examines the variation in the presence of [h] in the pronominal suffix in two neighbourhoods in Damascus. Her study analyses the linguistic and social constraints on this variation. The variable (h) has two variants, [h] and Ø. After consonants [h] is variably present, but it alternates with the glides [w] and [j] after vowels. [w] is inserted after the high back vowel [u] as in /abuwa/ ~ /abu:ha/ 'her father', and [j] is inserted after the high front vowel [i] as in /fi:ja/ ~ /fi:ha/ 'in her'. After the long low vowel /a:/, [h] is obligatorily present. The statistical analysis of Ismail's data shows that the presence or absence of [h] does not significantly favour a specific environment, i.e. a preceding consonant or a preceding vowel. Ismail correlates the use of the variable (h) with the social factors of age, gender and life-mode: the self-employed and the professional (based on Højrup 2003). Male and female participants of different age groups, young (1%), middle (6%) and old (6%), in both neighbourhoods did not show statistically significant differences in their usage of [h]. The zero form is found to be favoured by both male and female speakers in both communities. Results of Ismail's analysis show that Ø is favoured by the self-employed participants and the professionals. Based on previous studies and the patterns of variation evidenced in her study, Ismail concludes that the use of [h] in the pronominal suffix has been in stable variation in the dialect of Damascus for a considerable length of time.

### **Raising and lowering of the feminine ending *-ah***

Some Arabic varieties are characterised by *imāla*, i.e. the raising and fronting of /a/ or /a:/ towards /i/ and /i:/ in the vicinity of /i/-type vowels in general. This process affects the feminine ending *-ah*. Variation in the realisation of the feminine ending has been investigated in a few recent studies: Al-Wer (2002, 2007) in Jordanian, Cotter (2013) in Palestinian, and AlAmmar (2017) in Ha'ili Arabic in Saudi Arabia.

Raising of the feminine ending is a linguistic feature found in most Levantine dialects, particularly urban varieties. Al-Wer (2002, 2007) examines the variation in the use of the feminine ending *-ah* in Jordanian Arabic as she describes the process of new dialect formation in Amman as a result of dialect contact between speakers from Jordanian dialectal background and speakers from urban Palestinian dialectal background. While in Jordanian dialects, /a/



in the feminine ending is raised to [ɛ] after coronal sounds, in urban Palestinian dialects, /a/ is raised to [e], or a higher vowel, everywhere except after back and emphatic consonants. Al-Wer found that while the older speakers (first generation) in both groups maintained their respective traditional realisations, the younger generation innovate by using a ‘hybrid form’, such that they use the Jordanian variant [ɛ], but follow the Palestinian phonological constraints.

Cotter (2013) investigated variation in the realisation of the feminine ending in the speech of indigenous residents of Gaza and refugees from Jaffa in Gaza. Since raising of the feminine ending is phonologically conditioned, Cotter only included tokens where the feminine ending was preceded by non-emphatic and non-pharyngeal consonants or by /r/ in the vicinity of /i, i:/. Results from his study show that most indigenous Gazan speakers use the unraised variant [a] approximately 90% of the time. On the other hand, there is a steady decrease in the use of the raised feminine ending [e] (the default variant of the Jaffa dialect) across all age groups among the Jaffa-origin speakers, with the youngest speakers favouring the local Gazan [a] variant more than [e]. Cotter’s study indicates that there is a change in progress towards the loss of the raised variant [e], the default variant of urban Palestinian dialects outside Gaza, in the speech of Jaffan speakers in Gaza as a result of dialect contact with local Gazans, whose traditional dialect does not raise the feminine ending at all.

Al-Amman’s (2017) study of Ha’ili Arabic in the northern region of Saudi Arabia also examines variation in the realisation of the feminine ending. In the traditional dialect of Ha’il, /a/ in the feminine ending is raised unconditionally in all environments. Yet nowadays, the variable (ah) has two variants: the traditional raised variant [e] and the innovative low variant [a], which is also the supra-local form of the feminine ending used in many regions in Saudi Arabia, most importantly in Riyadh. The results from her study show progressive lowering of the Ha’ili form, a process that is constrained by social and linguistic factors. Of the social variables, age and level of contact with people from different dialectal backgrounds were statistically significant predictors of change, in addition to a linguistic predictor, namely, the preceding phonological environment. The analysis shows that younger female speakers, especially those with high level of contact, lead the change towards the innovative and supra-local variant [a], while older speakers, even those with high levels of contact, maintain the use of the traditional variant [e] at a very high rate (96%). Younger women are slightly ahead of younger men in using [a].

### *The definite article*

Some Arabic dialects have *m-* instead of *l-* as the definite article. The *m-*definite article is mainly found in Yemeni dialects (Rabin 1951; Behnstedt 2007, as cited in Alqahtani 2015), and in Tihāmah and ‘Asīr in Saudi Arabia (Procházka 1988; Alfaifi & Behnstedt 2010).

A recent sociolinguistic analysis in Tihāmat Qaḥṭān, in ‘Asīr, south-west Saudi Arabia (Alqahtani 2015), found the *m-*article to alternate with the *l-*article, the form commonly found in most modern Arabic dialects. Alqahtani (2015) examined variability in the use of the definite article in two villages (al-Jawwa in the highlands and al-Farṣa in the lowlands). The analysis shows that the variation is constrained by a linguistic factor – following sound – and social factors – gender and locality. With respect to the linguistic constraints, the incoming form, the *l-*article, was found to be favoured following (in descending order): vowel > labial > /l/ > back sounds > coronal > /z/. Generally speaking, female speakers favour the incoming variant, while male speakers disfavour it in the highland and lowland communities. Age was also found to be a significant factor, which suggests change in progress towards the *l-*article. The leaders of this change are younger women, whose rate of usage of the *l-*article surpasses

all other groups in both communities. Alqahtani argues that these young women diverge from features that are characteristic of the local dialect as a symbol of rejection of the local lifestyle. With regard to locality, data from her study show that the highland community, who are geographically less isolated, lead in the change towards the innovative /l/-article. According to Alqahtani, the seasonal movement of individuals between the two communities because of weather conditions facilitated the transmission of the innovative /l/-article from the highland community to the more isolated lowland community.

### Conclusion

The surveyed studies in this chapter demonstrate that sociolinguistic variation in Arabic is constrained by linguistic and social factors. The urbanisation process, which has stimulated internal migration and altered the patterns of social mobility, has led to a change in the linguistic norms in different parts of the Arab world. Statistically significant results of empirical studies cited in this chapter provide evidence that the pattern of linguistic variation in many Arabic-speaking communities points to the emergence of new koinéised dialects which have assumed the role of local/regional standards in parts of the Arab world, e.g. Amman in Jordan, Casablanca in Morocco, Manama and Kuwait in the Gulf region, and Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. Although these regional standard varieties seem to determine the trajectory of linguistic change in their respective regions, the specific outcomes of language change are shaped by combinations of linguistic and social predictors which are specific to the localities. In some cases, this can result in convergence to features of the supra-local standard, and in others, the result may be the maintenance of local features. It has also been noted that in dialect contact zones, levelling of marked variants can lead to the emergence of a range of variants; in some instances, it has led to the emergence of interdialectal forms or new forms altogether. With regard to extra-linguistic factors, social networks and frequency of contact appear to be the catalysts of linguistic change and the determinants of its direction (Al-Wer 1997). Young female speakers are at the vanguard of most instances of linguistic change that have been reported. Occasionally, the same linguistic feature exhibits change in different directions in different local dialects. One such example is the case of the interdental phonemes, for which the linguistic outcomes depend on region-specific sociolinguistic factors.

### Notes

- 1 Other variants of /g/ in Saudi dialects include a palatalised variant [gʲ], typically found in the dialect of the Ḥarb tribe in Medina, as reported by Al-Rohili (forthcoming).
- 2 Al-Amadidhi and Al-Muhanadi's studies approach variation as a case of alternation between MSA and vernacular variants in lexical items.
- 3 For a more elaborate explanation of the emergence of the new suffix in Amman, see Al-Wer (2003: 64–66).

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