



Linguistic Variation as an Identity and a Reflection of Affiliation: The Students of AAUP as an Example

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Abstract

An identity card is not the only proof of where a person comes from. Language is proof too. This paper aims to investigate the linguistic variation as an identity and a reflection of the affiliation of the members of the Palestinian community. The researcher used the students of Arab American University as a sample of the study since the researcher works at the university and communicate continuously with these students. The researcher used a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach during the study where she depended on a reviewed questionnaire consisting of 20 paragraphs as well as observing the students during communication in

different contexts. It is hypothesized that 1- The linguistic variation is an indicator of affiliation. 2- There is a statistical difference in preserving the linguistic affiliation due to gender, place of residency, and academic level. The research was conducted at Arab American University in Jenin in the north of Palestine. The researcher carried out the research paper during the spring term of the academic year 2019. The researcher concluded that there is a difference in the linguistic variation of the students at AAUP attributed to gender, there is no difference in the linguistic variation of the students at AAUP attributed to the academic level. There is a difference in the linguistic variation of the students at AAUP attributed to the place of

residency. It is recommended that further studies should be implemented in the same field but on different topics, to preserve the inherited dialects of the antecedents, awareness seminars should be held to preserve the heritage. Especially under what Palestine is exposed to by the Israeli occupation, to arrange periodical visits to villages and towns to recognize and record the Palestinian culture especially the linguistic varieties whether they are phonetic, phonological varieties or vocabulary variants, and the Ministry of Culture should organize activities and events that document the local dialects of Palestine, T.V programs for example.

Keywords: affiliation, identity, linguistic variation, AAUP

* Introduction

You have to display your ID or passport to cross or to communicate with new areas at borders, airports and checkpoints. These are, however, not the only evidence of one's heritage and home; language, linguistic diversity, culture and values exist. These must not be held on paper. You automatically know where a person is from when you hear him/her. Some

people want to preserve their language wherever they are or wherever they are, for example, Egyptians.

The idea that the context, character and motives of a person can be judged by the language, a dialect or, in certain cases, the choice of a single word, is always chilling (Walt Wolfram)¹. While Palestine has many dialects, it is a small country. People living in the north of the country use a range of phonology, morphology and vocabulary that varies from that used to the south. When the mass collects and interacts, universities are the best places to meet especially young people, the distinction between dialects is simpler. AAUP is known to be a speech culture in itself, which is the limitation of the current study and with its peculiarity. The students there reflect their language identity, which reflects the area to which they belong. It is worth noting that universities play a key role in the development and reform of the dialects of students through social contact and communication.

¹ Wolfram, W. do you speak American? Trusted. Valued. Essential <http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/sociolinguistics/soci>

[albehavior/#social](#) Accessed on 23, Dec. 2017 at 10:00p.m.

*** The Statement of the Problem**

Undoubtedly, any nation is proud of its linguistic identity no less than its national identity. In the twenty-first century, the interaction between people increases the mutual influence of languages and dialects. In Palestine and during the last twenty years, the number of students enrolled in universities has increased rapidly. Therefore, education has influenced students of both sexes. Females coming from rural areas, in particular, tended towards change especially at the linguistic level since they started to abandon the local variety and moved towards urban dialects and new prestigious positions. This is a problem in itself. From this point, the researcher found it is worth studying through researching the students of AAUP as one of the private educational institutions in Palestine.

*** The Questions of the Study**

The researcher's aim of this study is to answer the following questions:-

- 1- Do university students preserve their linguistic identity?
- 2- Is the linguistic identity influenced by gender?

3- Is the place of residence a variable in preserving the linguistic identity?

4- Is the student's academic level a variable in changing the linguistic identity?

*** The Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the study is going either to be accepted or rejected based on the results.

1- Preserving the linguistic identity is a relative matter.

2- There is a statistical difference in preserving the linguistic identity due to:-

a- Gender.

b- Place of residency.

c- Academic level.

*** The Significance of the Study**

This study implies a cultural, national and social significance. Particularly, in the era of globalization, a significant investigation is necessary to search issues are rooted in the mind of the community members. Language in all contexts and with its different varieties are the core of such issues in society. The young people nowadays seek prestige and change under the cover of modernization and civilization. This study is an attempt to

investigate the reasons and factors that encourage/ oblige the young to abandon their inherited dialects towards new ones. Especially, people, in Palestine, live a continuous competition between cultures and resistance against occupation to achieve identity and independence, as well as displaying their affiliation to the homeland.

*** The Limitation & the Sample of the Study**

The research was conducted at AAUP in Jenin in Palestine. The researcher carried out the research paper during the fall term of the academic year 2019/2020.

*** The Population of the Study**

The population of the study was the students of AAUP, Jenin. The researcher chose a random sample of both sexes consisting of 250 students. The sample was chosen from different levels, different disciplines and different backgrounds.

*** The Instrument of the Study**

To achieve the objectives of this research, the researcher developed a questionnaire consisting of 20

paragraphs to be distributed among the sample of the study and analyzed to conclude the results. The researcher also used observation as a tool to collect data as proof and a means of analysis.

*** Terms of the Study**

Linguistic dialect, AAUP, Linguistic identity.

1- Dialect: When the mass collects and interacts, universities are the best places to meet especially young people, the distinction between dialects is simpler. AAUP is known to be a speech culture in itself, which is the limitation of the current study and with its peculiarity. The students there reflect their language identity, which reflects the area to which they belong. It is worth noting that universities play a key role in the development and reform of the dialects of students through social contact and communication. Mustafa Jarrar et al handled the Palestinian dialects in details from the perspectives of phonology and morphology. They stated examples that explain the differences between the Palestinian dialects and the standard Arabic.²

² Jarrar, M., et al., Building a Corpus for Palestinian Arabic: a Preliminary Study. ANLP 2014, 2014: p. 18.

2- AAUP: Arab American University (AAUP) was established in 2000 in partnership with the California State University (CSU) in Stanislaus and the Utah State University (USU) in Logan and is now the first private Palestinian university in Logan. CSU accepted the first curriculums for AAUP and gave the requisite expertise to begin the university. In the first two years of the university, USU supplied faculty and administrators with expertise. With a diverse, creative learning ambience and a significant emphasis on the progress of every student, the AAUP serves the educational needs of more than 11,300 students, including 40percent from Palestine, 55percent from the Palestinian homeland and 5percent from foreign countries. AAUP administration and staff work diligently to establish a successful and extracurricular learning atmosphere. It then tackles rationally and seizes the resources available so that changes in a rapidly changing society adapt, evolve and understand. Equally relevant, AAUP complies with international standards of quality and has earned the ISO certificate (ISO9001:2015). The University also strives to provide a

³ www.aaup.edu

satisfactory atmosphere for learning accompanied by extracurricular activities. Thus, it accepts challenges, capitalizes on opportunities available, and prepare students to compete in the national, regional, and international economies of the twenty-first century. (www.aaup.edu)³

3- Identity: The sense of identity includes two major concepts according to Ahmad Bin Nu'man (1995):-

A- Personal identity: it depends on what distinguishes a person from other persons like fingerprints. A- Personal identity

B- National identity: it reflects general cultural and cultural characteristics that a person shares in a group or a nation with other people. The distinction between personal and national identities is that the former is privately known as the parson, who distinguishes the individual from other societies as a national identity⁴.

*** Linguistic Variation in Palestine**

The role of any language typically depends on the language of the interaction in social matrix and societies. The language we use is therefore not homogeneous; this means

⁴ Nu'man, A (1995): National Identity- Facts and Fallacies- Algeria, Dar Al-Manthumah for Printing, Publishing, translation, and Distribution, pp.23-24.

that speech and social actions are in many ways significantly related.

Speech by Edward Sapir (1921:147) The variety of language is beyond the knowledge of all of them "everyone knows that language is variable". Any of its speakers would never use a specific language in the same way. They differ greatly in language usage, and a variety of factors may cause this difference. That means that people are known by the language they use, which means that the identity of the speaker is the language from whom they are automatically recognized.⁵

Although Palestine has a small area particularly after the Israeli occupation seized the Palestinian Territories, it is categorized by social class and geographic distribution in several dialects throughout the world. A definition of Palestinian dialects by gender and place of residence will be provided to the readers.

*** Place of Residency and Dialects**

Palestine is divided into rural vs urban areas, in addition to the Bedouin dialect of a minority. Urban areas are the cities where people use a dialect that is considered a part of civilization

and a prestigious one in comparison to the dialects spoken in villages and towns. People in urban areas speak the sound /k/ in their speech e.g they say /knafi/ (kunafa), /kalb/ (dog), some cities' inhabitants, Nablus, for example, turn the sound /q/ into the glottal sound /ʔ/ e.g they say /ʔlb/ instead of /qalb/ (heart), /ʔu:m/ instead of /qu:m/ (stand up), /ʔa:l/ instead of /qa:la/ (said). While in the rural areas, the situation differs. The peasants (villagers) produce the sound /k/ as /č/ e.g the word /kalb/ is produced /čaleb/ (dog), /keef/ is produced /čeef/ (how). As for the people living in the Palestinian camps, they are closer to the variety of the city's especially the new generation. The difference between both areas is not limited to the sound variation, but it extends to the length of vowels where some people in certain areas like Tulkarm Province tend to produce long vowels like /ta'ali: ʔinaa/ (come to us), /zori:naa/ (visit us), while in the neighbouring areas, people say /ta'ali ʔna/ (come to us), /zorina/ (visit us).

*** Gender and Dialects**

It is a fallacy in daily life: a common yet false faith, that men and

⁵ Sapir, E. (1921). *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace,

and Co

women profoundly differ in how they use language to communicate. But it is also a fallacy to tell who you are and why you live as you are, in the sense of being a novel. It's a myth. Whether in any historical or scientific context, they are or are not "real," such stories have real consequences. They shape our convictions and so affect what we do. This law is no exception to the myth of Mars and Venus⁶.

The same applies to the way they talk to men and women in Palestine. Women as men generate identical letters in urban areas. In the town of Jenin, in northern Palestine, both use the sound /q/ // qari:b/ (close), qader (able), and the sound /³/ as // /³ri:b/ (close) in Nablus, /³a:der/ (able). However, people generate sound /g/ instead of /q/ in the city of Hebron south of Palestine as in /gari:b/ (close), /ga:der/ (able). About rural areas, people chat with the men /či:f halak / (how are you) as they communicate with the women /či:f halič / (how are you). Another example; /ma: ajmalak/ (how beautiful you are!) for men and /ma: ajmalič/ (how beautiful you are!) used to address females. There, the majority of the males and females

speak in the same way. But recently, females especially those who continued their education abandoned the sound /č/ in the first place. Then they started to substitute words from their environment with words from the urban areas like /hasa/ (now) substituted by /hala?/ (now). This subject in itself deserves an independent research.

* Related Studies

Al-Sheikh (2017) conducted a study titled Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the students at Al-Istiqlal University presented at a conference about multilingualism. The researcher studied the varieties as an identity of their speakers and to what extent the students preserve their language at the university and in other contexts. The study showed that males did not show any change in their accent and variety while the females coming from rural Areas change their way of speech after attending the university immediately.⁷

The researcher presents in this section several related studies about the Palestinian people's variety and

⁶ Cameron, D. (2007): What Language Barrier? Retrieved from www.theguardian.com on 22/2/2018.

⁷ Al-Sheikh, N. (2018) Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the Students at Al-Istiqlal University, Multilingualism conference, Morocco.

linguistic identity, and the linguistic identity of others in general.

In his thesis "Phonetics and the Dialect of Beit Hanon," Dr Medhat Dardonah describes a dialect as well as the dialect features of Beit Hanon's Gaza dialect. It demonstrates the phonetic characteristics of the town's inhabitants and the phonetic laws regulating this dialect. He has provided several examples to demonstrate that the Beit Hanon dialect retains the typical sound of Arabic.⁸

An analysis of the dialects of Askar camp to the east of the city of Nablus, Mohammad Taha (2010) was an investigator who dealt with food and cooking. From a dialectical and semantic perspective, he explored the meaning of these objects. The investigator conducted the origin and progress of the dialects in their present forms. He also introduced Hebrew and English, for example, the vocabulary

of non-Arabic origin. His research, as a guide in education and technology growth, was almost dead words.⁹

This study supports my current study on whether the students at Al-Istiqlal University preserve their linguistic identity or not.

In Hasan Abu Jarad (2010), two dialects from the "northern and southern Gaza Strip" of Palestinian Arabic were studied to assess the Arabic emphatic sounds and the constraints on these sounds were modelled following the work of Davis (1995)¹⁰ and McCarthy (1997; 2003)^{11, 12}: a clear finding was that the emphatic sounds of the left ha were bi-directed.¹³

The analysis of the Arabic colloquial dialect in general, and the Palestinian spoken dialect in particular, Dr Haseeb Shahata is considered a national responsibility because it improves the way of teaching our child

⁸ Dardanah, M. (2006) Study for Phonetics and Dialect in Beit Hanon, [Conference on Contemporary Language in Palestine](#), PP. 11-25.

⁹ Taha, M. (2010): Askar Camp Dialects; Phonetic-Semantic Study about House ware, Food and Drink Items.

¹⁰ Davis, Stuart (1995) Emphasis spread in Arabic and Grounded Phonology. *Linguistics Inquiry* 26: 465-598.

¹¹ McCarthy, J.J. (1994): 'The Phonetics and Phonology of Sematic pharyngeals', in Patricia Keating ed., *Papers in Laboratory Phonology. Phonological Structure and Phonetic form*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 191-233.

¹² McCarthy, J.J. (2003): *Optimal Paradigm*. Ms., University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA, [Available on Rutgers Optimality Archive, ROA-485.]

¹³ Abu Jarad, H. (2010): *Journal of Al-Quds Open University for research and Studies-N*. 21-October, 2010.

literary Arabic and increases his vibrancy and wealth. This refers to the root of the diversity of local dialects due to the Islamic-Arab expansion which at some points affected the standard Arabic language. He said the social, political, geographical and historical explanations for the diversity of dialects. He notes daily life and different contexts for examples from Kufur Yaseef.¹⁴

*** Research Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodology of the study starting from creating the questionnaire of the study to its statistical analysis.

1- The validity of the Questionnaire

The scientist conceived the five scales of the questionnaire; it was strongly unanimous, unequivocal, unclear and firmly accepted. Linguists then analyzed and accepted the analysis as the required method. It was subsequently distributed among the sample randomly selected for the independent variables from the population of the analysis.

Table No. 2 reflects the questionnaire's parts

Table (1)

Number	Scale
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Undecided
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

2- The Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the study was medium and this is suitable to conduct the current study.

*** Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.830	20

*** The Assessment & Analysis**

This section of the researchers analyzed the questionnaire results using the SPSS method. The table below shows the sample distribution in line with the three independent variables (gender, academic level, and place of residence).

¹⁴ Shahata, H. (2018): The Dictionary of the Palestinian- Arab Dialect: Overviews of Barghouthi

Dictionary (Tran.), Dar ALMANDUMAH, retrieved on 20/12/2017.

Table (2)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	92	65.7
Female	48	34.3
Total	140	100.0
The Academic Level		
Sophomore	46	32.9
Junior	36	25.7
Senior	58	41.4
Total	140	100.0
The Place of Residency		
City	56	40.0
Town	58	41.4
Camp	26	18.6
Total	140	100.0

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher used the SPSS system. Therefore, the study needed:

The extraction of the arithmetic mean, the standard deviation and the percentages of each paragraph of the questionnaire.

Equilibrium equation of Cronbach Alpha.

Independent-samples t-test

One-way Anova

The Mean Arithmetic Scores:

If the minimum score of the mean is between 1.5-1, the result then is Not OK. But according to the scores, the result of the scales used in the questionnaire was satisfying especially strongly agree which gained 4.21-5.

Mean	Score
1-1.8	Strongly Disagree
1.81-2.60	Disagree
2.61-3.40	Un decided
3.41-4.20	Agree
4.21-5	Strongly agree

The following table presents the means, standard deviation, percentage, and degree of each paragraph.

No.	Paragraphs	mean	Std. deviation	Percentage	Degree
1.	I feel proud when I speak my local/regional dialect.	4.33	.696	87%	Strongly agree
2.	I consider my pronunciation variety my identity.	4.30	.709	86%	Strongly agree
3.	I feel shy when I use my local variety especially in front of the other sex.	2.34	1.361	47%	Disagree
4.	The local variety is a barrier in front of my future job.	2.49	1.442	50%	Disagree
5.	Adopting an urban variety adds prestigious value to my life.	2.81	1.344	56%	Undecided
6.	Using my local variety limits my job development	2.97	1.262	59%	Undecided
7.	I feel an affiliation to my local variety.	4.11	.826	82%	Agree
8.	I am not sticking to my local variety, on the contrary, I am flexible according to the situations.	3.60	1.134	72%	Agree
9.	I prefer to use one variety to avoid embarrassment.	3.64	1.077	73%	Agree
10.	I use my local variety with my family only.	2.67	1.401	53%	Undecided
11.	People judge me depending on my pronunciation variety.	3.14	1.333	63%	Undecided
12.	The local variety is a part of our culture which must be revived.	4.07	.937	81%	Agree
13.	Using my local variety forms a barrier within the community to which I belong.	2.79	1.307	56%	Undecided
14.	There is compatibility between local variables and other varieties throughout my country.	3.90	1.024	78%	Agree
15.	I feel confident when I talk to a person using the same variety.	4.09	.913	82%	Agree
16.	Using local variety does not give me the chance to express my thoughts fully.	2.77	1.395	55%	Undecided
17.	While using my variety, I find difficulty in delivering my message to people of other varieties.	3.12	1.334	62%	Undecided
18.	There is no interest by the universities in teaching dialects.	3.40	1.172	68%	Undecided
19.	There is a gap between the various Palestinian dialects.	3.60	1.95	72%	Agree
20.	I think local dialects are vanishing because of modernism.	3.51	1.100	70%	Undecided
	Total	3.39	.567	68%	Undecided

The table above demonstrates that the whole Section has come to a strong consensus, agreement, disagreement, strong disagreement with and ambiguity. The following distributed:-

1- The degree was strongly accepted in paragraphs 1 and 2. Paragraph (1) says (I feel proud to speak my local dialect) that the greatest possible means have been obtained (4.33).

2- The agreement was received in paragraphs 7,8,9,12,14,15,19. In the other paragraphs of paragraph No 7, it was mentioned (I feel that I am associated with my local variety) (4.11).

Paragraphs 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20 have received undecided degree. And paragraph No. (10) which says (I use my local variety with my family only.) has received the least means (2.67).

paragraphs 3 and 4 have received a strongly disagree degree. Paragraphs No. (3) which says (I feel shy when I use my local variety especially in front of the other sex.) has received the least means, it reached (2.34).

The total received undecided degree where the means reached (3.39).

As for testing the hypotheses, the researcher found the following:

*** First Hypothesis**

"There is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the Students at AAUP attributed to gender.

Table (3) Independent-samples T-test

Name of part	Dep. variable	No.	Mean	Std. v	t	Sig
Total	Male	45	3.36	.517	-.491	.625
	female	24	3.43	.660		

The previous table indicates to accept the first hypothesis which says "There is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the Students at AAUP attributed to gender because the sig reached (.625) and it larger than ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) so the hypothesis is true.

*** Second Hypothesis**

"There is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the

Students at AAUP attributed to the academic level.

Table (4) One-way Anova

Name of part	Different resource	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	Between Groups	.773	2	.386	1.208	.305
	Within Groups	21.112	66	.320		
	Total	21.885	68			

The previous table indicates to contradict and reject the hypothesis which says " There is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the Students at AAUP attributed to the academic level because the sign reached (.305) and it is more than ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) so the hypothesis is false and rejected.

*** Third Hypothesis**

"There is no statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the Students at AAUP attributed to the place of residency.

Table (5) One-way Anova

Name of part	Different resource	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	Between Groups	1.497	2	.748	2.423	.097
	Within Groups	20.388	66	.309		
	Total	21.885	68			

The previous table indicates to accept the Hypothesis which says " There is a statistically significant difference at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in Linguistic Variation as a Linguistic Identity of the Students at AAUP attributed to the place of residency because the sig reached (.097) and it is more than ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) so we accept the hypothesis.

*** Conclusion**

It is concluded that according to the results of the above discussion:-

1- There is a variation in linguistic identity due to the gender of AAUP students. Males insist on preserving their linguistic identity in different situations, while some students of rural areas use the higher dialects (urban ones). However, rural women abandoned their local dialects with relatives, officers and university workers in any case.

2- The language variance among AAUP students at the academic level is no different. All students at the university from sophomore, junior, and senior are similarly characterized by linguistic variation.

3- There is a difference in the linguistic variation of the students at AAUP attributed to the place of residency. It

means that students who come from the north of Palestine like the Cities of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nablus have their distinct dialect which is originally different from the one of the students who come from the villages and towns of the mentioned directorates. Moreover, these dialects are different from the dialects of students coming from the middle areas like Ramallah and Jericho which in turn differ from the dialects of the south e.g. Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.

4- The first issue, which concerns the degree to which the students retain their linguistic identity, is a relative one. The female students from urban areas want to preserve their dialects at every level in the university and every circumstance. Women who come from rural areas prefer to communicate with urban students linguistically as well as to communicate with the university's teaching staff. As for the male students, the students who come from the urban areas are static without any change, but the students who come from rural areas are also static and preserve their local dialect at all levels even in communicating with the academic staff.

* Recommendation

To avoid the dialectical diaspora which is defined as Moving from one area to a smaller and more remote area is the so-called "dialect diaspora." This situation is found in a few cases in the English-speaking world and has become the subject of investigation by many linguists¹⁵. Therefore, the researcher presents the following recommendations:-

- 1- The researcher proposed the following in conjunction with the above results:
- 2- More research in the same area but with varying topics should be carried out.
- 3- Awareness seminars should be conducted to preserve heritage, especially under what Palestine was subjected to by the Israeli occupation to preserve the inherited dialects of the antecedents.
- 4- Arrange regular visits to villages and cities to understand and register Palestinian culture in particular, whether it is phonetic, phonological or vocabulary variant, the language varieties.

¹⁵ Studying Varieties of English, retrieved from <https://www.uni-due.de/SVE/>.

5- The Ministry of Culture should arrange events and activities recording Palestine's local dialects, such as TV programs.

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