

Language Attitude in Jordan: A Study of Males' Evaluation of Females' Variety Choice

Abdulaziz Alzoubi*

Department of English for Applied Studies, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

Thaer Alkadi

Department of English for Applied Studies, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

Hanan Hamouri

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

Ibrahim Darwish

Department of Translation, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan

Aseel Alyabroudi

Department of English for Applied Studies, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan

Abstract—This study aims at exploring the attitudes of males toward different spoken varieties of Jordanian Arabic when utilized by females. A female speaker delivered three recorded guises in the major spoken varieties of Jordan: urban, Bedouin, and rural. A Matched Guise Test (MGT) and informal interviews were utilized. In the MGT, 402 participants, evenly representing the three spoken varieties, responded to a questionnaire containing 12 statements related to status and solidarity traits. The analysis, employing Multiple-way ANOVA and Wilcoxon nonparametric tests, revealed a consistent pattern: Participants, irrespective of their spoken variety, rated the speaker of the urban guise most favorably and the speaker of the rural guise least favorably in terms of the examined traits. Results from the interview data, based on content analysis, supported the findings from the quantitative part. The observed attitudes are discussed in terms of socio-economic factors such as education and disparities in labor force participation. Additionally, the findings of the study are discussed with reference to themes from the third wave of sociolinguistics, including indexicality, iconicity, and multiplicity of social meanings.

Index Terms—language attitude, indexicality, iconicity, gender stereotypes

I. INTRODUCTION

Attitudes “affect most of our cognitive processes as well as our emotional ones; they dominate important aspects of our social life such as religion, marriage, politics, work and leisure, and they tend to be long-lasting and difficult to change” (Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39). Most of the discussion on language attitude in the context of Jordan does not come from proper attitude studies, rather it is presented as part of sociolinguistic studies of language variation. For example, when several sociolinguistic studies reported women’s preference for innovative linguistic forms and men’s preference for traditional ones (Abdel-Jawad, 1981; Abd-El-Jawad, 1986; Al-Khatib, 1988; anonymized; Al-Wer, 2007, 2020), they attempted to provide explanations for the linguistic behavior of females from a language attitude perspective. Nonetheless, owing to the lack of studies which examined attitude based on gender, this task becomes rather difficult. Accordingly, our study comes to explore gender stereotypes in Jordan by exploring males’ evaluation of females’ language choice.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition and Background

Language attitude has been defined as the “feelings people have about their own language or the language of others” (Crystal, 1997, p. 215); it has also been defined as “any effective, cognitive or behavioral index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties or speakers” (Ryan et al., 1982, p. 7). Moreover, other researchers have defined language attitude as “the linguistic clues that both guide a hearer to a speaker’s group membership and trigger the hearer’s beliefs about the group” (Preston, 2013).

Thus, using a particular linguistic variety reflects social identities and group memberships. Using a specific linguistic form or one variety, according to Garrett et al. (2003, p. 3) “can set off beliefs about a speaker, their group membership,

* Corresponding Author. Email: aaalzoubi@just.edu.jo

and can lead to assumptions about attributes of those members.” Furthermore, it determines people’s responses and attitudes toward each other. Dragojevic et al. (2021, p. 9) argued that “[a]lthough social categorization can be based on any socially diagnostic cue, spoken language often assumes primacy over other cues.” Attitudes toward language or language varieties play an important role in shaping the norms of societies and determining the roles of people in society (Appel & Muysken, 2005).

The study of language attitudes originally began in bilingual contexts. Lambert et al. (1960) developed the MGT to investigate evaluations of French and English amongst both French and English-speaking communities in Canada. The MGT “involves respondents listening to a series of single speaker who read out the same prepared text. The texts differ in one respect only; they are read out in a number of accents” (McKenzie, 2010, p. 46). The unwillingness of people to reveal their prejudices was one of the main factors that led to the development of the MGT (Preston, 2013). Respondents had to evaluate the speaker on a variety of traits using a scale in terms of personality, intelligence, competence, and sociability, without knowing that the guises belonged to the same speaker. Their responses revealed underlying stereotypes based on language attitude. The MGT has become a model for several subsequent studies on language attitude (Preston, 2013).

B. The Language Situation in Jordan

Two main types of Arabic exist side by side in Jordan: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is learned through formal schooling and is used in circumscribed situations. The second type is colloquial Jordanian Arabic, which is naturally acquired (Suleiman, 1985) and reflects a sociologically based grouping of people into sedentary (ḥadari) and Bedouin (badawi) (Palva, 2006). The sedentary dialects are further classified into urban and rural. Several researchers have described Jordan’s early linguistic profile as having rural and Bedouin dialects, but not an urban variety (Cleveland, 1963; Al-Khatib, 1988; Cleveland, 1963).

Soon after the establishment of Jordan in 1921, its population grew fast due to the relative stability it enjoyed and the chances of prosperity it offered. Large numbers of immigrants from Palestine and other neighboring countries settled in the country earlier in the 20th century. These demographic and linguistic changes were pivotal, later, in the process of creating and developing a local urban variety associated with Amman (Abd-El-Jawad, 1986; Al-Wer, 2007, 2020). As the capital of Jordan has become a hub for socioeconomic success and prosperity, its urban variety has also become associated with such values (Abdel-Jawad, 1981; Abd-El-Jawad, 1986; Al-Khatib, 1988). In this context, the urban variety started to achieve the status of a prestigious social variety that is associated with progress and socioeconomic success. Accordingly, adopting the new urban variety in Jordan and the shift from the two originally local varieties to the urban variety have been among the most examined topics in sociolinguistic studies on variation and change.

Studies have presented various competing explanations for the association between females and the urban variety (cf. Abdel-Jawad, 1981; Al-Khatib, 1988; Al-Wer, 2007). As we uncover the societal grounds of these explanations, we argue that situating these explanations within the concepts of social meaning and indexicality may provide a suitable account away from the idea of competing explanations.

C. Studies of Language Attitude in Jordan and Research Questions of the Current Study

Research on language attitude in Jordan has been limited to a few studies. Saidat (2010) used both a questionnaire and interviews, in addition to an observation method, to examine Jordanians’ attitudes toward MSA. He found that MSA was preferred by most participants for being the language of the Quran and literacy. However, a small portion of the participants preferred spoken varieties over MSA because of their simplicity and practicality.

Al-Raba’a (2016) conducted a study to investigate different attitudes of speakers of urban and rural Jordanian Arabic toward the urban and rural varieties. The study included 200 respondents who were university educated, from the same socioeconomic level, from two different regions in the north of Jordan, and from two age groups, over 45 and under 18-25. The study was based on a questionnaire with a scale of 1 to 5 to evaluate both urban and rural varieties in terms of their correctness, pleasantness, and social status. It is important to note that, in this study, respondents did not listen to audio material as in the MGT or VGT; rather, they referred to their sociolinguistic competence in providing evaluations of the varieties examined. The study found that respondents in the older rural group had a more positive attitude toward their own variety in terms of correctness and pleasantness but not in terms of status. Moreover, they did not have reservations about using the urban variety, except when considering it as feminine and soft, and accordingly, not suitable for males. Respondents in the older urban group had more positive attitudes toward their own variety and stronger negative attitudes toward the rural variety. Furthermore, members of the younger rural group rated the urban variety more positively in terms of correctness and pleasantness, but not femininity and simplicity. In contrast, members of the younger urban group rated the urban variety more positively in terms of correctness, pleasantness, and status. Moreover, the consensus was that the rural variety was the variety of uneducated people, and the urban variety was the variety of educated people.

Hussein and El-Ali (1989) conducted a study to explore the attitude of the students at Yarmouk University in Jordan toward MSA and colloquial varieties of Arabic in Jordan (Bedouin, Fallahi and Madani varieties, where the last two referred to as the rural and the urban varieties, respectively). Using the MGT and Osgood semantic differential scale, respondents from urban, Bedouin, and rural backgrounds were asked to evaluate the speaker in the MGT regarding 10 personality traits. Respondents were also asked to decide on the most suitable profession for the speakers in the recorded

guises. MSA was highly ranked in terms of status. The Bedouin variety was ranked the highest in status, followed by Fallahi and Madani. When the results were grouped according to the variety of the respondent, the Bedouin and Madani respondents favored their own variety first, while the Fallahi group favored the Bedouin variety and their own variety, respectively. Finally, most of the participants attributed certain professions to certain varieties, such as shepherds and teachers for Bedouin speakers; engineers, doctors, and lawyers for Madani speakers; and merchants, traders, or businessmen for Fallahi speakers.

While acknowledging that gender is a sensitive social construct, it is pertinent to observe the obvious variations in speech patterns and perceptions between males and females. In contemporary discussions, the topic of gender is complex and multifaceted. However, it remains evident that gendered perspectives influence language attitudes and usage. Unlike previous studies that have approached the topic of language attitude in Jordan, our study focuses on how gender is intertwined with language attitude. Although this topic is often referenced in sociolinguistic studies in Jordan, we cannot find a study dedicated to its examination. Our research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of attitude (positive/negative) do males in Jordan hold towards Jordanian spoken varieties (urban, rural) when produced by females?
2. How far do participants' attitudes depend on their dialect background or the dialect background of the speaker?
3. Which variety is viewed most/least favorably and by whom?

D. Aim and Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore the attitude of Jordanian males from different dialect backgrounds towards the three main varieties of colloquial Jordanian Arabic when used by female speakers. Language attitude studies are important because they allow us to explore the extent to which different identities have emerged or changed in Jordan in response to the demographic, cultural, and linguistic changes that the country has undergone recently.

Conducting a specialized study that focuses on investigating attitudes towards spoken varieties in Jordan when used by females serves four primary objectives. First, our study addresses methodological deficiencies observed in previous sociolinguistic research in Jordan. Many earlier studies incorporated language attitudes within broader investigations into language variation, and those that did examine attitudes towards different spoken varieties in Jordan often relied solely on descriptive statistics. Our study seeks to rectify this methodological gap by providing a thorough examination of attitudes towards different spoken varieties in Jordan by employing rigorous inferential statistical analysis.

Second, prior sociolinguistic studies discussed gender-related linguistic behaviors, such as women's preference towards innovative forms and men's preference for traditional ones. However, these studies did not explicitly delve into the exploration of attitudes based on gender. Our study aims to fill this gap in the literature by specifically investigating attitudes towards different spoken varieties in Jordan, with a focus on the role of gender in shaping these attitudes. We believe that probing attitude by reference to gender allows us to uncover attitude and stereotypes which drive such linguistic preferences and variety choices. Moreover, the topic of gender stereotypes and language attitude is seldom examined in sociolinguistic studies in Jordan. Furthermore, understanding language attitude "allows for fuller understanding of how and why people's attitudes toward language varieties are often translated into attitudes toward, and discrimination against, speakers who use particular varieties" (Schilling-Estes, 2002, p. 18).

Third, focusing on males' attitudes to different spoken varieties when spoken by females in Jordan and connecting these attitudes to gender stereotypes is hoped to bring this topic to scholars' attention in Jordan. We hope our study will contribute to a subsequent discussion on discrimination based on language attitude in Jordan, pinpointing where it most likely unfolds, and subsequently, how to provide intervention plans.

Fourth, our study situates the discussion of its findings within broader and more recent theoretical frameworks, such as those of language variation and change, and third-wave sociolinguistics.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed method that combines a quantitative and qualitative research design. Researchers in the field of language attitude encourage using more than one method for obtaining data to avoid biased results and misinterpretations (Ladegaard, 2000; McKenzie, 2010), enhance certainty, gain broader insights, and provide contextual specificity (Garrett et al., 2003). The exploration of language attitude in this study is largely done quantitatively through the MGT and is supported by qualitative data from interviews that provide rich contextual insights, cross-validate the findings, and offer flexibility in research design.

B. Population and Sample

The premise of this study is that individuals from diverse dialectal backgrounds hold different attitudes towards the three main spoken varieties of Arabic in Jordan. Thus, the study included listeners and interviewees who were native speakers of the three spoken varieties in Jordan: urban, rural, and Bedouin. A total of 402 listeners participated in the MGT part of the study, 134 representing each dialect. An additional 15 participants were interviewed, 5 representing each dialect. We limited participants' recruitment to those from the north of Jordan due to time and logistic considerations. To

recruit participants, we utilized the social network approach, specifically, the friend-of-friend approach, as used by Milroy (1980).

We targeted adult males between the ages 25 and 38. It was our assumption that this age group would provide a coherent category in terms of their sociocultural characteristics. The demographic information obtained from participants showed that there were differences among participants according to their marital status (married, divorced, widowed) and their level of education (high school or higher).

C. Data Collection Procedures

This section outlines the data collection procedure for both instruments used in the study.

(a). *The MGT*

The MGT included a voice recording of a passage performed by one Jordanian female speaker delivered in the three major Jordanian spoken varieties (the urban, the Bedouin and the rural). The theme of the passage was a trip to Petra, an ancient city carved in stone in the south of Jordan. The passage contained linguistic features that phonologically, lexically, or morphologically alternate depending on the variety of Jordanian Arabic used. The three versions of the text were identical in terms of theme. Following Lambert et al. (1960), the authenticity and naturalness of the recorded performances were examined by three native speakers of Jordanian Arabic representing each variety in addition to two Jordanian linguists.

Two additional records (fillers) from different female speakers were included in the MGT. The recordings were presented to listeners in the following order: Guise 1 (Bedouin), filler 1 (rural), Guise 2 (urban), filler 2 (Bedouin), and Guise 3 (rural). By temporally separating voice records, it was more difficult for listeners to recognize that the matched voice recordings were performed by the same speaker. Additionally, the use of such filler recordings is common practice in such experiments (Chakrani, 2010; Lambert et al., 1960; Price et al., 1983).

1. *The Questionnaire*

The MGT questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section was designed to obtain biographic information about the listeners' age, marital status, origin, level of education, and occupation. The second section included 12 statements to be rated on a four-point Likert scale. The scale featured four points: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. A four-point scale rather than a five-point scale was chosen to avoid the potential ambiguity associated with scales with a midpoint, as stated in Oppenheim (1992). The side of the scale towards agreement represented favorability, and towards disagreement represented unfavorability of the traits examined in each statement.

There were two kinds of traits in the statements: solidarity and status. Solidarity traits address a person's socially integrative characteristics that facilitate in-group integration, while status traits are a list of descriptive adjectives that are tightly associated with social mobility (Chakrani, 2010; Garrett, 2010; McKenzie, 2010). Seven solidarity traits were used: polite, attractive, humorous, friendly, beautiful, kind, and sociable, as shown by Cargile and Giles (1998) and Lambert et al. (1960). There were five status traits: modern, educated, intelligent, confident, and ambitious (Garrett, 2010).

2. *Administering the MGT*

The recordings and subsequent questionnaires were delivered to the listeners online. The listeners received a link to the online experiment through social media or personal emails from friends in personal capacity. They were instructed to listen to each voice recording and rate the speaker on each of the statements provided. Participants could not replay the voice records to minimize the effect of attention to the speech samples.

(b). *The Interviews*

Informal interviews were conducted with 15 Jordanian males residing in the northern region of Jordan, aged between 25 and 38. The interviewees were evenly distributed among the three dialect groups (urban, Bedouin, and rural). Individual interviews were carried out and recorded. The primary focus of these interviews was to gather comprehensive information about the interviewees' attitudes towards the various spoken varieties in Jordan, particularly in relation to female speakers. Given the conservative nature of Jordanian society and the fact that all interviewees were male, a male fieldworker was enlisted to conduct the interviews.

D. Pilot Study and Construct Validity and Reliability

Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted to validate the questionnaire and check its reliability. Sixty listeners participated in this pilot study. The sample represented listeners from the urban, rural, and Bedouin varieties, 20 from each dialect background. The responses of the listeners to the attitude questionnaires were statistically analyzed for validity and reliability.

By using construct-related evidence, a questionnaire's validity could be established. The questionnaire items were analyzed using a principal component analysis. For the reliability assessment, we calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each question; the alpha coefficient directly reflects the degree of consistency within each question. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.70 and above indicate good internal consistency. Furthermore, linear regression was used to study the relationship between the scores of each group and favorability ratings, as indicated by the four choices on the Likert scale.

As for the main study, Cronbach’s α was calculated to determine internal consistency and to check the validity and reliability. All Cronbach’s α values were between 0.9321-0.935. Therefore, Cronbach’s α is considered a reliable measure of reliability since all values are higher than 0.7, which is considered a high reliability value.

E. MGT Data Analysis Procedure

The sociodemographic variables were illustrated using descriptive statistics, with counts and percentages for discrete variables and means and standard deviations for continuous variables. We created a total that included the scores for the responses from the 12 statements.

We tested whether there was at least one common factor between statements. We found significant results $\chi^2_{105} = 13121.1$, with a p-value < 0.0001 , indicating a common factor. Item loadings of 0.40 or higher were taken into consideration. The principal component suggested that one factor was needed, meaning that the responses to the solidarity questions were not different from the responses to the solidarity items, hence representing one factor. The results of the principal component analysis with subsequent varimax rotation for questionnaire items are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1
ROTATED FACTOR LOADING

Item	Value	Item	Value
8	0.7736718	5	0.6600571
9	0.7425500	4	0.6076380
11	0.7317123	3	0.6033408
6	0.6926414	10	0.6026902
12	0.6851810	2	0.5673770
7	0.6739882	1	0.5325411

The total from the 12 statements was checked using a Q-Q plot and was found to have a normal distribution. A multiple-way ANOVA was used to determine the variables that affected the total. The Tukey–Kramer test was then applied to find significant pairwise comparisons. A t-test was used for pairwise comparisons when the variable had two levels. All analyses were performed using SAS Institute Inc.'s JMP software (SAS Institute Inc., 2020) with a confidence interval of $\alpha = 0.05$.

F. Interview Data Analysis Procedure

Content analysis was employed in analyzing the interview data. Recurring topics were identified and reported under the results section. They were also utilized in supporting discussion of results from the MGT part.

IV. RESULTS

This section provides the findings obtained from the MGT, delineating the results of the statistical tests applied to address the research questions. Furthermore, it presents the main themes derived from the examination of the interview data through content analysis.

A. Descriptive Statistics of MGT Data

Several variables were included in the sampling of listeners for the study. First, the age variable was divided into two categories: Group one, the younger group, included participants between the ages of 25-30, with 210 respondents (52%) in this group. The second age group included participants between 30-38, with 194 respondents (48%) in this group. Second, for marital status, the unmarried group had the most respondents 280 (70%), followed by married, widowed, and divorced respondents 109 (30%). Third, as for the educational background, most respondents, 308 (76%), completed a bachelor's degree, while those with higher education, two-year diploma, or high school were 49 (12%), 18 (1%), and 29 (1%), respectively. In addition, the same dialect background classification applies to both listeners and speakers. There were three dialect groups for listeners and speakers (urban, rural, and Bedouin). The distribution of listeners according to their dialect backgrounds was 134, 137, and 133 from urban, rural, and Bedouin, respectively. The means and standard deviations of the statement responses were calculated and listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2
RESPONSES MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Statements	Mean \pm SD	Statements	Mean \pm SD
The speaker is modern.	2.6 \pm 0.75	The speaker is beautiful.	2.7 \pm 0.68
The speaker is polite.	2.9 \pm 0.64	The speaker is intelligent.	2.7 \pm 0.69
The speaker is educated.	2.9 \pm 0.71	The speaker is ambitious.	2.8 \pm 0.7
The speaker is attractive.	2.6 \pm 0.81	The speaker is confident.	2.9 \pm 0.7
The speaker is humorous.	2.7 \pm 0.72	The speaker is kind.	2.8 \pm 0.64
The speaker is friendly.	2.8 \pm 0.69	The speaker is sociable.	2.8 \pm 0.66
Total Mean \pm SD			
33.1 \pm 6.2			

B. Inferential Statistics of MGT Data

This section presents the results of running inferential statistical tests on the data to answer the three questions of the study. A significant multiple-way ANOVA model was detected ($F_{10,1201}=29.4$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.0001$). Table 3 presents the results of the effect test and shows a significant effect of age, marital status, and the interaction of dialect of listener by dialect of speaker. Table 4 presents the pairwise comparisons for the interaction between dialect of listener by dialect of speaker. These tests help answer the study's questions. First, they answer the first research question by showing that participants had different attitudes towards the three guises. Next, they address the second research question by revealing that these attitudes were influenced by both the speaker's dialect and the listener's dialect. Finally, the test results establish a ranking of how participants evaluated the guises, answering the third question.

TABLE 3
EFFECT TESTS

Source	Prob > F
Age	0.0001*
Dialect of listener	0.7765
Marital status	0.0151*
Dialect of speaker	<.0001
Dialect of listener by dialect of speaker	0.0008*

*The asterisk indicates a significant effect of the variable.

TABLE 4
DIALECT OF LISTENER BY DIALECT OF SPEAKER USING TUKEY HSD

Level	Level	Difference	p-value
L.B.,S.U.*	L.B.,S.R.	7.291045	<.0001*
L.B.,S.B.	L.B.,S.R.	6.708955	<.0001*
L.U.,S.U.	L.U.,S.R.	6.473684	<.0001*
L.U.,S.B.	L.U.,S.R.	4.157895	<.0001*
L.R.,S.U.	L.R.,S.R.	4.029197	<.0001*
L.R.,S.B.	L.R.,S.R.	3.897810	<.0001*
L.U.,S.U.	L.U.,S.B.	2.315789	0.0220*

*Legend: L: listener; S: speaker; B: Bedouin; R: rural; U: urban

Pairwise comparisons for age and marital status showed that the younger group (25-30) and the married group gave higher scores to the questionnaire items than the older group (30-38), and the married group ($p\text{-value} < 0.0001$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.0151$) respectively.

C. Results From the Interview Data

A major theme uncovered through content analysis of the interview data shows that there exists a prevailing stereotype that females' speech is expected to show softness to reflect femininity, while males' speech is anticipated to convey toughness and strictness to embody masculinity.

The analysis of the interview data shows that the urban variety is commonly associated with positive attributes such as being perceived as 'civilized', 'modern', and promoting clear communication. The rural and Bedouin varieties are viewed favorably when discussed independently of gender associations. The Rural variety is perceived as commonplace, straightforward, and strict, while the Bedouin variety is hailed for embodying Jordanian authenticity and dignity, being viewed as powerful and meaningful.

Significantly, the urban variety takes on a nuanced connotation when associated with females; it is often perceived as a manifestation of femininity and softness due to its modern, simple, understandable, gentle, moderate, easy, and inclusive characteristics, as noted by the interviewees. In contrast, the rural and Bedouin varieties are predominantly associated with males. Positive traits attributed to urban females, such as modernity, kindness, beauty, advanced thinking, and high awareness, sharply contrast with the negative perceptions of rural or Bedouin females as old-fashioned and coarse. Some interviewees expressed the belief that even if females use the rural or Bedouin varieties at home, they should refrain from using them in the workplace or in public settings and use the urban variety instead.

In conclusion, the interview results strongly align with the outcomes of the MGT, indicating a positive inclination among participants from all dialect groups toward the urban variety, particularly when associated with females. Conversely, the rural and Bedouin varieties are linked with males, and when associated with females, they are generally rated negatively.

V. DISCUSSION

The study examined how the evaluation scores given by listeners could be dependent on the dialect background of the listener and/or the dialect in which the guises were performed. Main effects were found for the age and marital status of listeners on the scores; younger and married groups provided higher rating scores for the questionnaire items. These two patterns require further investigation, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Statistical analysis demonstrated a significant effect of the interaction 'dialect of listener by dialect of speaker,' as shown in Table 3. The pairwise comparison in Table 4 shows that the urban and rural listener groups rated the urban

guise's speaker (henceforth, UGS) more favorably in comparison with their rating of the Bedouin guise's speaker (henceforth, BGS) and the rural guise's speaker (henceforth, RGS), which came second and third, respectively. The Bedouin listener group rated the UGS more favorably than the RGS and the BGS more favorably than the RGS. The difference in how Bedouin listeners rated the UGS in relation to the BGS did not reach significance.

In summary, listeners from the three dialect groups consistently rated the UGS more favorably than the RGS, and the BGS more favorably than the RGS. In this study, higher scores indicated a greater degree of favoring in terms of status/solidarity traits. Therefore, listeners from the three dialect groups, excluding the Bedouin group concerning the UGS, demonstrated a preference for the UGS, followed by the BGS, and the RGS, in order.

We found that the use of the urban variety by females was associated with higher status, prestige, and power on one hand, and with solidarity and pleasantness on the other, more so than the two other varieties. Listeners from urban and rural dialect backgrounds perceived the UGS to be more modern, educated, intelligent, confident, and ambitious on one hand, and more polite, attractive, humorous, friendly, beautiful, kind, and sociable than the BGS and the RGS. Bedouin listeners also rated the UGS more favorably than the RGS.

The findings from the interviews corroborated the results obtained from the analysis of the MGT's responses. Interviewees from the three dialect groups chose the urban variety as the most beautiful for females. They justified their opinion by describing the urban variety as modern, simple, understandable, gentle, moderate, easy, and inclusive.

Our results align with those reported by Hussein (1980), which were solely based on ethnographic interviews, revealing the same hierarchy of favorability. It is important to discuss the findings from language attitudes studies in relation to studies on language variation and change, as attitudes "may be seen in terms of input and output, completing a cycle of influence between language variation and social cognition" (Garrett et al., 2003). In this regard, our results echo the findings of several sociolinguistic variation studies in Jordan where females from different dialect backgrounds were observed to use features of the urban variety more frequently than males (Abdel-Jawad, 1981; Abd-El-Jawad, 1986; Al-Khatib, 1988; Al-Wer, 2007, 2020; anonymized).

A. Gender, Education and Disparity in Socio-Economic Opportunities

One of the widespread cultural stereotypes about the urban variety is its association with socioeconomic success. This stereotype is intertwined with gender in complex ways. It is a documented fact that socioeconomic opportunities are not equal among gender groups in Jordan. Jordanian females' participation in the labor market is one of the lowest worldwide (Kaasolu et al., 2019), standing below 15 % for females compared to 60% for males (International Labor Office, 2018). Jordanian females are mostly homemakers (Peebles et al., 2007).

The association between local linguistic forms (rural and Bedouin) and masculinity was a main result of the exclusion of women from participating in the public sector and the government (Al-Wer & Herin, 2011). During these early years of modern Jordan, women did not enjoy as much power as men due to their social exclusion from participation in the public sector and politics. As a result, women sought to accumulate symbols of prestige and power by adopting features of speech associated with the major urban centers in the Levant and the newly shaped local urban variety (Al-Wer & Herin, 2011). In doing so, they asserted their status. On the other hand, men found an incentive to use features of the originally local spoken varieties or MSA (Abdel-Jawad, 1981), where the use of these features signified national identity, covert prestige, and political power. As the country witnessed a period of social and political stability, in the 1980s and the 1990s, more jobs in the private sector were created, where the emerging urban variety thrived as a regional prestigious variety or a prestigious social variety (Al-Wer & Herin, 2011). Consequently, an association between ambitious mobile young people and the use of the urban variety has been established. In their effort to sound prestigious, socioeconomically mobile, and modern, females from different dialect backgrounds have been found to be leading the change towards the urban variety in Jordan as seen in different variationist sociolinguistic studies in Jordan.

Today, there is increasing pressure for females to participate in the labor market. This pressure comes from the changing social roles of females from the traditional role of homemakers and housewives to that of breadwinners, side by side by males. More young males planning to start a family are searching for university-educated young females as life partners. Males are motivated by the idea that females with higher education have better chances of finding a job in the public sector, where highly educated women receive higher wages than those in the private sector (Kaasolu et al., 2019). Females with a low level of education do not look for work because opportunity costs are not worth their while (Kaasolu et al., 2019). This explains why highly educated females represent the largest category of females who hold jobs, based on the analysis presented by Kaasolu et al. (2019). Peebles et al. (2007, p. 17) elaborated on females' education and employment "the higher their education, the more likely they will be economically active and work outside the home".

The presence of the stereotypes associating socioeconomic success, modernity, prestige, and femininity with the urban variety may be a force that is steering language choice for females. This reasoning is compelling when we take the stance that "attitudes to language varieties underpin all manner of sociolinguistic and social psychological phenomena" (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 12). Thus, we argue that females who want to project an image of potential socioeconomic success about themselves may be incentivized by the extant language attitudes and stereotypes to switch to the urban variety. Accordingly, language attitude towards the different varieties spoken in Jordan seems to be one of the forces behind language variation and change.

B. Explaining Language Attitude by Reference to Overt Prestige, Stigma, and Covert Prestige

Language attitude-related concepts such as prestige and stigma have been utilized in explaining the fact that language change in Jordan takes place away from the rural and Bedouin varieties towards the urban variety. Urban varieties have been found in different cultures and settings to be associated with greater prestige than rural varieties. To this effect Ech-Charfi and Azzouzi (2017, p. 150) argue, “Western and non-Western, all seem to converge on the fact that urban varieties are considered as more prestigious than rural ones.” Thus, the finding that the UGS received higher favorability scores than the BGS and RGS is in agreement with the common trend observed in other cultures.

The BGS was favored over the RGS by all listener groups, including the rural group. This could be explained by the favorable status the Bedouin variety enjoys in Jordan, both among its members and among members from other groups. It has been reported that the Bedouin speech community in Jordan is more conservative in the process of language innovation and change and more loyal, as a cultural and linguistic group, to their linguistic norms than the rural speech community (Abdel-Jawad, 1981). Favorable attitudes towards the Bedouin dialect were also confirmed by Hussein and El-Ali (1989) where the Bedouin variety was rated more positively by listeners from the three dialect groups than the urban and rural varieties in Jordan. Positive sentiments towards the Bedouin identity were documented in Ech-Charfi (2020, p. 68) who argued that “the Bedouin, besides being the original inhabitants of Jordan[sic.], find pride in their traditions, and their tribal organization as a source of power for them.” The association between the Bedouin variety and concepts of authenticity and national identity is demonstrated in the rise of national songs – a genre of songs that enkindle pride in the Jordanian identity and the Jordanian army and police- that are performed either in the Bedouin or rural varieties, but never, as far as we know, in the urban variety. Thus, these values might be important factors for why the BGS was rated higher than the RGS.

On the other hand, the rural variety has been reported to be associated with stigma and negative evaluation. This stigma is not only held by speakers of other varieties towards the rural variety; it is also held by members of the rural group themselves as seen in the results from the MGT. Results from interview data support this self-stigmatization analysis where members of the rural group indicated that their variety is not appropriate outside of the home domain. Two urban interviewees maintained that females should not use Bedouin or rural varieties in the workplace because such places require the use of a ‘civilized’ or a ‘common’ variety such as the urban variety. Moreover, one Bedouin interviewee contended that the rural and Bedouin varieties are only suitable at home and with the family, while outside these circles the urban variety is expected. Similar results were reported by Hussein and El-Ali (1989), where the Bedouin and the Madani (urban) respondents favored their own variety first, while the Fallahi (rural) respondents favored the Bedouin then their own variety. Accordingly, we argue that in addition to the negative evaluation of the rural variety by others, there is a powerful force of self-stigmatization among the rural group itself that is not witnessed among other groups.

Relevant to this self-stigmatization are ideas of pride in group membership; while values of group identity and group affiliation seem too strong among the Bedouin group, they seem to be not as strong among members of the rural group. Similar finding has been reported in Ech-Charfi (2020, p. 68) who contended that “[t]his identification with the group seems to be stronger among the Bedouin group and less among the rural”.

Nevertheless, the rural variety is seen in Jordan as a variety associated with values of toughness and masculinity when its usage relates to males. It is no surprise that most interviewees maintained that females should use a soft and gentle variety that reflects their femininity and modernity like the urban variety, while males should use a variety that reflects their masculinity and toughness like the rural and Bedouin varieties.

The fact that some interviewees pointed to the suitability of rural and Bedouin varieties in the home domain indicates that these varieties are valued in the family domain due to their association with their group identity. Labov (1978) introduced the concept of covert prestige which accounts for how forms associated with low-status groups thrive and continue to exist. This kind of prestige is crucial to group identity and survival.

Reconciling Different Explanations

Research in third-wave sociolinguistics emphasizes the idea that different social meanings can be inferred from the use of certain linguistic forms. Discussing language attitude by reference to concepts of indexicality and multiplicity of social meanings could provide a solution to the seemingly contending explanations of attitudes towards different varieties in Jordan when used by females. Thus, values of prestige, pride in group identity, femininity versus masculinity, and stigma all seem to be possible explanations for the different attitudes observed.

It is argued that individuals pay attention to different aspects of language because of their differing experiences (Hay et al., 2006). Additionally, language users make inferences about stance, persona, or other social types related to class, ethnicity, and gender (Moore & Podesva, 2009). Thus, identifying the exact social meaning – from the host of social meanings a sign may be connected with is a function of an interpretative process that is ideologically mediated (Hall-Lew et al., 2021). Consequently, we argue that there needn’t be only one explanation for the favorable attitude towards the UGS, and for the less favorable or negative attitude towards the BGS and RGS.

Explaining the different language attitudes observed in the study is better achieved by exploring cultural groups whose varieties are examined and their attributes in social cognition. This line of reasoning is necessary since “people’s reactions to language varieties reveal much of their perception of the speakers of these varieties” (Edwards, 1982, p. 20). A basic assumption of studies on language attitude is that people use linguistic information to assign speakers to identifiable social groups. This linkage between the linguistic features of the variety spoken by a group and the group’s attributes has been described as iconicity by Irvine (2002). Certain attributes of a group are transferred to the linguistic features associated

with it, where the presence of these linguistic features may bring up these attributes in an automatic or subconscious manner (Irvine, 2002). Taking this approach to explaining the different attitudes observed here or described in the literature allows for a multiplicity of social meanings to be possible.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that male Jordanian participants, hailing from diverse dialectal backgrounds, distinctly favor the urban Jordanian variety over Bedouin and rural varieties when used by female speakers. The preference for the urban variety can be ascribed to a various historical, linguistic, and social factor. Firstly, due to Jordan's historical absence of a linguistic metropolis, the urban dialect has frequently been associated with linguistic metropolises in neighboring regions, such as Syria and Palestine. These well-established linguistic metropolises have consistently enjoyed cultural and linguistic prestige in the Levant. Thus, it is reasonable to assert that the participants' manifested preference for the urban dialect is influenced by social and linguistic prestige in the Levant. Secondly, with substantial shifts in gender roles in Jordan over the past few decades, females are no longer confined to traditional homemaking roles; they have emerged as breadwinners, working and residing in urban centers or commuting daily to and from them. This social and linguistic contact has undeniably shaped the way females in Jordan speak as they strive to compete in a labor market characterized by the burgeoning urban metropolis in Amman. This Ammani urban dialect has been diffusing to other urban centers in Jordan over the past few decades. Males in Jordan have not been immune to these social and linguistic influences and may now perceive females with urban dialects not only as prestigious but also as socially and economically powerful speakers. Despite substantial shifts in gender roles in Jordan, the results unfortunately suggest that Jordanian males continue associate gender stereotypes with linguistic behavior.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire Jordanian society since the sample is limited to the north of Jordan. Moreover, we believe that research on the topic of language attitude and gender in Jordan is still in its infancy; therefore, future research should investigate language attitude in specific domains or communities of practice. Such studies could be useful in revealing the power dynamics between gender groups in Jordan and how discrimination based on language attitude may unfold.

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Abdulaziz Alzoubi is currently an Assistant Professor and the Head of the Department of English for Applied Studies at Jordan University of Science and Technology. He holds a PhD and an MA in Linguistics from the University of Utah, USA. His research interests include language variation and change, language maintenance and shift, sociophonetics.

Thaer Alkadi is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of English for Applied Studies at Jordan University of Science and Technology. He holds a PhD from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA. His research interests lie in literary theory and language and culture.

Hanan Hamouri is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Jordan University of Science and Technology. She holds a PhD in Biostatistics from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research interests include biostatistics and data analysis.

Ibrahim Darwish is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Translation at Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan. He holds a PhD from the University of Essex, United Kingdom, Colchester. His research interests are in Linguistics and Translation Studies.

Aseel Alyabroudi is a graduate student in linguistics at Jordan University of Science and Technology. Her research interest lies in sociolinguistics.