

Attitudes Towards Language Variation in Tlemcen Speech Community¹

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This paper intends to look at the relationship between language and society from a social-psychological perspective, a line of exploration that has been of considerable importance to sociolinguistics. Indeed, people's attitudes towards a language variety reflect their views about the users of that variety, and the observation of their reactions can help us understand the association between social stereotypes and ways of speaking, as well as the resulting impact on their own linguistic behaviour. Based on an indirect technique of eliciting the attitudes of a number of respondents in the speech community of Tlemcen, our investigation reveals interesting results as to their reactions to the two high status languages, MSA and French, on the one hand, and the two low varieties co-existing in the community, Tlemcen speech and a rural form of Arabic.

¹ Excerpt from Dendane (2006), an unpublished Doctorate Thesis, *Sociolinguistic Variation and Attitudes towards Language Behaviour in an Algerian Context: The Case of Tlemcen Arabic*. Univ. of Oran.

1. Introduction

Interesting findings in social psychology have contributed to understanding sociolinguistic phenomena, as demonstrated, for example, by Lambert (1967) and his associates with regard to attitudes towards language use. While sociolinguistics *per se* deals with speech variation and language change as a whole both on macro- and micro-levels, social psychologists have focussed on the dynamics of cognitive representation of language as a social phenomenon: the basic aim in this research area is to examine people's subjective reactions to language variation and their social judgements of a speaker's pronunciation or lexis, for example. What is crucially interesting about people's evaluations of language varieties is that, in spite of the linguistic demonstrations that languages as such cannot be described in terms of 'good' or 'bad', 'correct' or 'incorrect', they suggest intrinsic linguistic inferiorities or superiorities, and thus they view them as prestigious or low in status. Research in language attitudes has clearly shown that speakers' judgements of language varieties in terms of prestige and quality reflect the social connotations associated with these varieties, and hence the necessary alliance between sociolinguistics and social psychology of language. The social psychological perspective and its principles have contributed, and still contribute, to a large extent, to the development of a broad sociolinguistic theory. But in turn sociolinguistic findings have also fruitfully enhanced the social psychological theory of language attitudes.

One crucial aspect of the complexity of the linguistic situation in Algeria is reflected in a formal-informal

‘complex’ which is far from being equivalent to the standard-with-dialect dimension prevailing in the western world. Indeed, due to the socio-historical great events which led to the establishment of Islam in the country along with the introduction of Arabic more than ten centuries ago, and then, many centuries later, to the enforcement of French and its deep-rootedness resulting in societal bilingualism, two language systems, in a twofold relation to the native tongue(s), are in continual competition as far as prestige is concerned:

a) the High variety, with its ‘dual standard’ CA/MSA, gains its prestige from its being the language of the Qur’ān and the whole bulk of religious and literary works, the language of the Arab nation, and, today, the language of education and the media;

b) Standard French too is regarded as prestigious for its association with education, especially in technical and scientific domains, and for the role it plays in economic sectors and transactional relations, but also for its consideration by many as a symbol of modernity and global communication.

Both languages thus are felt to have high status in the Algerian society, though we may at times attest confrontational opinions related to cultural and ideological orientations, particularly among those educated ‘franco-phones’ as opposed to ‘arabophones’. Algerian Arabic, on the other hand, the mother tongue of most Algerians, has no overt prestige though it is the language of solidarity and national identity.

On the grounds of such multi-dimensional linguistic configuration characterizing the speech community of Tlemcen, and following Lambert’s model (1960, 1967)

of language attitudes elicitation, we have set out to observe the reactions of a number of youngsters towards the language varieties at play.

By making use of linguistic variation involving the two high-status languages, MSA and French, and the two low Arabic varieties (TA and a rural form of Arabic used in the community, RA hereafter) existing side by side in the speech community of Tlemcen, we have attempted to explore reactions to people's linguistic behaviour and to elicit stereotyped subjective impressions and biased views held about representatives of the different languages and language varieties.

2. Reactions to Language Varieties

- The investigation

The procedure, as used in Lambert *et al.* (1960), intends to carry out, by means of the matched-guise technique, an assessment of the language attitudes displayed by 50 young students aged between 18 and 23.

The aim of the experiment is to elicit the informants' reactions to the forms of speech tape-recorded by a single speaker in four different 'guises' representing the four varieties commonly heard in the community. The speaker happened to be a man, but it would be interesting to carry out the same experiment with a woman; for, a female speaker would certainly bring about different reactions as gender in itself is a social stereotype. The informants, here called judges for the matter, were asked to evaluate the *four* speakers on a number of dimensions; it was four *guises*, in fact, but the judges thought they were listening to four *real* persons, and we are almost certain that they

did not guess they heard only one. Performed perfectly well (as if each of the fictitious four speakers was using his own natural way of speaking), the same passage was read in the four varieties, and the whole was played twice in the order: 1: Tlemcen Arabic; 2: Rural Arabic; 3: MSA; 4: TA/French. As the judges were students of English in the Department of Foreign Languages, we have decided to compose the questionnaire in English. We believe that the neutrality of English for the experiment helped to avoid all bias as to the varieties to be evaluated. The questionnaire sheets were handed out after the first playing of the tape; then, after giving some explanations about how to fill them in, we played the recording a second time and gave enough time for the filling in.

- The text

The one-minute passage was read at a natural speed rate (less than five minutes were taken to read it in the four guises). We have composed the text so that there would be no emotion felt by the listeners which would have diverted them from the aim of the test. The only problem we had was with the third guise which was characterized by a kind of incongruity as an everyday event was related in MSA. In his study of Moroccans' reactions to the use of Arabic and French, Bentahila (1983:96) says in this respect:

A case where such incongruity might arise is where the varieties being compared are the high and low varieties of a diglossic situation, as is the case with Classical and Colloquial Arabic.

In fact, we noticed that during the MSA guise performance, our students could not help expressing amusement when they heard, for instance, [la: ta Xa:fi: ja: ?umma:h] ‘Don’t worry Mother, don’t worry’, an utterance we would never hear in everyday settings. But the aim of including the High variety in the test was precisely to elicit the informants’ reaction to it as opposed to AA.

As for the two AA guises (TA then RA), they naturally included a few French borrowings, which is commonplace in Algerian speech. But the fourth guise consisted of considerable code-switching between Tlemcen Arabic and a type of French that is closer to the Standard form used in France. We know of course that our students understand French to a large extent, just like many Algerians, especially those exposed to it in school, on TV, etc. However, as examined in a previous work, not all of the respondents have a good command of French in terms of production.

- The results

Before exposing the results which reveal the students’ reactions to the passage they heard, a few methodological points have to be made:

- The questionnaire administered is in the form of the ‘semantic differential’ proposed in Osgood *et al.* (1957)²: i.e., relevant adjectives describing the variety and the speaker are presented at both ends of a seven-point scale ranging from one extreme to the other, that is, from what is socially regarded as positive to negative (e.g. *rich* ...

² Mentioned in Ryan and Giles 1982.

poor); and thus, the seven points on the scale are given scores, from 6 on the left (positive) to zero on the right.

- On each characteristic of the variety or trait of the speaker, proposed to the judges for evaluation, the results are computed and overall percentages are obtained for each 'speaker' and compared.

- For an overall observation of the results, the tables and graphs show the evaluations of the whole group of judges on three dimensions: evaluation of the variety, the speakers' personalities, and then the job that would better suit them.

- But, to obtain contrasting attitudes, we have then split up the 50 judges' rating sheets into two separate groups on a personal background basis: 30% native speakers, and 70% non-TA speakers (information provided by the students). The contrast between TA users and RA users being a central aspect of our investigation in the community, the reactions of the two groups of judges (natives vs. non-natives) are contrasted so that we can observe the extent to which the members of each group favour or disfavour their own variety.

- A final direct question is addressed to the judges themselves: it aims at exploring the likeability of one variety through the degree to which they would like to resemble one speaker or another.

- Deeper insights into language attitudes would have been achieved from the gender differentiation perspective had we used a female speaker in the various guises; but we did not have the opportunity to verify such assumption because we did not find a woman to carry out the experiment.

3. Evaluative reactions to the speaker's variety

The first test consists of a table to fill in about the language variety that each guise-speaker uses and on each of the five traits proposed: *pleasantness, status, urbanity, clarity, and manliness*. Our decision in selecting the four 'guises' using TA, RA, MSA and TA/French is based on our assumption – as a native speaker aware of the dynamic and often confrontational relationships between the varieties used in the speech community – that the judges are potentially sensitive to these varieties and hold stereotyped impressions of the groups that use them. The five characteristics chosen are intended precisely to elicit such impressions. Consider the tables below and the corresponding graphs:

- Pleasantness

Table 1.

How pleasant do you find each variety?

		Pleasant ----- Unpleasant						
N= 50	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	
TA	17	6	8	13	5	0	1	
RA	3	4	4	10	13	3	13	
MSA	13	9	7	6	6	5	4	
TA/Fr	19	12	10	8	1	0	0	

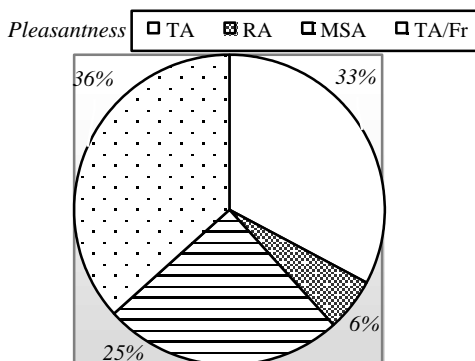


Fig. 1. Students' evaluation of pleasantness.

The results obtained and the overall configuration of the above pie-chart reveal that, in spite of the higher number of non-TA judges (35 out of 50), the urban varieties, TA mixed with French and then TA, are viewed as the most pleasant, while MSA is valued slightly lower (25%). In contrast, the rural variety is perceived as much less pleasing and only reaches a 6% overall percentage.

Combining the scores obtained on this attribute by assigning values from 6 to zero for each of the four varieties, the following pie-charts compare the results in a 'pleasantness degree' so as to show the contrasting views of TA judges as opposed to non-TA judges:

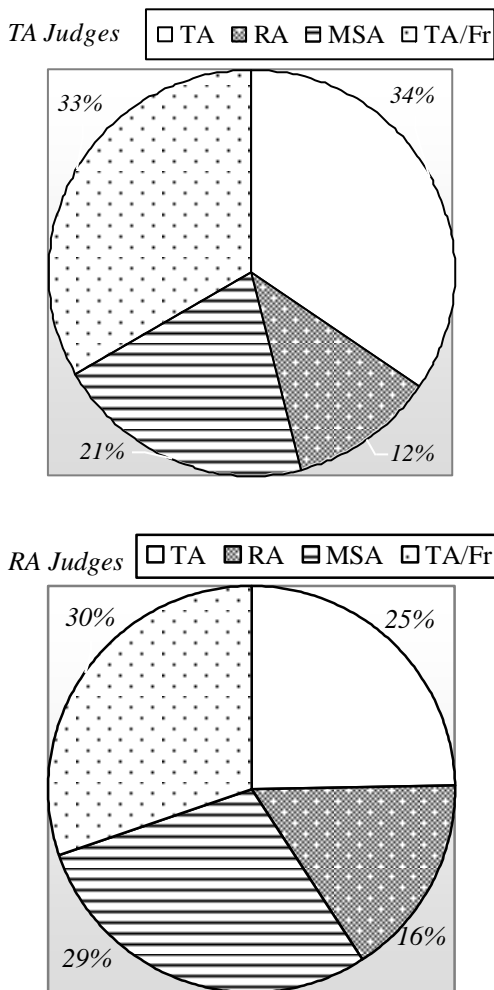


Fig. 2. - a. TA ratings of pleasantness. - b. RA ratings of pleasantness.

The TA judges' reactions to the varieties show clearly that they favour TA first, their own vernacular, then TA heavily mixed with French. MSA, too, is viewed

as quite pleasant (21%); but they consider RA as much less pleasing. What is surprising is that the rural speech users rate their own variety as quite unpleasant as opposed to TA which they themselves value unexpectedly better than theirs (25% for TA vs.16%). The RA judges also clearly favour TA/French more or less to the same degree as their counterpart, but they perceive MSA as more pleasant than do TA speakers (30% and 29% respectively).

The graph below, taken from Fig. 2 above, highlights the two groups' reactions to rural speech as opposed to the adding up of TA in its two forms, i.e., TA + TA/Fr.

This clearly shows higher scores for TA, not only on the part of the natives – which is predictable though Tlemcen speakers on the whole often avoid using their vernacular – but also in the reactions of the non-native speakers who unexpectedly devalue their own variety.

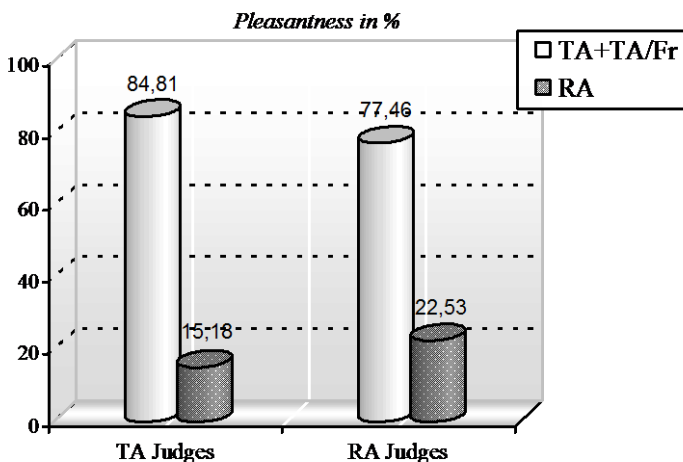


Fig. 3. Judges' ratings of Pleasantness: Tlemcen speech vs. RA, in %

Such attitude leads us to raise a few questions: If the non-TA speakers living in Tlemcen evaluate TA as more pleasing than their own speech, why don't they accommodate their way of speaking to that of TA speakers? And, what is more, why do they persist in mocking at Tlemcen speech to the extent that many of its characteristics have become strongly stigmatised, the glottal stop in particular?

Mention should be made here again that, in this investigation that follows Lambert's matched-guise technique, our intention is to elicit reactions to a language or a language variety as a whole, but it is crystal-clear that it is mostly the phonological opposition (?):[?~g] (as in [?→lli], 'He told me', as opposed to the widespread form [g→lli]) which makes Tlemcen speech an idiosyncratic variety in Arabic-speaking Algeria. Tlemcen speakers are indeed often labelled as "those who speak 'with' ?a".

We shall try to put forward some tentative answers to the questions above and to other issues after considering attitudes and reactions towards other attributes.

- Status

Status in relation to language has been considered as an essential factor in sociolinguistics, for because of its association with power and prestige, it allows the ranking of different language varieties in a society in hierarchical terms. Language status arises mostly from the functions it is associated with.

In our context, it is MSA, the High variety, which enjoys high status and is used in education, in the written form and formal settings. But, French too enjoys its share of status as it is regarded as a language of modernity and

technological advancement. On the basis of these considerations, we have decided to include the language status attribute in our attitudinal investigation to see how these two languages are viewed by people in contrast with the two low varieties, TA and RA, used in the community. Consider the following.

Table 2. How do you consider the status of each variety?

High ----- Low

N= 50	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TA	3	7	16	13	8	3	0
RA	1	4	4	9	18	5	9
MSA	9	7	6	12	5	4	7
TA/Fr	19	11	9	9	2	0	0

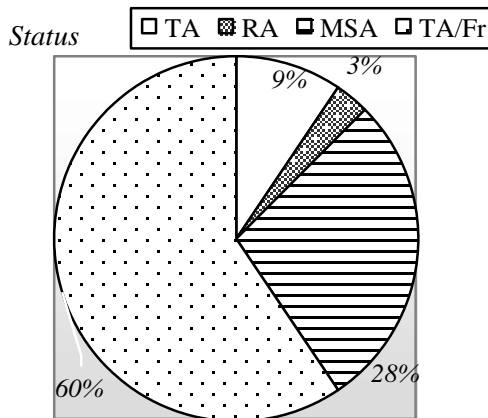
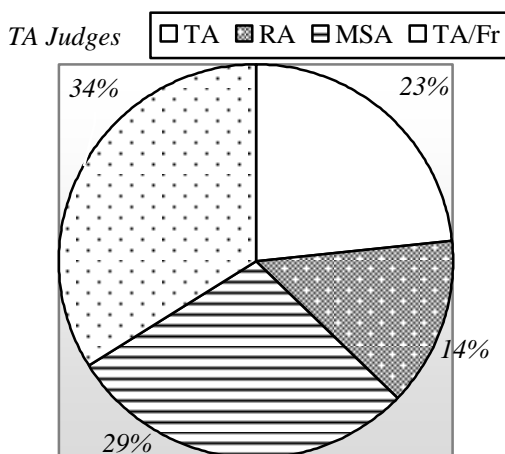


Fig. 4. Students' evaluation of status.

As expected, the overall scores show that TA/Fr is perceived as much higher in status, not because of TA, but most likely because of extensive use of French which, as mentioned above, still enjoys prestige in the Algerian society as a whole. Then, MSA receives quite high scores in contrast with TA alone and RA.

Considering again the results from the perspective of the two groups, we have obtained quite similar scores as those above.



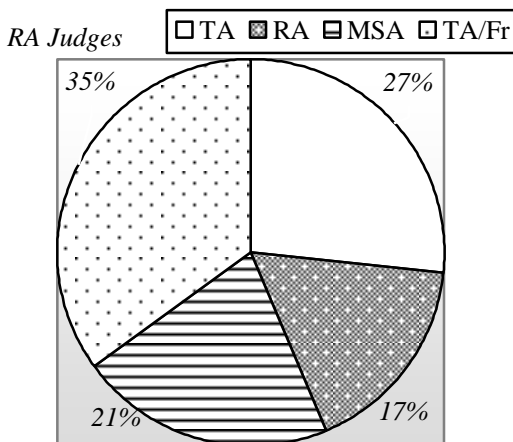


Fig. 5. - a. TA ratings of status. - b. RA ratings of status.

And, interestingly, a strikingly downgrading of RA by RA judges, more than that of the trait of pleasantness appears here with, at the same time, higher status scores for TA, especially when combined with TA/Fr as shown in the graph below:

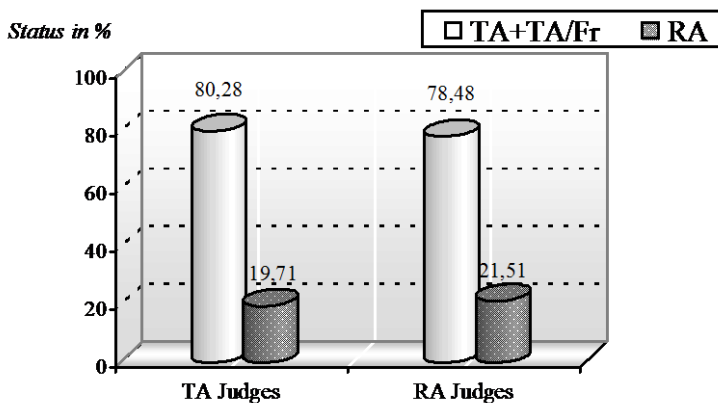


Fig. 6. Judges' ratings of status: Tlemcen speech vs. RA.

- Urbanity

The results obtained on the aspect of urbanity seem to match the reality, as very few judges perceive RA as having reached a certain degree of ‘refinement’, in spite of its long co-existence with the established urban variety of Tlemcen. Is this a reflection of loyalty and solidarity displayed both by TA and RA judges to their respective language varieties?

Table 3. Which variety do you think is ‘more urban’?

	Urban -----Rural						
N= 50	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TA	25	12	8	4	0	0	0
RA	2	1	5	5	5	11	21
MSA	9	11	5	5	3	3	14
TA/Fr	27	9	6	6	2	0	0

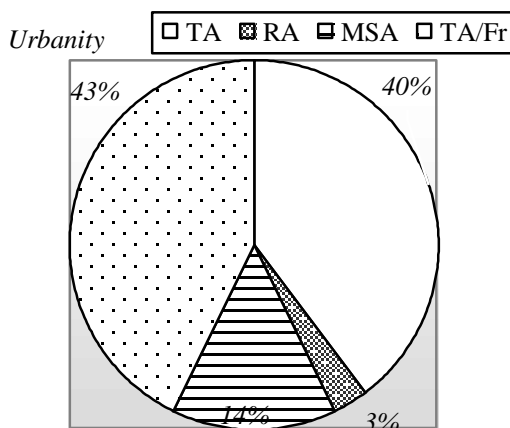


Fig. 7. Students' evaluation of urbanity.

The only explanation we can provide about the students' reactions is that the influence exerted by TA on rural speech users is very weak and only noticeable in the use of a few lexical TA items, such as [w→s★m] 'What?', or [f→j★n] 'Where?', instead of the rural forms [wa♦ta] and [wi:n]. Rather, it is the urban variety which is strongly influenced by rural speech because of the strong stigmatisation of a number of native TA linguistic characteristics, particularly the glottal stop.

As to MSA, both TA and RA respondents perceive it as 'less urban' than TA and 'less non-urban' than RA; that is, MSA is viewed neither as an urban variety nor as a rural one.

- Clarity

The scores obtained on which variety sounds clearer seem to reveal no real consistency of one of the four guises on this attribute as they share the pie chart in almost equal portions. Consider the table below and the corresponding pie chart:

Table 4. Which variety do you think is clearer?

		Clear -----Confusing						
N= 50	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	
TA	19	9	11	8	1	1	1	
RA	21	6	5	9	5	3	1	
MSA	15	5	11	5	7	3	4	
TA/Fr	21	5	3	11	7	3	0	

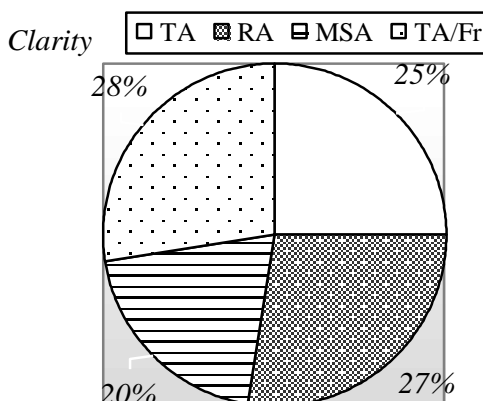


Fig. 8. Students' evaluation of clarity.

MSA, however, gets the lowest scores (20%) perhaps because its use in the context of everyday talk – the text played in the four guises here is common speech – appears to be quite peculiar to the judges who perceive the other varieties as 'clearer' for the setting.

- Masculinity

Research into sociolinguistic variation has shown that some variety in a given speech community, generally the least prestigious one in western society, is viewed as rough because of its association with lower class people and more so with men, while women in general use more refined forms of the standard, seeking to reach prestige and status. But in Tlemcen it is the women who tend to stick to TA speech which has come to be associated with female speech. Consequently, a stereotype has arisen: TA linguistic features, like the glottal stop, are viewed as

feminine, and such stigmatisation has led to their avoidance by male speakers.

The scores obtained in the attitudinal test seem to confirm our assumptions that TA male speakers, particularly younger ones, tend to avoid TA idiosyncratic features in mixed settings, and readily accommodate to rural speech, precisely because they do not want to be ridiculed for their saying [ʔulli], ‘Tell me’.

Let us consider the table below and the corresponding pie chart, and see how the two groups view the different varieties in terms of masculinity.

Table 5. Which variety do you think is more masculine?

		Manly ----- Feminine						
N= 50	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	
TA	4	5	5	5	5	11	15	
RA	30	12	5	1	2	0	0	
MSA	8	11	5	9	7	4	6	
TA/Fr	11	13	9	10	3	3	1	

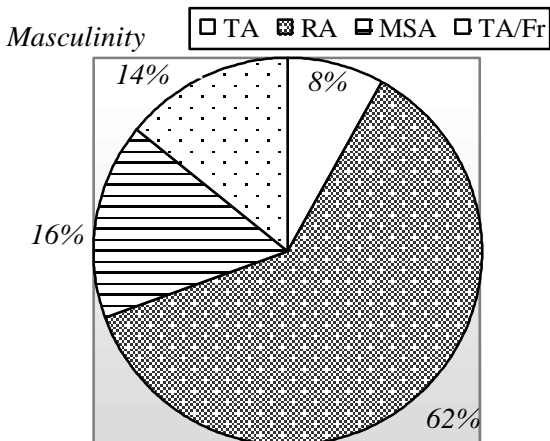


Fig. 9. Students' evaluation of masculinity.

The general pattern indicates that RA receives the highest scores on this trait. The evaluators' judgements allow the expression of social stereotypes, and the scores obtained here clearly represent the dual social stereotyped reaction: rural speech is associated with masculinity and toughness, and Tlemcen urban speech with femininity and 'refinement'. Indeed then, as expected, the two TA varieties are viewed as much less 'manly', rather 'feminine', in spite of the fact that the performance of the tape recorded text was achieved by a man's voice.

The following diagram shows the extent to which the two groups react practically the same way towards the two low varieties, TA and RA, which points to the shared social stereotype as to the speakers' manliness or femininity:

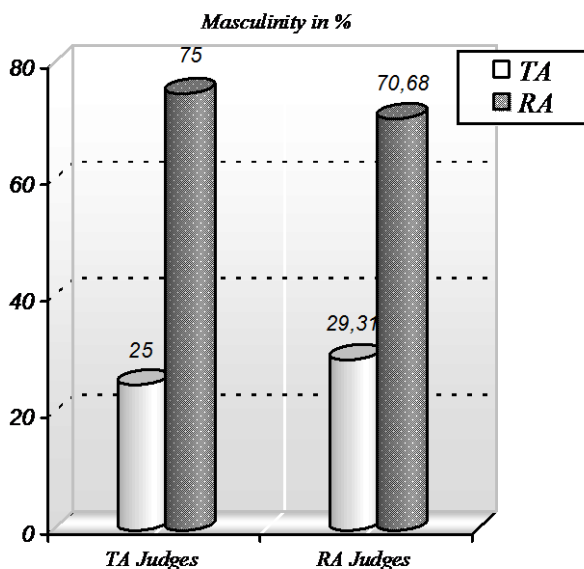


Fig. 10. Judges' ratings of masculinity: TA vs. RA.

- Interpretation

The most important point to make in considering the reactions to the varieties on various dimensions is that the indirect 'matched-guise' technique provides us with identification of social features and stereotyped images of speakers through speech cues. It must be emphasized again that it is not the speech itself which is evaluated by the judges, but the *user* of the speech variety. Trudgill (1974:8) says in this regard:

All varieties of a language are structured, complex, rule-governed systems which are wholly adequate for the needs of their speakers. It follows that value judgements concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are *social* rather than linguistic.

A related fact is that the judges' evaluations of speech here are different from the informants' attitudes obtained through direct questionnaires such as those used to elicit conscious views about MSA and French production, for example. What we need to know, however, is whether conscious attitudes match up with people's evaluative reactions. Bentahila (1983:93) says that "... it has been suggested that such explicitly elicited attitudes may not always correlate exactly with the possibly unconscious attitudes which are reflected by more indirect methods of investigation."

Our findings reveal indeed that the speakers' actual linguistic behaviour and their conscious comments on their own speech or on other varieties in the community do not always match up with their attitudes towards, and evaluation of, people's different ways of speaking. We have seen (Dendane 1993) that TA is on the whole avoided in many settings because of its stigmatisation, but this does not prevent people, native speakers and non-natives alike, to evaluate it as pleasant speech. Conversely, though non-TA speakers almost never adapt their speech to that of Tlemcen, they evaluate this latter as much more pleasant than theirs. Such behaviour, we believe, clearly reflects their loyalty to rural speech and solidarity with members of their community.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that there are some contradictions that need to be explained: Why do rural speakers view Tlemcen speech as pleasant and as a higher status variety, but continue to make fun of its users, particularly native male TA speakers? Another issue raises itself here: Why do TA male speakers turn away from their vernacular when they ‘know’ that it is regarded as more pleasant and higher in status? The point is that, even though we consider their accommodation to RA in mixed settings and their switching back to TA in unconstrained ones as a kind of bi-dialectal competence, there is much evidence that today an increasing number of native TA speakers have got used to utilize rural speech characteristics in a quasi-spontaneous manner even in relaxed situations. Such speakers’ behaviour in avoiding the glottal stop, for example, for its (irrational) association with feminine speech correlates perfectly well with the judges’ evaluation of TA as the less masculine variety (See Fig. 9 and 10 above), a social negative stereotype that is undeniably regarded as responsible for the overall ‘shame’ of using idiosyncratic features of Tlemcen speech by males.

Will these negative unfavourable attitudes lead to definitive convergence to RA speech and, eventually, to TA dialect shift? Trudgill (1983:23) points out in fact that “*attitudes* to languages clearly play an important role in preserving or removing dialect difference.”

But in spite of the acknowledged spread of RA, we strongly believe that the preservation of Tlemcen speech will persist, unless women too start using rural speech forms consistently; that is, if they use the 2nd person feminine suffix morpheme {-i}, as in [ˈrohi], ‘Go’ and,

more decisively, if they replace [ʔ] by [g] by saying, for instance, [gɔlli], ‘He told me’, instead of [ʔɔlli], in relaxed domains such as the home, with relatives and friends, and with little children who will acquire these forms as part of their native tongue. But, for the moment, there is evidence that little TA boys only start switching to rural forms outside of the home, when they reach the age of mixing with non-TA children and, thus, the switches occur in a rather conscious manner, illustrated in their double aim: to avoid being made fun of and to sound tough in the playground.

We shall now try to find out how the judges view the four guises on personality dimensions.

4. Attitudinal reactions to personality traits

The second matched-guise test was intended to elicit the fifty listeners’ evaluations on four personality traits selected on the basis of a limited number of social characteristics reflecting socio-economic status, competence (intelligence and instruction) and social attractiveness. We asked the judges to rate the ‘four’ speakers on each of these traits.

- Wealth

The first trait which concerns the socio-economic status of the speaker has been decided on the somewhat biased idea that the Tlemceni people are wealthier and indeed the ratings below confirm this assumption, the TA/Fr speaker being perceived as much better off than the

TA guise, most likely for his use of French which is highly rated on many dimensions. The user of MSA is not viewed as rich, but the poorest of all is the RA guise.

Table 6. How wealthy do you think the speaker is?

	Manly -----				Feminine		
N= 50	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TA	9	9	19	11	2	0	0
RA	3	3	2	17	13	7	5
MSA	7	5	6	17	9	3	3
TA/Fr	25	14	7	2	2	0	0

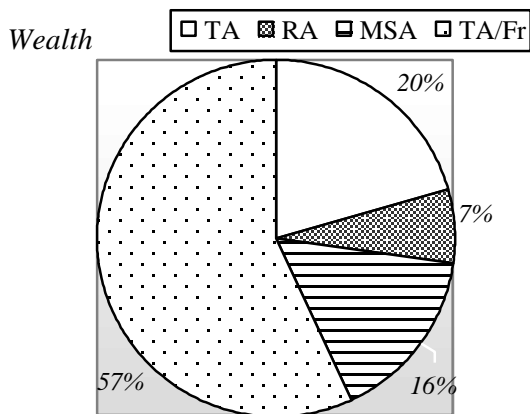


Fig. 11. Students' evaluation of wealth.

- Competence

Quite similar evaluation patterns as those above have been obtained on the two personality traits related to competence as, in general, the TA speakers, particularly the guise using French, are perceived more favourably than the RA and MSA guises. The ‘urbanity’ of the speaker surely has some impact on the judges’ upgrading, but again, the use of Standard French mixed with TA receives the highest scores on both attributes related to instruction, intelligence and education, as shown in the combined table below and the corresponding graphs:

Table 7. Speaker’s intelligenc Table 8. Speaker’s education.

Intelligent ----- Stupid								Educated----- Uneducated							
N= 50	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	N= 50	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
TA	9	12	15	11	1	1	1	TA	19	8	11	11	1	0	0
RA	6	1	9	13	11	7	3	RA	5	3	8	13	9	7	5
MSA	7	3	9	10	7	5	9	MSA	15	7	7	7	10	2	2
TA/Fr	23	10	9	7	1	0	0	TA/Fr	27	15	5	3	0	0	0

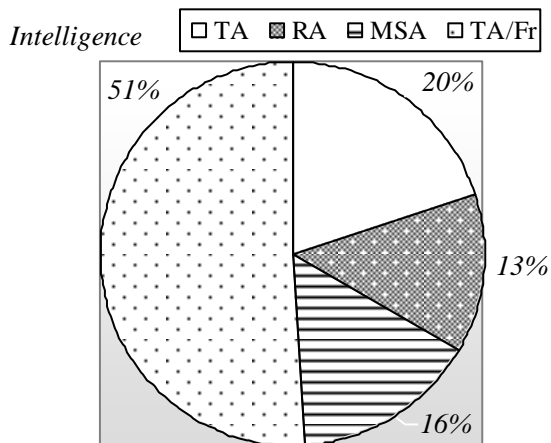


Fig. 12. Speaker's intelligence.

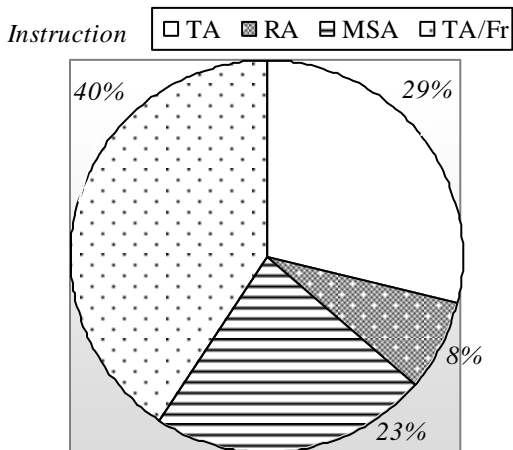


Fig. 13. Speaker's education.

- Friendliness

While the TA and TA/Fr speakers receive high scores on competence traits, they are slightly downgraded on social attractiveness, specifically on the friendliness attribute. The RA guise, on the other hand, is rated more favourably on this trait though, on the whole, the values are somewhat shared for the four guises, as clearly below (Fig. 5.8).

Table 9. Which speaker do you find more friendly?

	Friendly ----- Unfriendly							
	N= 50	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TA	7	7	9	13	6	5	3	
RA	14	9	7	8	7	2	3	
MSA	8	5	8	13	7	5	4	
TA/Fr	11	5	10	11	5	4	4	

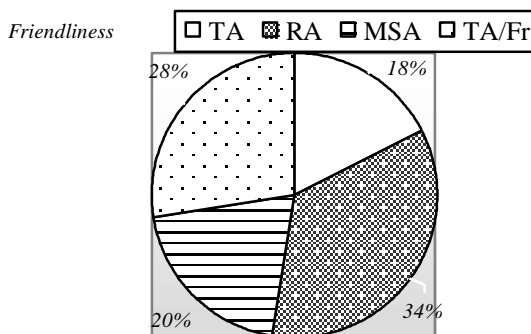


Fig. 14. Evaluation of speaker's friendliness

The point to make is that the results here are comparable to some extent to the findings we have come across in the literature on language attitudes (e.g. Lambert 1967; Ryan and Giles 1982). That is, the low values obtained on competence traits in the case of the RA speaker are counterbalanced by higher scores on more ‘human’ traits such as social attractiveness and solidarity. Conversely, the use of extensive French in TA, combined with the ‘undesirable’ stigmatised glottal stop, tends to cause a feeling of social distance, particularly on the part of RA judges, and consequently rather negative evaluations are felt for TA speech on the friendliness trait.

5. Views on speaker’s job suitability

The third matched-guise test was administered in the form of a direct question asking the informants to choose the job that would suit each guise best. The five occupations selected for this experiment reflect various positions in the society. The aim is to see how listeners associate the type of job with the type of speaker, only on the basis of speech cues. Of course, the judges ignore they are rating the same speaker in different guises, and thus, as Labov (1972a:213) says, “they unconsciously translate their social attitudes towards language into differential judgments of the speaker’s honesty, reliability, intelligence, etc.” So, how do they evaluate the ‘speakers’ on the occupational dimension?

Table 10. Speaker's job suitability

Variety Job	<i>T</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>ML</i>	<i>F</i>
TA	22	7	13	7	1
RA	1	1	9	12	27
MSA	23	5	10	6	6
TA/French	9	37	3	1	0

N = 50

(T: Teaching / M: Medical / SE: Self Employment / ML: Manual Labour / F: Farming)

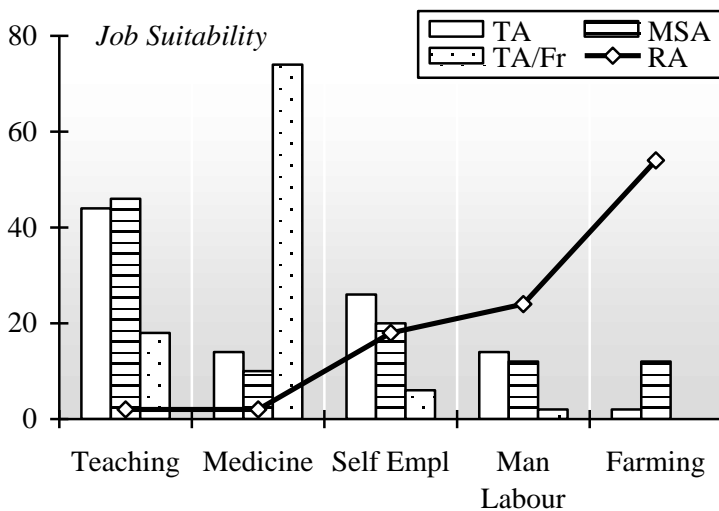


Fig. 15. Judges' reactions on job suitability.

The most salient feature that the diagram above reveals is the judges' negative estimation of the RA guise as to the jobs that do not suit him: a teacher or a doctor.

Their virtually unanimous impression reflects the social stereotype that a rural speech user cannot hold an intellectual occupation such as teaching or medicine. Such opinion about job suitability associated with the type of language used is not random but has a social background. Holmes (2001:343) writes in this regard:

People generally do not hold opinions about languages in a vacuum. They develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their views about who speak the languages, and the contexts and functions with which they are associated.

Indeed, that country people in Algeria could not be doctors or teachers was conceivably true in the past when they lived in rural areas with no opportunity to go to school, particularly during the French occupation. We know, however, that anyone today may show aptitude for getting a degree in both fields, but the social stereotype does not seem to have vanished. Rather, the jobs that better suit the RA speaker may be in the sphere of manual labour or, to a lesser degree, in self-employment. But he is best viewed in farming, even by the RA judges themselves, as shown by the sudden rise of the curve in the graph.

Conversely, the urban speech guises in our experiment are rated much better on higher occupational status.

In particular again, we believe that because of his extensive use of French in a form closest to the Standard, the TA/Fr speaker is perceived as most suitable for medicine by TA judges, and, surprisingly, more so by RA judges. The graph above (Fig.15) is displayed below in a

different manner so as to show the scores obtained for each guise on the occupational dimension, but also to highlight, by means of a curve, the informants' evaluation about suitability for doing medicine, the most highly esteemed job in our society. The curve starts very low with RA; then, the MSA and TA guises receive quite low values (10% and 14% respectively) compared with the TA/Fr speaker who is rated significantly more favourably as he is granted no less than 74%, illustrated by the steep rise of the curve. The judges' attitude seems to confirm the prestige that French continues to enjoy in the Algerian society as a language associated with modernity but also with scientific fields, reflected here in medicine, one of the fields in which the Western world is well ahead of us. And, as a matter of fact, medicine is one of the few domains that are still taught in French in the Algerian university.

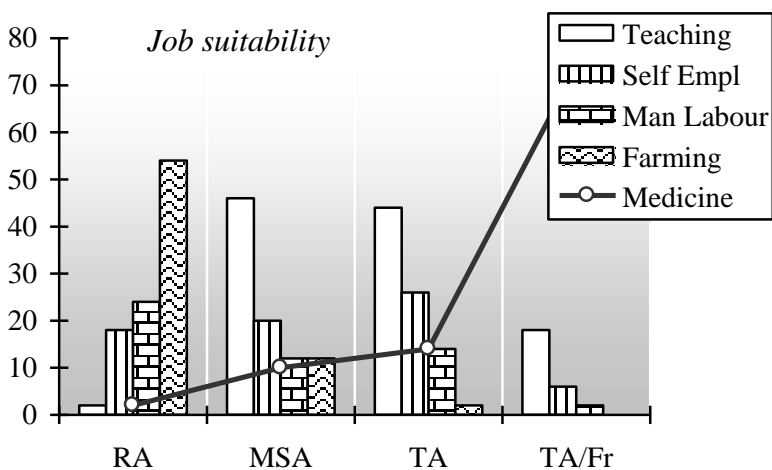


Fig. 16. Speakers' occupation suitability.

The TA and MSA speakers, on the other hand, are perceived as more suitable for the teaching domain. This perception is understandable for MSA whose status as the High variety used in formal education is acknowledged by everybody, but we wonder why the TA guise, using a low AA variety, receives just slightly lower scores for teaching than the MSA user, while the judges' reaction toward the RA guise, who also uses a low variety, shows that he is not fit for being a doctor or a teacher. The point of central importance here is that, most probably below the level of conscious awareness, rural speech users display a positive attitude toward TA, which does not coincide with their actual negative treatment of the variety, as pointed out. In fact, it is predictable that a positive attitude towards a language variety or to a linguistic variant leads to its adoption or at least to people's desire to make use of it in certain contexts, as is the case with RP English in Britain. But this is definitely not the case in our investigation in spite of the high values assigned by RA judges to TA, as can be seen clearly in the patterns below.

The two pie-charts reveal the stereotyped impressions on the occupational dimension that each group of judges holds of the guise using the variety of the contrasting group. The two TA guises' scores (TA and TA/Fr) are added up here to draw attention to the RA judges' overall evaluation. It is worth noting here that whereas the RA judges rate the TA speakers favourably with the highest scores for medicine and teaching and with low scores for low-status occupations, none of the TA judges 'thinks' that the RA guise could be a doctor or a teacher. In the face of it, he receives more than 90% of the values on the

two low-status occupations, 60% of which going to farming while only 7% to self employment.

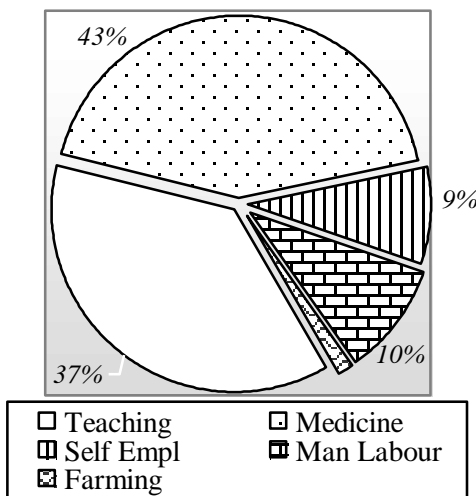
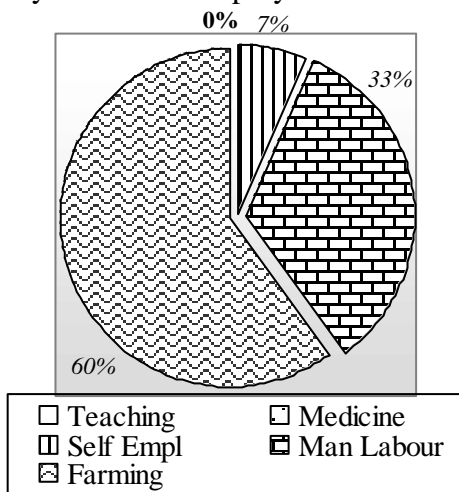


Fig. 17. Job suitability: - a. TA judges on RA guise.
- b. RA judges on TA+TA/Fr guises.

Thus, it appears unequivocal that rural speech is associated in people's minds with low-status jobs, a biased attitude that persists despite today's large-scale urbanization and opportunities for studying at the university open to everyone. A question arises on this point: Why do people continue to use varieties that are downgraded when, at the same time, many consciously or unconsciously wish to identify with a better viewed one, as shown in the results below?

Table 11. Which speaker would you like to resemble?

Judges Guises	<i>TA</i>	<i>RA</i>	<i>MSA</i>	<i>TA/Fr</i>
TA Students N=15	6	0	2	7
RA Students N=35	5	17	4	9

The listeners' answers to the direct question "Which speaker would you like to resemble?" reveal the configuration in the graph below: first, it is obvious that many students of the two groups identify with the guise using their own variety; that is, they do not aspire to sound like the speaker using the 'other' variety. But, what is interestingly unexpected again is that 40% of the RA respondents report they would like to resemble the two TA guises, particularly the one using French.

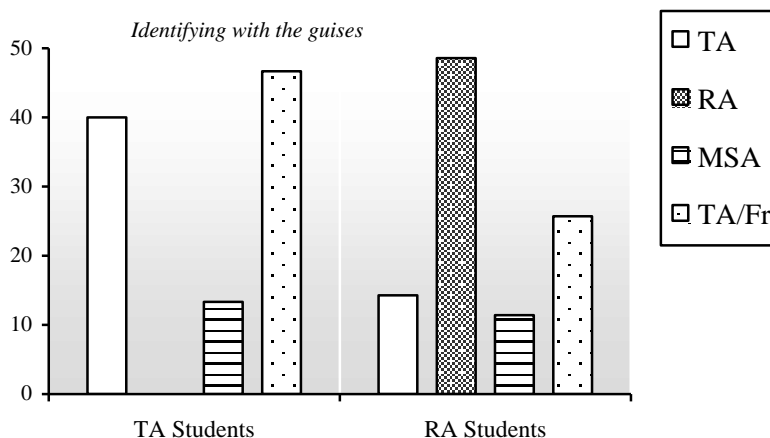


Fig. 5.18. Listeners' degree of identifying with the four guises, in %.

We understand that the judges must have been influenced by the TA/Fr guise, for the overall feeling is that, alongside MSA, a good command of Standard French may give access to high status and to a wide range of social positions in society.

But why are they also inclined to identify with the other TA guise when, at the same time, not only do they virtually never accommodate to TA speech, particularly in the use of the glottal stop, but also tend to ridicule its users?

Conversely, the results show that the TA respondents do not wish to resemble the RA guise, even though in

reality an increasing number of native TA speakers do switch to rural speech in many domains, to the extent that such linguistic behaviour seems to reflect an on-going change in the urban variety. We shall try to see briefly, in the next sub-section, the role that language attitudes play in bringing about linguistic change.

6. Language Attitudes and Linguistic Change

Language attitudes have been considered one of the central factors that engender linguistic variation which in turn may lead to change in the language. Gauchat's study (1905) of the French-speaking dialect of a Swiss village, has been regarded as a pioneering work on sound change, as a number of phonological features were observed in apparent time in the speech of three generations, i.e. in the speech of three age groups. Hermann's (1929)³ follow-up report in real-time depth confirmed Gauchat's sound change in progress as it showed that some of the phonological features had reached completion. The change occurred under the influence of a negative reaction to the older form or to positive evaluation of the newer one. In his work on New York City, Labov (1966) has shown that attitudes towards language are responsible to a large extent for linguistic change in progress. And, in an attempt to explain the correlation between the objective linguistic changes observed and people's subjective reactions, he (1972a:162) puts forward two approaches:

³ Mentioned in Labov (1972a:276).

The indirect approach to this problem correlates the general attitudes and aspirations of the informants with their linguistic behavior. The more direct approach is to measure the unconscious subjective reactions of the informants to values of the linguistic variable itself.

Indeed, the social significance that a linguistic variable has for different groups have led sociolinguists to understand linguistic change in progress, and evidence from numerous studies (Labov 1972 *a* and *b*; Trudgill 1974; Romaine 1994:2000; etc.) has shown that much language change can be explained in terms of subjectively negative and positive attitudes attached to linguistic variables.

However, while in western speech communities such attitudes are related to prestige and status, power and solidarity, resulting in concepts such as ‘change from above’ and ‘change from below’ (Labov 1972*a*), in a diglossic situation, the prestige variety does not ‘belong’ to a category of people but to the whole community. Therefore, at variance with the overall pattern in a standard-with-dialect context, the very fact that the High variety, CA/MSA in our case, is not used in ordinary speech interaction by any portion of the society, but represents a supra-language associated with religion, literature and formal education, it is unanimously highly valued. Rather, the locus of negative/positive attitudes lies in the contrasting low varieties of everyday speech, Colloquial Arabic.

The co-existence of two Arabic low varieties in the speech community of Tlemcen brings about linguistic variation, in particular among native male speakers who

tend to avoid idiosyncratic TA features, precisely because of the negative attitudes they spark off. Such attitudes, which are elicited not only among non-native speakers who associate TA speech on the whole with femininity, but also among native speakers themselves, have led to strong stigmatisation of some linguistic characteristics, the glottal stop being the most salient one, and will probably result in substantial change in the variety. Indeed, evidence from our investigation shows that, just like in Gauchat's study, native TA speakers use [g] in place of [ʔ] more or less consistently according to age, gender and situation. The increasing avoidance of [ʔ] in the speech of the younger people even in unconstrained settings is a clear index of a linguistic change in progress. And if these young speakers continue to use its counterpart [g] and adopt it as they grow older, we will attest the progressive loss of [ʔ] and a drastic change in the TA variety, unless women remain strong enough to continually revitalize its use whatever negative attitude it may bear.

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