

**Aspects of Language Change in Ghazaouet
Spoken Arabic**

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الملخص:

مظاهر التغير اللغوي في المنطوق العربي بمنطقة الغزوات

ليس هذا البحث بالعمل المكثف حول ديناميكية اللغة في الجزائر, ولكنه مجرد رؤية عامة حول بعض من جوانب استعمال اللغة العربية, وذلك من خلال التطرق إلى دراسة المفردات في اللهجة العربية بمنطقة الغزوات و ضواحيها. يراعى في هذا البحث تناول تطور اللغة كنتيجة للتطور السوسيوإقتصادي بالمنطقة كخطوة أولى, وسيدعم إن شاء الله ببحث لاحق نتطرق فيه إلى تغير اللغة كنتيجة لإدخال مفردات فصيحة بالمنطوق. و نحن بهذا نطرح سؤالين أساسيين, أولهما: كيف يؤدي التطور السوسيوإقتصادي إلى تطور اللهجة العربية؟ و ثانيهما: ما هي مستويات هذا التطور في المنطوق العربي؟ وعليه, فإن تغير هذه اللهجة المحلية يشتمل أساسا على التخلي على بعض مما يميزها وتعويضه بمميزات لغوية حضرية أو بدوية مأخوذة من اللهجات العربية الأخرى المنطوقة بالجزائر. كما يتلخص هذا التطور أيضا في استبدال ما تبقى من اللغة الأمازيغية في اللهجة بما يناسبه في اللهجات الأخرى.

The present paper is not meant to be an exhaustive study on language dynamics in Algeria. It is rather an overview on some aspects of language change. This preliminary survey is based on observations made in the speech community of Ghazaouet vis à vis the deep social upheaval this community has witnessed and other phenomena tightly related to

the Algerian society. In the current study, we shall deal with causes of language change in Ghazaouet Spoken Arabic. We will focus on the impact of the socioeconomic evolution on language use and let the implementation of standard forms in GSA as well as its contribution in the rise of “Middle Arabic” in Algeria for a second paper. We are thus to examine first and foremost the following questions:

1. *How does the socioeconomic evolution contribute in the process of language change in G.S.A?*
2. *What aspects of G.S.A are subject to variation?*

Language change in G.S.A is described as the actual loss of “Villageois” peculiarities and the infiltration of new linguistic forms mainly classical, urban and rural. We are to consider here the introduction of new dialectal forms (both urban and rural) at the expense of Berber features in this spoken dialect.

When dialect interference causes communication breakdown, linguistic variation occurs. This inevitably leads to language change. Many factors contribute in the understanding of the actual mechanisms of linguistic evolution in this mountainous context. Presumably, variation within G.S.A speakers, in correlation with the socioeconomic evolution provides the key to understand not only language shift in Ghazaouet, but also some linguistic aspects of adaptation to environment in Algerian Arabic.

Since Algeria got its independence, there have been great and brave institutions in politics and economy in order to better the citizen’s standard of life. Consequently, challenging decisions have been taken to build factories and to restructure the existing economic infrastructure in the fields of industry, agriculture and commerce. Ghazaouet, like all the other Algerian towns has been immensely influenced. Yet, it is worth mentioning that the socio-economic change started in the region and elsewhere long before the Algerian independence in 1962. Great upheavals were due to the European contacts mainly , the French ,the Spanish, the Italian, and to a lesser extent the German with the indigenous tribes (*Janier : 1944*). The natives were necessarily obliged to abandon their traditional manufactures and to substitute them by more sophisticated products that were claimed by the Europeans, as their old productions were not appreciated by the colonists.

Later on, with the introduction of many governmental facilities, things have continued to convert. This socio-economic evolution has probably been accompanied by a linguistic evolution. Notably, the ancient modes of life required specific terms, which suited the old awkward economic system. These linguistic forms have been consequently shaken up according to the present state. New terms were therefore embraced at the expense of the old lexis. In G.S.A, words of Berber features have been adapted if not replaced by other

Similarly, the change in the linguistic forms above is not total, as the root is kept. It is only the initial Berber originated vowel which is excluded. The masculine gender is also kept in all these words except in [mBʃⵎⵏ]: “comb”, where the lexeme takes a feminine form.

The following pairs constitute some lexical items of the same Berber scheme: “æ + base”, “tæ + base” or “tⵎ + base”, and their rural / urban substituants:

[ædⵎⵎ]	→	[mBhra:z]	:	“pestle”
[æʎuwa:l]	→	[dBrbu:ka]	:	“drum”
[ærnBz]	→	[ʎodbm]	:	“heel”
[tælxsa]	→	[beⵎ:ra]	:	“A kind of food made with dried beans or peas.”
[tæfza]	→	[Bᵛrⵎ:b]	:	“earth”
[æjdu:r]	→	[kBᵛrⵎja]	~	“A pot made of baked clay used for butter.”
		[qBᵛrⵎja]		
[ti:mʃBrᵛa]	→	[du:da]	:	“worms in dried meat”
[æjBru:dʒ]	→	[ækBlla:l]	~	[æqBlla:l] → : “sieve”
		[keskæ:s]		
[æʁBddu]	→	[Bᵛslu:ʒ]	:	“an eatable plant”
[æski:f]	→	[bi:t]	:	“room”
[tæjju:t]	→	[bA:b] ⁱ	:	“fog”
[ænwa:l]	→	[masxar]	→	[kuzi:na] : “kitchen”
[ækBrdæ:ʃ]	→	[kBrdæ:ʃ]	~	[qBrdæ:ʃ] → [lu:h] ~ : “cards”
		[l⊕:h]		

There are other words of the same pattern that have nearly disappeared in usual interactions. They are no more used except by the very old people. These are mainly names of some plants and utensils. The young generations are not familiar with forms like:

- [tæzBrt] : “A plant used to prepare food.”
 [æ▪fB] : “stick”
 [tæsBkra] : “A plant used to cure.”
 [æbku:k] : “A plant which grows under ground.”

Sometimes, the shift from words of Berber features, mostly those items representing verb roots of repeated syllables implying repetitions in sounds and movements or exaggerations in performing acts, is of a morphosyntactic type. Here, the change is not lexical but chiefly morphological, since it manifests the omission of the Berber initial vowel {æ} and the introduction of the Arabic forms {ta} before a consonant cluster or {t} before a consonant along with the lengthening of the vowel in the second syllable. Such items, in this way, get one of these canonical shapes: CVCCVC for words starting with {ta} as in the first three pairs in the list below, and CCVCCVC for words starting with {t} in the remaining examples:

- [æBllBk] → [tBla:k] : “hanging”
 [æ▪bbBn] → [tB▪b:n] : “washing”
 [æfllBs] → [tBfla:s] : “damaging”
 [æmBrmBd] → [tmBrmi:d] : “soiling”
 [ænBnB] → [tnani:] : “crying”
]]
 [ænBhnBh] → [tnBhni:h] : “neighing”

Surprisingly, the only Algerian Arabic dialects which have preserved the Berber prefixes [æ], [tæ] and [t] are the “Villageois” dialects of Djidjelli, Mila and Collo and those of the Mountains of Msirda and Trara, notably Ghazaouet (*Cantineau (1937) and Marçais 1960*). The socio-economic motivation evidently, and at least in the case of this latter, has certainly contributed in the linguistic evolution of G.S.A. This change, however, has not disturbed only the Berber features. Other dialectal forms are subject to variation each time the social environment requires it. We notice for instance the following patterns of lexical variation in G.S.A:

[mBtrBd]	→	[ˈbβe]	: “plate”
[ˈuʃfa]	→	[xi:ma]	: “tent”
[rβʃfa:ka]	→	[marfaˈ]	: “shelf”
[bBrʒa]	→	[tæka]	: “window”
[ʒubb]	→	[ˈre:ʒ] ~ [sa:ri:ʒ]	: “cistern”
[ˈefo:r]	→	[mi:da]	: “table”
[kβˈa:d]	→	[tʃurs] ~ [kurs]	: “chair”
[mdi:na]	→	[mBkkabra] ~ [mBqqabra]	: “cemetery”
[bo:ˈa]	→	[bBmi:l] → [bu:tˈja]	: “water barrel”
[mBkla]	→	[ˈʒe:n]	: “a pot used to bake bread”
[luˈˈf]	→	[ˈfe:ra]	: “mat”
[nˈa:la]	→	[sækka] ⁱⁱ	: “plough”
[xurˈa]	→	[xa:tBm]	: “ring”
[wna:ʒBs]	→	[halaka:t] ~ [halaqa:t] → [mnæˈɔBʃ]	: “earings”
[mBftu:l]	→	[mBsja:s]	: “bracelet”
[ʃBlla:ʒ]	→	[bri:k] ~ [bri:q]	: “pitcher”
[ˈerˈa]	→	[ˈh]	: “terrace”

[xBʃba]	→	[poʃo]	:	“ lamp post”
[ʒuxna]	→	[debʃ:ra]	:	“ lumber-room”
[kBndi:l]	→	[kænkʃ] → [lʃ:mba]	:	“lamp”
[kubb]	→	[bi:du]	:	“bucket”

Obviously, and as it is illustrated in the list above, the shift this time is via spoken Arabic or even French as in these words: [lʃ:mba]: “lamp”, [bi:du]: “bucket”, [poʃo]: “lamp post”, and [debʃ:ra]: “lumber-room”. Here again, the shift is also phonological in the instances of [mBkkabra]: “cemetery” and [ħalaka:t]: “earings” as the velar [k] can be substituted by the alveolar [q], and the sibilant [tʃ] in its turn can be replaced by [k] in [kursʃ]: “chair”.

Several uncontrollable factors enter into the choice of individual and community linguistic alternatives. The relative involvement of certain linguistic forms over some others in the speech community of Ghazaouet plays an important role in determining the process of language evolution. Noticeably, because verbal behaviour and society are so closely linked, linguistic change is a matter of social upheavals. Societal realities do specify conditions under which some choices are appropriate more than any other alternatives. Indeed to assume that such factors do specify conditions under which some kinds of choices are more appropriate than any other alternates is to assume that language is a complex phenomenon.

The study of the corpora gathered in this paper shows that semantic units in the fields of morphology and vocabulary are important indicators of language change in G.S.A. . In dealing with the socioeconomic motivation of this phenomenon, Linguistic variation in this village dialect is not merely phonological or morphosyntactic. More than that, it is characteristically lexical. Presumably, it is not only the passive aspect or the phonemic level of language which is subject to change. The active aspect of language is also an important facet of linguistic evolution in this Algerian dialect.

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ⁱ [ɔ̃bA:b] would be a variant misuse for [ɔ̃ bA:b]. The standard emphatic consonant /Δ4/ is realised as [ɔ̃] and not as [ɔ̃Δ4] as in these village forms: [ɔ̃Δ4o] : “light” and [mre:ɔ̃Δ4] : “ill” .

ⁱⁱ Notice here again that the standard geminated velar /k/ for [sikka] is kept in its dialectal form [səkka]. [sətʃtʃa] is therefore a variant misuse.