

## **The Substitution of [ɣ] for [q] in El-Meni'a Spoken Arabic**

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### **Abstract**

**The diglossic situation in the Arab world has left Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) with little variation; this on one hand. On the other, Arabic vernaculars exhibit tremendous variations at different levels: lexis, phonology, morphology, and syntax. The result of language change in colloquial Arabic is varieties that are so distinct from Arabic. In this regard, the current article investigates a sound change in progress in the Arabic dialect of El-Menia whereby the sound [ɣ] is substituted for [q]. The importance of the research lies in the wide spread of the phenomenon throughout many places in Algeria and the lack of study on the topic. The methodology chosen consists of two stages: observations and interviews. The finding of these show a consistent use of the variant [q] by all social categories. It also reveals that the sound change is not constrained by any phonetic environment. Even though the paper does not provide answers as to the reasons and the origin of the change, it raises several questions and it is a starting point for further investigation.**

**Key Words: Dialect - Arabic - Substitution - Variation - El-Meni'a**

## المخلص

تعد الازدواجية اللغوية أحد الظواهر التي تميزت بها الألسن العربية، ففي الوقت الذي بقيت فيه اللغة العربية الفصحى على حالها بدون أي تغيير قد شهدت اللهجات التي تنطوي تحتها اختلافا كبيرا من العديد من المستويات : كالأصوات، الكلمات، المورفولوجيا، والبناء التركيبى للجملة. وفي هذا الصدد ستكون هذه الورقة البحثية عرضاً لتحقيق تبديل الصوت ( غ ) إلى ( ق ) في اللهجة العربية لساكنة المنيعنة ولاية غرداية - الجزائر. تكمن أهمية البحث في كونه يعالج مسألة أثرت بشكل كبير على الواقع اللغوي الجزائري، وعلى الرغم من هذا لا توجد دراسات مكثفة ومعقدة حولها. ويشار إلى أنّ منهجية البحث اعتمدت طريقتين لجمع المعلومات هما: الملاحظات والمقابلات. وقد أظهرت نتائج البحث النقاط التالية : الاستخدام الكلامي للمتغير ( ق ) يرد متساقاً عند جميع الفئات الاجتماعية، التّغيير الذي يطرأ على الصّوت ليس مقيد بأي بيئة لفظية .وإن كانت هذه الدراسة لا تقدم إجابات عن أصل التّغيير الصّوتي ، فإنّها تثير العديد من الأسئلة لذلك تعتبر نقطة انطلاق لمزيد من الأبحاث.

## 1. Introduction

Arabic is a Semitic language with more than 422 million speakers stretched across 22 countries.<sup>1</sup> The enormous number of speakers and the vastness of the geographical area where the language is used have resulted in many varieties under the umbrella of Arabic. By means of illustration, studies such as Aitsiselmi 2006, Brustad 2000, Suleiman 1986 attest to the fact that in each region there is a

<sup>1</sup> - UNESCO, World Arabic Language Day, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-arabic-language-day/> (accessed August .18, 2017)

unique Arabic variety that has some unique linguistic features.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, the current article embarks on a sociolinguistic investigation of a salient linguistic feature which is manifested in the substitution of the sound [ɣ] for [q] in the Arabic spoken dialect of El-Menia. It should be noted however, that such linguistic behavior is not restricted to the designated area, but it is common to many regions in Algeria for example Ouargla, Biskra, Djelfa, Laghouat, and Ghardaia. Nevertheless, this claim still needs to be grounded on scientific evidence. In an alignment with Watson, studies of Arabic dialects remain fragmented and mostly scattered in unpublished theses, a situation that well applies well to Algeria.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of the current study emanates from the necessity of providing a sociolinguistic profile of the dialects spoken in Algeria which would later contribute to an Algerian Dialect Atlas. Although the current article focuses mainly on the substitution of the [ɣ] in EL-Meni'a, the occurrence of the same phenomenon in many regions in Algeria renders the work valuable. In the pursuit of such endeavor the following research questions are raised:

- 1- What are the reasons behind substitution in Arabic dialects?
- 2- Is the substitution of the sound [ɣ] for [q] systematic or just a random linguistic behavior?
- 3- Does the sound substitution affect all social categories?

The attempt to understand the context of the research mandates first pondering over the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria. The latter has always been referred to as a complex one with the existing of three languages Arabic, French, and Berber. Even when only Arabic is at play, the complexity still persists as the latter is just an umbrella

<sup>1</sup> - Farid Aitsiselmi, "Algeria: Language Situation.", in The Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics (2nd Ed) ,eds. Edward Killoran Brown and Anne Anderson (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 160; Kristen Brustad, The Syntax of Spoken Arabic: A Comparative Study of Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, and Kuwaiti Dialects (DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000),2.; Saleh Mahmoud Khalil Suleiman, Jordanian Arabic between Diglossia and Bilingualism: Linguistic Analysis, Pragmatics & Beyond, VI:8 (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co, 1986),24.

<sup>2</sup> - Janet C. E. Watson, The Phonology and Morphology of Arabic, The Phonology of the World's Languages (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007),9.

word that hides underneath it several varieties: Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and specific to the context what some refer to as “Maghrebi dialects”.<sup>1</sup> However, the present paper deems such term to be oversimplifying the complexity and the diversity that exist in northern African countries. Accordingly, the article focuses on the Arabic variety spoken in El-Menia. The latter is a small town about 900 km to the south of the capital city Algiers. Beside the formal language Modern Standard Arabic which is taught at school, the primary dialect used is a low Arabic variety which is referred to here in this context by the Dialect of El-Meni’a.

The article is structured as follows: First, it starts with a literature review of the phenomenon of sound substitution in Arabic vernaculars. Next, an overview over the historical background of the people of El-Menia is presented. The latter is followed by the description of the methodology opted for the research. Finally, the data obtained will be analyzed and a final conclusion is drawn with suggestions of further research.

## 2. Substitution of Sounds in Arabic Vernaculars

The concept of substitution here is used as a direct translation of word ‘ʔal ʔibdaal’ that is used to denote the process of “replacing one item by another at a particular place in a structure”.<sup>2</sup> In the current paper, the concept denotes strictly sound aspects of language that include both the substitution of mere sounds or phonemes.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the term substitution is not widely used but rather

<sup>1</sup> - Abdou Elimam, “Du Punique au Maghribi Trajectoires d’une langue sémito-méditerranéenne.” *Synergies Tunisie 1* (2009) ;Andrzej Zaborski , "Afro-Asiatic Languages.", in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, eds. C. H. M. Versteegh and Mushira Eid (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005),35. ; Lotfi Sayahi, *Diglossia and Language Contact: Language Variation and Change in North Africa*, Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014),20. ; Abdulkafi Albirini, *Modern Arabic Sociolinguistics: Diglossia, Variation, Codeswitching, Attitudes and Identity* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> - David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 6th ed, The Language Library (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 463.

<sup>3</sup> - Mohammed Ahmed Abdul Sattar As-Sammer, "Phonological Variation in Modern Standard Arabic : The Case of the Affricate / dʒ /: Oman as a Sample.", *Journal of Basrah Researches (Humanities Series)* 36, n.4 (2010): 45.

studies that tackle the subject are found under the header of the notion 'sound change'. The latter refers to the change in sound the system of language. The processes involved in sound change can affect phonemes thus a phonological change, or it can strictly be confined to sounds therefore a phonetic change. The corpus tackling the subject of sound change can be traced way back to the past. The work of al-Lughawī, died in 351 AH (962 AD), which was revised by Al-Tanukhi attests to this fact.<sup>1</sup>

Causes of sound change can be looked at from two standing points whether by taking a purely structural view or by considering sociolinguistic factors. As far as the former is concerned, phonological rules provide systematic ways of understanding the allophonic variation of phonemes.<sup>2</sup> As an example, Ibrahim 2012 provides the phonological rules that render the pronunciation of the /q/ as [g] in Zubairi Arabic: first, regardless of the adjacent sounds, if the /q/ is followed by /s, d, t, h, m, w/ it will be replaced by [g].<sup>3</sup> Second, it is also replaced by [q] when it is preceded by /a/, /u/ or /i/. Besides the phonological rules, phonological processes are also responsible for changing sounds. Often, these processes are triggered by the effort of the speaker to find more easy ways of pronunciation. For instance, that is achieved by assimilation where two adjacent sounds start to sound more like each other.<sup>4</sup> The sound [t] is assimilated to [d] in the example 'you do' in Libyan Arabic dialect /t+diir/ → [ddiir].<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Bouhania provides examples from Touat spoken Arabic on routine assimilations in coronal- obstruent clusters.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> - Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī , ?al ?ibdaal ( Phonemic Substitution), Revised by Al-Tanukhi ( Damascus ,1960),21.

<sup>2</sup> - Laurel J. Brinton, The Structure of Modern English: A Linguistic Introduction (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub, 2000),49.

<sup>3</sup> - Majid Abdulatif Ibrahim , "The Sound System of Zubairi Arabic: A Phonological Sketch." , Studies in Literature and Language 5 , no.1 (2012) : 60.

<sup>4</sup> - Brinton, The structure of modern English,51.

<sup>5</sup> - Mokhtar Yousef Elramli, "Assimilation in the Phonology of a Lybian Arabic Dialect : A constraint-Based Approach. "Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Newcastle University, .Newcastle , United Kingdom . 2012, 109.

<sup>6</sup> - Bachir Bouhania, Touat Spoken Arabic: Dialectology and Sociolinguistics ( Amman ; Jordan: Dar Ebn Batota, 2012),167.

Likewise, the phonological features of [ɣ] and [q] reveal closeness that can justify the substitution (see table 1). First, both sounds are non-coronal obstruents. Second, they share the same manner of articulation, [ɣ] is voiced velar fricative while the [q] is voiceless uvular stop.

However, not all sound substitutions can be explained in terms of rules or constraints. Maclagan and Gordon 2003 attest to the fact that structural linguistics fails to offer explanation for random or free variation.<sup>1</sup> On the same idea, Labov insists that the study of language structure and the social one should not be separated but rather they complement each other.<sup>2</sup>

	Class features			Place features										Laryngeal features			Manner features						
	cons	sons	syll	labial	round	coronal	ant	dist	dorsal	high	low	back	tense	pharynge	ATR	voice	sg	cg	cont	strident	lateral	del rel	nasal
[ɣ]	+	-	-	-	0	-	0	0	+	+	-	+	-	-	0	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
[q]	+	-	-	-	0	-	0	0	+	-	-	+	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 1. Phonological Features of Sounds [ɣ] and [q]. Adapted from Phonological Features Chart (version 11.02 February 2011) by Jason Riggle.**

<sup>1</sup> - Margaret Maclaga and Elizabeth Gordon, "Variation and sound change in New Zealand English.", In Social Dialectology: in Honour of Peter Trudgill, eds. David Britain, Jenny Cheshire, and Peter Trudgill (Amsterdam Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003),69.

<sup>2</sup> - William Labov, Principles of Linguistic Change. Vol. 2: Social Factors, Digital print, Language in Society 29 (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006),28.

Consequently, a closer look at sociolinguistic variables is imperative by considering paralinguistic features such as identity, gender, social class, and ethnicity. Indeed, contemplating on the way identity correlates with language and sound change, Fakharani points that Arab tribes used to express their identity through sound choice, as those who live in harsh environment reflect that in their language by substituting soft sounds by hard one.<sup>1</sup> By way of illustration, [h] in [hatta] ‘until’ is substituted for [ʕ] [ʕatta]. Consequently, he further confirms that it is often difficult to draw a relation between sounds involved in substitution.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. El-Meni’a

According to Wardhaugh, extending the study of language beyond its structure calls for questions that cover the history of people, the language, and the culture.<sup>3</sup> For the present research, answering the questions of how is the El-Menia society structured and who are the indigenous people of El-Menia is vital to investigate language variation. The necessity comes from the endeavor to establish a relationship between the people and the linguistic feature in question.

In term of social structure, El-Menia is characterized by a rigid social system based firmly on family ties. The tendency of young people to live next to their families has resulted in big extended families that occupy large areas. The situation has caused close communities which in turn have implication for new people moving to the city as they often would find it difficult establishing homes among such families. The limited mobility of people and family structure have two outcomes: dense social networks and low contact society. On the question of how such social structure would correlate with language, Trudgill sees that low contact and dense social networks are

<sup>1</sup> - Abou Seoud Fakharani, *Min ʔsoul Fiqhe Ellouya: ʔllhazat wa ʔttaʕrib wa izdiwaʕ ʔlloyawi* (From Fundamentals of philology :Dialects and Arabization and linguistic duplication) , (Cairo :Dar Elkitab Elhadith, 2010),153.

<sup>2</sup> -Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> - Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 5th ed, Blackwell Textbooks in Linguistics 4 (Malden, Mass., USA: Blackwell Pub, 2006),9.

the core ingredients of preserving language. This perhaps explains the maintenance of the linguistic features.<sup>1</sup>

Logically, the question of who are the indigenous people of El-Menia should be the first to address, however, it was mandatory to refer to the social structure to establish the factors that have helped in the preservation of the original families of El-Menia. That is backed by the two consensuses of people of El-Menia one on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1958 and the other on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1896.<sup>2</sup> The significance of such consensus is helping tracking the origin of the families. According to Benoualha, people of El-Menia originate mostly from Metlili and Ouargla which are home to Chaamba tribes.<sup>3</sup>

According to Benoualha, Chaamba tribes descend from Banu Sulaym tribes who came with the first wave of Hilalians in 1151.<sup>4</sup> Along with other Arab tribes, the first ancestors were forced to leave from the borders of the Zirid territory which now is called Tunisia after the fall of the Zirid dynasty in 1148. In 1156, they settled in the Gsar 'the village' of Metlili. With the growth of the population, Chaamba have spread throughout the south of Algeria reaching Laghouat, El Bayadh, El Oued, Ouargla, and El-Menia. On the light of the history of Chaamba, Ben-Oualha repudiates the idea that Chaamba are of Hilalian origins. Instead, he asserts that Chaamba tribes grew in number primarily because of numerous other families have joined them whether to enjoy their strength or to pledge loyalty.

#### 4. Methodology

The sociolinguistic nature of the research and the interest in variation of the sound [ɣ] in the dialect of El-Menia are the reasons behind opting for the variationist approach. In the quest to turn the

<sup>1</sup> - Peter Trudgill, "Sociolinguistic Typology and Complexification.", in Language Complexity as an Evolving Variable, eds. Geoffrey Sampson, David Gil, and Peter Trudgill (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 103.

<sup>2</sup> - Abdelhamid Benoualha, ?bna? ?ch?amba wa Mara?il ?ata?awor ?a?aqari libilad ?chabka : SeKaniyyan ?aqa?idyyan wa ?omraniyyan ( Sons of Chaamba The stages of civilized development of Chebka : population, religions, Urban) (Metlili-Ghardaia: Dar Sebhi, 2014),27.

<sup>3</sup> - Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> - Ibid.,29.



variationist paradigm into a practical inquiry, the methodology opted for consists of two phases. The first stage is uncovering the variable while the second entails a systematic study. In regard to the first stage, Wolfram attests that one of the challenges that face variationists is establishing a ready quantifiable variable.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the sound [ɣ] is not present in all words thus arriving at a list of words that contains words to be used later in the second phase is important. Furthermore, understanding the linguistic behavior involved with the sounds in question is necessary. For such reasons, the primary data collection tool is observation.

The second phase of the research makes use of semi-structured interviews that are guided by the list of words obtained by observation. The interviews serve two objectives. The first is to rule out the possibility that the variation of the sound [ɣ] exhibits is just random act and performance related but rather a socially significant reoccurring phenomenon. Second, the interviews yield quantifiable data, that through analysis allow for the establishment of a final conclusion about the substitution of the sound [ɣ] for [q].

#### 4.1. Design

The first problem to circumvent when conducting a sociolinguistic investigation is what is referred to as the ‘Observer’s Paradox’<sup>2</sup>. Labov acknowledges that working with everyday language raises a methodological paradox as people tend to change their language once they know they are being observed.<sup>2</sup> In the same respect, Feagin sees that all kind of data collection methods are not immune to such a problem.<sup>3</sup> As a response to the issue, all the observations were done anonymously. 14 hours were spent in public

<sup>1</sup> - Walt Wolfram, "How to Uncover Linguistic Variables.", in Data collection in sociolinguistics: methods and applications, eds. Christine Mallinson, Becky Childs, and Gerard Van Herk (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 21.

<sup>2</sup> - William Labov, "Some Principles of Linguistic Methodology", *Language in Society* 1, no. 1 (1972): 105.

<sup>3</sup> - Crawford Feagin, 2013, "Entering the Community: Fieldwork", in *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change (Second Edition)*, eds. J. K. Chambers and Natalie Schilling-Estes (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, a John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication, 2013), 22.

places such as the market, the post office, the town hall, and coffee shops, listening to people and taking notes of all the words that contain sounds [ɣ] and [q]. Nevertheless, not all words will be used in the interviews but only those that originated from CA or MSA. Comparing these words with their counterpart in CA/MSA eliminates the chance that substitution is confined to dialect-specific words. For ethical considerations recording equipment were not used during the observation even though they would have helped considerably.

The second stage involved interviewing 20 participants that meet certain conditions. First, all participants need to have been born and still living in El-Menia. Second, they have not moved to another city or country for a long period. Third, interviewees were selected from the old families in El-Menia. As for the rationale standing behind such conditions is to work with indigenous people in an attempt to minimize interference from other language varieties. The distribution of the participants is indicated in the next table:

**Table 2. The Sample Distribution for Interviews**

Age	6 - 14	15 - 25	26 - 40	41 - 60	60 and older
Male	2	2	2	2	2
Female	2	2	2	2	2

The subjects of the interviews were devised to orient the participants to use the words gathered in the observation stage. However, there is always the risk of the influence the interviewer may exert on participants if he/ she pronounces words with or without substitution; therefore, leading questions were used. Furthermore, the participants were not informed about the question or details so to avoid changing their style. All the interviews tackle the subject of the local dialect. All the sessions were recorded with a verbal consent granted.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

### 5.1. Observation

Observing the linguistic behavior in the context of the sounds [ɣ] and [q] shows that the dialect of El-Menia conforms with a salient Bedouin dialect phonetic feature which is the pronunciation of the /q/ as [g].<sup>1</sup> For instance, /qamar/ ‘the moon’ is pronounced [gamra]. However, there are few resistant words in which the sound /q/ remains as in the word Quran. Bouhania reports similar examples from the Adrar spoken Arabic.<sup>2</sup> He states that “the use of ‘standard’ /q/ in a dialectal stretch of speech is a classicising feature”.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the variable [ɣ] has two variants in the dialect, [ɣ] and [q]. The observation phase has initially confirmed that the sound change [ɣ] to [q] is not a random behavior but there is a systemic usage. This is backed by the number of occurrence in the observation as the sound [q] was used 56 times instead of [ɣ] found 36 words. Nevertheless, for the interviews only 12 words were used (table 3). The number of words picked is governed by the origin of the word as they should be of Modern Standard Arabic origin. For instance: [taqɖab] “to be angry” comes from the Arabic word “تغضب” [taɣɖab]. Furthermore, given the limited time in the interviews focusing on short word list was necessary.

### Table 3. List of Words for Interviews

<sup>1</sup> - Jacques Grand’Henry, "Algeria.", in Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics, eds. C. H. M. Versteegh and Mushira Eid (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005), 54.

<sup>2</sup> - Bouhania, Touat Spoken Arabic, 131.

<sup>3</sup> - Ibid.

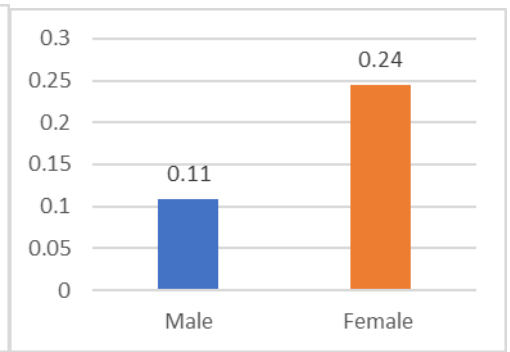
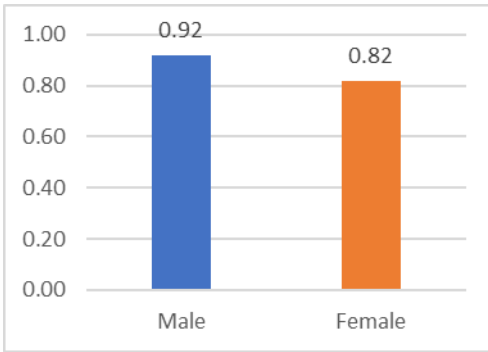
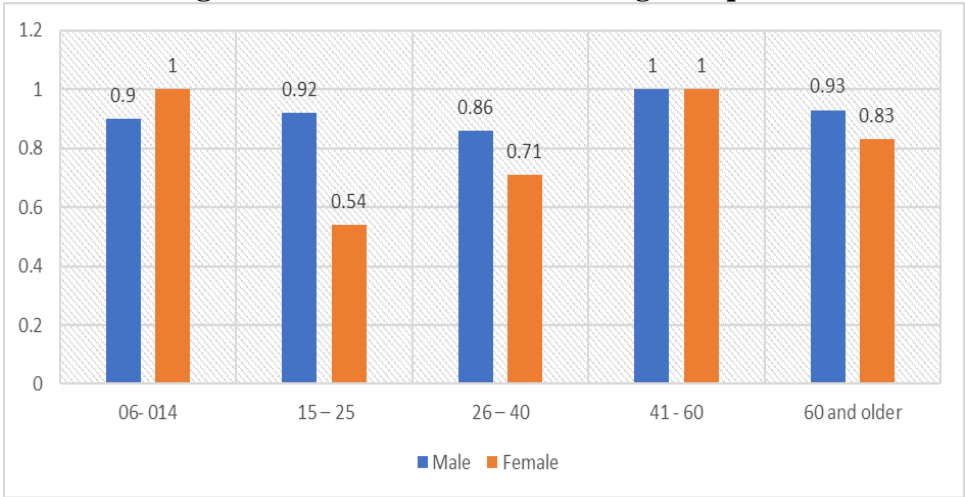
Word MSA	Meaning	[ɣ]	[q]
تغضب	To get angry	[ tɑyɖɑb ]	[ tɑqɖɑb ]
غزال	Gazelle	[ ɣzæɪ ]	[ qzæɪ ]
غربال	Sieve	[ ɣɑrbæɪ ]	[ qɑrbæɪ ]
يغلي	To boil	[ jɑɣɪɪ ]	[ jqɪɪ ]
غيمة	Cloud	[ ɣɑjmə ]	[ qɑjmə ]
يبيغي	To love	[ jɑbyɪ ]	[ jabqɪ ]
غلاف	A cover	[ ɣlæf ]	[ qlæf ]
غالي	Expensive	[ ɣæɪɪ ]	[ qæɪɪ ]
غطاء	Cover	[ ɣtɑ ]	[ qtɑ ]
يدغدغ	To tickle	[ jdæyɖæy ]	[ jdæqdæq ]
يفرغ	To empty	[ jfæræy ]	[ jfæræq ]
مغرب	Maghreb (time)	[ mæyɾæb ]	[ mæqræb ]

## 5.2. Interviews

While the observation phase ascertained that the change in the sound [ɣ] is not random, the attempt to cover people from different ages and gender was a problem. The interviews provided a controlled environment where the use of the variable and the variants were statistically evaluated through the calculation of index scores for each individual. Later, these scores will be compared in different combinations to account for variation in the different age groups and gender.

Figure 01 confirms the results in the observation phase indicating a high use of the variant [q] as the mean of all the indexes is 0.87. A detailed look at the result shows that the minimum index is recorded with female participants aged between 15-25 with a value of 0.54. The value shows that even at the lowest rate the participants in the sample used the variant [q] more than 50 % at the expense of the variable. Conversely, upper value is 1 which is the highest score an index can reach. The latter has been recorded in multiple age groups (female 6 -14, male and female 41-60). These numbers mean that participants with score 1 have abandoned the variable [ɣ] entirely changing it with the sound [q].

**Figure 01. Index Scores of the Usage of [q]**



**Figure 2. Mean Index Scores**

**Figure 3. The Standard Deviation of Indexes**

Figure 2 shows the difference between the mean scores of the male and female participants. The difference is 10 % in favor of men which means that female participants favored the sound [y] over [q] compared to male participants. The lowest index found in female participants is 0.25 and 0.71 with males. In the third figure, the standard deviation of both gender groups is calculated to account for the variation in the use of the linguistic variable. The outcome

divulges that male speakers are more subtle regarding changing the sound [ɣ] over female speakers as the difference is more than 50 %.

## 6. Conclusion

Neither the observation phase nor the interviews are meant to be interpreted separately and the attempt to do otherwise will make the research subtile to fundamental constraints. Therefore, it is the accumulation of both results that enables arriving at the answer of the research questions. As far as the question of whether the change of [ɣ] to [q] is a random linguistic behavior or not, the practical part of the research shows that the repeated occurrence of the behavior is an evidence that it is a perceptible verbal conduct whereby speakers in El-Menia substitute the sound [ɣ] for [q]. Furthermore, the substitution is not limited to words coming from MSA but many words registered in the observation phase are colloquial.

The systematic interpretation of the interviews indicates that the sound change is not confined to a specific social group but it encompasses both male and female speakers. Additionally, the substitution of the sound extends to all age group categories with differences in usage. Unfortunately, the current paper can not yield explanation to the imbalance in the performance of the speakers about the pronunciation of the /ɣ/ due to the insufficient size of the sample. Overall, the answer to the question whether the sound change affect all categories is positive.

As far as the reasons behind the linguistic behavior, they were investigated from two standing points. Taking a structural approach to look at the matter, the review of the literature shows that there is a closeness in phonological features of the sounds [ɣ] and [q]. However, both observation and interviews fail to disclose any pattern that governs the change. Rather, the shift from [ɣ] to [q] occurred in various phonetic environments. Consequently, ruling out the idea that there are rules or constraints that control the sound change.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the paper also failed to provide an answer to an important question which is the origin of the sound change. Although a timeline was established in regard to the history of the people of El-Menia and Chaamba tribes, a definitive source could not be tracked. Additionally, there is an apparent lack in

the literature tackling the subject of the sounds in question in the corpus whether in Algeria or in the Arab speaking countries. Still, the value of the paper can not be overlooked as it has systematically documented the prevailing linguistic phenomena in El-Menia and helped raising more questions.

### 7. Recommendation for Future Research

The absence of previous systematic study of the phonetic change of [ɣ] to [q] renders the work a starting point for more deep and compelling questions that need to be addressed. First, the concept of language change infers to certain possibilities. The change could be in a complete state, however, the existing of both the variable and the variant implies that it is not the case. Reversely, the change could be still in progress. Yet this possibility entails two questions: is the change towards the variable [ɣ] or the variant [q]? Furthermore, language change provokes several topics linked to language contact that need to be examined in relation to the context of the research.

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