

The urban Tlemcenian glottal stop in a prospective coma due to contact and accommodation: A cross-sectional investigation

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Abstract

Although many researchers have attempted to include age as a variable in explaining linguistic variation, the delicate mechanisms via which variability in speech relates to age-grading aspect are still incomplete in especially lesser-known Arabic-speaking communities akin to Tlemcen, an urban city in Algeria. This paper aims at cross-sectionally investigating the sociolinguistic situation occurring in the Tlemcen speech community especially concerning the use of the glottal stop, an urban realisation of classical Arabic *qaf*. With the help of a survey interview, questionnaire and non-participant observation, data were collected from a convenient sample of 122 participants of different age cohorts and genders from Tlemcen. The results show that the dialect contact taking place in the community is moving towards aspects of koineisation, mainly levelling and simplification. Social and psychological features are said to explain the dialectal ruralisation guided by post-adolescent and young male native urban dialect speakers, while females of all ages, including old people, are strictly preservative.

Keywords: Accommodation, age, dialect contact, glottal stop, Tlemcen, speech community.

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1. Introduction

Tlemcen is a province located in the north-western part of Algeria, on the Moroccan border. It is located 700 km far from the capital, Algiers. Historically speaking, Tlemcen is said to be inhabited by Berbers, Arabs and Turkish (Benhalilem, 2015). This heterogeneity in people's origins has led to considerable diversity in their speech where the CA *qaf* is realised as [q] by speakers of Berberophone origins, [g] is used by rural Arabs, and [ʔ] is used by urban Tlemcenians who are said to be of Turkish ancestry. Nowadays, Tlemcen is characterised by this dialectal variability. In order to trace whether change is still occurring in the speech of Tlemcen dialect speakers, unlike previous studies which focused on one group of speakers as case studies, this study gathers speakers from different age cohorts. By this, we aim at answering important research questions: What are the mechanisms of change adopted by speakers of the Tlemcen dialect? Which group of people is said to be most pertinent in promoting dialect change in the Tlemcen speech community?

2. Literature review

2.1. Preface to the sociolinguistic situation in Tlemcen

Throughout its history, Tlemcen has been regarded among the long-founded sedentary centres distinguished from other Algerian areas by highly conservative social and cultural features shown in the speech uttered by its inhabitants, especially with the use of the urban glottal stop (Dendane, 2013). Urban Tlemcen variety of Arabic (TA) is considered amongst the old 'urban' pre-Hilali dialects (Marcais, 1902; Miller, 2007; Versteegh 1997) which were brought about during the 7th and 8th centuries by the first waves of Arab Muslim conquerors (*al fatihin*) into North Africa (Dendane, 2013). The second conquering wave had taken place during the 11th century, especially with the coming of the nomadic Bedouin tribes of *Banu Hilal* who settled in the regions of Maghreb, bringing their lifestyle to the area, namely the bedouin features of Arabic, including the variant [g] of classical *qaf*. These movements have led to the coexistence of two main varieties of Arabic in Tlemcen: the urban dialect, spoken by what Ibn Khaldun labels as *alhadar* 'the civilised' for sedentary people living in the city centre, and the rural dialect, spoken by *al'Arab* 'the Arabs' for nomads/rural people living in remote areas and surrounding environments. This dialectal cut had remained sharp until after achieving Algerian independence in 1962, when a large-scale rural exodus moved to Tlemcen city looking for better life opportunities. As a result, important rural–urban dialect interferences started to take place touching phonological, morphological and lexical levels of TA.

In response to the existing situation, Dekkak (1979) divided speakers into two essential categories: those who have always lived in Tlemcen city and are the true Tlemcenians who Dendane (1993) has called [ʃhɑ:b ʔetli ʔetlek] 'people using the glottal stop', an expression with a negative connotation, and those living in or coming from rural areas, generally known as 'ʕroubiya' the Arabs/Bedouin/outsideers, which is also a pejorative label. Linguistically, members of the first category use the glottal stop to identify themselves as urban, whereas speakers of the other category use the rural variant [g]. More to the point, he states that true Tlemcenians have a good ability in switching between the two coexisting varieties where [g] is used to address someone of 'lower status', who does not belong to the urban community or in situations where someone travels outside Tlemcen, except when the speaker wants to reveal their identity; [ʔ] is always used to show and emphasise Tlemcenian identity and origins as a sign of solidarity among members of the same urban, prestigious community.

2.2. The glottal stop in the Tlemcen speech community

As noted, the most eminent criterion of Tlemcen speech is the glottal stop, but it is clearly and continuously subject to variations in such a dialect contact situation occurring in the community. Surprisingly, Tlemcen native users of the urban variety, who comprise the community's virtual

majority, tend to dig out the glottal stop in favour of the rural velar [g]. This fact has been explained about by some social and psychological reasons mainly gender, age, frequency of contact, avoidance of stigmatisation and gain of social acceptance.

Many researchers interested in the sociolinguistic situation of Tlemcen agree that gender plays a significant role (Dekkak, 1979; Dendane, 1993, 2013; Obeidat & Hammoudi; 2019). They advocate that males switch to the rural variety more than females do. The reason for this lies in the fact that men are trained to freely use and speak the distinct Tlemcenian dialectal varieties as they have more contact with other men coming from different rural regions. Conversely, women refuse any external contact with outsiders and non-Tlemcenians; this very 'subjective' attitude is mirrored in their speech where only [ʔ] is used. Dekkak (1979, p. 21) asserts that it is a 'social norm' that Tlemcenian women use the glottal stop and it will be a 'social heresy' not to do so in daily speech. Interestingly, men, in their dialectal performance, use [ʔ] only when the conversation is 'very relaxed' where the addressee is a close relative, a family member or a friend (Dekkak, 1979). Yet, Dendane (1993) clarifies that this shift does not happen with all urban dialect speakers; people who have no contact with rural tend to preserve their own vernacular features in whatever situation they are in. Women rarely use [g] or [q] even if the context is formal: they show resistance to dialectal change and cherish [ʔ] as very prestigious to enjoy higher social status.

2.3. Age as a variable in speech choice

As far as the age variable is concerned, the quantitative analysis of many studies shows that the younger the speaker, the more they vary their speech, not only in constrained situations but also in conversations out of conditions (Dendane, 2013). However, it should be noted that male children use the urban variety in their communication and daily conversation; up to the age of 15, they speak Tlemcenian as a mother language. When they grow up, from adolescence onwards, stigmatisation and negative attitudes towards the use of the urban variety start to develop because TA is related to 'effeminacy', the reason why natives are often mocked at. Consequently, they stop using it for it deprives them of their manhood thinking that using [g] will give them more social acceptance and power (Dendane, 2013). These results have led researchers to hypothesise that the Tlemcen speech is witnessing a continuous change moving towards a kind of dialect levelling, if not dialect shift. Thus, researchers agree that what is happening to Tlemcenian varieties' reasons may lead to the emergence of a regional koine or a neo-urban variety enhanced by males but conserved and maintained by urban females.

3. Data

To guarantee a high degree of scientific authenticity, integrity and substantiation of results, the researcher utilises both qualitative and quantitative methodologies with the application of a multiple data-gathering approach where triangulation of methods and procedures is opted for.

3.1. Participants

The population of the study is divided according to the place where the research was administered. More precisely, because our research is exploratory, it takes place in Maghreb, a Tlemcen city in the north-west of Algeria. For this reason, the selection of the sample was based on various social and linguistic variables. Accordingly, speakers of both rural and urban dialects (who live in Tlemcen city) formed the nucleus of our work. They were categorised under some basic variables, including gender, age and ancestry. The total number of participants was 122 from Tlemcen. The sample was taken from a group of people who was easy to contact and reach (e.g., in public places including markets, malls, libraries, the street etc.). This type of sampling is known as group sampling, availability sampling or what is generally known as the convenience sample in the sense that people are available and willing

to participate (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The classification and the counting of the participants are taken as a whole and shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' division according to age and gender

Group		[5–11]	[12–17]	[18–35]	[40–55]	[60 +]
Age						
Gender	M	5	6 + 6	14	10	8
	F	5	9 + 13	22	10	14

3.2. Instruments

To successfully and effectively conduct our study, the researcher used a triangulation of instruments that encompasses features of both quantitative as well as qualitative paradigms. Cohen, Manion and Morrision (2000, p. 254) said that '[triangulation is an] attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint'. Thus, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection is necessary for having access to rich, reliable and authentic data. The latter included multiple forms of data collection which was community profile, direct and indirect observations, in-depth semi- and unstructured interviews and a sociolinguistic questionnaire.

3.3. Community profile

The researcher established a community profile, which contained historical background about rural and urban dialects of the Tlemcen speech community. To establish the community profile, the researcher had read the available literature on the community. Secondary data were very helpful in establishing the community profile. Primary data such as observations and unstructured interviews with people from the population helped as well in getting detailed information and facts about the participants.

3.4. The questionnaire

The questionnaire is viewed as a very vital and crucial research instrument since it enables the researcher to gather as much quantitative data as possible in order to gain reliable results. Qualitative data can also be elicited, especially in open-ended questions and those related to aspects of subjective points of view and attitudes. We used a different method in the questionnaire. We did not only design it to answer some sociolinguistic enquiries but also included a separate section where different sentences and expressions were asked to be translated. The main objective was to elicit the frequency of occurrence of the realisations of [q] in the first part of the questionnaire (translating items), as well as to find answers related to reasons and explanations of the studied phenomenon.

3.5. The interview

One of the most common ways of collecting naturally spoken data and spontaneous speech is the sociolinguistic interview. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998, p. 172) said that:

The interview is one of the most widely used research instruments in the social sciences. Consequently, much of our knowledge about the social world is derived from information generated during interviews especially when ideas are expressed unconsciously. However, research interviews are themselves periods of social interaction between parties.

The questions asked during the interview were generally directly related to the linguistic issue. The researcher used a smooth conversational transition from very broad to very specific questions to get enough consistent information from the participants.

4. Methods and materials

While investigating the Tlemcen speech, the researcher concentrated on three main points in her data gathering:

1. The frequency of the occurrence of the glottal stop and its counterpart [g] in the pronunciation of the speakers;
2. The attitudes of the informants towards the spoken variety;
3. Reasons behind the use/neglect of the studied variants.

For this to be achieved, the researcher designed a sort of questionnaire to be distributed to all the samples. The questionnaire was administered either verbally or in the written form (hard copy), according to the situations we were found in as well as people who we talked to. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: the first was about the informants' personal data including age, gender, residential area and ancestry. The second involved a set of sentences written in standard Arabic; the respondents were asked to translate them in their daily dialect. The final question was directed to elicit the attitudes of the informants towards the spoken variety, as well as the urban Tlemcenian one particularly.

We chose schools and academic institutions to be places for the process of investigation. The reason behind this is that: first, schools gather subjects of similar age. Thus, the variable of age is adequately present. Second, the behaviour of those informants is similar because they are influenced by each other. Third, these academic places welcome scientific research and researchers; this makes it easy for us to progress with the investigation.

A. University students

The questionnaire was distributed by the researcher herself. The first addressed sample included students from the University of Tlemcen. We chose students from different departments. The students (males and females) were very helpful and excited about the type of questions they were responding to. Several interesting conversations were opened in parallel with the process of answering the queries. These topics helped us a lot in developing our work, especially things related to social and attitudinal facts. The questionnaire was administered in Arabic and explained in dialectal Tlemcenian (rural or urban depending on the addressee) and sometimes in French when needed.

B. Middle school pupils

The second step was to find samples from a different age than the former. Thence, our direction was addressing pupils of the middle school (Salima Taleb in Tlemcen city). Happily, the pupils (girls and boys) were so excited about the activity, especially after we introduced ourselves as well as the aim of our work. The same type of questions was seriously responded to by the pupils. Some remarks were added orally since small conversations were discussed. Concerning their age and their way of thinking and viewing things, the researcher attempts to explain the questions in simpler language sometimes by using CA, TA and even French. At this stage, the survey was not tiring at all, but rather beneficial; pupils were so serious that their answers were really important in the process of analysis.

C. Secondary school students

Participants aged under 20 and above 14 were needed in our experimental study. As conducted with the other groups of informants, the researcher selected a day specific to this sample too. Because we were afraid of people's reactions not to help us as much as we wanted, we waited for the true time for precise selection of our sample which was during the final exams in secondary schools (Baccalaureate) where the researcher waited for the pupils to finish their exams to be able to answer at ease. Correspondingly, everything went in the direct direction that the researcher had planned (although we had some problems with the police because of the type of questions we were asking).

The questionnaire was distributed to our sample after asking their permission and whether they were originally (born and bred) from Tlemcen city or not. The pupils were so excited about the topic.

This fact led to a long debate between them (rural vs. urban) which we considered very interesting and helpful as it matched the aims of our study. The researcher took advantage of the situational conversation since it was really spontaneously done and not previously intentioned to happen. Therefore, we started our observation of the different perspectives towards the social dimension of the dialects used in Tlemcen and their effects on the individual, as well as on the society as a whole.

D. Elderly people

People above the age 40 and less than 55 are generally known as the elderly group of the society. In our survey, this category of individuals was shopkeepers, taxi drivers and some intellectual persons, who we used to meet at the Central Public Library in Tlemcen city. To this sample, an orally administered interview was conducted. At this stage, the participants appreciated and encouraged the researcher and the way in which she was handling things. Consequently, their answers were of greater importance, especially that they achieved a higher educational level.

E. Old people

People above the age of 55 were chosen randomly from public places where they were generally gathered in the city. Because the research was carried out in the holy month of Ramadan, old people were expected to be free day and night to provide help and talk in detail about the topic. First of all, the researcher introduced herself as well as the subject of her experiment. Because the sample achieved a certain level of education, they understood our aim from the study and just were spontaneous in their responses. At the very beginning, we asked them to give translations to the same expressions that were designed in the linguistic questionnaire since we have said that we were only trying to find the linguistic characteristics of Tlemcen speech. Interestingly, the subjects found the task very easy and funny. Once they arrived at a certain point of feeling at ease with the researcher, we introduced the idea of attitude for it forms the nucleus of our investigation. The average time that each conversation took was from 5 to 15 minutes, depending on the motivation and participation of the informants. The discussion was carried out in the urban Tlemcenian dialect so that participants could feel comfortable talking in the variety they used at home. Sometimes we needed to switch to the French language to be understood since most of the old people in Tlemcen are highly competent in that language. Answers were taken down on a sheet of paper specific to every individual. Attitudes were claimed overtly, especially on the recent use of the urban variety by the new generation and especially at home (and family constraints).

F. Children

Children aged 11 and below were also of significant importance in our investigation. By taking into account their age, children were not asked about their attitudes. We only needed to observe their linguistic behaviour. The latter was either with their friends or among family members. Conversations were only observed in spontaneous current without them paying attention in a very informal setting: the street. These conversations happened to be in the Tlemcenian variety. We only opted for the changes that could happen in their interactive discussions (generally according to their addressee).

5. Results

Our data are classified according to the linguistic and social variables on which the whole research is based. Since the same questionnaire was distributed to different groups of the sample population, we analysed the collected data according to the questions asked. The observation, interview and questionnaire aimed at similar issues; this is why we manage to put our results together (according to the general questions).

5.1. Evidence for dialect mixing

The first part of the questionnaire includes several words and utterances that participants were asked to translate. This strategy helps us rating the frequency of occurrence of the dialectal phonetic realisations of *qaf* that may be found in the speech of Tlemcen speakers. Its realisation varies from one case to another. Our results show the parallel presence of rural as well as urban variants of /q/. The informants who are Tlemcenians (live, work and study) provide both voiced and unvoiced /q/-articulations, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Some examples where the different relational variants of *qaf* occur

[ʔ]	[q]	[g]	[k]	Gloss
darwaʔ	**	**	darwek	Now
lwaʔt	lwaqt	**	**	Time
ʔa:l	qa:l	ga:l	kal	Say
**	**	jegʔud	**	Sit

According to the collected data, we divided the realisations under some categories:

1. [ʔ] and [g] are in free variation: one can substitute the other without any change in meaning. [ʔ] is generally used by urban Tlemcen speakers and [g] is used by rural speakers.
2. Only [g] is used in some words
3. [q] and [ʔ] are in free variation (in these words [g] cannot be utilised)
4. [g] and [q] are in complementary distribution where the substitution of one by another causes a change in the meaning of the word.

Throughout the long-term observation and recordings, a general remark can be made: the above categories certainly experience a mixing situation.

5.2. Social and psychological realities related to the linguistic situation in Tlemcen

Question 1: Aims at knowing which dialect participants speak at home. Table 3 summarises the answers.

Table 3. The variety spoken at home by the participants

Dialect spoken		Urban		Rural	
Group	Total N°	Males	Females	Males	Females
Children	(5 M, 5 F)	5	5	0	0
Middle	(6 M, 13 F)	4	12	2	1
Secondary	(6 M, 9 F)	1	7	5	2
University	(14 M, 22 F)	3	19	11	3
Elderly	(10 M, 10 F)	6	8	4	2
Old	(8 M, 4 F)	7	4	1	0

Table 3 summarises the answers related to the variety of speech that is used in the daily life of the participants. We noted that children, regardless of their gender, tended to use the urban Tlemcenian dialect at home: 0% of the subjects under the age of 10. We should also note that this group of participants was observed by the researcher in different situations. Most of these circumstances were in family contexts where children were with their parents, friends and colleagues in primary school. Therefore, our results show that the urban dialect is maintained in childhood (especially if the parents are of urban background).

The second group consists of participants under the age of 16. The table shows that at this age, male speakers still use the urban variety in their home environment. Four out of six tend to utter the [ʔ] variant in their daily speech with their family members. Two out of six males started using the rural

variety with their parents and sisters (they claimed that this variety was the same one used outside the house). Females, on the other hand, still stick to the urban Tlemcenian dialect. Only 1/13 females claimed the use of [g] variant because she is from a rural background and it is the variety used by her parents too. Hence, we noted that male adolescents tend to shift from their home variety to use the rural one even in unconstrained situations like home rather than females who did not show any shifting.

The third group involves participants above the age of 15. The results that are illustrated in the table indicate that there is a remarkable degree in the shifting, especially in males' speech. Only one out of six male participants use the [ʔ] in their daily interaction. The others use the [g] variant consistently. Females, on the other hand, still show little willingness in shifting: seven out of nine use the urban variety; the other two participants are from a rural background. Thus, the numbers reveal a fact that males are in progressive use of the rural dialect.

The fourth group involves university students. Again, the table shows that only 3 males out of 14 *confessed* their urban dialectal use. A larger number of male participants claimed their rural dialect use. On the other hand, only 3 out of 22 female speakers tend to use the rural variety at both home and outside (as they claimed since they travel constantly). Thence, progressive use of the [g] variant was noted to take place in the city of Tlemcen.

The fifth group contains elderly people, i.e., participants above the age of 40. Most of them were shopkeepers who have long been in the commercial domain (and therefore their dialect is influenced because of their daily interaction with people from different areas and origins as they stated). We observed that 6 out of 10 used the urban variety at home, whereas 4 out of 10 used the rural one. The situation of change is having a stable level by the shifting of male speakers. However, elderly females show a high level of urban Tlemcen dialect preservation that 8 out of 10 strictly use it.

The last group is devoted to old people: participants above the age of 60. All of the participants, regardless of their gender, tend to use the urban Tlemcenian variety at home, except for one male speaker who sometimes uses the [q] variant. Dialect maintenance was very notable in this group.

The second question aims at knowing whether participants are obliged to change their dialect from urban to rural. Table 4 illustrates the respondents' answers in relation to their situational obligation of shifting from their home variety to the other.

Table 4. Shifting dialects of the participants

		Yes	No
Middle	Male	5	1
	Female	3	10
Secondary	Male	6	0
	Female	4	5
University	Male	14	0
	Female	7	15
Elderly	Male	10	0
	Female	2	8
Old	Male	3	5
	Female	0	4

From first sight, the researcher noted that the answers show a huge difference between men and women's shifting (as shown in Figure 1). On the one hand, 42 out of 58 females (72.41%) showed negative answers towards shifting to the rural variety. On the other hand, 38 out of 44 male subjects (86.36%) mentioned positive responses concerning their ability to shift. Something remarkable is that males score 100% for shifting in the three groups: secondary, university and elderly, which means that the use of the rural [g] is witnessing its peak at the age period between 15 and 47. This can be

explained by the fact that the Tlemcen dialect is still widely used by females who find lesser obligations in shifting rather than males.

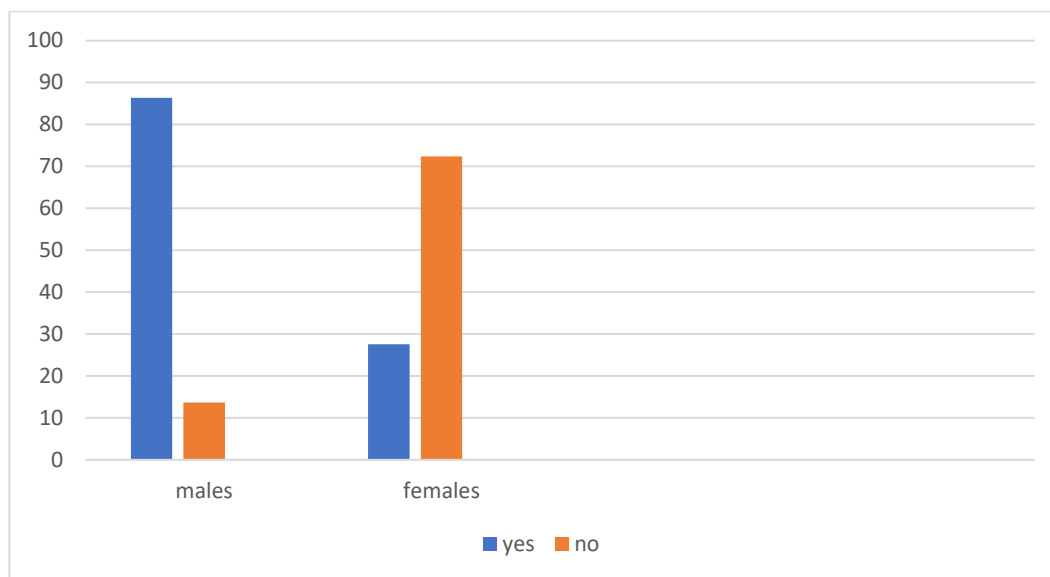


Figure 1. Participants' situational obligation of switching

When asked to give a justification, most of the participants claim that it is according to the situation that the speaker changes their linguistic behaviour. Males change their dialect and tend to shift to the rural one more often because of their direct frequent interaction with outsiders, job obligations and especially the feminine connotation related to the use of the glottal stop. Females, on the other hand, do not switch or change their dialect unless in situations where they feel embarrassed, mocked or misunderstood.

Question 3: Aims at eliciting the circumstances which affect dialect use and shifting.

Table 5. Circumstances that may influence the dialect of the speaker and, therefore, may lead to shifting

Participants		Travelling	Marriage	Sex	Topic	Addressee
Middle	Male	4	0	5	0	2
	Female	10	5	1	1	3
Secondary	Male	6	0	4	1	4
	Female	6	5	0	2	0
University	Male	14	0	7	5	5
	Female	13	7	4	5	1
Elderly	Male	10	0	7	10	6
	Female	1	3	0	0	2
Old	Male	0	0	3	0	5
	Female	0	0	2	2	2

Table 5 and Figure 2 show the circumstances where participants are found to shift from their urban variety, i.e., no use of the glottal stop. Accordingly, we noted that travelling scores the highest rate for both genders. In other words, both (72.27%) males and (51.72%) females view that moving out of the city of Tlemcen brings them under the obligation of avoiding the glottal stop. As far as the second variable is concerned, we noted that for males, marriage does not necessitate them to change their language behaviour as opposed to women who (34.48%) consider the aspect of marriage (especially with a non-Tlemcenian) a strong reason not to use the [ʔ] variant in their dialect. The topic of discussion is of considerable importance for males more than females. We noted that 36.36% of them

paid attention to the subject of conversation rather than 17.24% of females. Interestingly, males show more interest in the addressee: 50% of them changed their variety concerning to whom they were talking to. Females, on the other hand, did not really show a great obligation as far as their interlocutors were concerned. Therefore, one may claim that Tlemcenian males pay attention to their speech more than females and find themselves in circumstances where they have to change their home variety and, more precisely, avoidance of the glottal stop. However, females stick to their urban home variety and do not find any stress in the use of the [ʔ] variant in differing situations except for marriage as well as travelling out of the Tlemcen district. Table 6 summarises the reasons that push you to use/ avoid this dialect.

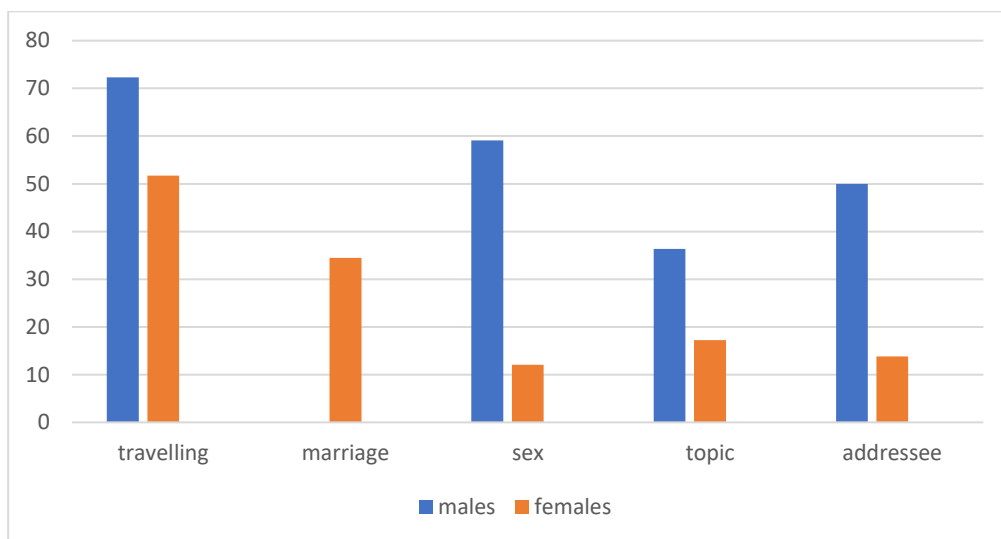


Figure 2. Participants' situations of shifting

Table 6. Reasons to use/avoid the urban dialect

Reasons to avoid the glottal stop	Reasons to use the glottal stop
- To avoid mockery	- It is part of the identity
- To be understood	- Once being with family
- To interact with out-group people	- To interact within group people
- Not to sound racist or selfish	- To be raised this way
- Associated with feminine behaviour	
- Work constraints	

Question 4: Do you feel embarrassed when using *U* out of home and friends?

As shown in Table 6 and Figure 3, male participants show a higher rate in their feelings of embarrassment and shame in using the urban variety, especially with [ʔ] variant. Females, on the other hand, claim that they are not ashamed at all in using the glottal stop in their speech. As for males, 43.18% of them claimed that they did not feel ashamed of using the urban variety; we noted that 1 out of 18 males aged between 45 and 85 showed positive answers. Therefore, we assume that female urban Tlemcenian dialect speakers are very proud of using this variety; the same applies to elderly and old males. Youngsters, however, claim that they are embarrassed with the glottal stop (we will consider the reasons in the following section) and therefore avoid it as much as they can.

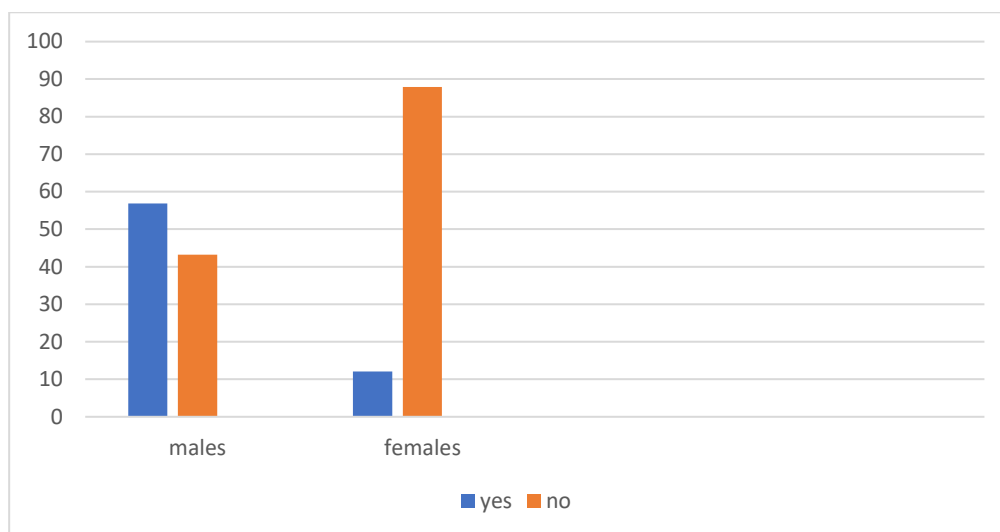


Figure 3. Percentage of the feeling embarrassment associated with the use of the urban variety

6. Discussion

In answering the question of ‘what is the nature of the studied linguistic situation: is it an expectation of dialect shift, an emergence of an Algerian Arabic regional koine or just a bi-dialectal competence exercised by TA speakers?’, earlier research confirmed that speakers of different, but mutually intelligible, dialects may show some change in their way of speaking once their varieties come into contact. The change in variety depends on the period of contact: if contact is for a short period, then the speech will only have temporary, situational and contextual modifications. However, if it is for a prolonged time, its effect will be pertinent where intermarriage of varieties occurs; some features can be adopted, others can be lost. Therefore, dialect contact occurring between urban and rural varieties in Tlemcen may lead to differing outcomes.

6.1. Accommodation or bi-dialectalism

Trudgill (1986, p. 39) claims that ‘speakers accommodate each other linguistically by reducing dissimilarities between their speech patterns and adopting features from each other’s speech’. Accordingly, the participants tended to adopt features of other dialects regarding the use or non-use of the glottal stop. The direction of accommodation moves from the urban variety to the rural one, especially by males. Trudgill (1986) adds that ‘speakers during accommodation reduce dissimilarities with other speakers, not imitate them slavishly’ (Trudgill, 1986, p. 58). Thence, linguistic accommodation is not total in all dialect contact situations and may, therefore, be partial (Trudgill, 1986, quoted in Kherbache, 2017). In this vein, Trudgill (1986, p. 62) identifies three types of incomplete accommodations:

- a) By altering their own variant of a form with that of the other speakers;
- b) By using the other speakers’ variant in some words but not others (transfer/mixed dialect);
- c) By using pronunciations intermediate between those of the two accents in contact (approximation/fudged dialects).

Our results show another type of imperfect accommodation which is mainly dialectal hypercorrection. Participants substitute the glottal stop by its rural counterpart [g] in instances where [q] is the sole phonetic realisation of *qaf*, e.g., *[gbel] vs. [qbel] ‘before’. Therefore, their accommodation is not complete since they do not master the rules of [q]-realisational use in the rural

variety which results in hypercorrection. This hypercorrection reflects the speakers' incomplete bi-dialectal competence.

According to Wilson (2010), there are distinct types of accommodation that may form a continuum: from full accommodation, i.e., acquisition of full linguistic features of the host variable to complete non-accommodation which refers to no assimilation to forms of the host variety (as cited in Kherbache 2017). The latter (lack of accommodation) implies native variant retention, and most female speakers – in Tlemcen – retained their variant forms. The expectation of complete accommodation (Niedzielski & Giles, 1996, change by accommodation model) by males in Tlemcen is in continuous processing (cited in Kherbache, 2017). It would be achieved as change occurs at a community level where a particular new linguistic feature is adopted and used by speakers at the expense of the original variant that is threatened to be lost (ibid).

6.2. The outcomes of dialect contact and the emergence of koineisation

Along long-term contact between mutually intelligible varieties of similarly existing dialects emerged distinct linguistic results. These include processes that follow accommodation such as mixing and levelling the prevailing koineisation to occur.

• Mixing

The process of mixing has been defined as 'the coexistence of features with origins in the different input dialects within the new community, usually because speakers have different dialect origins' (Kerswill & Trudgill, 2005, p. 197). Tlemcen's speech community too is witnessing an emergence of a mixed dialect: a dialect that is neither extremely *fully* bedouin nor *abusively* urban. According to the daily observations that we made, Tlemcen inhabitants are paving the way for a common dialect where the glottal stop is subjectively prone to non-utilisation. Therefore, as mentioned in Kherbache's (2017) work, in front of mixed and competing forms, speakers select what to use and what not to use and it is at this level that some new features are adopted and some original ones are levelled out as a consequence of accommodation that leads to convergence and levelling (Auer & Hinskens, 2005), as is the case in Tlemcen town.

• Levelling: urbanisation versus ruralisation

The process of levelling is of great importance when mutually intelligible varieties come into contact. In the same line of thought, Britain (2010, p. 199) proposes the term convergent linguistic accommodation claiming that it usually gives birth to levelling where 'highly local dialect forms are often beginning to be eroded, levelled away in favour of spatially more widely distributed variants'. This is the case of [g] in Tlemcen as it is the most widely used variant in Algeria. Accordingly, linguistic variables that are marked and stigmatised tend to be avoided in favour of others that are more prestigious and less negatively perceived. In Tlemcen, speakers abandon the urban [ʔ] and start to heavily adopt the rural one, making it a directed ruralisation process. Consequently, Tlemcen city proves to be an exceptional case of the Arab world in matters of dialect change orientation.

Although the operation of change is taking a divergent direction, the issue that we notice in the studied speech community is that is it majority of the native group who linguistically follow the minority group. This contradicts the idea that was claimed by Kerswill and Trudgill (2005) that the majority group of speakers 'preserve its own variety with differing degrees of admixture of linguistic features found in the variety of the host community'. Consequently, 'when there are minority groups with a non-powerful native majority group, the process of koineisation may take place' (Kherbache, 2017, p. 248). Levelling is one step towards linguistic koineisation. The studied speech community witnesses such kind of contact which results in the fact that the non-powerful majority native group is following the virtual minority non-native one which may be an indicator of a koineisation process.

Relying on the linguistic evidence of mixing and then that of levelling, can we assume an upcoming process of koineisation in the studied speech communities? The answer cannot be precise since the coexisting dialectal varieties show vague linguistic results. What is prominent and pretty sure to take

place is the existence of dialect shift 'showing mixing and variability in the use of competing forms via the process of levelling' (Kherbache, 2017, p. 250). Hernandez-Campoy (2003) provided an equation for the idea that change reaches completion after several stages as follows:

$$X \rightarrow X/Y \rightarrow Y$$

X: native feature in categorical use by its native speakers;

Y: the newly adopted variant from another variety;

X/Y: the occurrence of both as mixed forms/alternative use (quoted in Kherbache, 2017, p. 251).

If we are to follow Hernandez-Campoy's equation, we believe that we will come to a certain stage in the change, since in Tlemcen speech community the two variants are in alternative use. This means that the linguistic change is at an advanced level.

Returning to the idea of hypercorrection in the operation of dialect mixing, Bassiouney (2009) states, about Guy et al. (1996, p. 90) that 'usually irregularities in the usage of a variable may provide evidence of linguistic change in progress'. She argues that 'if a phonological variable such as *q* in Arabic is used irregularly by a specific community, this may be a sign of a change in progress'. Following the quantitative data as well as the frequency of occurrence of the studied variables, there is strong evidence that *qaf* is variably used by rural and urban inhabitants of the studied towns. This frequency depends on which variant is socially highly valued. In Tlemcen, the glottal stop is stigmatised. As a consequence, results confirm that the variable is undergoing a sound change: from the sedentary [ʔ] to the rural [g] in Tlemcen. Original native speakers are accommodating and adopting the non-native pronunciation of (*q*).

6.3. Factors leading to dialect change

What are the factors that govern this dialect behaviour: social or psychological ones? Informal interviews as well as non-participant observations show very important results concerning the reasons that push speakers to shift from their home variety to another one. These reasons are generally classified under two categories: social and psychological ones.

6.3.1. Social factors

• Ancestry and nature of the situation

To have a clear picture of the nature of the accommodation that is happening in Tlemcen, we ought to examine two essential factors: ancestry and the nature of the situation where the speaker is.

The idea of ancestry (as we classified our informants under the basis of urban/rural) has a crucial impact on the speech community of Tlemcen. In addition to the researcher's intuition, the survey's results show that there is a big social tension between rural and urban speakers in Tlemcen. Each group considers themselves as the native inhabitants of the district and tends to strongly highlight their dialectal differences which distinguish them from speakers of the urban one and city inhabitants. Therefore, people of rural background tend to keep using the [g] variant in their speech claiming that their language reflects their identity as well as their personality. Urban informants, on the other hand, attempt to switch to the rural one though they strongly mention their pride in belonging to the urban identity. The final claim is only reflected in the speech of females who are so conservative and attempt to preserve the Tlemcenian glottal stop (they state that TA is their noble ancestral linguistic heritage).

The nature of the contextual situation proves to be of paramount importance in the operation of dialect change. Examples, such as travelling, marriage, the topic of discussion, the addressee etc. were all involved in the speakers' answers regarding the circumstances that push them to switch.

- **Age**

Trudgill (1986) claims that children, as a category of speakers, play a very important role in the process of dialect mixture and new dialect formation (quoted in Kherbache, 2017, p. 241). He explains this for the fact that children 'are well known to be much more rapid and complete accommodators than adults' (p. 31). Interestingly, age has been and still is considered as a salient sociolinguistic variable, especially in the explanation of the process of dialect change.

In the present work, we are dealing with dialect change in the Tlemcen speech community in apparent time, i.e., studying linguistic change by making comparisons on the speech of people from different age groups at one point in time. Our objective is, of course, to find out the differences in speech between people of distinct generations and to elicit the mechanisms via which change occurs; we want to see where the transformation happens (how and why) and where retention is.

In Tlemcen, not only do female children use the glottal stop, but male children also do. It is their mother tongue, their L1 which is not yet influenced by outside contact nor is it shaped by social connotations.

The age group 15–25 shows an unstable state in dialect pronunciation. Adolescents and youngsters are influenced by distinct types of transitions, broader contact and acquaintances, which affect their linguistic behaviour and the social and cognitive connotations associated with certain linguistic features (see below the effect of socialisation on dialect change).

As expected, young Tlemcen males play a crucial role in dialect change. More correctly, they reflect the present state of the linguistic situation that the city's arrived to. Elderly and old people, on the other axe of the line, tend to keep their original variety without seeing any need to change. Some male participants claim that despite their origin as urban, they use the rural [g] because of the nature of their works and occupation (e.g., shopkeepers, military forces, teachers, doctors etc.) [g], which gives a status to male speakers. Tlemcenian females above the age of 30 are so conservative in their use of [ʔ]. Finally, old people are seen to preserve their original home variety. Those who have urban origins use the glottal stop; those who have rural origins use [g] variant in their speech. What was obvious was that all of those who were questioned said that they use [ʔ] with their young children and grandsons to keep their dialect safe.

- **Gender**

Researchers (such as Labov, 1972) have proposed the 'prestige' notion as the most salient feature in women's speech. In other words, females tend to use variables that they consider more prestigious than other counterparts. On the other hand, men attempt to use the rural variety that is said to be more adequate for males as it symbolises not only the men's nature as being strong and tough but also their identity as they claimed they are proud of. Females play a crucial role in the process of linguistic accommodation and change. It has been claimed that women have greater sensitivity to the social status associated with certain variants which help them gain social capital and advance their social standing. In Tlemcen, however, the situation is a bit complex: females view the glottal stop as prestigious and, therefore, keep using and preserving it. Males, on the other hand, stigmatise [ʔ] and try their best to avoid it in order to gain social approval. The situation is then paradoxical. Women's speech is in fact the 'language of powerlessness' (Chambers, 1995). The present findings suggest the idea that females use the [ʔ] to seek prestige and, therefore, gain social status. This is why they keep preservation in Tlemcen due to the weak ties and remote contact with rural speech communities. Males use [g] to seek power and show social capital this is why they are leaders of change towards ruralisation in Tlemcen, especially in relation to their wider social networks.

6.3.2. Psychological factors

- **Speakers' awareness and linguistic choice**

Many scholars (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Trudgill, 1986) have claimed that the contributing factors in the framework of accommodation are the social and linguistic factors that are generally related to salience and socially marked features. Salience (as cited in Kherbache, 2017) is tightly

related to the linguistic feature of a particular variety whose speakers are *aware* of to the extent that is more notable than others. Hence, it is according to the degree of the language users' awareness (salience) and their cognitive perception that a certain variable may turn into a marker. If it is becoming stronger, then it will turn into a stereotype (Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1986). In this vein, Trudgill (1986, p. 11) states four factors by which a particular linguistic variable is relatively high in speakers' consciousness:

1. Forms which are overtly stigmatised in a particular community. This overt stigmatisation is due to the high status variant of the stigmatised form and this matches up with the orthography.
2. Forms that are currently involved in linguistic change.
3. Variables whose variants are phonetically radically different.
4. Variables that are involved in the maintenance of phonological contrasts.

If we are to apply what Trudgill (1986) suggested, if the source of salience is stigma, the variant is not likely to be adopted (Kherbache, 2017, p. 258). However, in Tlemcen, again, it is the urban [ʔ] that is receiving the stigma attitude; and hence speakers of native Tlemcenian are adopting the rural variety (especially males). Interestingly, in the latter speech community, the degree of awareness about the salient variant is too high in both native and non-native speakers' consciousness, and thus it is taking a 'stereotype direction'. This follows Siegel (2010, p. 121) statement that 'the prediction would be that a variant in D2 would be more likely to be acquired when the corresponding variation in D1 is stigmatised'. This can be illustratively summarised as the following:

The variant [g] of the variable (q) instead of the native [ʔ] in Tlemcen.

Following the attitudes and opinions given by the participants, the majority of Tlemcen native [ʔ] speakers consider it as a source of stigma, especially once uttered in constrained situations and with outsiders who generally mock them and their soft [ʔ] pronunciation; [g] is thus the newly adopted feature in their speech. Some of the participants' answers show that they receive comments on their linguistic behaviour, especially in public places. This leads them either to reduce or enhance the use of the studied variants. In this respect, Trudgill (1986, p. 39) states that 'if a speaker accommodates frequently enough to a particular accent or dialect ... then the accommodation may in time become permanent, particularly if attitudinal factors are favourable'. This means that the strong attitudinal orientations (negative vs. positive connotations associated with the use or non-use of the studied variants) of the speakers are the key to understanding their linguistic behaviour.

• Stigma versus prestige

Although the choice may be highly contextually oriented, stigmatisation is still having a ground in people's attitudes towards the process of shifting. Our findings nearly contrast with Al-Wer's (2014, p. 407) claim that Amman participants shifting 'is not an issue of one variant being prestigious while the other is stigmatised'.

The Tlemcenian speech community shows great emphasis on this idea and does not need a sophisticated analysis. The results and facts show that there is a high level of complexity in terms of stigma and prestige associated with the glottal stop. And as a native speaker, it is difficult to separate between the two opinions:

1. The glottal stop is seen as a prestigious variant for both native and non-native speakers in Tlemcen. The former consider it as a cultural heritage that makes them different from other speakers, inhabitants and outsiders. The latter view it as a social class marker, in the sense, that is a mark of wealth and advancement as well as belonging to a high class, having Turkish beauty and coming from a rich background. Urban dialect speakers are highly valued in Tlemcen society and even outside it.
2. The glottal stop is stigmatised by both native and non-native speakers in Tlemcen. The former believe that it is embarrassing to keep talking in it, especially in mixed contexts and particularly by male speakers. It is regarded as shameful to use [ʔ] by male youngsters especially. The latter think

that the glottal stop is a reason for racism along the district. Strongly believed, rural participants agree on the idea that [ʔ] leads to social stratification and gender discrimination. For them, speakers of urban Tlemcenian tend to have more value and more opportunities wherever they go and participate. They include examples of educational settings, administrative issues and social relationships, such as marriage etc. For them, the rural variety (especially the pure Bedouin one) receives a very subjective attitude. It is associated with poor countryside people; it only refers to backwardness and ignorance more precisely when used by females or in a tough Bedouin accent. Therefore, it can be deduced that the glottal stop is not only a matter of prestigious or stigmatised linguistic item; rather, it moved beyond this to have psychological effects which show social consequences.

This dual conflicted socio-psychological linguistic situation puts us in front of another question about Tlemcen urban dialect: Is this a power of dialect or a dialect of power? The results show that the urban variety has social and psychological effects on the district in general and on individuals in particulars. This makes it a dialect of more powerful people since it is a marker of *virtually* high social class. It also gives its users power once they interact with it (the dialect has a certain social power which gives an advantage to its users). This stratification leads to a racist society where virtual conflicts are present in Tlemcen between urban and rural speakers.

Therefore, the stigma/prestige dichotomy is very serious in the case of the Tlemcen speech community. Although male participants show an advanced degree of switching (initiating dialect change), females tend to stick to the [ʔ] variant in their speech and work to preserve it. This conservatism and preservation of [ʔ] cause some psychological, as well as social, inequities among Tlemcen (rural and urban) inhabitants.

7. Conclusion

Starting with the idea that language mirrors identity, we have seen the role of regional identity, origin and ancestry in dialect change and how it is performed or escaped linguistically. The results show that Tlemcen participants (originally urban) are adopting a rural identity which is mainly characterised by the displacement of the original urban glottal stop by its rural counterpart [g]. This dialect change is going towards ruralisation; linguistic diffusion is thence counter-hierarchical.

The results of our study reflect the existence of a bi-dialectal competence along the process of shifting. However, the performance is sometimes not right and urban speakers tend to make mistakes by their overuse of the [g] wherever [ʔ] normally exists in their urban original variety. This results in linguistic hypercorrection which is assumed (by the researcher) to be another type of imperfect accommodation and a sign that the bi-dialectal competence of Tlemcen speakers is still not complete.

We also investigated the role of gender in dialect shift and retention. The statistics reflect the fact that the investigation of Tlemcen inhabitants shows that females do not shift from their urban variety (although stigmatised) and keep using the glottal stop, while males tend to shift to the rural dialect. The two aspects of femininity and masculinity are the first and foremost reason behind dialectal shift. Of course, females naturally show their feminine side which is reflected in the way in which they speak. For this aim, Tlemcenian females do not need to shift since they are already speakers of an urban variety which they participate in its preservation. On the other hand, males show their masculine side which also ought to be reflected in their speech and, therefore, we find that Tlemcenians are under an obligation of switching from their urban [ʔ] to the rural [g]. As a consequence, we believe that looking for power and social status is not only the objective of females who use the urban, soft varieties but also males want to gain a certain social power which leads them to the use of more tough and masculine varieties.

Age also plays a role in dialect preservation and transformation. What is common between the two speech communities is that elderly (above the age of 40) and old people (above the age of 55) tend to

speak the native variety. Regardless their gender, old participants in Tlemcen, speak the urban [ʔ]. None of them showed dialect shift (some exceptions were found in the Tlemcen speech community where participants switch to use the sedentary [q] when being outside the district). Another result is that adolescents and youngsters (age below 35) show high rates of shifting, especially males in Tlemcen. Children (below the age of 14) are users of the urban variety in both speech communities except for some male participants who showed a mixed situation. Consequently, it can be confirmed that old people play a great role in dialect preservation, whereas youngsters are the essence of the dialect shift.

Another important point of discussion is the stigma/prestige dichotomy. In earlier works, it has been always claimed that in most countries, like Jordan, urban forms are more prestigious than rural ones. Yet, it cannot be generalised all over the Arab world. The Tlemcen community shows an exception where the urban glottal stop is getting the stigma attitude and, therefore, it is avoided and much more abandoned by especially male speakers in favour of the rural [g].

Accordingly, participants' attitudes towards or against the variety they use function vitally in the direction of linguistic change. Results of the investigation reflect the fact that people from childhood are aware of the sociolinguistic situation at hand. Attitudes range from positive to negative regarding the use of one variety rather than another. In the Tlemcen speech community, the case is a little bit different, for the glottal stop creates and reflects a racist society as it is a social class marker. Accordingly, attitudes range from very positive to very negative. However, positive viewers claim that the glottal stop is part of the Tlemcen culture which makes it independent and different from other districts, belonging to a civilised identity, forming a certain class that is particular to them, marking educated people, negative viewers advocate that the glottal stop leads to social class stratification which lead to social inequity problems, especially regional ones, gender issues, administrative affairs, marriages etc. Along with the research, there are people of middle positioned attitudes; they are speakers of a mixed dialect which is approximating both varieties and characterised by the neglection of all marked features which may result in a regional koine.

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