

A Consonant Shift in Kuwaitis' Speech: Challenging the Bedouin vs Sedentary Hypothesis the Case of [tʃ]

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ABSTRACT

In light of sociolinguist phonological change, the following study investigates the shift of [tʃ] to [k] sound in the speech of Kuwaitis and argues against the Bedouin/Sedentary distinction. The main hypothesis is twofold: first the shift seems to be driven not by the differences between the sedentary and Bedouin varieties, but by the widespread of the English language as a prestige form and by the recent change of Kuwaitis' lifestyle; second, the shift is not totally in the direction of [k], but rather in the direction of a lexical replacement by either English loanwords, classical Arabic, or other Arab dialects. To test this hypothesis, 130 informants were informally interviewed. 503 tokens were collected and were examined across gender, age, level of education. Their speech was phonetically transcribed and accordingly was quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Results indicate that the [tʃ] variant is undergoing change and that the social parameters and the significant social changes, that Kuwait has undergone recently, have triggered this linguistic shift.

Key words: Sociolinguistics, Phonology, Kuwaiti Variable, Social Parameters

INTRODUCTION

One of the phonological processes in Arabic variation that has attracted sociolinguists is the affrication of /k/ to /tʃ/ in dialect groups spoken along the east and west coast of the Persian Gulf and the middle territory of Saudi Arabia, in addition to the Bedouin-origin varieties in the Levant and Iraq (Johnstone, 1967). Among the researchers who investigated the variation between [tʃ] and [k] in the Arab world are Ingham (2004), Al-Wer (1999), Qadan, & Shehab (2016), Al-Rojaie (2013), El Salman (2016), Al-Essa (2012) and Al-Khayyari (2008). Phonological variation is often studied from a sociolinguistic point of view, i.e., by examining the use of variants as a function of external factors such as, gender, age, style, register, and social class (Antilla, 2003). Rapid political and social changes also influence the speedy phonological changes in terms of what could be considered prestigious and what could not be in any given community.

People of the Arabian Gulf states, including Kuwait, have in the last four decades experienced enormous changes in their lifestyle. These changes had an impact on the linguistic landscape of the Gulf. Johnston (1967: xxviii) claimed that 'there is no real doubt that the Kuwaiti dialect is doomed to disappear in a relatively short time and that it will be replaced by a local version of the pan Arabic koine'. Holes (1990: 61) contradicted this view by claiming that 'the demographic policies adopted by the Kuwaiti gov-

ernment which accompanied the country's rise to economic dominance, and which can be seen as a defence against the dilution of the Kuwaiti identity by the huge numbers of expatriate Arabs and others who flocked there, were resolutely separatists and non-assimilatory'. However, Holes, (2011) adopted another viewpoint later. He investigated the recession of communal dialects up and down the Gulf in the face of linguistic homogenisation and believed that there is a fashion for code-switching between Arabic and English. He stressed the worry of some Gulf commentators that Arabic is 'dying' in this area of Arabia'. The fashion for code-switching between Arabic and English in Kuwait has been extensively researched by Dashti (2016; 2015; 2004).

Having said that, this study investigates the Kuwaiti Arabic variables [tʃ] and [k] in the light of the change in Kuwaitis' lifestyle which has driven them to resort heavily on English lexical items as a prestige form to avoid using the [tʃ] variant, rather than Sedentary/Bedouin distinction. Such an assumption will be examined across gender, age, and level of education. At first, a review of the literature associated with phonological variation will be presented. After stating the research questions, the methodology utilized to conduct the study will be stated, followed by the results, which will be analyzed in detail in connection with the literature review in the discussion section. Finally, a brief conclusion will provide a clear statement of results and future anticipated studies related to the research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE & THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION

One of the common phonological features of Arabic dialects is the obvious variation in the pronunciation of the voiceless velar stop [k] (Johnstone, 1965; Holes, 2015, 1995;). Several social parameters are frequently used in phonological variation studies, namely geographical area, social class, social network, age, gender, race and ethnicity (Foulkes & Docherty 2007).

Eades (2008: 28) commenting on dialectical variation in Oman states that “the primarily classificatory division of the Arabic dialects of Oman is that of the familiar socially-based Sedentary (S) versus Bedouin (B) dichotomy. This division is marked by distinct contrasts in various phonological, morphological, and lexical features. However, in some regions the distinction between these types is blurred”. Abdel-Jawad & Abu Radwan (2013) introduce an innovative approach to linguistic variation, namely, the variation approach. This approach assumes that the probabilistic use of linguistic items correlates with an index of stylistic, economic, and socio-political variables shared by all members of any speech community. Qadan, & Shehab (2016) investigate the choice of the variable (k) and its variant [ʃ] in the speech of Al-Jaroushia speech community, Palestine, by examining the speech of 38 informants. The variable and its variants are examined across gender, age, level and field of education and income level. Results indicate that females tend to use more of the standard Arabic phonetic forms. They claim that this entails that gender is the major, most influential social correlate governing the choice of (k) and [ʃ] since it overlaps with the speaker’s socio-economic status, addressee and age, setting up complex patterns of social stratification

In Saudi Arabia, Al-Rojaie (2013) investigates patterns of variation in the affrication of [ʃ] for [k] in the speech of 72 speakers of Qaşīmī, a local dialect of Najdi Arabic across age, gender, and level of education. His findings point out that his participants favour affrication in the phonological context of high front vowels. Such affrication is powerfully correlated with the age, educational level, and gender of the speaker. Older uneducated speakers from both sexes tend to maintain the use of the local variant [ʃ], whereas younger and middle-aged educated speakers, particularly women, increasingly shift toward the use of [k]. The study concludes that the significant socioeconomic changes that Saudi Arabia has undergone in the last half century are suggested to have triggered and accelerated the linguistic shift.

El Salman (2016) investigates the variant [ʃ] of the (K) variable in the speech of a Bedouin tribe, namely, the Anizi tribe, in Saudi Arabia. The study shows that the/ ʃ/ sound, is categorically used in the speech of the members of this tribe within the tribe’s domain. It frequently appears in a high percentage in the speech of the older generation as well as the young. The study also shows that its use drastically decreased in sedentary settings.

Abdel-Jawad (1981) investigates (Q)-standardization and (k)-standardization in spoken Arabic in Amman. 170 speakers representing various social categories were recorded in different contexts. The study shows that lexical and phono-

logical variation is entirely extralinguistically conditioned with no linguistic conditioning. It also demonstrates and explains the various devices, i.e. standardization, urbanization (adoption of Urban forms) and Bedouinization (adoption of Bedouin forms), of stylistic and linguistic modifications in spoken Arabic. One of the most important conclusions is that sex differentiation plays a major role in linguistic variation and change and that unlike in Western communities, women in the Arab world use the standard prestigious forms less often than men, but they use the Urban variants more often than men; variability in spoken Arabic is persistent. The study concludes that it is more promising to describe the linguistic situation in the Arabic speaking world in the framework of variation models rather than defining discrete, homogeneous and well-defined varieties

Most sociolinguists agree that gender of interlocutors plays an important role in phonetic and phonological variation. Trudgill (1972), in his study of phonetic and phonological variation in Norwich, England; Labov (1990, 2010) in his analysis of variation in Philadelphia; Abdel Jawad (1981) and Al-Wer (1991) in their investigations of phonetic variation in Standard Jordanian Arabic in Amman, Jordan, in addition to many other researchers, generally support the idea that males use phonetic variants that are different from those used by females for some of the phonemes in their respective dialects (see also Al-Khatib, 1995; El Salman, 2003). These researchers point out that one variant of a phoneme is often associated with masculinity, toughness, rurality, or working-class life style, while another variant is more associated with, or indicative of, femininity, softness, prestige, urbanism, or high-class lifestyle (see also Al-Ali & Arafa, 2010; Abdel Jawad, 1986; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006, pp. 237-245). These studies also note that females have a greater tendency than males to use phonetic variants that are considered more prestigious.

Crucial to sociolinguistic analysis is the concept of prestige. Certain speech habits are assigned a positive or a negative value which is then applied to the speaker. This can operate on many levels: it can be realized on the level of the individual phoneme. The post-vocalic/r/, for instance, is used among the upper class and avoided by the lower class in the USA, but the situation is reversed in England overt vs covert prestige. It can be realized on the macro scale of language choice, as realized in the various diglossias that exist throughout the world, where H and L varieties in the Arab world is perhaps most well-known. In the mid-1980s, Arab linguists started to realise that variation did not occur mainly because of the impact of the standard on the vernacular (Bassiouney 2009). The concept that “the standard is equal to the prestigious should not be applied to the Arab situation, where certain vernaculars seem to hold a prestigious place depending on several factors such as the geographical, political and social factors which are often unique to each country in the Arab world” (ibid: 18). Many studies have focused on the analysis of prestige by comparing the standard with the vernacular (Palva 1982, Holes 1983, Abu Haider 1991, amongst others). It has been found that in every Arab speech community there is always a dominant dialect that

holds linguistic prestige more than the other dialects. Bassiouney (2009:19) states that one dialect becomes dominant when the city exerts socioeconomic power over the countryside. Another reason could be political power possessed by one social group such as the case of the ruling families of the Gulf States. Holes (1983:448) investigating two Bahraini dialects, claims that the influence of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) on the dialects of educated Bahrainis depends mainly on the social status of the speaker. While Sunni speakers, who are considered socially prestigious, do not use MSA patterns in their speech, the dialect of the lower status Shiites is influenced by MSA. Dialects are infused with aspects of speaker identity and can be associated with status; so that by resorting to the urban dialect, which is heard every day in conversations and in the media, the Shiites Bahrainis may gain higher status and they may be associated with the Arab Bahrainis who assume a higher status in Bahrain. Indeed, some dialects are ridiculed when they are perceived to be radically different to the prestigious Bahraini dialect.

Sadiq (2015) investigates the impact of English language on Urdu speakers and how English is taken as a social symbol of prestige in Pakistan. The study highlights the factors which cause the excessive use of English vocabulary in her informants' social language. The paper also highlights the code-switching and code-mixing in Pakistan. In conclusion, Sadiq (ibid) claims that Pakistani people prefer to use English rather than Urdu because they view English as a prestige form; they want to send a message to their interlocutors that they are capable of using English in their daily conversation; and they want to impress others or create a prestigious effect because everyone wants to show that he is well-educated. In recent literature on contact linguistics (for example, Lutz, 2013; Hickey, 2010), the notion of prestige is recurrently presented when discussing lexical influence. Lutz (2013: 262), for example, We know that prestige as a factor in language change is not restricted to changes of lexis but plays a role also with regard to structural changes, e.g. of styles of pronunciation or of syntactic and pragmatic choices. We know that prestige as a factor in language change is not restricted to changes of lexis but plays a role also with regard to structural changes, e.g. of styles of pronunciation or of syntactic and pragmatic choices. We know that prestige as a factor in language change is not restricted to changes of lexis but plays a role also with regard to structural changes, e.g. of styles of pronunciation or of syntactic and pragmatic choices. We know that prestige as a factor in language change is not restricted to changes of lexis but plays a role also with regard to structural changes, e.g. of styles of pronunciation or of syntactic and pragmatic changes" Dashti & Dashti (2017), for example, through investigating Kuwaitis' morphological adaptation in 400 tweets tweeted by Kuwaitis in twitter and by interviewing 50 students claim that Kuwaitis heavily use morphologically adapted English loan words in twitter and in everyday speech, to the extent that some tweets are found to lack even a single KA lexical item. Fischer (2003:110) claims that "status and power relations, greater cultural pressure, and socio-political dominance may determine the lexical choice e.g., of a loanword over that of an

inherited term". Crystal (2003) claims that non-native speakers use English language more than native people because English is, presently, in prominent position and millions of non-native speakers use English in all over the world.

As to level of education, many researchers found out that a change of some phonological variables highly correlates with speakers' level of education. However, Al-Wer (2002: 4-5) believes that "in Arabic speaking communities, it is not level of education per se which correlates with linguistic usage, rather that level of education is actually an indicator of the nature and extent of the speakers' social contacts. It just so happens, that, in the Arab World, access to education, especially at the higher level, and often even beyond primary schooling, involves significant alterations to individuals' socialisation patterns. It involves leaving one's home town, changes in familial links, expansion in social contacts, interaction with speakers of other dialects, exposure to different social values, shifting of one's loyalties and attachments to various social groups, changes in priorities and ambitions, etc. All of these, and others of a similar nature, are important factors in shaping individuals' linguistic behaviour".

Scope of the Study

The change of the use of variants of any given linguistic variable, be it phonological, morphological, lexical, semantic, or syntactic, has always been of interest to sociolinguists. In phonology, changes in vowels and consonants were researched in different Arab dialects. Studies of phonological variation in the Arab world and in the Gulf states often relate the variation to the differences between the sedentary and Bedouin varieties and to the desire of one group to accommodate to the other group driven by some political and social constraints. However, through examining variation of the variable under discussion, the shift seems to be driven not by the differences between the sedentary and Bedouin varieties, but by the widespread of the English language as a prestige form and by the recent change of Kuwaitis' lifestyle. Thus, this study is an attempt to investigate such a hypothesis hoping to add new insight to the existing literature.

METHODOLOGY

This study will seek answers to whether the Kuwaiti variable (k) and its variant [ʃ] has undergone any phonological change in the speech of Kuwaitis, and if any what are the reasons for this change. The results will be examined across gender, age, level of education as paralinguistic parameters. 130 informants were informally interviewed. 503 tokens were collected. The tokens were then transcribed and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Two hypotheses are to be tested (i) there will be change in status of the variable (k) and its variant [ʃ], (ii) age, gender and level of education trigger phonological change. It is crucial to mention that all lexical items, neologisms, which have infiltrated both KA and SA together with all morphologically adapted loanwords from other languages in which (k) does not vary were excluded. For example/kompju: tər/ 'computer',/ kaʃi/ 'build-

ing slaps', /kirsi /'chair' were exempted simply because (k) is always [k].

Research Questions

This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Are Kuwaitis losing the variant [ʃ] in favour of [k] or in favour of some other variants?
2. Are there any significant differences in the occurrence of [ʃ] and [k] in the speech of Kuwaitis as far as gender, age, and level of education are concerned?

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The (k) variable

Kuwaiti Arabic has the following variants of the variable (k): [k] voiceless velar stop.

[ʃ] voiceless palatal affricate.

The Kuwaiti variant [ʃ] of the variable (k) exists in the Kuwaiti phonological inventory as a separate phoneme and until recently it is heavily used by Kuwaitis. The /k/ variant, on the other hand, even though, it is the classical variant, yet it can hardly be heard in the speech of Kuwaitis. [ʃ] is a salient feature of traditional Kuwaiti Arabic, a predominant form in the speech of Kuwaitis and characterizes the sedentary population which is made up of both the indigenous and nonindigenous groups. [k], on the other hand, is the Classical Arabic variant and is the realisation of the Bedouins who are also a part of the indigenous population. However, it appears that Kuwaitis presently are losing the Kuwaiti variant [ʃ], sometimes in favour of (K), and some other times in favour of prestigious lexical items. This change has not been investigated in Kuwait neither linguistically, nor sociolinguistically. However, change in other Kuwaiti variables, such as (dʒ), (Q), and (ð) have been investigated by Dashti (1997), and

Dashti et al (2015). Taqi (2010) investigated the outcome of dialect contact by focusing on (dʒ) and (Y), a set of phonological variables which traditionally had accent-specific realisations.

Linguistically speaking, in central/eastern Arabia (Holes 1995) and in Salti, Jordan (Bruno & Al-Wer 2013) /k /is affricated to/ ʃ/ in front vowels environments. So in KA speech, as an eastern Arabian dialect, it is not unlikely to find the following examples:

KA	CA	Meaning
/ʃībi: r/	/kabi: r/	big
/miʃa: n/	/maka: n/	place
/ʃabri: t/	/kabri: t/	coper
/ʃatfi	/katfi	my arm
/di: ʃ/	/di: k/	cock

Since this paper is concerned only with examining the results across social factors, linguistic analysis will be beyond this study. First, Table 1 below shows the distribution of demographic factors.

Table 2 below shows the realization of the [k] and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable in the speech of Kuwaiti informants.

The quantitative data above shows that the realization of the [k] variant, or a lexical replacement in the speech of all informants is 79.7% while the realization of the [ʃ] variant is 20.2%.

Table 3 below shows the realization of the [k], or lexical replacement and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable in the speech of male and female informants.

Table 3 above clearly shows that the occurrence of the variant [k], or a lexical replacement in the speech of the females (49.8) and that of the males (50.1) is not significant. Similarly, the occurrence of the [ʃ] variant in the speech of the females (50.9) and that of the males (49.0) does not show any significance either.

Table 4 below shows the realization of the [k], or a lexical replacement and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable across age.

Table 4 above shows that the older the informants are the more [ʃ] is used and that the younger the informants are, the more [k], or a lexical informant is used.

Table 5 below shows the realization of the [k], or a lexical replacement and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable across level of education.

Table 5 above shows that the higher educated the informants are, the more [k], or a lexical replacement is used, and the less educated the informants are, the more [ʃ] is used.

The data above clearly shows that the voiceless palatal affricate exhibits an amount of variation, probably indicating change, somehow in the direction of the voiceless velar stop [k] or in the direction of a lexical replacement. This corre-

Table 1. Distribution of demographic factors

Gender	Frequency (%)
Male	58 (44.6)
Female	72 (55.3)
Age	
18-39	49 (37.6)
40-65	41 (31.5)
66+	40 (30.7)
Education level	
High school	21 (16.1)
University	57 (43.8)
Higher studies	52 (40.0)

Table 2. The realization of the [k] and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable in the speech of Kuwaiti informants

Total number of tokens	Number of tokens of/ k/	Number of tokens of/ ʃ/	Percentage of/ k/ in the speech of Kuwaitis	Percentage of/ ʃ/, or a lexical replacement in the speech of Kuwaitis
503	401	102	79.7	20.2

Table 3. The realization of the [k], or the lexical replacement and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable in the speech of male and female informants. (Total of tokens=503, /k/=401, /ʃ/=102)

Gender	/k/	/ʃ/
Male	50.1%	49.0%
Female	49.8%	50.9%

Table 4. The realization of the [k], or a lexical replacement and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable across age. (Total of tokens=503, /k/=401, /ʃ/=102)

Age	/k/	/ʃ/
18-39	39.4%	17.4%
40-65	30.4	27.4%
66+	30.1	54.9%

Table 5. The realization of the [k], or a lexical replacement and the [ʃ] variants of the (k) variable across level of education. (Total of tokens=503, /k/=401, /ʃ/=102)

Level of education	/k/	/ʃ/
high school	24.9%	43.1%
University	33.6%	34.3%
Higher studies	41.3%	22.5%

sponds with Al-Wer (1999:38) who states that ‘the differences can show in the way the variables *pattern* or in the *amount* of variation, which is often considered to be symptomatic of how advanced the change is, i.e. the more tokens of the new variant there are the more advanced the change is’. Interestingly though, the present data showed that the informants, in addition to occasionally shift to the [k] variable, they very often, resort to loanwords either from English, classical Arabic, or other Arab dialects to avoid the use of the [ʃ] variant. In avoiding the use of the [ʃ], our informants were recorded saying:

/ilfamili malkom mijkila
the family yours problem a
your family is a problem.

The researcher was expecting to hear/ahaliʃ mijkila/, a KA equivalent to “your family is a problem”. In another context, both males and females, again to avoid the use of the [ʃ] variant, replaced the KA word/ʃam/“how much” with the English equivalent “how much”:

/lhasa: b ʔiða simaħt ha: w m^ ʃ
the bill if please you how much
How much is the bill, please?

This does not rule out the fact that a few said/kam/. In a different context, the informants were recorded replacing the KA word/baʃir/(tomorrow) to either/bokra/, a lexical equivalent used in Egypt and some parts of Saudi Arabia, or with the English equivalent “tomorrow”.

/okaj aʃufkom b^kra mu titaxxon
ok I see you (pl.) tomorrow (neg) late you
OK, I’ll see you tomorrow. Don’t be late.

/ħabi: bi tomoro ʕindi θalaθ imtiħana: t
xal amʃi

Love my tomorrow have I three exams let I
walk

My love, I have three exams tomorrow. I’ll have to go. (My love, here, is a solidary term, very often used by males when addressing their male friends).

In this respect, the data corresponds with Johnston’s (1967) who claim that the Kuwaiti dialect would disappear and will be replaced by a local version of the pan Arabic koine. Our findings, however, contradict with Holes (1990) who claim that Kuwaitis will maintain their dialect because of Kuwaiti government’s policies to uphold Kuwaitis’ identity. Holes’ views might have been true if we look at Kuwait before 1990. As a matter of fact, Kuwait has, unfortunately, deteriorated in all spheres of life after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. Ghabra (2014) states that social and cultural change during the last decades has strongly affected Kuwaiti society. The rising level of education among a growing and youthful population along with globalization and social networking have contributed to the emergence of new social forces. Among these are a middle class increasingly aware of government mismanagement, rising levels of corruption, and a lack of economic transparency. Hasenian et al (2014) claim that individuals who studied at universities that use English as a medium of instruction show significant differences in the extent to which they embrace a global identity. The data also contradicts with Abduljawad & Abu Radwan’s (2013) findings and Bassiouney (2009). Abduljawad & Abu Radwan (ibid: 6) state that the [ʃ] variant “is not stigmatised in the Gulf states and Iraq, where it is considered to be the norm, is widely used in urban centres, and is adopted by the elite and ruling classes...it is associated with the values of the dominant and ruling classes”. This is not the case anymore in Kuwait, as one of the Gulf states. Like the KA variable (dʒ) and its variant/j/(Dashti et al (2015), the data of this study shows that [ʃ] has been subject to variation as the statistical results above showed. The [ʃ] variant, based on the findings above and the researcher’s own observation as a native speaker of KA is becoming stigmatised among a considerable number of Kuwaitis including elites and ruling classes, and occasionally, replaced by [k] and mostly by an English loanword which they deploy as a prestige form. This finding might bring about a new visage to the idea of the familiar socially-based Sedentary versus Bedouin dichotomy. The data shows that Kuwaitis do not look at the Bedouin variant [k] as a prestige form; otherwise, they wouldn’t have resorted to English loanwords to avoid the [ʃ] variant. This corresponds with Eades’ (2008) view that the distinction between the Sedentary and Bedouin varieties in Oman is blurred.

The data also agrees with the well asserted finding in literature that social parameters, such as, age and educational level trigger linguistic change (Trudgill, 1972; Holes, 1995; Labov, 1990). However, the data of this study shows no gender significance. As to the gender variable, many researchers (Trudgill, 1972; Labov, 1990, 2010; Al-Ali & Arafa, 2010; Abdel Jawad, 1981, 1986; Al-Wer, 1991; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006,

indicated that one variant of a phoneme is often associated with masculinity while another variant is more associated with, or indicative of, femininity and softness. However, our data show no significant gender differences as Table 3 above show. This might be discussed in the light of the lifestyle of Kuwaitis and the Kuwaiti culture in general. Kuwait used to be a masculine society, in the sense that men always have more power than women. This social cultural doctrine has changed recently. Kuwaiti women have now more freedom than before to decide on how to lead their own lives. They lead, more or less, a westernized type of life. They may, for instance, travel, dine out with their female friends; they may attend meetings and conferences out of Kuwait, alone all by themselves. On the other hand, married women carry out most of everyday life duties. They take their children to school, revise with them their school homework, do shopping with them, take them to outdoor activities during weekends etc. This change of lifestyle is seen to have an impact on their use of language. The masculinity/femininity indication mentioned above is blurred again in Kuwait. Women no longer feel linguistically insecure. This conclusion very well fit with that of Qadan, & Shehab (2016) and Al-Rojaie (2013) who concluded in their studies in Palestine and Saudi Arabia respectively, that the significant socioeconomic changes that their countries have undergone in the last half century are suggested to have triggered and accelerated the linguistic shift of [ʃ].

As to the age parameter, the study corresponds with most studies in the literature (see for example, Al-Rojaie, 2013; Abdel-Jawad & Abu Radwan, 2013; Al-Essa, 2012; Al-Khayyari, 2008). As Table 4 above shows, the older the informants are the more [ʃ] is used and that the younger the informants are, the more [k] or a lexical replacement is used.

With regard to the education variable and as Table 5 above shows, the higher educated the informants are, the more [k], or a lexical replacement is used. However, I would strongly agree with Al-Wer (2002) that in Arabic speaking communities, it is not level of education per se which correlates with linguistic usage, rather that level of education is actually an indicator of the nature and extent of the speakers' social contacts. I would also add prestige and social media which rapidly trigger linguistic change.

CONCLUSION

This study examined from a sociolinguistic perspective, the shift of the variant [ʃ] of the variable (k) in the speech of Kuwaitis. The examination was investigated across the social parameters of gender, age, and level of education. The findings showed no gender significance. However, age, and level of education were significant. Results indicated that the shift is driven not by the differences between the sedentary and Bedouin varieties, but by the widespread of the English language as a prestige form and by the recent change of Kuwaitis' lifestyle. Moreover, the shift is not totally in the direction of [k], but rather in the direction of a lexical replacement by either English loanwords, classical Arabic, or other Arab dialects. The researcher believes that the significant social changes in Kuwaitis lifestyle have enhanced the linguistic shift. The study's findings imply that prestige

and social media are two strong forces that trigger linguistic change in the Kuwaiti community.

Future studies may look into whether other Kuwaiti phonological variables behave the same.

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