

Accent Accommodation in the Workplace: Cross-Dialectal Realizations of the 2 F.SG. Object/ Possessive Pronoun Suffix by Saudis

Manal A. Ismail*

Department of English Language and Literature, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Manal A. Ismail, E-mail: maismail@ksu.edu.sa

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ABSTRACT

Little attention has been given in the Arabic sociolinguistics literature on examining levelling influences across speakers of different dialects and social backgrounds. Moreover, the effect of occupational background, a relevant socioeconomic category, has been neglected. The study explores accent accommodation towards the community-wide second-person feminine singular (2 F.SG.) object/possessive pronoun suffix [-k] by Saudi Arabic speakers that are delineated according to three salient regional realizations of the suffix [-ts, -ʃ, -j]. An interview was used to investigate speakers' accommodation to the supralocal [-k] in their workplace environment. Subjects' realization of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix was examined in relation to four extralinguistic variables: gender, age, education, and occupation status. Findings show the [ts] dialect group resorted to their native variant of the second-person feminine clitic more, particularly women and a younger generation of speakers, whereas [ʃ] and [j] dialect speakers converged more to [-k]. This may suggest that the spread of the supralocal form [-k] may be spearheaded by speakers of [ʃ] and [j] dialects. Occupation status was a significant factor in subjects' accommodation behavior for all three dialect groupings. Speakers of high status jobs accommodated more towards the clitic [-k], whilst probably paying attention to the professional aspect of their face. Yet, speakers of low status occupations resorted more to their native second-person feminine suffix and most likely demonstrated their closeness to vernacular culture. The results show that the processes of supralocalization are not uniform across dialect communities and speakers' occupation status is an influential factor on their accent accommodation.

Key words: Saudi Arabic dialects, Accent Accommodation, Phonological Levelling

INTRODUCTION

High levels of urbanization, modernization, and literacy rates in the Arab world has led to a general process of dialect levelling and koineization that requires investigation (Miller, 2007). In the context of Saudi Arabia, the few formal variationist sociolinguistic studies conducted on Saudi speakers show them to be shifting away from local indigenous phonological variants in favor of a supralocal norm, which may be a result of dialect levelling (Al-Azraqi, 2007b; Al-Essa, 2009; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ismail, 2012). Yet, there is no reason to assume that this suggested pattern of phonological levelling is uniform across different speech communities. Since dialects are socially stratified, we would expect differing pressures on speakers from different dialect backgrounds to adopt supralocal norms. There is however a paucity of research that investigates the adoption of supralocal linguistic forms by Arabic speakers of diverse dialects and different socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the literature on Arabic sociolinguistics has mainly focused on examining the influence of extralinguistic factors like age, gender, and

education (e.g., Abu-Haidar, 1989; Al-Azraqi, 2007b; Al-Essa, 2009; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Al-Wer, 2002; Daher, 1998; El Salman, 2003; Ismail, 2012; Sallam, 1980), while neglecting occupational background, an important socioeconomic category.

The research objectives are threefold. First, to collect spoken data from the face-to-face interactions of a sample of Saudis from three different dialect backgrounds in their work settings. Second, to use quantitative methods to study speakers' realizations of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix/-k/in relation to three salient regional reflexes of the clitic [-ts, -ʃ, -j] and the community-wide form [-k]. Third, to investigate social and socioeconomic factors that may influence speakers' accent accommodation, specifically, gender, age, educational level, and occupation status. The study takes the approach that style-shifting can be "a controlled device for measuring the dynamics of sociolinguistic variation" (Labov, 2001:85). Thus, the assumption taken here is that an examination of the various regional realizations of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix by Saudis in dialect contact situations may provide a broader

understanding of the underlying dynamics of phonological levelling across Arabic speech communities.

I begin the paper by providing a brief overview of the background to this research and then I outline how the terms levelling and accommodation are used in this paper. I then discuss the importance of studying the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix across Saudi dialects. In the sections that follow, a description of the subjects is presented, the methodology is outlined, the data is displayed and statistically evaluated, and an explanation of the findings is offered. Finally, I conclude by reviewing the main implications of the study's findings and provide suggestions for future research.

BACKGROUND

The focus of this research is on Saudi speakers residing and working in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is the largest urban center in the country located in the central region of the country locally referred to as Najd with a population of approximately 6 million. The inhabitants of Riyadh are a mix of local Najdi people and Saudis from different regions of the country as well as a sizable mix of expatriate workers from Arab countries and non-Arab speaking Asian continent. As the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, has witnessed rapid economic and urban growth accompanied by high rates of population growth, which has brought an assortment of Saudis from all regions of the country mixing together in public spaces such as places of learning, work spaces, and local markets. This migration is characterized by language diversification and intercultural encounters and would be a source of social and linguistic innovation, which makes Riyadh a fruitful site to explore dialect leveling influences. Moreover, studying dialect contact in such a large urban setting is important to the overall understanding of the dynamics of linguistic change in contemporary urban Arab societies.

LEVELLING AND ACCOMMODATION

The term levelling is used to imply "the reduction or attrition of *marked* variants" and marked refers to "forms that are unusual or in a minority" (Trudgill, 1986: 98). Significantly, levelling is examined here "as an outcome of accommodation (mutual convergence) between speakers of different dialects" (Tagliamonte, 2012: 58). Speech accommodation theory assumes that interlocutors linguistically converge to reduce the dissimilarities between their speech when they want to gain each other's social approval, show solidarity and promote communication efficiency, but will diverge to dissociate themselves and promote distinctiveness (Coupland, 1980, 1984; Giles et al., 1991). Dialect style, in particular, can be viewed as "a special case of the presentation of the self, within particular relational contexts – articulating relational goals and identity goals" (Coupland, 2001: 197). Speakers' style choices may be shaped by both self-identity and audience design, 'the relational self' (Coupland, 2001, 2007). Moreover, if a speaker accommodates more often to a specific accent "then that feature may become a permanent part of a speaker's accent or dialect, even replacing original

features" particularly if attitudinal factors are positive (Trudgill, 1986: 39-40). Individual acts of accommodation may eventually lead to changes in a person's habitual speech in dialect contact situations (Trudgill, 1986: 3-38).

WHY STUDY 2 F.SG. OBJECT/POSSESSIVE PRONOUN SUFFIX?

In Standard Arabic, the second-person feminine clitic has a Standard form [-k-i] (2.SG.OBJ;POSS-F.) in which the [k] corresponds to the orthographic, *kāf* (the name of the Arabic letter). Saudi dialects have two koineized phonologically conditioned allomorphs of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix that are realized: [-k] in words ending with a vowel and [-ik] in words ending in a consonant (Al-Azraqi, 2007b; Al-Essa, 2009; Al-Rojaie, 2013). The form [-k] of the second-person feminine clitic is a common feature of urban centers in Saudi Arabia such as Riyadh (Al-Azraqi, 2007b; Al-Rojaie, 2013) and western cities of Jeddah and Mecca (Al-Essa, 2009; Holes, 1991; Ingham, 2009). The velar plosive, however, undergoes considerable regional variation in Saudi Arabia. This study focuses on three major forms of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix that are regionally restricted and potentially socially marked [-ts, -ʃ, -j]. The [-ts] form is commonly associated with central Arabian Peninsula dialects of Najd (Al-Azraqi, 2007b; Al-Essa, 2009; Holes, 1991; Ingham, 1994, 2008, 2009; Johnstone, 1963, 1967; Prochazka, 1988) and particularly with the Qaṣīmī dialect, a dialect of Najdi Arabic, that is spoken in the north-central region (Al-Rojaie, 2013). The eastern region of the Arabian peninsula is marked by the use of the affricated form [-ʃ] of the second-person singular feminine suffix (Al-Azraqi, 2007a, 2007b; Holes, 1991; Ingham, 2009; Johnstone, 1963, 1967; Prochazka, 1988) and in some areas of the south-west (Holes, 1991). The southwest, in general, and some eastern regions of Saudi Arabia utilize the [-j] form of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix (Holes, 1991; Ingham, 2009; Prochazka, 1988). The various dialectal realizations of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix are one of the most prominent distinctions by which regional varieties of Saudi Arabic can be delineated (Ingham, 2009). Significantly, the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix is a morphophonological feature that has a syntactic function of signaling feminine gender in Arabic and reflexes of the second-person feminine clitic are not phonologically conditioned. This gender marker can thus provide a viable feature by which Saudi dialects can be compared and analyzed.

The selected feature appears to vary with specific urban territories, gender, and education. Among educated Saudi speakers in formal social settings, greatest use of the supralocal form [-k] was associated with the city of Riyadh, with lower rates in the less modern cities of Abha in the southwest and Sakaka in the northwest of Saudi Arabia. Whilst, the lowest rates of [-k] usage were recorded in Buraidah, in the northcentral region of the Arabian Peninsula. And within these cities, men resorted to [-k] more than their female counterparts (Al-Azraqi, 2007b). In the informal speech of Qaṣīmī women and men of various social backgrounds residing in their indigenous locale, the native

2 F.S.G. object/possessive pronoun suffix [-ts] was categorically retained (Al-Rojaie, 2013). In contrast, Al-Essa (2009) observed women [ts] dialect speakers residing in Jeddah to favor more than men the local urban clitic [-k] instead of their native variant.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Participants

The selection of participants was based on three criteria. First, informal observation of users of the 2 F.S.G. object/possessive pronoun suffix [-ts, -ʃ, -j] that the researcher came into contact with in public domains such as at banks, hospitals, universities, and shopping centers and those elicited through intermediaries such as friends', acquaintances' and relatives' networks. Second, and more significantly the willingness of subjects to be interviewed more formally by the researcher. It is noteworthy to mention that although subjects showed a willingness to chat with the researcher informally, some were reluctant to participate in a recorded interview. Third, a focus on sociodemographic factors that might affect speech, that is, duration of residence in the city of Riyadh. Only speakers that were born and resided in Riyadh all their lives were included in the study, as well as an emphasis on a relatively equivalent number of both sexes from the regional dialects under investigation. For statistical considerations, there was also a concerted effort to have a minimum of five speakers for each educational level. One hundred and thirty-one people initially agreed to be interviewed, however several at the beginning of the interview or during the interview for various reasons declined to cooperate. A few subjects were also eliminated due to content validity concerns. That is, subjects that did not realize the native variant of the second-person feminine clitic [-ts, -ʃ, -j] during the interview and significantly maintained they were not native users were not included in the research. Data was eventually collected from a hundred and seven subjects. Participants' maintained that their parent's regional roots were tied to the central region (Qaṣīm, Dawādmī, Kharj, Alwashim, Sudeir, Bureidah, Al-Aflāj, Ḥāyil and Ḥawṭah), the southern region (Abhā, Asīr, Ragdān, Najrān, Jizān, Namās and Sarat Ubaida), and/or the eastern region (Ḥasā, Qaṭīf, and Khobar).

Participants' Demographics

Participants ranged in age from 21 to 57 years and were divided into two age groups: less than 29 and greater than 29. This division in age was based on Saudi government population statistics data of 2018 that puts approximately 60% of the population below 29 years of age (Note 1). Using 29 years as the cut-off age would be significant in exploring the linguistic behavior of the majority younger generation of Saudis in relation to their elder counterparts. This division would be meaningful since Arab youth have been observed to typically resort to dialectal forms (Daher, 1998; El Salman, 2003) and more inclined to deviate from the colloquial norms of their speech community (Al-Rojaie, 2013) and use innovative expressions and words (Hassanein, 2009).

Subjects were also divided into three groups according to level of education (i.e., highest level of education an individual has completed or is receiving): Senior school, diploma, and college/university. (Note 2)

It is significant to further consider participants' occupational background since interviews were conducted in their work environment. Drawing on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), subjects clustered into five occupational groups (Note 3): (1) managers (i.e., business and public administrative managers), (2) professionals (i.e., medical doctors, school teachers, college/university faculty, finance professionals, lawyers, architects), (3) technicians and associate professionals (i.e., IT support and medical technicians), (4) clerical support workers (i.e., secretaries, receptionists, bank tellers), and (5) service and sales workers (i.e., salespersons, cashiers, security workers). Given that occupations carry different levels of prestige or respect irrespective of the individual who occupies the position, subjects' occupations were further grouped into two socioeconomic categories, high (H) and low (L) status jobs. Generally, in Arab societies, business and public administrative managers and professional jobs are ranked highly, that is, are considered H status jobs, whilst technicians and associate professionals, clerical support workers, and service and sales workers are commonly deemed less prestigious than H status jobs and can be bracketed together as L status jobs. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of participants in this study for the three dialect groupings in relation to the four extralinguistic variables examined in this study: gender, age, education, and occupation status.

Procedures

Data was collected primarily from an interview with participants in their work environment over a period of nearly 8 months. Semi-directed questions were used to collect sociodemographic data on each subject and to elicit the use of the 2 F.S.G. object/possessive pronoun suffix. Subjects were informed that the purpose of the interview was to collect data on language use in Saudi Arabia. To facilitate subjects' acceptance to be interviewed and recorded, they were shown from the onset typed questions of the first part of the interview, upon answering they were shown typed questions of part two of the interview. Interviewees were directed to freely ask the researcher similar questions or to digress if they wished. They were assured that recorded interviews would be analyzed by the researcher and their responses would be anonymous in the study; moreover, they could decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study. The interview situation was relatively formal for three main reasons: First, interviews were recorded, second, the formal relationship between interviewees and researcher, and third, the focus of the interview to collect data for the study of language use. However, the researcher significantly resorted to a colloquial speech style that utilized [k] during interviews in an effort to induce a casual conversation that would elicit interviewees' native dialect. Even though participants' were interviewed in various institutional contexts, each interview's structure and questioning was kept similar.

Interview

The female researcher began the interview session by greeting the interviewee and extending the ritual greeting ‘How are you?’ *keif-ik/ak* (how-you.F/M.) which would very often lead to the adjacency pair follow-up ‘God bless you’ *allah jsallim-ik* (God delivers-you.F.) by interviewee with the realization of [-k] or their native reflex of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix. The researcher then asked general background questions such as: Where were you born? How old are you? Where were your parents born or raised? How many years have you lived in Riyadh? What is your educational level? What is your job title? What is your job description? How long have you been working? What do you like about your job? What don’t you like about your job? The objective of the line of questioning was threefold: to obtain relevant demographic data on participants, to elicit as much as possible the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix/-k/when similar questions were redirected towards the researcher, and to maintain a relatively similar line of questioning and hence conversational focus for all participants. Subjects were then asked which variant of /k/they used at

home. Only, subjects that acknowledged they were native users of either [-ts, -ʃ, -j] variant of the second-person feminine clitic were included in the final analysis of data. Duration of interviews was approximately between 4-13 minutes comprising a total of nearly eleven hours of recorded interviews.

DATA

Cross-Dialectal Realizations of the 2 F.SG. Object/Possessive Pronoun Suffix

Participants in the study had a choice of realizing the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix as the supralocal form [-k] or their native variant [-ts, -ʃ, -j]. That is, subjects could realize the second-person feminine clitic as for example *dʒawa:l-ik/dʒawa:l-its* (mobile telephone-your.F ‘your mobile’), *muʃkilat-ik/muʃkilat-iʃ* (problem-your.F ‘your problem’), and *marhaba:b-ik/marhaba:b-iʃ* (welcome-you.F ‘you are welcome’). Some of the items with speakers’ vernacular realization of 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix by dialect group included in the study are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants (N=107) according to native form of second-person feminine suffix

Characteristics	Native [-ts] Users (N=37)		Native [-ʃ] Users (N=33)		Native [-j] Users (N=37)		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender								
Female	20	54.1	18	54.5	20	54.1	58	54.2
Male	17	45.9	15	45.5	17	45.9	49	45.8
Age								
≤ 29	22	59.5	20	60.6	27	73	69	64.5
≥ 30	15	40.5	13	39.4	10	27	38	35.5
Education								
Senior School	8	21.6	8	24.2	5	13.5	21	19.6
Diploma	9	24.3	9	27.3	10	27	28	26.2
University	20	54.1	16	48.5	22	59.5	58	54.2
Occupation								
High	15	40.5	16	48.5	19	51.4	50	46.7
Low	22	59.5	17	51.5	18	48.6	57	53.3

Table 2. Items realized with the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix by dialect group

[-ts] Clitic users		[-ʃ] Clitic users		[-j] Clitic users	
Item	Gloss	Item	Gloss	Item	Gloss
[keif-its]	‘how are you’	[diʒa:r-iʃ]	‘your home’	[ʔaʃtʔeit-iʃ]	‘give you’
[jiħaji:-ts]	‘salute you’	[iʃloun-iʃ]	‘how are you’	[fi:-j]	‘with you’
[ja:xð-its]	‘take you’	[maktab-iʃ]	‘your office’	[ʔism-iʃ]	‘your name’
[ʔasa:ʃd-its]	‘help you’	[ʃuʃl-iʃ]	‘your work’	[ʃind-iʃ]	‘have you’
[ʃantʔat-its]	‘your bag’	[ʃaðrat-iʃ]	‘excuse you’	[ħa:l-iʃ]	‘your situation’
[ʔabu:-ts]	‘your father’	[wein-iʃ]	‘where are you’	[ʔakalim-iʃ]	‘speak to you’
[ʔaxba:r-its]	‘your news’	[l-iʃ]	‘for you’	[ʃuju:n-iʃ]	‘your eyes’
[wila:dat-its]	‘your birth’	[raʔ-iʃ]	‘your opinion’	[dʒibl-iʃ]	‘bring you’
[ʔiqa:mit-its]	‘you live’	[maka:n-iʃ]	‘your place’	[ʔahl-iʃ]	‘your family’
[mistawa:-ts]	‘your level’	[ʔalu:m-iʃ]	‘blame you’	[ʃumr-iʃ]	‘your age’

Speakers' Realizations of the 2 F.SG. Object/Possessive Pronoun Suffix

Two dependent variables were sought in this study in relation to the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix in individual speaker's verbal discourse during the interview: Realization of [-k] and retention of speaker's native/k/reflex [-ts, -tʃ -ʃ]. Table 3 displays for each subject, the realization frequency of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix as

their native variant [-ts, -tʃ, -ʃ] and as [-k] and additionally the percentage frequency of each speaker's vernacular realization as a function of total 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix occurrences in each person's speech. A total of 807 tokens of the second-person feminine clitic/-k/were recorded, 163 [-ts], 69 [-tʃ], 58 [-ʃ], and 517 [-k]. The data in table 3 reveals that some speakers alternated between [-k] and their native/k/reflex of the second person feminine clitic, whilst

Table 3. Realization of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix for each speaker

Frequency		*[-ts]%	Frequency		*[- tʃ]%	Frequency		*[-ʃ]%
[-ts]	[-k]		[-tʃ]	[-k]		[-ʃ]	[-k]	
7	0	100.00	0	9	0.00	0	8	0.00
9	0	100.00	6	0	100.00	5	0	100.00
0	6	0.00	0	8	0.00	1	9	10.00
0	5	0.00	1	5	16.67	0	12	0.00
7	3	70.00	5	2	71.43	0	7	0.00
1	5	16.67	0	10	0.00	2	7	22.22
9	0	100.00	0	4	0.00	4	2	66.67
4	0	100.00	1	5	16.67	2	6	25.00
7	0	100.00	2	7	22.22	6	0	100.00
8	3	72.73	0	8	0.00	1	6	14.29
6	3	66.67	0	7	0.00	2	9	18.18
11	0	100.00	0	5	0.00	2	5	28.57
0	4	0.00	3	6	33.33	0	8	0.00
0	7	0.00	1	5	16.67	0	9	0.00
10	0	100.00	2	2	50.00	0	6	0.00
8	0	100.00	4	3	57.14	1	4	20.00
2	4	33.33	2	8	20.00	0	9	0.00
2	5	28.57	6	0	100.00	0	10	0.00
9	0	100.00	8	0	100.00	0	7	0.00
4	0	100.00	7	3	70.00	4	0	100.00
5	3	62.50	0	12	0.00	0	11	0.00
8	2	80.00	1	4	20.00	4	2	66.67
0	6	0.00	0	7	0.00	3	7	30.00
4	5	44.44	0	9	0.00	5	0	100.00
7	0	100.00	4	2	66.67	0	8	0.00
3	1	75.00	8	8	50.00	0	11	0.00
8	0	100.00	0	5	0.00	2	6	25.00
0	9	0.00	0	10	0.00	0	8	0.00
2	3	40.00	0	6	0.00	0	5	0.00
0	6	0.00	7	0	100.00	0	10	0.00
0	11	0.00	1	3	25.00	2	5	28.57
7	0	100.00	0	7	0.00	9	0	100.00
2	5	28.57	0	9	0.00	2	6	25.00
4	2	66.67	-	-	-	0	6	0.00
6	0	100.00	-	-	-	0	9	0.00
3	4	42.86	-	-	-	1	8	11.11
0	5	0.00	-	-	-	0	5	0.00

*Percentage vernacular realization of second-person feminine suffix as a function of the total realizations of the clitic in each subject's speech

others either totally retained their native pronunciation of the clitic or they converged towards the supralocal [-k] throughout the interview. Observe also the frequency of variability in the realization of the second-person feminine clitic, which was more likely due to how subjects viewed the formality of the interview situation and personality dimensions such as talkativeness.

STATISTICS AND DATA ANALYSIS

To investigate accent accommodation, the rate of vernacular retention of 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix by subjects as a function of total realizations of the clitic/-k/in their speech was compared according to dialect grouping. Additionally, for each dialect group, speakers' accommodation behavior was examined in relation to four extralinguistic variables, that is, gender, age, education, and occupation status. A significance criterion of $p \leq 0.05$ two-tailed was used for all statistical tests. The ensuing summarizes the results of the data analysis.

Rate of Vernacular Retention of 2 F.SG. Object/Possessive Pronoun Suffix by Speakers According to Dialect Grouping

One Way ANOVA was conducted to explore whether there were significant differences in the percentage vernacular retention of the second-person feminine clitic between dialect groups. The results showed that there are significant differences between dialect groups in the rate of vernacular retention of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix, $F(2, 104) = 8.705, p = 0.000$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD indicate that the mean score for the rate of vernacular retention of the second-person feminine clitic was significantly higher for [-ts] users in comparison to [-ʃ] users ($p = 0.004$) and also higher for [-ts] clitic speakers in relation to [-ʃ] speakers ($p = 0.001$).

Rate of Vernacular Retention of 2 F.SG. Object/Possessive Pronoun Suffix by Speakers According to Gender, Age, Education, and Occupation Status

To investigate the interaction of gender on speakers rate of vernacular retention of 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix, t-tests were performed for each dialect group. The results of the output showed a significant effect for gender for [-ts] users only, that is, females retained their vernacular second-person clitic [-ts] more than their male counterparts ($t(35) = 3.143, p = 0.003$), whereas women and men in the other dialect groupings showed no apparent differences.

T-test output for percentage vernacular realization of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix showed a significant difference for the category age for the [ts] dialect grouping only. That is, a younger generation of [-ts] users aged 29 years and less resorted to their native second-person feminine clitic more ($t(35) = 2.485, p = 0.018$). Sociolinguistic studies have found Arabic speaking youth to resort to more dialectal forms (Daher, 1998; El Salman, 2003). On the other hand, age was not a significant factor in [-ʃ] and [-j] clitic users accommodation behavior in this study.

An analysis of variance showed that there were no significant differences in speakers' percentage realization of their vernacular second-person feminine clitic according to education for [-ts] and [-ʃ] users. There was, however, significant differences in the percentage native realization of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix [-ʃ] according to educational level ($F(2, 34) = 7.000, p = 0.003$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test suggest that the mean rate of second-person feminine clitic [-ʃ] retention was significantly higher ($p = 0.003$) for subjects with a senior school certificate than university level. Women and men in Arabic speaking communities typically favor standard phonological forms as their level of education increases (Abu-Haidar, 1989; Daher, 1998; Haeri, 1996; Sallam, 1980; Walters, 1991). Nevertheless, since senior school certificate [-ʃ] clitic users consisted of a numerically small sized sample of five subjects, the effect of education on this dialect grouping in workplace settings merits further study.

Participants in each dialect grouping were not only from a wide range of social and linguistic backgrounds, but they also belonged to diverse occupational backgrounds that also requires examination. The statistical tests show occupation status to have a significant effect on speakers' rate of vernacular retention of second-person feminine clitic for all three dialect groupings: [ts] ($t(35) = 7.842, p = 0.000$), [ʃ] ($t(18.648) = 3.980, p = 0.001$), and [j] ($t(18.918) = 3.654, p = 0.002$). That is, overall subjects in L status jobs displayed more preference in retaining their native 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix than speakers of H status jobs.

In sum, it appears that [-ts] clitic users, female, aged 29 and below, in low status occupations, resorted to their native 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix more than [-ʃ] and [-j] users. It would be appropriate to ask in relation to [-ts] users whether social and socioeconomic factors interact with their native realization of the second-person feminine suffix. Multiple factor ANOVA was used for [-ts] clitic users aged 29 and below to investigate the interaction of: occupation status with gender, occupation status with education, and education with gender. The results of the interaction analysis showed no significance between independent variables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Subjects varied considerably from consistent use of their native variant of the second-person feminine clitic to a total shift towards the supralocal [-k] during the interview, with the rest of the speakers alternating between [-k] and the use of their native variant [-ts, -ʃ, -j]. From the descriptive data that has been outlined above, the following generalizations can be made.

Spread of the Supralocal 2 F.SG. Object/Possessive Pronoun Suffix [-k] May Be Spearheaded by Speakers from [ʃ] and [j] Dialects

Even though participants varied within dialect groupings in their accommodation behavior, overall, the frequency counts show [ts] dialect speakers to significantly retain their ver-

naacular second-person feminine suffix during the interview more than [ʃ] and [ʒ] speakers. In other words, [-ʃ] and [-ʒ] native clitic users more readily converged towards the supralocal [-k] during the interview than [-ts] clitic users. Linguistic change may be led by social groups that use more of the target feature (see e.g. Labov, 1972; Kiesling, 2011; Trudgill, 1986). It would seem then that the spread of the supralocal form [-k] may be spearheaded by speakers from [ʃ] and [ʒ] dialects.

Linguistic convergence may entail social rewards and costs (Giles et al., 1991). It was clear that for [-ʃ] and [-ʒ] clitic users, usage of the widespread [k] has more potential benefits than their native alternative regional variants. "Speakers actively seek out neutral forms in order not to signal very local and possibly old-fashioned identities" (Kerwill, 2003:228). The [k] is the norm in urban dialects of Saudi Arabia, and for this reason accent convergence towards the community-wide [-k] would be a desire by the speaker for not only social integration, but also a means to reclaim an urban identity. On the other hand, since the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix [-ts] is indigenous to the central region of Saudi Arabia where the capital city of Riyadh lies, then perhaps this realization was viewed by its speakers as a positive emblem of local membership. This may underscore the reason why [ts] dialect speakers more readily retained their vernacular second person feminine clitic.

Women and a Younger Generation of [-ts] Users Were More Inclined to Diverge from the Supralocal 2 F.SG. Object/Possessive Pronoun Suffix [-k]

Women [-ts] users, in particular, showed the greatest retention of their native 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix in relation to their male counterparts. The explanation may lie in the degree to which the female participants from these diverse groupings are integrated socially into the local speech community. There is apparently a correlation between social network structure and linguistic variable, that is, vernacular norms are more observable in the speech of people firmly integrated within the community (Milroy, 1987: 159). Given that the affricated [ts] reflex of/k/is indigenous to the area of Najd where Riyadh is located, women [-ts] clitic users would be more integrated within the local Najdi community and perhaps for this reason had a greater desire for local identity marking. A younger generation of [ts] dialect speakers also resorted to their native reflex of the 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix more than their elder counterparts and hence readily diverged from supralocal norms, very possibly, to promote distinctiveness whilst displaying allegiance with the local Najdi community where their vernacular norms are commonplace.

Gender and Age Were Apparently Insignificant Factors on [ʃ] and [ʒ] Speakers' Accent Accommodation

Since [ʃ] and [ʒ] reflexes of/k/are not indigenous to the Najd region where this study took place, this could explain why gender and age for these dialect groupings did not seem to be significant factors in subjects' phonological accommodation

towards the supralocal norm. When [-ʃ] and [-ʒ] clitic users converged towards the community-wide pronunciation of the second-person feminine suffix [-k], the perceived social rewards were greater than maintaining a highly distinctive regional pronunciation for both women and men of all ages. In other words, for [ʃ] and [ʒ] dialect speakers the social rewards in converging to the clitic [-k] apparently outweighed the social costs of a loss in regional and personal identity.

Overall, Educational Level Was Seemingly an Insignificant factor on Speakers' Accent Accommodation for All Dialect Groupings Except for the Small Sample of Senior School [-ʒ] Users

Only senior school [-ʒ] clitic users significantly retained their native variant of the second-person feminine clitic more than their more educated university level counterparts. It is important to mention again that the sample of [-ʒ] clitic users was numerically small and consisted of only five subjects. Nonetheless, the relative importance of educational attainment in Arabic speaking communities should not be down played. Generally, sociolinguistic studies on Arabic speech communities find educated speakers to more readily adopt forms that approximate to Standard Arabic (e.g. Al-Wer, 2002; Daher, 1998; Haeri, 1996; Sallam, 1980). The [k] is indeed part of standard Arabic, whereas the reflexes of/k/, [ts], [ʃ] and [ʒ], are not. It is significant to point out however that some of the participants had higher qualifications than the L status jobs required e.g. a bachelor or post-graduate degree and were actively seeking occupations that would match their qualifications or subjects were university students and the L job was a summer job. This observation could explain the fact that, in general, education was an insignificant variable on speakers' accommodation behavior in this study given that subjects' job status was a highly influential factor.

Accent Convergence Towards the Supralocal Second-Person Feminine Clitic [-k] for all Dialect Groupings Was More Prevalent in Speakers of H Status Occupations, Whereas Speakers of L Status Occupations Were More Inclined to Diverge from Supralocal Norms.

Occupation status was an influential factor on speakers' realization of 2 F.SG. object/possessive pronoun suffix for all dialect groupings. Speakers of H status jobs apparently converged more to the supralocal [-k] form of the second-person feminine suffix. It is reasonable to claim that when these subjects adapted their speech to the community-wide clitic [-k], they projected self-identities attuned to the preferences of the addressee in order to enhance their perceived personal attractiveness and gain social approval. That is, H status job speakers during professional work-modes seemingly avoided their native pronunciation and modified their speech more often towards [-k] to reduce regional group differences as a show of solidarity, while most likely improving their disposition in relation to the hearer (the researcher and academic). This accent shift can be considered a marker

of added learning since the realization of [k] is part of the standard register and hence would conform to the professional workplace culture and exhibit loyalty to the values of an institutional norm and, in turn, draw attention to a professional image. Accent shift to [-k] may hence be regarded as a means for speakers to pay attention to their face wants and in particular to the professional aspect of face. In doing so, they catered to the expectations of the hearer by very probably portraying an image of more educated. On the other hand, speakers of L status occupations approximated more closely to their native pronunciation. The reason could lie in the fact that it is common knowledge that L status jobs do not require a high level of educational attainment and are more closely associated with a vernacular culture, and as such, these speakers saw no need to portray an educated style of speech nor the need to minimize regional identity differences. It would seem then that a speaker's accent accommodation was shaped by the 'relational self', that is, identity goals and relational goals.

CONCLUSION

In the urban setting of Riyadh, it is apparent that there are two opposite forces at play: supralocalization pressures and maintenance of regional forms as signs of group identity. It is reasonable to presume that the non-local dialect groups of [-ʃ] and [-ʒ] clitic users, in an effort to be integrated into the mainstream urban culture and language were more committed towards assimilation and an urban way of speaking and readily converged to [-k] as an act of integration. Whilst the local dialect grouping of [-ts] users, especially women, a younger generation, employees in low-status occupations, more readily diverged from supralocal norms and favored their vernacular form of the 2 F.S.G. object/possessive suffix as a symbol of allegiance with their native indigenous community.

Even within the limited scope of this study, job status appeared to be a highly significant variable on Saudi Arabic speakers' accommodation behavior for all three dialect groupings examined here. Speakers of H status occupations portrayed a professional self-image by more readily converging to the community wide second-person feminine suffix [-k], whilst speakers of L status occupations readily retained their native clitic and hence showed their closer involvement with the vernacular culture. Social identities were activated in the speech situation and possibly defined by the speaker's perceptions of oneself as well as the hearer's expectations. When choosing a particular reflex of the 2 F.S.G. object/possessive suffix/-k/, speakers opted to invoke personas whose metaphorical associations were seemingly appropriate to the particular workplace culture as well as tailored to the addressee.

In general, [-ʃ] and [-ʒ] clitic users and Saudis of H status occupations irrespective of their dialect background were apparently spearheading the spread of the supralocal [-k] form of the 2 F.S.G. object/possessive suffix. Thus, the findings of the study demonstrate that supralocalization pressures are not uniform across dialect communities and on speakers from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The

investigation of levelling influences on cross-dialectal phonological variation hence provides a better understanding of the underlying forces at work in regional dialect levelling. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of studying speakers' accommodation behavior in relation to their occupational background, a neglected socioeconomic category in variationist studies of Arabic speaking communities that merits further examination.

END NOTES

1. <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/43>
2. The label senior school refers to subjects that had been awarded the highest secondary school certificate and were not pursuing any further education. In Saudi Arabia, a diploma is a qualification that is below the college/university degree level that is awarded by vocational schools, colleges, or universities after the successful completion of a course of study of two years or less.
3. For classification structure of occupational groups refer to: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08/index.htm>

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