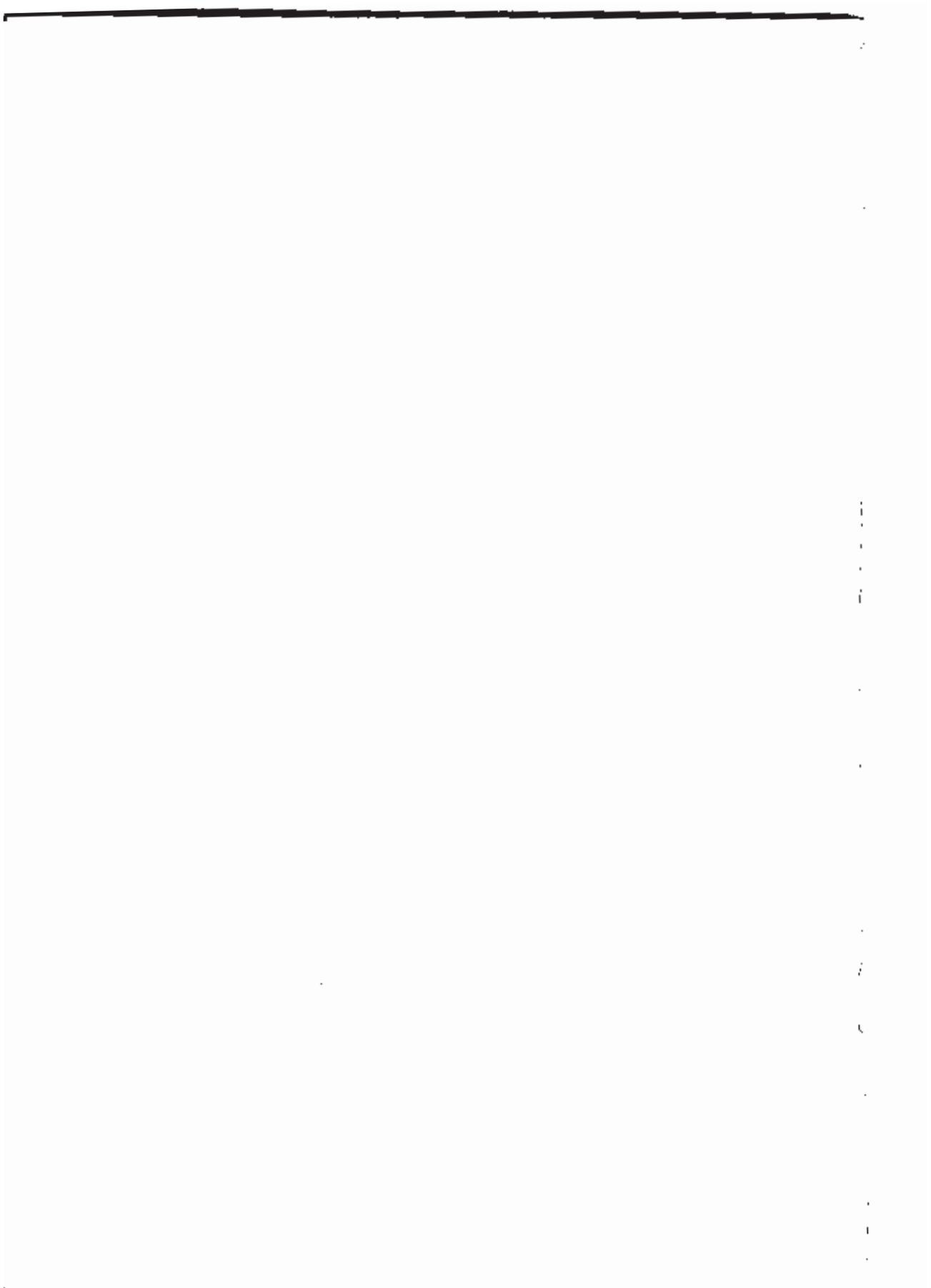


1

**Modern Standard Arabic:**  
An Empirical Study on Saudis

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### Abstract

Modern Standard Arabic has always been a controversial issue in sociolinguistics. The findings of the present study suggests that there are strong emphases on education to account for the observed sociophonological variation in the SMSA. This finding is in line with a number of sociolinguistic studies, as for example Coulams, (1997), who states that the concept of "educatedness" is fundamental in sociophonology. It is interesting to note that the present study show no sex-differentiated patterns of variation. Such findings reveal that the higher the education of the speakers of SMSA, the higher the tendency to use the CA variables /Q/, /-ð/, and /-θ/) more frequently than the CHA variants /-q/, /-z/, /-s/, /-v/. Therefore, it appears that the influence of education is evident and significant on language usages. As a result of the findings of the present study, it is suggested that there are three discrete Arabic varieties to be distinguished. 1- First, /Al-ʿarabiah Al-FuSha/, "FuSha Arabic" or "Classical Arabic" CA. Second, /Al-ʿarabiah Almiʿyariah Alhadi:thah/, "Modern Standard Arabic" MSA. This Arabic variety combines linguistic aspects of both Classical and Dialectal Arabic, regardless of the nationality of the speakers of this Arabic variety. Third, /Allahjah Alʿammīyah Alʿarabiah/ "Colloquial Dialectal Arabic" CDA, which is applicable to all Arabic dialects. Consequently, the variety of the present study SMSA, is deemed to belong to the second variety, namely, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

### Introduction

Arabic speaking communities differ from formal to informal, and from written to oral varieties. It would be appropriate to limit the linguistic territory of any study to only one variety. This empirical sociolinguistic study attempts to investigate certain phonological variations in the formal oral variety of Saudi Modern Standard Arabic SMSA. It hopes to account for the sociophonological variation mingled between Classical Arabic CA variables (namely, /-Q/, /-ð/, and /-θ/) and their colloquial

social factors, i.e., sex/gender and education of the subjects of S.M.S.A, are taken into account. The study is based on a number of formal interviews and panel discussions, tape-recorded from radio and television.

This study reveals that the mingling of subjects, in the formal oral variety of SMSA, between CA variables and CHA variants or reflexes, is not haphazard or random. This mingling, we believe, is a systematic nature of variability that can be attributed to certain social factors i.e., education and sex. Honey's concept of "educatedness" (which will be discussed in relation to the findings of the present study) reinforces such systematic nature of variability (for more see Coulmas, 1997:104). This concept relates linguistic variation to education. The diglossic situation of Arabic, which in this case involves the coexistence of the two discrete varieties CA and CHA, has resulted in the existence of an indiscrete Arabic variety, which we tend to call SMSA.

The study aims at revealing that SMSA is a descendent and a degeneration of CA, and therefore it is considered to be an indiscrete Arabic variety. We tend to believe that the existence of certain types of language variation (e.g., phonological), involves a more or less simultaneous effect on large groups of people, up to entire societies, but does not, necessarily, lead to the discreteness of the newly emerged variety. Parkinson's three views of Egyptian MSA, is discussed and analyzed with special reference to S.M.S.A. The indiscreteness of SMSA is argued in relation to certain aspects of Egyptian M.S.A. as characterized by Badawi's five levels of Egyptian Arabic, (see El-gibali, 1985). Relevant sociolinguistic studies, as for example Daher (1998), are dealt with in terms of comparing results, for the purpose of seeking similarities and differences in the concerned sociophonological variation in oral formal Arabic varieties.

### Modern Standard Arabic MSA

The field of Arabic linguistics is rich with its Arabic language topics. Eid, (1990) says that Arabic linguistics has shown an enormous growth in the past few decades. Eid, (Ibid), along with other prominent linguists, believes that Arabic linguistics, a sub-

field of linguistics, represents the interaction of linguistics and Arabic studies. Arab and Western linguists have empirically investigated a set of assumptions about inter-language and intra-language variations, in Arabic varieties such as Classical Arabic CA, Modern Standard Arabic MSA and Arabic dialects AD.

Empirical studies of sociolinguistic variations, in the Arab world have generally been studies of phonological variables. For example Haeri, (1990) tackles the nature of diglossic variables and the phonological process of borrowing from Classical Arabic (CA.) Daher, (1998) analyses gender differences in the usage of the phonological variants /-q/ and /-ʔ / in Syrian Arabic. He illustrates, on a statistical basis, how certain sociolinguistic factors such as sex and education, have significant influence on the favoring and disfavoring of one variant over the other through a well presented study of a phonological variable widely used in diglossic communities, and exhibits interesting variations in Arabic speaking countries e.g., Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

As for empirical sociolinguistic studies on MSA, Parkinson, (1993) describes MSA, as an Arabic variety that has two formally-used versions: written such as the language usually used in newspapers, text books and other formal (or serious) writings, and its oral counterpart used in formally delivered radio and television programs. In relation to Egyptian Arabic, Parkinson, (Ibid) describes the main aspects of MSA in three view points which are as follows:

1-MSA is the variety that has a prescriptive system inherited from Classical Arabic watched over by the language academy and taught at schools.

2-MSA is partly a communicative continuum that comprises linguistic properties ranging from the deepest dialectal resources to the highest unique classical expressions. It is not evident to which part of the continuum MSA belongs i.e., it is characterized as an in between Arabic variety which is neither classical nor dialectal.

3-MSA is imperfectly known, but a fully functional variety and part of the communicative behavior of most Arabs. It is associated with a high degree of linguistic insecurity; reverred to the degree of

being viewed as a descendent of CA, denigrated to the degree that it is considered as a degeneration of CA.

Applying Parkinson's views, to the formal oral SMSA will shed some light on the reasons for the phonological variations of the CA variables /-Q/, /-ð/ and /-θ/ and their variants. This study, assumes that certain phonological variations may partly be attributed to certain sociolinguistic factors (i.e., levels of education and sex of speakers) and partly to the inherited linguistic properties in CA. Parkinson's first view of MSA's inherited system from CA is a justifiable aspect because MSA is a formal variety used mainly by educated people who gain their education through formal learning of the Arabic language at schools and the only Arabic variety taught at schools is Classical Arabic simply because it is a grammaticalized (i.e. it has grammatical rules at all linguistic levels) Arabic variety and it is the only revered and respected variety of Arabic in the Arab world.

4

We argue that MSA is not the Arabic variety that is taught at schools in any of the Arabic countries including Egypt, as Parkinson claims. In fact, previous sociolinguistic studies, including Parkinson's second view, consistently reveal that MSA is an intermediate Arabic level that simply means that it is mainly dependent on CA in most of its linguistic aspects. In addition, none of the previous sociolinguistic studies claim that MSA has its own phonological, morphological, syntactic or grammatical rules that can be taught at schools. It can be described as an Arabic variety that has some of its predictable aspects borrowed from CA, while other aspects taken from a regional colloquial variety. So it is a mingled Arabic variety that has no discreteness or even stability as Badawi, (1973) claims. He describes the contemporary diglossic language situation in Egypt as one of a continuum between two opposing ends; "Classical Arabic" (which he tends to call it "fusha al-turaaθ") and "Illiterate Colloquial" (which he calls "Aamiyyat al-? Ummiyyiin") and in between these High and Low levels, (according to Ferguson's 1959 terms) Badawi says there are three middle levels: fuSha al-AaSr "Modern Standard Arabic", Aamiyyat al-muθaqqafiin "Educated Colloquial", and Aamiyyat al-mutanawwinin "Literate

Colloquial" (see El-gibali, 1985). Badawi's five levels, for Egyptian Arabic are according to Ferguson, subject to close connections and interactions and the transition from the highest level of "FuSha Arabic" to the lowest level of "Aaamiyya" colloquial would be a continuous gradual flow. Badawi, (see El-gibali, *ibid*) argues unconvincingly for the discreteness and stability of the three middle levels. We believe that with the exception of "FuSha" Arabic, Badawi's suggested three middle levels of Arabic varieties are neither discrete levels nor stable for two rational reasons:

1-The smooth flow of continuous unpredictable switching from one of the suggested three middle varieties (or levels as Badawi tend to call them) into another is a clear indication of their indiscreteness and that is due to the fact that their boundaries are blurred, muddled and indistinct at all linguistic levels. In addition, the suggested three middle levels exhibit an overlapping of linguistic properties (at all linguistic levels) whether they are used in formal or informal occasions by illiterate, literate or even highly literate native speakers, in written and oral forms at all linguistic levels, and therefore can not be treated or considered a discrete and stable levels.

2-The interrelatedness of Badawi's three middle levels, leads us to go back to Parkinson's above stated second view, in which the latter considers MSA, (which is one of Badawi's three middle levels) as part of an indefinite communicative continuum ranging from the most elevated classical level to the lowest colloquial linguistic properties. Parkinson, (1993) adds, in his second view, that it is not evident to which part of the continuum MSA is to be classified i.e., as either classical or dialectal. The indefiniteness of Parkinson's second view of MSA as being unpredictable, along with the interrelatedness of Badawi's view for his three middle levels are, in fact, a clear and conceivable justification for the indiscreteness and instability of Badawi's three middle levels.

We believe that MSA, or any dialectal Arabic variety for this matter, is a descendant and a degeneration of CA. This view drives us to discuss Parkinson's above mentioned third view, in which he describes MSA as a despised and a denigrated variety simply because it is a descendant and a degeneration of CA. Most,

if not all Western and Arab linguists and sociolinguists, who believe that Classical Arabic is undoubtedly the origin of all Arabic varieties including MSA, deny Parkinson's third view. In fact, the main reason behind labeling MSA as a standard Arabic is, as I mentioned earlier, that it gained some of its linguistic aspects (i.e. phonologically, morphologically etc.) from the originally standardized CA through education (Daher, 1998, El-gibali, 1985 among others). As for the process of modernization in Arabic, (Daher, 1998, Haeri, 1990, Royal, 1985,) believe that the frequent use of foreign words (e.g., *beebe* "baby", *nersaat* "nurses" etc.) by both men and women may be interpreted as their wish to be associated with modernized social groups as the forces of modernization and westernization is at work in the region. Thus, the term "modern" in the modern standard Arabic variety is, probably attributed to the process of modernization and the usage of foreign words in MSA.

Parkinson, (Ibid) adds that Nunation or "Tanwin" is not viable in Egyptian MSA. Tanwin according to Haywood and Nahmad, (1984: 33) is the changing of vowelings of the final consonant to indicate the three cases of nominative, accusative and genitive. This grammatical aspect is surely beyond the scope and objectives of the present study, yet it is worth noting that such aspect of CA is assumed to be unviable in the oral formal variety of SMSA. Moreover, it is believed that speakers of MSA, in the Arab world tend to avoid Tanwin; instead, they use Taskin (i.e., the use of *sokun* at the end of words) to avoid the complexity of the CA system of Tanwin compared to the simple usage of Taskin at the end of words.

On the basis of the above discussion of Arabic varieties, and for convenience of the present study, we propose to distinguish between three different Arabic varieties, which are as follows: Firstly, /Al-ʔarabiah Al-FuSha/, which is "FuSha Arabic" or "Classical Arabic" CA, and it is the only discrete, rule-governed (at all linguistic levels) grammatically correct Arabic variety that is taught at schools. It has the prescriptive system used formally in both written and oral forms (see Cowan, 1983). Secondly, /Al-ʔarabiah Almiʔyariah Alhdi:θah/, which is "Modern Standard Arabic" MSA. It identifies any indiscrete and mingled Arabic

variety in two forms; written (usually found in newspapers) and oral mainly used in formal television and radio news delivery, interviews and panel discussions along with lectures in humanities. Thirdly, /Allahjah Alʿammīyah Alʿarabīyah/ “Colloquial Dialectal Arabic” CDA. It refers to any indiscrete regional nonstandard dialect used informally. In this study we are referring to colloquial Hijazi Arabic CHA as a regional dialectal Arabic spoken in the western region of Saudi Arabia. It is characterized as regional, social and a non-standard stereotyped variety determined by the actual usage patterns (see for example, Ingham, 1982, Prochazka, 1988). It is to realized that CHA is considered, in this study, as one of the CDA varieties.

#### Data Collection

A major reason for recent advances in variation studies is, according to Milroy, technological. (See Coulmas, 1997: 48). Milroy, (Ibid) adds that in the last 30 years, attention has been devoted to collecting tape-recorded data to describe language variation. As a method of collecting reliable and authentic tape-recorded data, to elicit formal speech styles, the investigator had to specify certain important limitations for collecting data of the present study, which are: 1-Types of radio and television interviews i.e., formal or informal panel discussions. 2-Number of tape-recorded hours. 3- Gender and number of subjects 4- Education Levels of the subjects. 5- Linguistic aspects of variables, and the main objective for the study.

In a period of three months, in 2000, the investigator tape-recorded certain formal radio and television interviews, and panel discussions. Saudi television interviews, were the source of data for male speakers, whereas radio panel discussions were the source of data for female speakers of SMSA. Obtaining data from two different sources (i.e., radio and television interviews) is due to the religious and traditional situation in an Islamic society, i.e., men and women do not appear together in the same radio and television interviews or panel discussions. I am sure that, if similar studies are conducted in other Arabic countries, similar circumstances will not be encountered. The first source of data

(i.e., male speakers of SMSA) comprises 20 tape-recorded hours of formal television interviews and panel discussions. The number of the male subjects (i.e., the host and guests of the 20 tape-recorded hours of T.V interviews) are 40; 18 of them are highly educated (Masters or Ph.D. holders), while the remaining 22 are treated as educated. The second source of data (i.e., female speakers of S.M.S.A) consists of, also, 20 tape-recorded hours of formal radio interviews and panel discussions. The total number of female subjects are 33; 14 of them are highly educated, while the other 19 subjects are considered educated.

The total number of subjects is 73, and they are divided, as rationally as possible, into four social categories on the basis of the two social variables taken into considerations, namely, sex (i.e., male vs. female) and the levels of education; i.e., educated for subjects with college or university education, and highly educated with masters and Ph.D degrees. Therefore, the four social categories as follows: male educated ME, male highly educated MHE, female educated FE and female highly educated FHE. It is to be realized, that the educational background (or levels of education) of the subjects is identified by the host of the radio and television programs. The social variable of age is obliterated because it will be difficult for the investigator to anticipate the age of the subjects.

The collected data were classified and tabulated in accordance with the concerned linguistic and social variables. The different utterances,(or variants) of each phonological variable, are statistically analyzed (i.e., in terms of the frequencies and the percentages of the variants used by the concerned four social groups. After specifying the limitations of the data collections, it is necessary to state the main objective of the study, which hopes to account for the sociophonological variation occurs when CA variables /-Q/, /-ð/ and /-θ/) alternate with the CHA variants in SMSA. These variables were chosen to be investigated, for a number of reasons, most important of which was the frequent alternation with their variants. Also, such variables were the principal focus of certain sociolinguistic studies, and this study hopes to add insight into this interesting area of variation.

### **Sociophonology**

Education is embedded in language, and it is believed that the standard variety of a language appears to be taken as the only vehicle for education. Sociolinguists like Labov and Trudgill, among others, attempt to correlate phonological variations with sociological variables. This correlation is termed "sociophonology". A relevant situation of sociophonology is the phonological variables /-q/, /-d/ or /-θ/ in SMSA, which are assumed to have phonological variants and which may, in turn, be accounted for by certain social variables. Milroy, states, in this regard, that phoneticians repeatedly indicate that no two utterances of the same word by the same speaker are pronounced exactly alike (see Coulmas, 1997: 48). Honey, believes that it is a commonplace of linguistics that the spoken form of any language exhibits more variations than the written form, and such variation in speech can be attributed to differences in (a) region, (b) social group, and (c) situation (see Coulmas, 1997: 92-93). Honey, (Ibid) adds that the speech forms of regional and social groups, not to mention the pronunciation of particular words in distinctive manners, appear to be characterized as the standardized sound features whose patterns are distinctive for each social group whether that group is educated or highly educated. Honey, (Ibid: 95) cites the speakers of British English, who receive higher (or extended education) tend to use a more standardized variety (i.e., in terms of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) than a local variety of the language. This, in fact, shows the significant influence of education on language usage. The following sociophonological analysis and discussions of variation in SMSA may shed some light for the socially conditioned phonological variants of the variables concerned.

9

### **Variation with /-q/ and /-q/ in SMSA**

Before we analyze and discuss the variation exhibited in the use of the variable /-q/ and its variant /-q/ in SMSA, it is tenable to define a linguistic variable in sociolinguistic studies. Wardhaugh, (1992:139-40) states the following definition: "A

linguistic variable is a linguistic item which has identifiable variants" (for more see Coulmas, 1997:130). He adds, that linguistic variables are, traditionally<sup>4</sup> correlated with social categories, like sex (gender), age social class, education etc.

Studies in Arabic diglossic speech communities have concluded that the sociolinguistic variables of sex and education appear to be significant factors in accounting for the exhibited variation in the use of the variants of the variable /-Q/ in Cairene, Kuwaiti and Damascene standard Arabic varieties (cf, Daher, 1998, El-gibali, 1985). Daher, (1998:184) argues for relating the observed phonological variation of the variable /-Q/ (Daher's symbol is /-q/) to the competition between two standards: The nationally and internationally recognized standard Arabic, and the prestige local dialect of certain urban cities as, for example, Cairo and Damascus. This argument can not be taken for granted, because only one standard Arabic variety is recognized to be used by educated speakers in formal situations (both written and spoken) in diglossic community. His view of considering the prestige local dialect, spoken in large urban cities, as for example, Damascus and Cairo, to be a standard variety might be the subject of considerable argumentation. This is because if take this issue, we will come up with several standard Arabic varieties, and this does not reflect the real situations in Arabic varieties.

Our argument is that there is only one standard Arabic variety, taking into consideration the occurrences of minor linguistic variations (at the phonological, morphological or even the syntactic level) when spoken in different Arabic speaking countries. The existence of certain phonological variations in SMSA does not mean that it is a discrete variety, and therefore, different from standard Arabic used by Egyptians, Syrians or Jordanians. This study is meant to argue for the indiscreetness of only one MSA variety, and to shed some light on certain phonological variations of MSA as it is used by Saudis, and such variations can be in congruent with similar variations in standard Arabic used by Egyptians, Syrians or any educated speaker of Arabic.

Since this study takes into account the sociolinguistic variables of sex and the levels of education of the speakers of

MSA, it hopes to relate linguistic variation to the concerned social variables. Daher, (1998) reveals that it has been broadly reported that educated Arabic speakers, in their oral use of the language, normally use the Arabic variety which includes mingle aspects (at all linguistic levels) from both CA and colloquial Arabic (Daher 1998; Parkinson 1993, 1994, 1996; Meiseles 1980; Holes 1993; Hary 1996; Eid 1982).

A straightforward statistical analysis of the data was conducted taking into consideration the elements that are congruent with the objectives of this study. These elements are: The two social variables i.e., sex and the levels of education and they are categorized into four social categories: They include, the phonological variants of each variable; the frequency of occurrence of each variant for the same variable; the percentage of the frequency of occurrence of each variant; and the total frequency of variants for the same variable (these elements are tabulated in statistical figures). Each element of the following statistical tables in this section, is meant to provide answers (on statistical basis) to the variation observed with the phonological variable /-Q/ and its variant /-q/. That is to say, to account for such variation on the basis of the relevant sociolinguistic factors and the observed frequencies of the variants used and their percentages in relation to their occurrences. Two observed variations are recorded in this regard: One variation is recorded with the C.A. variable /-Q/, while the other with CHA variant /-q/. The association of the variant /-Q/ with CA is attributed to two main reasons: First, it is the only CA variable (i.e., it has no variants in CA) and Arabic dialects appear to have borrowed it from CA (see cf Rosenhouse, 1998; Abdel-Jawad, 1981 among others). Second, El-gibaly, 1985 and Daher, 1998, referred to it as a CA variant because it is only used in CA (For their convenience they used the symbol /-q/ instead of the present study's symbol /-Q/). We used the term "variable" instead of "variant" to refer to /-Q/ simply because it is considered, in this study, as the original form of the derivated variant /-q/. El-gibaly, (Ibid) and Daher, (Ibid), reveal sex differentiation is exhibited whereby men seem to favor the use of /-q/ more than the variant /-? / while women favor the use of the variant /-? / in the Arabic varieties of Cairene,

Kuwaiti and Damascene. The symbol /-q/ is referred to as a CHA variant. This is due to its frequent occurrences in this dialect, as it is observed in the present study and in several prior studies (see cf Bakalla, 1979; Prochazka, 1988; Ingham, 1982; Khcshafaty, 1993). The /-q/ is an ejective velar phoneme, while /-Q/ is a plosive velar.

The scores of variations in the following table (1) are quite informative. They indicate that while the CHA variant /-q/ scored higher percentage (68%) by the social category ME than the CA variable /-Q/ (32%), yet the variant /-q/ scored lower percentage (24%) by the social category MHE than the variable /-Q/ (76%), which may probably be explained by educational differences. This may suggest that the variant /-q/ is more likely to be used in high frequency words, by the social category ME than in a low frequency words, whereas the variable /-Q/ is more likely to be used in high frequency words, by the social category MHE, than in low frequency words. The following is a representative sample (from data of the present study) of high frequency words in SMSA which are pronounced as a plosive/-Q/ and as an ejective /-q/:

12

/Qaraar/ "decision"	/Qasr/ "Palace"	/Qalb/ "heart"
/naQd/ "criticism"	/ittifaaQ/ "agreement"	/mustaQe/ "independent"
/qaal/ "said"	/qibil/ "accepted"	/qaabal/ "met with"
/qali/ "little"	/qoom/ "stand up"	/qabel/ "before"

Since, the phoneme /-Q/ is referred to (in this study) as CA variable, and /-q/ is a CHA variant, henceforth, the observed variation in the use of both /-Q/ and /-q/ can be recognized as an indicative of SMSA (which borrowed /-Q/ from CA) versus CHA, respectively, and the use of /-q/ as a variant of /-Q/ is one of the prominent aspects of the SMSA variety. The choice of either /-Q/ or /-q/ appears to be a social marker of SMSA. That is to say, it serves to identify the speaker's social group i.e., as either ME or MHE in relation to the present study.

**Table 1: Male Subjects and variation with /-Q/ and /-q/ in SMSA**

Social Categories	Variants in SMSA	Frequency	Percentage	Total Frequency of Variants
Male Educated. ME	/-Q/	782	32%	2423
	/-q/	1641	68%	
Male Highly Educated MHE	/-Q/	2142	76%	2818
	/-q/	676	24%	

In examining table (2), it seems that two significant observations need to be emphasized: First, the scores in table (2) support the educational differences, seen in table (1), in using the variable /-Q/ and its variant /-q/. That is to say, there is a relatively high tendency (70%) towards the use of the variant /-q/ by the social category FE, compared to (40%) in using the variable /-Q/. Second, in contrast with FE, the social category FHE exhibits a noticeable tendency (66%) towards using the variable /-Q/, in comparison with the (34%) is using the variant /-q/.

13

In comparing the scores in both tables, it is noticed that the correlation between the use of the variable /-Q/ and advanced education is evident. In other words, highly educated (male and female) speakers of SMSA tend to favor using the CA variable /-Q/ more frequently (MHE 76%, and FHE 66%) than the CHA variant /-q/ (MHE 24%, and FHE 34%). This result is in line with Daher, (1998: 193-196) whose findings reveal a linear correlation between the use of /-q/ (which is symbolized as /-Q/ in this study) and the speakers' level of education. This means that the higher the education of the speaker the more usage and the more favoring of the CA variable /-Q/. Such results support Daher's findings of the linear correlation between the use of /-q/ and the speakers level of education. Daher, (Ibid, P 196) adds since /-q/ was replaced by /-?/ between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, according to Garbell, (1958: 313). However, Daher says the liable explanation for /-q/ to reach Damascene Arabic, is the direct borrowing from standard Arabic. It is worth noting that standard Arabic, according to Daher, corresponds to Classical

Arabic in this study, which is the formally prescribed variety taught at school.

Table 2: Female Subjects and variation with /-Q/ and /-q/ in SMSA

Social Categories	Variants in SMSA	Frequency	Percentage	Total Frequency of Variants
Female Educated. FE	/Q/	924	40%	3125
	/-q/	2201	70%	
Female Highly Educated. FHE	/-Q/	1736	66%	
	/-q/	928	34%	

Bright, (see Coulmas, 1997: p 89) says that as written language generally changes more slowly than spoken language, it has been suggested that the influence of education might act as a "drag" to "retard" change in the spoken language. Bright's view supports the results of the present study, exhibited in tables (1) and (2), whereby the high educated social groups (namely, MHE and FHE) appear to be "dragged" (by their advanced education) and showed "retention" by using the CA variable /-Q/ instead of the CHA variant /-q/. The fluctuation between the variable /-Q/ and its variant /-q/ is, as we have just explained, neither random nor haphazard. The use of either /-Q/ or /-q/ appears to be predictable through the relevant social factors. Wolfram, (see Coulmas, 1997: 113-114) says that although it is impossible to predict which variant might be used in a given utterance, there are social and linguistic factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood that certain variants will be used. This confirms the results of the present study in which level of education seems to increase or decrease the likelihood of using either of the two variants.

The influence of the level of education on the speakers' use of the language, leads to adding another dimension into perspective on language variation, and that is the systematic nature of variability. Important discoveries emerged from detailed dialectal studies in the past several decades. They are related to the relative frequency occurred with different variants of the same variable (see Wolfram, *Ibid*). For example, SMSA and CHA, are

not differentiated by the discreteness or categorical use or nonuse of /-Q/ or /-q/, but by the relative frequency of variants occurred. Thus we found, that SMSA is differentiated from CHA by the frequent frequencies of the CA variable /-Q/ by highly educated speakers of both genders. It is important to realize that all subjects of SMSA exhibit variation between /-Q/ and /-q/, but the systematic nature of variability is attributed to the influential social factor of education. Wolfram, (Ibid) tends to use the technical term "constraints" to refer to influential "factors". He categorizes constraints into two types, "external" factors (i.e., social factors) and internal factors (i.e., linguistic factors). Whatever the terms and terminologies used by different sociolinguists, such factors remain influential in inter-language and intra-language variations.

As it is known in sociolinguistic studies, Labov, in his (1966b) study was the first to notice the significant role of sex/gender as a social variable (see Coulmas, 1997: 133). Surprisingly, sex/gender difference, does not seem to exhibit noticeable variation (in the fluctuated forms /-Q/ and /-q/) between male and female speakers of the same educational level or background. The statistical scores of the relevant social categories exemplify this. On the one hand, male and female social categories ME and FE scored (68%) and (70%) respectively, in using the same variant /-q/, in tables (1) and (2), and on the other hand male and female social categories MHE and FHE scored (76%) and (66%) separately in both tables in using the variable /-Q/. These scores indicate that sex difference per se, is not accountable for language variation in this study as it is the case in other studies. Daher, (1998: 190) attributes the observed sex-based linguistic variation, (i.e., /-q/ is associated with men while /-?/ with women) to the historical greater access of secular education to men in Damascus. Thus men began to incorporate /-q/ into their speech before women did. In this study, the accountable justification for favoring the same variant by both male and female speakers of SMSA can be attributed to the equal accessibility of education for Saudis in the past five decades. Henceforth, both men and women had encountered the same

influence of education at the same period, and therefore favored the same variable /-Q/.

In view of the above analysis<sup>1</sup> and discussion, it is understandable that the level of education per se, in this particular type of variation, appears to be an influential social factor in increasing or decreasing the likelihood that certain variant(s) might be used by certain social categories.

#### **Variation with /-ð/ and /-z/ in SMSA**

This section seeks to explore possible answers to the variation exhibited with /-ð/ and /-z/ in SMSA, taking into consideration two important social variables i.e., sex/gender and the level of education of the speakers. In the past few decades' education has certainly spread, in Saudi Arabia for both gender, and with it the knowledge of classical Arabic. As a result of this education fostering, intellectual production and communication, amongst educated and highly educated Saudis, was encouraged and the use of CA and MSA has been promoted. Al-Abed-Al-Haq, (1998: 30) indicates that standard Arabic is viewed, in Jordan, as the means of wider communication or lingua franca among Arabs. The findings of his study reveal that oral communication across the Arab countries would be difficult without the use of standard Arabic.

It is believed, by educated Saudi speakers, that SMSA is the lingua franca of educated people in formal occasions. This Arabic variety appears to exhibit certain phonological variation. The situation of sociophonology, in this context, is relevant to the CA variable /-ð/ which has no phonological variants in CA. Another way in which different varieties, of the same language, may become mixed up with each other is through the process of borrowing. As it is the case with /-Q/, it is believed that /-ð/ is borrowed into Arabic dialects and MSA including SMSA from CA. The variable /-ð/ (borrowed from CA) seems to be used, in SMSA, in alternation with the CHA variant /-z/. The variant /-z/ is not exclusively used in SMSA as a reflexive of /-ð/, but happens to be used in several Arabic dialects including, Egyptian, Syrian,

Jordanian, Sudanese and other dialects (see cf. Badawi, 1973; Abd El-Jawad, 1983; El-gibali, 1985 among others).

Tables (3) and (4) summarize the statistical analysis of variation with /-ð/ and /-z/, and the effect of the concerned social variables. The scores of variation in both tables indicate that the level of education is a highly significant social variable, whereas the sex/gender variable has little effect. Looking at the results in more detail, table (3) reveals that the social category ME appears to be more frequently using the CHA variant /-z/ scores (74%) than the variable /-ð/ scores (26%) of the total frequency of variation. These scores indicate that the social category ME maintain the local variant /-z/ more than the CA variant /-ð/ however, the social category MHE in table (3), seems to have a relatively high score (62%) in using the CA variable /-ð/ compared with /-z/ which scores (38%) of the total frequency of variation. This is perhaps to be explained by the speakers' level of education.

Table 3: Male Subjects and variation with /-ð/ and /-z/ in SMSA

Social Categories	Variants in SMSA	Frequency	Percentage	Total Frequency of Variants
Male Educated. ME	/-ð/	151	26%	587
	/-z/	435	74%	
Male Highly Educated. MHE	/-ð/	424	62%	687
	/-z/	263	38%	

17

The alternation between /-ð/ and /-z/ reveals that highly educated Saudi speakers use the prestigious CA variable, which reflects their advanced education, more frequently than the nonstandard local vernacular CHA variant. Also, the mingling between /-ð/ and /-z/ indicates that lesser educated Saudi speakers appear to be conservative by preferring to use the local vernacular variant /-z/. This variation amongst male speakers, of SMSA, as shown in table (3), reflects once again the significant role of education. That is to say, the higher the education the more the tendency towards using prestigious standard variable(s) i.e., /-ð/, and the lower the education the more tendency towards using local nonstandard variant(s) i.e., /-z/.

The following is a sample of the most frequently used words in SMSA with their mingled pronunciation as an interdental /-ð/ and as an alveolar phoneme /z/:

/haada/	"his"	/ðaki/	"intelligent"	/ðakar/	"mention"
/ðakirah/	"memory"	/ʔaxaða/	"took"	/munnuh/	"since"
/ʔazaar/	"excuses"	/kazzab/	"a liar"	/zīra	"a remembrance"
/zakar/	"remember"	/ʔustaz/	"teacher"	/yattaxiz/	"to decide"

The subjects of the present study use the SMSA variety with a certain amount of ease. They are able to make themselves understood in a variety that is neither colloquial nor classical i.e., the SMSA normally used in formal occasions. We can characterize the Saudi subjects using MSA as follows: The average Saudis with a college education who are categorized in this study as EM or EF can be described as a competent user of the SMSA, while those with higher education, with an MA or a PhD, categorized as HEM or HEF, are considered professional competent users of this variety and that is due to their ability to use the language effectively and efficiently i.e., closer to CA. It is worth mentioning that the subjects of these social categories appear to know MSA certainly well enough for communicative purposes.

The statistics in table (4) reveal that there is a noticeable tendency among educated female FE speakers to abandon the CA variable /-ð/ in favor of the CHA variant /-z/. The variable /-ð/ scores (76%) by FE, whereas /-z/ scores (24%) by the same social category. So, the nonstandard colloquial variant /-z/ seems to prevail in the variation by female educated speakers. The prevalence of /-z/ by FE appears to be in contrast with the prevailing /-ð/ used by the social category FHE. The score (61%) of the CA variable /-ð/ indicates that it is used more frequently than /-z/ scores (39%). These statistical results, in table (4), are in line with the those in table (3), in terms of the significant influence of the levels of education on the speakers' usage of the language.

**Table 4: Female Subjects and variation with /-ð / and /-z / in SMSA**

Social Categories	Variants in SMSA	Frequency	Percentage	Total Frequency of Variants
Female Educated FE	/-ð /	117	24%	492
	/-z /	375	76%	
Female Highly Educated FHE	/-ð /	386	61%	635
	/-z /	249	39%	

The fluctuations between /-ð / and /-z / confirm again that the regional or local variant(s), (i.e., CHA variants) can often compete with the standards (i.e., CA variables) in formal occasions. However, this competition appears to be socially conditioned by the level(s) of education of the speakers. More importantly, such fluctuation does not imply the stability of or discreteness of SMSA. In fact, this variation, or any variation in any Arabic variety apart from CA, must not be taken beyond its objective and goal, which is an adequate sociolinguistic description of intra-language variation. Trudgill, (1983: 186-87) states that Standard English is spoken with a large number of different accents. He adds that accent and dialect usually go together to the extent that we consider an accent as an integral part of a particular dialect. Trudgill, (Ibid) reveals that most speakers of standard English dialect speak it usually, with a not too localized regional accent to the extent that their geographical origins is hidden in their standard English accent, which is known in British English as Received Pronunciation RP.

The main reason for citing Trudgill's view, in this context, is to provide collateral accountable justification for phonological variation in Arabic varieties. That is to say, although English, just as Arabic, exhibits similar variation in pronunciations, yet sociolinguists do not take such variation as a justifiable excuse to establish a discrete and a stable English variety. They provide adequate description of the observed English variation, and account for it in terms of the relevant social variables i.e., age, sex/gender, literacy etc. However, in Arabic certain sociolinguists, (see cf, Abdel-Jawad, 1987; Badawi, 1973 among others) tend to

sub classify it into several levels (e.g., high level, middle levels and low level etc.) and their views are untenable and irrational. They, unsuccessfully, defended their views by describing certain phonological or morphological variations in Arabic dialects, and considering such variations as evidence for their classified levels of Arabic. In fact, any variation in Colloquial Arabic can be justified sociolinguistically (i.e., by the relevant social variables) and incorporate such dialectal variations within the regional dialectal differences, as it is the case with English, with out the need to create or posit an unstable or indiscrete Arabic level.

In view of this discussion, we argue that the coexistence of two or more variants, at the phonological level, in an Arabic variety, does not necessarily mean the establishment or the postulation of a new standard Arabic variety. The adoption of such views, of having several standards in Arabic may be taken as an attempt to literary damage the prestige, admiration and the respect of FuSha or CA. We view colloquial Arabic varieties to be descendant from or a degeneration of CA. We agree with what Trudgill, (1983) stated earlier about Standard English, and believe that most speakers of MSA have two identifiable aspects: First, they do not show their region in their accent. Second, they do not use too localized phonological variants. These two significant aspects are the most tenable and rational explanations for defining and identifying MSA and its speakers. Therefore, it is inconceivable to have more than one standard variety in Arabic. We reiterate once again, what we have stated earlier in this article that Arabic has three different varieties : First, Classical Arabic, or FuSha and it is the only prescribed Arabic variety taught formally at schools. Second, Colloquial Arabic, and it embodies all the Arabic dialects in all geographically distinctive areas. Third, Modern Standard Arabic, and it is a combination of both FuSa and Colloquial Arabic. Any sub classification of Arabic into middle levels, as Badawi, (1973) among others claims is, we believe, inconceivable and does not have stability or discreteness. Certain linguists, (see cf Ibrahim, (1968) make a distinction between standard and what they call prestigious Arabic. We tend to categorize these two and other similar varieties as colloquial versus standard Arabic, and this

categorization is in line with our three level classification of Arabic.

#### Variation with /θ/ /-s/ and /-t/ in SMSA

In this section, the observed phonological variation, occurs (in SMSA) between the variable /-θ/ and its variants /-s/ and /-t/, will be analyzed in association with the relevant social factors in an attempt to account for such variation. Before we proceed with the analysis, it is worth noting that Eid, (1988) reveals, in her study of principles for code-switching between standard and Egyptian Arabic, that lexical items are uttered with different pronunciations (i.e., switching between standard and Egyptian Arabic varieties) by the same educated Egyptian speakers in the same formal occasion. Eid, distinguishes between two varieties, namely, FuSha Arabic (she refers to it as standard Arabic) and colloquial Egyptian Arabic. She illustrated the observed phonological variation by citing the different pronunciations for the words "three" /θala:θa/ and "revolution" /θawra/. Eid, (1988) points out that the alternation occurs when these words are pronounced either with the standard Arabic interdental fricative variable /-θ/ (as in "three" /θala:θa/ and "revolution" /θawra/) or with the colloquial Egyptian alveolar variants /-s/ and /-t/ (as in "three" /sala:sa/ or /tala:ta/; and "revolution" /sawra/ or /tawra/). El-gibali, (1985) agrees with Eid, (Ibid) and states that there is a close correspondence, in Cairene Arabic, between Classical Arabic variant /-θ/, and its correspondences /-s/ and /-t/ in formal and informal oral situations.

21

This means that Egyptian Arabic, according to Eid's (1988) study, and Elgibali, (1985), exhibit certain phonological similarities with SMSA. The similarity can be summarized in two respects: First, the two Arabic vernaculars (i.e., CHA and colloquial Egyptian Arabic) appear to be using the same phonological variants (i.e., /-s/ and /-t/). Second, the two standard Arabic varieties (i.e., Egyptian and Saudi) are exhibiting similar phonological alternations between what we tend to call CA variable /-θ/ (i.e., standard Arabic form according to Eid, and El-gibali) and the colloquial variants /-s/ and /-t/ in Egyptian and

Saudi Arabic varieties. It is worth noting, in passing, that Eid (Ibid) refers to its Arabic variety as Egyptian Arabic, while El-gibali, (Ibid) calls it Cairene Arabic. For convenience of the study, we will refer to the variants /-s/ and /-t/ as Colloquial Hijazi Arabic (CHA) variants. The above two fold similarities observed between the two Arabic varieties (i.e., Egyptian and Saudi) reinforces our earlier stated view regarding the indiscreteness of regional standard Arabic varieties. Both, Eid's and the present study appear to be exhibiting similar phonological variations as the following tables show.

Turning to the discussion of the results, table (5) shows clearly the alternated CA variable /-θ/ and its CHA variants /-s/ and /-t/. In analyzing the alternation, the statistics of the table illustrates a clear higher tendency (57%), by the social category ME, towards using the CHA variant /-s/, than the other CHA variant /-t/ (25%). The CA variable, however, scores the lowest percentage of occurrence (18%) by the same social category. As for the social category MHE the table shows that the highest percentage of frequency (42%) is towards using the CA variable /-θ/, compared with the CHA variants /-s/ and /-t/ which scores (38%) and 20%) respectively. Although the difference in the frequency percentage between using the CA variable /-θ/ and the CHA variant /-s/ is minor (i.e., only 4%), yet it still shows a prevalence of /-θ/ over /-s/. It is worth noting, that /-s/ seems to be a competitive variant to /-θ/ in both varieties (i.e., the informal CHA and the formal SMSA) regardless of the levels of education of the speakers.

**Table 5: Male Subjects and Variation with /-θ/ /-s/ and /-t/ in SMSA**

Social Categories	Variants in SMSA	Frequency	Percentage	Total Frequency of Variants
Male Educated ME	/-θ/	275	18%	1541
	/-s/	879	57%	
	/-t/	387	25%	
Male Highly Educated MHE	/-θ/	513	42%	1232
	/-s/	471	38%	
	/-t/	248	20%	

Comparing the scores of the CHA variants /-s/ and /-t/, one can notice that the most frequently used CHA variant, by both social categories ME and MHE in formal occasions is /-s/, which simply means that it is a competitive and preferable variant in SMSA, as it is the case in colloquial and standard Egyptian Arabic (see Eid, 1988). On the basis of our observations in the present study, it appears that the higher the frequency of using the vernacular variants /-s/ and /-t/, the more natural the mode of discussions becomes, and vice versa i.e., the higher the frequency of using the CA variable /-θ/ the more formal the mode of discussions will be. That is to say, the favoring or disfavoring of using vernacular or standard variants is attributed to three main factors: First, whether the occasion, in which such alternation is used is formal or informal. Second, whether the speakers, of the concerned Arabic variety are educated or highly educated. Third, whether the alternated CA variable has one or more variants frequently used in colloquial speech. Because of this mingling between Arabic varieties, (at all linguistic levels), which is due to the above-stated three factors in Arabic societies, one can say that the relationship between standard and colloquial Arabic varieties is very close, and our view in this regard is in line with El-gibali, (1985) amongst others, who repeatedly say that Arabic varieties are interrelated.

The interrelatedness of CHA and SMSA is illustrated in the following words, from the present data, which show the alternative CHA variants /-s/ and /-t/, and CA variable /-θ/ in SMSA.

<i>/ʔalaʔθθar/</i> "was affected"	<i>/ʔatassar/</i> "was affected"	<i>/ʔatatar/</i> "was affected"
<i>/kaθi:r/</i> "a lot of"	<i>/kasi:r/</i> "a lot of"	<i>/kati:r/</i> "a lot of"
<i>/ʔaθar/</i> "found"	<i>/ʔasar/</i> "found"	<i>/ʔatar/</i> "found"

These extracted words, show clearly how the same word, is pronounced in three different ways by the same speakers of the concerned Arabic variety. Needless to say, however, that not all words exhibit the same alternation. On the one hand, there are words which are mingled between the variable /-θ/, as for example, the words /θaQa:fa/ "culture" /θawa:ni/ "seconds" /tamθi:l/ "acting", or the variant /-s/ /saQa:fa/ "culture" /sawa:ni/ "seconds" /tamsi:l/ "acting". Words like these are not observed to be pronounced with the variant /-t/, even though they are amongst the most frequently used words in SMSA. On the other hand, there are other words which are alternated between /-θ/ and /-t/ only, such as the numerals /θala:θa/; /θala:θi:n/; /θala:θmiaʔh/ "three"; "thirty"; "three hundred", which are also uttered as /tala:ta/; /tala:ti:n/; /tala:tmiaʔh/ respectively. Kheshaifaty, (1997) indicates, in a comparative study between Classical and Colloquial Hijazi Arabic, that the /-t/ is used in numerals in CHA instead of /-θ/ in CA. However, CHA, seems to be having distinctive forms of numerals. That is to say, the variant /-s/, for example, is never used in CHA as an alternative for /-θ/ as it is the case with Colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

This study reveals that there are many other words, apart from numerals, which are observed to be alternating between /-θ/ and /-t/ only, as for example, /θo:b/ or /to:b/ "men's gown"; /θo:r/ or /to:r/ "a bull". As a result of the diglossic situation in the speech of the relevant social categories, a "mingled variety" from CHA and CA, had given rise to a new but an unstable and indiscrete Arabic variety, and that is SMSA. As it is the case with MSA, used in other Arabic speaking countries, the indiscreetness of this new Arabic variety is due to its dependence on either CA or CHA,

and the observed alternation between these two varieties is a clear illustration of our view.

By examining the results in table (6), it seems that the fluctuation between /-θ/, /-s/ and /-t/ is not random or haphazard. The statistical results show that the variant /-s/ scores (68%) the highest percentage, by the female educated FE social category, compared with the scores of /-t/ (18%) and /-θ/ (14%). As for the social category, Female highly educated FHE, it appears that the variant /-s/, has, once again, the highest score (44%) compared with the scores of /-θ/ (36%) and /-t/ (20%). The results, in table (6), are interesting, and appear to be different from those in table (5) in four sociolinguistic aspects: First, table (5) exhibits education differences, whereby male educated ME, tend to favor using the variant /-s/, whereas, male highly educated MHE, appear to be favoring the use of /-θ/. Second, table (6) shows no education differences, since the two social categories FE and FHE, appear to be using the variant /-s/ more frequently than the other two variants /-t/ and /-θ/. Third, the scores in both tables (5) and (6) indicate that, whereas the two social categories ME and FE are congruent in favoring the use of /-s/ (i.e., obliterating any sex/gender differences regarding the observed variation), the other two highly educated social categories are incongruent and exhibiting sex/gender differences i.e., MHE favors the use of /-θ/, whereas FHE favors using /-s/.

25

Table 6: Female Subjects and Variation with /-θ/ /-s/ and /-t/ in SMSA

Social Categories	Variants in SMSA	Frequency	Percentage	Total Frequency of Variants
Female Educated FE	/-θ/	127	14%	936
	/-s/	632	68%	
	/-t/	177	18%	
Female Highly Educated FHE	/-θ/	412	36%	1136
	/-s/	495	44%	
	/-t/	229	20%	

This adequate description of the socio-phonological variation mingling between /θ/, /s/ and /t/, yields two points: 1- Sex/gender differences, coupled with education, appear to be influential factors in this type of variation. 2- These two social factors are further reinforcements of the systematic nature of variability. That is to say, education and sex/gender appear to, systematically, increase or decrease the likelihood that one of the fluctuated variants will prevail.

The statistics in both tables, (5) and (6) indicate that even though SMSA, is dealt with in this study, as a spoken formal variety, we found that the most frequently used form was the informal variant /s/, regardless of the sex and education of the subjects. Consequently, we can say C.H.A. reflexes (namely, /s/, /t/) are highly competitive variants for the CA variable /θ/. This finding is in line with findings of the earlier discussed variations, in which informal CHA variants /q/ and /z/ are competing with the formal CA variables /Q/ and /ʒ/ in the formal oral variety of SMSA.

## 26

**General Findings**

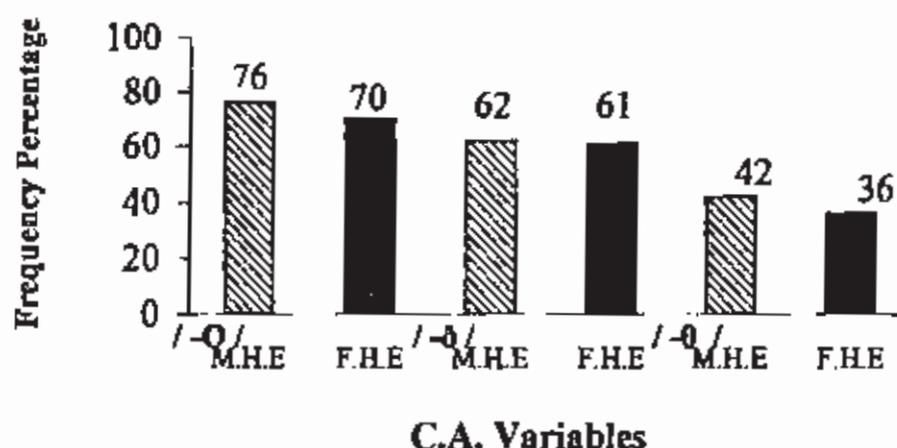
To summarize the findings of the present study, in view of relevant sociolinguistic studies, there are strong emphases on education to account for variation in the formal speech style of educated people. Honey, (see Coulmas, 1997: 104), for example, states that the concept of "educatedness" is fundamental in sociophonology. Educatedness, he adds, is closely associated with the notion of being "well spoken", which appears to be shared by all languages, and also associated with formal styles of speaking. Applying Honey's concept, to the formal oral variety of SMSA, appears to be feasible on the basis of the earlier discussed findings. That is to say, it is evident that there is a connection between highly educated male and female speakers of SMSA, and the most frequently used CA variables, (which are /Q/ /ʒ/ and /θ/) compared with the lesser used CHA variants, namely /q/, /z/, /s/ and /t/. Thus, the notion of "well spoken" is represented in the present study, by the frequent usages of the CA variables, and Honey's concept of "educatedness" can, therefore, be implemented

to the formal speech style of SMSA, and is, in turn, shared by Arabic varieties, as it is the case with other language varieties.

It is interesting to note that the findings of the study show no sex- differentiated patterns of variation in the formal oral variety of SMSA. Figure (1), based on the scores of the two highly educated social categories , MHE & FHE, on tables (1-6), illustrate very clearly the close tendency of both male and female subjects towards using the same CA variable. The figures present the best summary of recurring tendency, towards using the same CA variables, by the two social categories MHE & FHE. Based on tables (1-2), the figure shows the recurring tendency of the CA variable /-Q/, which scores (76%) by MHE, and (70%) by FHE. Similarly the case is with the CA variable /-ð/, based on tables (3-4), the figure appears to exhibit very close scores (62%) by MHE and (61%) by FHE. Also, on the basis of tables (5-6) with respect to the recurring tendency of the CA variable /-θ/, the figure reveals that both social categories MHE and FHE scores (42%) and (36%) respectively.

27

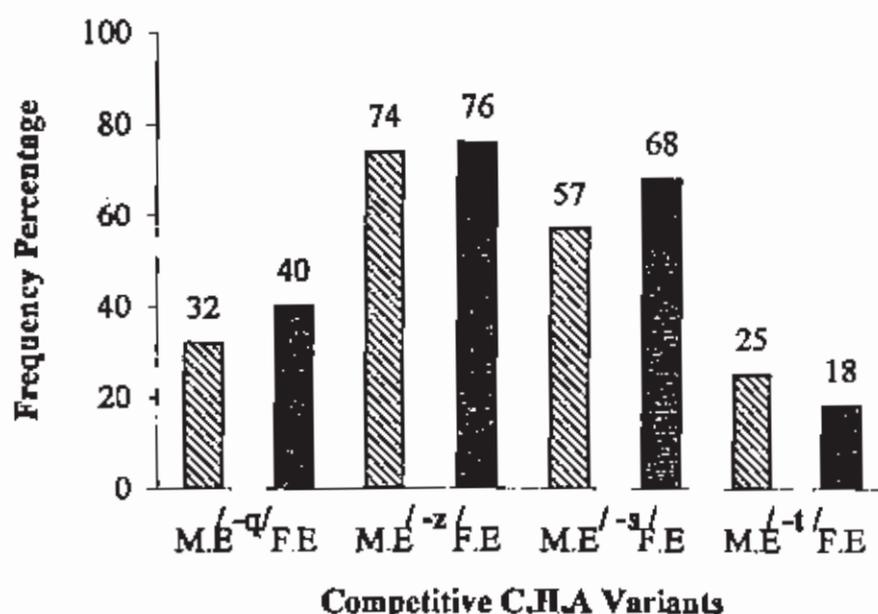
Figure 1: Frequency Percentage of C.A. Variables used by the social Categories M.H.E & F.H.E



The scores, in figure (1), illustrate that sex/gender differences does not play influential role in the sociophonological variation of

SMSA variety. Furthermore, the figure shows a tendency to close similarity between CA, and SMSA varieties. This similarity lies in the frequent usage, of the CA variables; by subjects of SMSA. These findings support our earlier stated view that SMSA (as it is the case with MSA used in any Arabic speaking country) is an indiscrete mingled Arabic variety, largely dependent on two main Arabic varieties, namely, CA and dialectal Arabic. This is explained in two respects: Firstly, figure (1), illustrates the mingled variation of SMSA (at the phonological level), and its dependence on certain CA variables. Secondly, figure (2) shows the indiscreteness of SMSA, by exhibiting the percentages of the competitive CHA variants used side by side with the CA variables in formal oral occasions.

**Figur 2: Frequency Percentage of the Competitive C.H.A Variants Used By the Social Categories M.E & F.E**



The summarized recurring findings in figure (2), which is based on tables (1-6), reveal that, as it is the case in figure (1), sex differences have no influential role in the observed

sociophonological variation in SMSA. The competitive CHA variant /-q/, in figure (2) based on tables (1-2), has a lower percentage of occurrence, (32%) and (40%) for the two social categories ME and FE. This low occurrence occurs when it is used in alternation with the CA variable /-Q/. Such close tendency between male and female (i.e., the two social categories ME and FE) is recurring, in figure (2) based on tables (3-4), with the competitive CHA variant /-z/, when it is mingled with the CA variable /-ð/. It is worth noting, in this respect, that by comparing the statistics in figures (1) and (2), it seems that the concerned four social categories, appear to have two different tendencies. That is to say, the two social categories MHE and FHE in figure (1), have high tendency towards using the CA variable /-ð/ scoring (62%) and (61%), and that is in contrast with the two social categories ME and FE, in figure (2), which score (74%) and (76%) in using the CHA variant /-z/. This finding can only indicate that the favoring of /-ð/ and its variant /-z/ is mainly attributed to the level of education of the subjects.

Turning to the CHA variants /-s/ and /-t/ and their CA variable /-θ/, it seems that there is general consensus, amongst all four social categories, towards favoring the use of /-s/ in formal occasions on SMSA. It is to be realized that /-s/ exhibits the highest scores (57%) and (68%), by ME and FE respectively, in figure (2) which is based on tables (5-6), compared with the lower scores of /-t/ (25%) and (18%) by ME and FE in figure (2), and the scores of /-θ/ (42%) and (36%) in figure (1). Consequently, these scores lead us to conclude that the most frequently used variant, in this respect, is /-s/ and this finding applies to all four social categories.

The general findings, of the present study, can be stated as follows: Education is the most influential social factor in the sociophonological variation occurs in SMSA, and this influence is illustrated in frequent usages of the CA variables /-Q/, /-ð/ and /-θ/, in association with the CHA variants /-q/, /-z/, /-s/, and /-t/ by educated male and female subjects in formal occasions. The findings reveal that the higher the education of the speakers of SMSA, the more /he/she tends to use CA variables, and vice versa i.e., the lower the education level, the more /he/she tends to use

dialectal reflexes i.e., CHA variants. This finding is explained by the fact that, education includes and requires the knowledge and use of CA variables, in formal occasions of SMSA variety. Moreover, the stereotypical social status of Saudi women has changed from illiterate housewives to educated persons of high caliber, and this is reflected in their use of the language, which to a great extent becomes similar to men's speech particularly in formal oral situations.

Consequently, this study shows no sex differences amongst educated speakers of both gender in SMSA. This particular finding is not in line with certain earlier sociolinguistic studies, which reveal that sex differences can be an influential social factor in linguistic variation occurs in Arabic dialects. Rosenhouse, (1998) indicates that, sex-based differences is possible in a language, where the system of that language allows more than one structural solution, as for example, using standard versus dialectal phonological variants. Rosenhouse, (Ibid) amongst others, as for example (Abdel-Jawad, 1981, Suleiman, 1985), described sex-based phonological variations in the usage of /-q/ and its reflexes /-ʔ/, /-k/ /-g/ and /-j/ in Egyptian and Jordanian (rural and Bedouin) dialects of Arabic. Such –sex based differences may not be generalized to all Arabic varieties, and henceforth, does not necessarily apply to MSA varieties including SMSA.

### Conclusion

We have argued in this empirical sociolinguistic study, that sociophonological variation may partly be attributed to certain sociological factors (namely education levels of speakers and sex) and partly to the inherited linguistic properties of CA variables and their variants. With this main conclusion, it appears that it is in agreement with the earlier discussed views of Parkinson, (1993) in which he describes MSA as having a prescriptive system inherited from CA. The findings of this study, are also in line with Parkinson's view (Ibid) whereby he mentions that MSA is an in-between Arabic variety, which is neither classical nor dialectal.

The conclusion reached in this study, which are valid for most speakers of SMSA, argues for the indiscreetness and for the instability of any MSA variety including SMSA. This view is not in line with Badawi's (1973) proposed five-level of Egyptian Arabic. Badawi, (see El-gibali, 1985) suggests that three of the levels (which are Modern Standard Arabic, Educated Colloquial, and Literate Colloquial) are discrete and stable Arabic varieties. Badaqi, (Ibid) argues, unconvincingly, for the discreetness and stability of his proposed three levels. We believe that the smooth flow of continuous unpredictable alternation between the three suggested varieties, is a clear evidence of its muddled and indistinct boundaries, and henceforth, of its indiscreetness.

Finally, we propose to distinguish three different Arabic varieties: Firstly, /Al-ʿarabiyyah Al-Fuṣṣḥā/, which is "Fuṣṣḥā Arabic" or "Classical Arabic"(C.A), and it is the only discrete, rule-governed Arabic variety and it is taught formally at schools. Secondly, /Al-ʿarabiyyah Almiʿyariyyah Alḥiṭṭiyyah/, and it is termed "Modern Standard Arabic" MSA. It identifies any indiscrete and mingled Arabic and it is used formally in written and oral forms. Thirdly, /Al-ʿarabiyyah Alʿammīyyah Alʿarabiyyah/ "Colloquial Dialectal Arabic" CDA, and it refers to any indiscrete regional nonstandard dialect used informally.

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