

Political and Social Impact on the Linguistic Behavior of Iraqis: A Gender-based Study on Lexical Innovation

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Received: November 29, 2011

Accepted: January 9, 2012

Published: April 1, 2012

doi:10.5539/ijel.v2n2p10

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v2n2p10>

Abstract

In this research, we believe that there is political and social impact on the linguistic choices of males and females. The main objectives of the research are to investigate the way the political and social changes affect the linguistic word choices of Iraqis, and to find out the direction of the gender pattern. The main problem in Arabic sociolinguistics is the absence of a unitary gender pattern differentiation. However, in many cases, men, not women, have attempted to approximate the Standard Arabic. The issue of prestige is also confusing, because each Arab country has a local variety that is prestigious, but not necessarily the standard. This issue has motivated us to study the linguistic differences between males and females in their choices of 12 new lexical items in Baghdad, where all the events of the 2003 war happened. Twenty hours of tape recordings of ten males and ten females were investigated and analyzed. The most important finding in the current research is that female prestige is not associated with the standard variety. Rather, the meaning of words is what should be prestigious. For females, if the meaning of a word is stigmatized, then the word is stigmatized as well even if it is a standard word.

Keywords: Innovation, Standard, Prestige, Arabic, Diaglossia

1. Introduction

When the concepts and values of people change, a need to satisfy that change by the innovation of new lexical items is recognizable. Mercer (2000, p. 13) pointed out that "every living language continues to evolve to meet the needs of its speakers." She added, "Not only can existing words change their meaning and be combined in novel ways, new words and structures can also be created as they are required." Essentially, the innovation of new words can be seen, first, as a reaction to political, social, economic, scientific, and other factors; and second, as a reflection of language contact. In both cases, innovations occur to fulfill certain social needs and fill the gap in the actual language use of speakers in everyday conversation.

Over the last 20 years, many events, inventions, values, principles, and concepts occurred and changed the way people look at things. Accordingly, these phenomena changed and increased people's vocabulary. The wars, civilian violence, discrimination, religious conflict, terrorism, human rights, gender issues, immigration, fashion, music, language contact, technology, and many other issues in the 21st century have been reflected in people's speech. Crystal (2010) argued that English is "permanently evolving and developing new words and expressions are coined and existing words change their meaning as society, culture and technology progress."

Communities in societies, which face social and political change, are confronting seemingly challenging issues. Emerson (1966, p. 31) believed that the “balance between stability and change can best be achieved by the fullest freedom of expression.” For example, Iraq is one of the societies that faced social and political change. Beginning with the war in 2003, Iraq came under military occupation by a coalition of forces, primarily American and British. After 2003, Iraq was a country divided by religion and ethnicity. Iraq was also a broken society. These divisions have been deepened and complicated by 30 years of war and deprivation (Stansfield, 2007).

2. Gender Patterns

Observable differences in the way a language used in a speech community are clearly exemplified in linguistic research. Trudgill (2000, p. 21) asserted that “language is not a simple code used in the same manner by all people in all situations.” Men do not behave linguistically as women. For example, a large number of sociolinguistic surveys carried out in the English-speaking world have shown that for the [ing] variable, in words such as “running,” men use a higher proportion of the alveolar /n/ variant than women in their social class and, conversely, women use a higher proportion of the velar plosive (Labov, 1966 in New York City; Wolfram, 1969 in Detroit, and Trudgill, 1974 in Norwich). Fasold (1990, p. 92), for example, referred to this condition as “the sociolinguistic gender pattern.” However, some case studies have shown that men, not women, appear to favor the prestige forms. In Amman, for example, men prefer to use the prestige [q] variant. In addition, Haeri (1987; 1996) undertook the study of the colloquial Arabic in Cairo with a sample of 100 speakers from a series of networks through friends and extended contacts. The sample represents the highest social class group that is strongly oriented toward Western culture. The [q] variable was studied, and men were found to consistently use more of the traditional uvular stop.

Labov (1998, p.13) argued that “this appeared to represent a global reversal of the positions of men and women in two Muslim societies, perhaps related to the fact that in general women played less of a role in public life of those societies.” However, this concept is not necessarily true, because Classical Arabic is not comparable to the standard dialects of other societies as Chambers (2003) assumed. Chambers (2003, p. 160) pointed out that “it [Arabic] cannot fill the role of the standard variety in social stratification.” As a result, the same hypothesis that men and women linguistically behave differently holds true as far as there is an impact of extra linguistic factors in Iraqi society upon its speakers. Therefore, the concern in the current paper will be, first, to highlight the concepts of prestige and standard in western and Arab studies; and second, to find out the direction of the gender pattern and provide an explanation for this pattern. The innovation of new lexical items and the supposed differences between males and females motivated us to investigate this phenomenon and to shape the assumed gender pattern.

3. Related Work

Arabic sociolinguistics started as an academic entity when Ferguson (1959) recognized two distinctive varieties. The first is the high variety, which is the Classical Arabic used in formal occasions and literary and religious functions. The second is the Low variety, which is used in everyday conversation such as between friends and at home. According to Ownes (2001, p. 423), diglossia is “a socio-politically regulated linguistic situation, where one linguistic variety has a higher status than another (or others), and in which linguistic functions are partitioned between the two in contemporary fashion.” The Low varieties are distributed into 22 different regional Arab countries. Discourse across dialect boundaries is carried out in a modernized form of classical Arabic, referred to as Standard Arabic. Indeed, Standard Arabic has no native speakers but is learnt as a second language in formal institutions such as schools (Ownes, 2001; Trudgill, 2000; Ibraheem, 1986). In addition, for some scholars, Classical Arabic is considered pure, since it is based on the written text of the Holy Quraan, while Low varieties were seen as corrupted forms (Versteegh, 1983 not available to the researchers but is seen in Ownes, 2001). Lyons (1981, p. 285) pointed out the choice of the two varieties is determined “not by a person’s social class as such... but by the situation in which he finds himself.” Moreover, if an Arab individual does use the high variety in everyday conversation, it “is generally felt to be artificial, pedantic, snobbish or reactionary” (Trudgill, 2000, p. 96). Trudgill (p. 102) assumed “Low Standard Arabic” is present when “there is often a mixture: mainly colloquial Arabic, but with an admixture of classical elements” in normal educated speech.

Many Arabic studies have concentrated on the use of the two varieties in Arab societies, assuming in advance that the standard variety is the prestigious one (Abd-el-Jawad, 1981; Bakir, 1986) and that caused confusion in Arabic sociolinguistics. This might be because Arab scholars relied on Western methodologies and theories, which should not be applicable in the Arab world (Ownes, 2001). Therefore, Ibraheem (1986) assumed the prestigious dialect is not necessarily the standard variety, which seems a reversal from the general Western

pattern. In Western academia, “standard variants are prestigious in various senses: change tends to work towards them; they are the target of hypercorrection, they represent the norms of society at large as opposed to local, communal values of the vernacular variants” (Ownes, 2001, p. 437). Nevertheless, the situation in Arabic sociolinguistics has taken another direction. For example, in his investigation of the Arabic spoken in Bahrain, Holes (1983) stated the Sunni speakers’ variety is the prestigious dialect, whereas the Shia’t variety is stigmatized although standard features are present. This might be given a clear explanation when we understand that Arab communities are different in their power, economy, social norms, education, and cultural heritage. Smith (1979, p.113) emphasized the fact that “prestige cannot be used interchangeably with standard in sociolinguistics, for the linguistic varieties that are socially advantageous (or stigmatized) for one group may not be for the others.”

Gender studies, on the other hand, have received significant attention in Arabic sociolinguistics. Sex and gender studies in the Western world have reached a universal sociolinguistic phenomenon, such that women of the same social class tend to use more linguistic prestigious forms than men do. Romaine (1994, p. 990) stated, “one of the sociolinguistic patterns established by quantitative research on urban dialects was that women, regardless of other social characteristics such as class, age, etc., use more standard forms of language than men.” On the other hand, men try to approximate more closely to the working class life due to of the desire to preserve toughness and masculinity (Trudgill, 1972). However, the sociolinguistic gender pattern in Arabic studies has followed a different direction. For example, many studies of the [q] variant in Egypt, Iraq, and Levantine varieties (Abd-el-Jawad, 1981; Kojak, 1983; Bakir, 1986; Haeri, 1991) proved that men, not women, used the standard variants. In the study of Bakir (1986) in Basrah, the south part of Iraq, on the female/male use of the [q] variant and the internal passive, males were found to use more standard features than females. Bakir concluded that although women used less standard variants, they associated themselves more with the prestigious Arabic dialect in Iraq, that is, Baghdadi Arabic. He explained that “this state of affairs, however, does not entail that women, because of their restricted social roles are not conscious of status. In the formal domain of women, the prestigious linguistic form would certainly not be a form that is associated with formality, i.e., Standard Arabic. It is the variety of Colloquial Iraqi Arabic used in Baghdad” (p. 7). Baghdadi Arabic is spoken in Baghdad, and in the last century, Baghdadi Arabic has been standardized and become the lingua franca of Iraq, and considered one of the prestigious dialects in the Arab world (Ferguson, 1972, p. 116). Baghdadi Arabic is really the language of education and commerce (for more information about dialects in Baghdad see Blanc, 1964).

In the same regional area, Iraq, the study of Abu-Haidar (1989) in Baghdad proved that women used a higher percentage of standard features than men did. A study considered an opposite pattern to that of Bakir has clearly explained that “in Iraqi society today, where sex roles are not so clear-cut and both sexes enjoy similar social privileges, women are more prestige conscious than men, since it is mostly women who opt for the prestigious speech varieties” (p. 479). In conclusion, both studies suggested that women, not men, used the prestigious forms, whether Baghdadi Arabic in the Bakir research or Standard Arabic in the Abu-Haidar study.

From what has just been said, the following points are made:

- 1) Gender studies in Arabic are based on phonological data. [q] is the most inspiring variable that has received a lot of attention in scholarly investigation. However, our concern in this paper is to investigate the innovation of lexical items.
- 2) Scholars always adhere to the notion of diglossia. There is always a comparison between the local variety and the standard one as far as the female or male use of one variety rather than the other is concerned. However, in our study, the main objective is to focus on Baghdadi Arabic only. We do not put in advance that this lexical item is prestigious or stigmatized. Through the female/male choice of lexical items, we would like to understand how to assess for a gender pattern affected by political and social norms and to give reasons for their choice. We leave the choice to both sexes to decide whether a particular word is prestigious or stigmatized.
- 3) Lexical innovation is rarely treated in quantitative Arabic sociolinguistics. However, a few studies focus on the appearance of loan words from a different language in a particular variety, such as the study of Alomoush (2010) who investigated the adaptation of English loan words in Jordanian Arabic and that of Ibraheem (2006) who studied the English loan words in the written texts of the internationally circulated Egyptian magazine *Al-Ahram*. However, our concern in this paper is quantitative in nature that deals with the emergence of new forms and thus new meanings, words that undergo semantic shift, and new borrowed lexical items from the high variety of Arabic and English.

4. Lexical Innovation

This section is devoted to the explanation of the meaning of the new Iraqi speech phenomenon. Indeed, translating some of these words is not an easy task. Among the strategies concerned, some deal with untranslatable or culture-bound expressions (Nida, 1981), which means that some of the words in the current study have no counterparts in English. This problem (i.e., having no equivalents in the target language) exists mainly because these words, in turn, have no similar meaning in Standard Arabic. The current research makes an effort to explain the meaning of these words as they are used and understood by speakers of Iraqi Arabic. The explanation of these words is based on the viewpoints of informants and the understanding of researchers of these concepts. When Iraqi society experienced new concepts, new words had emerged to satisfy that social need and fill a gap in the linguistic performance of people.

Lexical innovation primarily occurs due to two reasons. First, political, socio-psychological, and economic changes create new meanings and new forms; second, language and dialect contact, as a result of internal immigration and the appearance of religious men, leads to lexical borrowing. Hence, lexical innovation in Iraq involves three dimensions: creating new meanings based on existing items, creating new forms by means of derivation and then new meanings, and borrowing from English and Standard Arabic. The description of those words show that sometimes, more than one process is involved in innovating them.

In studies on accommodation as a consequence of migration, trade, travel, and colonolization, language contact of related languages and non-related ones seems to lead to what is called “borrowing.” Auer (2007, p. 109) pointed out that “convergence between structurally distant language systems can lead to code switching, code mixing, lexical borrowing.” He added that “borrowing and code mixing can occur between dialects just as between languages.” Indeed, majority of human languages have borrowed from each other due to culture contact during their history (Winford, 2003). Thomason and Kaufman (1991, p. 37) defined lexical borrowing as the “incorporation of foreign features into a group’s native language by speakers of that language: the native language is maintained but is changed by the addition of the incorporated features.” The new lexical items are replicas of models in the donor language, and they can be manifested as phonetic or semantic adaptations, including calques or translation loans.

In November 2006, the UNHCR estimated that nearly 100,000 Iraqis fled to neighboring countries each month. In addition, 1.5 to 2 million Iraqis were internally displaced by military operations between 2002 and 2004 (UN Refugee Agency, 2010). Accordingly, many families left their original residences for new ones where they share no social ties except having the same ethnicity or religious sect. Having weak social networks helps the diffusion of new lexical items. Aside from the phenomenon of accommodation, the appearance of religious men from both sects of Islam (Sunni and Shi’at) after 2003 helped the diffusion of borrowed words from Standard Arabic. Standard Arabic is the variety spoken by religious men and some educated individuals who would like to give the impression that they are religious. Many people affected by sect values imitated the religious men in Iraqi society; however, afterward, this affection and/or imitation were directed toward another path, as seen in the following descriptions of the 12 innovative lexical items:

The new word *hawasim* /ħawa:sim/ covers the whole situation of theft, corruption, occupation, and destruction. People at first used this term jokingly, but later the word intermingled in the speech of individuals. In Iraqi Arabic, the word makes no sense; it has never been used before. Stansfield (2007, p. 194) contended that the new word is derived ironically from the last words of Saddam (the former president of Iraq up to 2003) regarding his war against the United States being final. He called the last battle *AL-Hawasim*, which in English means *the finalists*. Having been used in the everyday conversation of people raises logical linguistic questions, because no connection or semantic relationship exists between the word or its *sense*—being final—and its *reference*, namely, the things to which the word refers (i.e., theft, corruption, and occupation). What is of so much importance is not what the word intends to mean, but what people really mean. The main reason is that language varies and then changes as the experiences of people change.

Hawasim was first used as an instance of direct, harsh, unpleasant, or offensive language. The word was, indeed, one of the most efficient ways to do away with extra frustration, as many swearwords do. However, *Hawasim* was used sometimes to indicate a particular social group. Thus, when the word is used for this purpose, no frustration or anger is present. *Hawasim* refers to anything taken or done illegally, such as theft (in particular from governmental institutions and banks), plagiarism, breach of law, financial corruption, patronage (favorism), reckless driving, incompetence, inefficiency, and the underqualification of a person to do a certain job. *Hawasim* denotatively refers to the very poor shelterless people who occupied and lived in government buildings after the

collapse of Baghdad and continue to live in these places. *Hawasim* is a plural word, yet it can be used to refer to both singular and plural. In Standard Arabic, *hawasim* is a plural adjective used to express the meaning of putting an end to a particular issue. After 2003, *hawasim* was used to name the regime's battle against the United States, the consequences of that war led to a split on how people look at the situation. Some people think that Iraq has become a scene of theft and crime after the loss of the *AL-Hawasim* war. Others believe that Iraq has been destroyed because of the *AL-Hawasim* war. Therefore, that war put an end to the life and future of Iraq. In both cases, the consequences of the war and invasion lead to the same word, which refers to anything illegal. Certainly, the collapse of the Baghdad regime in 2003 led to the fall of all governmental institutions, such as ministries, courts, police stations, and all other legal departments that may keep order and protect people. Thus, the word *hawasim* as well as other words had been innovated. Today, *hawasim* takes different forms, which are derived to cope with new situations, such as *hawsama* (a noun referring to the situation of doing things illegally) and *hawsamchi* (a noun referring to the doer of the action). A search using Arabic letters in Google will reveal a number of cultural forums named *hawasim*, and many events and activities under the same name. Indeed, the use of *hawasim* is peculiar to Iraqis only because its use demands a speaker-listener social understanding, as seen in the following examples:

- sayya:ra hawasim (hawasim car): a stolen car
- sya:qa hawasim (hawasim driving): The driver has no driving license.
- shurta hawasim (hawasim police): They are inefficient in doing their duties.
- ama:la hawasim (hawasim workers): workers who do their job improperly

In some cases, *hawasim* has been standardized and used by some politicians in intense TV debates. Clearly, *hawasim* was initially borrowed from Standard Arabic, and then underwent a semantic shift. One of the amazing facts about *hawasim* is that in referring to the word "theft," it substitutes the generic name *Ali Baba*, which occupies a significant place in Iraq's long history and dialect.

The second innovated word is *allas* /ʕalla:s/. The duty of *allas* is similar to that of a spy. However, *allas* is not only a spy, because he or she does not only gather information about somebody, but also has a hand in the crime. The *allas* intentionally and indirectly guides the victim to a terrible unknown fate. The *Allas* does this to take revenge on somebody, or take a ransom from the victim's family. *Allas* is derived from the old local word *alis* /ʕalis/, which means "chewing food;" *allas*, in turn, is a borrowed form from Standard Arabic. Thus, the word was first borrowed from Standard Arabic and then derived; accordingly, its meaning has been changed, too.

Qaffas /qaffa:s/ is another innovated word. This word is originally derived from *qafas* /qafa:s/, meaning "box" where birds are "imprisoned." *Qaffas* is then extended to refer to people who use certain tactics to fool others or cheat them. Thus, the victim has no way out of this box or /qafa:s/. *Qaffas* was first derived, and then it underwent a semantic shift.

Sahwa /sahwa/ means "awakening." Denotatively, the word refers to the military local forces of West Iraq, including Fallujah, which were formed in 2005 to fight AL-Qaada. Connotatively, *sahwa* refers to the revival or awakening of conscience of the same local groups who were obliged to fight before 2005 with AL-Qaada. *Sahwa* word involves multi processes, that is, borrowing from Standard Arabic, derivation, and semantic shift.

Hashash /hætʃ a:tʃ/ is a painful social phenomenon that came from outside the country and destroyed the youth who used to take the hashish and/or capsule to feel happiness. The process involved in creation of this word is derivation only. The use of *hashash* is not limited to refer to the youth, but to any individual who behaves in an unstable manner. *Tahshish* /tahʃi:tʃ/, on the other hand, is derived also from *hashash* to refer to the ability of combining fragments of sentences in a way that causes laughter from the present audience. Indeed, the word is derived from *hashash* because those individuals use words, fragments, and sentences illogically, and thus cause laughter.

Ahsant /əhsant/ means "well done." *Ahsant* is a Standard Arabic word that has never been used in an informal conversation. However, after 2003, the word became part of the speech of many people who have the tendency to show they are "religious" and/or "educated." This word is the significant linguistic feature of religious men (the Shi'at) and people who in the past were deported to Iran and after the fall of Baghdad returned to the country.

Mawlai /mawlai/ means “sir.” The word refers only to “Sayyids” who belong to the family of the prophet “Mohammad.” *Mawlai* implies a kind of respect and appreciation. Literally, *Mawlai* means “my sir.” This word is widespread in the country and used very often after 2003. Previously, the word was forbidden by the Saddam regime, because it was used by Shi’at. The word is a characteristic of some parts of Baghdad and South Iraq. Many of those Sayyids today occupy good positions in the Iraqi government, such as Ibrahim AL-Jaafari, who was elected as prime minister in 2005. However, this word has recently occupied an important space in the speech of young people, carrying meanings of friendship, mockery, and insult. The use of the word depends on the situation of speech and the relationship between the speaker and hearer. *Mawlai* is borrowed from Standard Arabic.

Mu’mmam /muʕammam/ refers to any man wearing a turban. The *Sayyid* wears a black turban in Iraqi tradition, whereas the *Sheikh* wears a white turban. After 2003, a huge immigration of mu’ameen (plural) occurred from Iran to South Iraq, and a large number of them appeared outside *AL-Hawza* (the Islamic school in Najaf before 1,000 years). Nowadays, there is a resentful opinion against mu’ameen, and many people call for a split between politics and religion.

Kiki /kiki/ is a borrowed word. The origin of this word is unknown, and nobody knows how it was formed and by whom. *Kiki* refers to young people with particular haircuts and manner of dressing. They are distinguished by their appearance and their delicate way of speech. During the history of Iraq, there was the “breaki” individual who imitates popular break dancers. *Kiki* seems to be a reference to a particular type of song or dance; the innovative word might have come with the American soldiers to Iraq.

Hata /ʔata/ refers to a very beautiful young girl aged between 15 and 25 years, dressed in a very modern style. The semantic component of the word is opaque. The question of whether this word involves social importance in reflecting some of the values of the Iraqi speech community is controversial. In some parts of Baghdad, another word is used to refer to the same meaning. The word is *muzza*, derived from Egyptian movies, and *muzza* seems to be a new innovation in the Egyptian dialect as well.

Militia refers to groups of armed persons who protect the values and properties of the political parties with whom they work and from whom they get money. In some cases, anger and protest occur in the Iraqi streets against the militia’s violence against the civilians. *Militia* was borrowed from English, and it seems to be the only borrowing. An example of the most famous militia in Iraq is that of *Muqtada AL-Sadar*. In North Iraq, Kurdish *Al-Beshmarga* is the most famous militia.

Irhab is a borrowed translation of the English word *terrorism*. *Irhab* first entered Arabic after the massive attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center. However, the use of *irhab* was limited in intense TV debates and the written texts in journals and magazines. After 2003, *irhab* started to substitute another word, *jihad*. *Jihad* is a Standard Arabic word that entered the English dictionary in the 1980s when the “Cold War” between the United States and the former Soviet Union was at its peak. *Jihad* was used in the west part of the country in addition to parts of Baghdad. The aim was to make *jihad* against the American troops; however, the aim was changed to make suicides against Iraqi people and police. *Jihad* was substituted by *irhab*, meaning “terror,” by approximately all people who thought that the word was used to cover particular agendas in the area and spread the culture of killing.

5. Methodology

The data on which the current study is based consist of 20 hours of recorded conversations from Iraqi informants of both sexes aged between 25 and 35 years and from the same level of education (university level). The informants had been approached through informal contact following Milroys’ technique of “a friend of a friend” (1978). The researcher was introduced as a friend in Baghdad, the capital and heart of Iraq. Baghdad is the place where all races, ethnicities, religions, and their sects and languages are found. Indeed, selecting informants from the listed names, such as those in electoral registration and telephone directories, is not applicable, because no records of names exist except that one of election. In addition, approaching people through lists of names was difficult and dangerous, because this contact certainly evokes political and social sensitivity. Since 2003, Baghdadis have lived in panic. They distrust others and look with an eye of fear and suspect at anyone they do not know. The idea of being a friend helps yield natural vernacular speech.

The interview implemented in the current study depends on “spontaneous or free conversation interview” (Wolfram and Fasold, 1974, p. 48). The researcher noticed that the informants had a tendency to give an opinion,

discuss matters, participate in any object, and comment on the current political and social issues. Having the ability to speak, the interviewer was able to achieve the objective in a very natural way. As a result, the present research relied on an empathetic approach, focusing on memories, real scenes, social problems, and other psychological questions. Indeed, the informant would be involved in the topic, so that the frequency of the suggested words is supposed to occur. The picture elicitation method was used to increase the number of occurrences of each word, and avoid the limitation of the interview situation in collecting data of the same type (Milroy, 1987). Labov (1972) suggested that the informant's competence can only be assessed using a varied database. Fifty pictures of different objects were shown to the informants, who were asked to explain the content of the picture. Each object was chosen carefully to elicit the target word. These pictures are associated with Iraqi life and society after 2003. For example, some pictures show casualties in a bombing suicide; others show some Iraqi politicians; religious men also appear in some pictures; armed young people occupy the space of some pictures; and many other objects are depicted, such as election, poverty, services, and religion. After the picture elicitation method, informants were asked about their attitudes toward the suggested words and other questions related to the origin, form, and meaning of the lexical items.

6. Analysis and Discussion

The aim of the present research is to find out how the political and social factors have an effect on female and male linguistic choice as far as it is sociolinguistically proved that men and women show different linguistic patterns. The analysis of data shows that the suggested words carry a sociolinguistic value as to the political and social orientation of the gender, and how each gender uses linguistic features to express personal values and beliefs, such as anger, protest, irony, satisfaction, and many other attitudes. The occurrence of the 12 innovative lexical items in the data shows that a significant difference is present in the linguistic behavior of men and women as indicated in Figure 1. Data were expressed by implementing the statistical method of the T-test analysis to give an adequate presentation of the numerous relationships between linguistic and gender variables.

The examination of these words (Tables 1 and 2) leaves no doubt as to the gender differentiation pattern obtained in the speech of a sample of educated men and women aged between 25 and 35 years in Baghdad. Based on the columns, males are the innovators, using a high percentage of the locally made lexical items. In our discussion, we rely on the informants' evaluation of these words during the interviews. Sixty-five percent of females think that these words (except militia) are **stigmatized** forms of language that should not be uttered by women. The same percentage of females assumes that most of the words are **tough** and suitable for men more than women. Approximately 25% of females think that the word *militia* is **prestigious** and better than using any other word. Up to 15% of females think that they are obliged to use the word *sahwa*, because there is no available **alternative**. On the other hand, 90% of males think that these words reflect the **reality** of Iraqi society and events since 2003, but at the same time, they think these words are **nice** and **interesting**. The same percentage believes that, females should not use these words in their **public** speech (they said females can use the words during a family talk only) due to social constraints. In general, most females do not know the origin of most words, why they appear, how they are formed, and for what purposes, despite the fact that they are educated. Most males state that females have weak political and religious opinions.

These attitudes reflect the impact of political and social factors upon the linguistic behavior of men and women. According to the percentage of attitudes given, gender differentiation clearly has gone to its extreme. Based on another examination of Figure 1, females use a small percentage of the words *hawasim*, *allas*, and *qaffas*. However, the use of those words by males keeps a good percentage. Difference in the use of the word is apparent, which can be explained by gender social networks. Although they are educated, women usually have little contact outside the home, and their peer groups are limited to colleagues at work or friends in school or neighborhood. On the contrary, males have multiple social networks, and thus their contact outside their environment is larger. This contact enables men to be informed daily of events that occur in the society.

With regard to the use of *sahwa*, the duty of *sahwat* (plural) after 2005, in protecting people and the governmental institutions and fighting against *AL-Qaeda* in Baghdad, Fallujah, and Samaraa (in West Iraq) and Diala (to the east of Baghdad) deserves appreciation from people. Therefore, this word appears in the speech of most males and females.

In the use of some words, males and females behave similarly; that is, approximately the same difference of percentage is repeated. These words are *hashash* and/or *tahshish*, *mawlai*, *mu'mmam*, and *kiki*. The difference is clear in the speech of men and women, which can be explained by the following reasons. First, *tahshish*, that is, composing funny sentences to create an atmosphere of laughter and friendship, is a male marker, not a female one. Second, *mawlai* and *mu'mmam* are used by most males as a reflection of their anger toward the interference

of religion into politics, and because religious men “are leading us down” as some men assume. Some males use this word as a sign of respect; others for fun between friends. In both cases, these words appear in the speech of most men regardless of the reasons behind that usage. Finally, the use of *kiki* is a male characteristic; however, 30% of females use this word, because they think that it is not bad to refer to men’s modern style.

The use of the word *hata* seems to be limited to males, without any percentage appearing for females. All females reject the use of this word, because they think that it is inappropriate to refer to beauty using what they assume as a “*strange word*.”

Militia is the only word that occupies a good percentage of female usage due to the prestige associated with this English word. Males prefer to refer to those armed groups by their leaders to differentiate between them; hence, they consider the word *militia* as part of their political knowledge and education. On the contrary, females refer to all armed groups as *militias* without much information about them. Some females think that *militias* are the *national army*.

Ahsant is another word that shows a different gender pattern. *Ahsant* occupies no percentage at all in the speech of females, which can be attributed to the fact that this word was uttered first by religious men, not women. The failure of this word to take its way of diffusion to females makes sense.

The last word is the Arabic translation of *terrorism* (*irhab*). The similarity in the percentage of usage of both males and females is normal, because they both believe that what happened in Iraq cannot be explained outside the zone of terrorism.

The final outcome of this analysis raises two logical questions: First, why are most of these words stigmatized by females despite the fact that they were borrowed from Standard Arabic? Second, why is borrowing from English very limited, and why does the diffusion of other words not appear in Iraqi dialect?

Standard Arabic is the high variety of Arabic language that is taught in schools since childhood. Being educated females impose upon them the use of Standard words as Abu-Haider (1989) concluded in her research in Baghdad. However, the current results are different from hers, perhaps because the situations where both studies were conducted are different. Situations of terror and civil war, killing, kidnapping, shooting, migrating, and many other social and political issues change the way females look at and evaluate things. Although most words are standard, they refer to a bitter reality and bad concepts and values that occurred after the war. Therefore, most females refused to use these words, because they refused the meanings and values to which these words refer. Ogden and Richards (1953) were two of the first language theorists to refuse relying on the denotative definitions of words. They believed that meanings are in people, not in words. They highlighted the fact that all people think they share the same personal (thought/image) reaction to a word; however, words do not mean the same to all people. For this reason, educated females did not use the words, not because they have weak political orientation, but because the values to which these words refer are stigmatized. Once again, the present research is not different from other Arab or Western studies, in that females are socially more sensitive and more prestige conscious than men, and this phenomenon is reflected in their linguistic behavior. In addition, another observation during the interviews was that males impose social constraints on the general behavior and linguistic behavior of females in particular. The reason is that gender roles in eastern societies are still segregated. Finally, female attitudes toward the suggested words as being **tough** that mark men’s and not women’s language obliged them to find out other linguistic **alternatives** to express themselves; women sometimes use long sentences to refer to a particular situation.

In the history of Iraq, the Iraqi dialect has borrowed many words from other languages, especially from English, during the occupation of Britain in 1914. However, this phenomenon cannot be proven in the current research, because no prior academic studies exist to serve as basis. However, further research is recommended to answer the second question posed above. The current explanation relies on empathetic reasons. Most Iraqis blamed Americans for the chaos, corruption, and ruin of Iraq. Later on, photos from Abu Ghraib prison and Buka appeared in mass media, which increased the hatred toward the American troops and their policy in Iraq. Indeed, there was no bridge between the two cultures, and thus no language contact appears. However, the word *militia* is frequently used by Iraqis due to the existence of tens of armed groups in the streets.

7. Conclusion

Gender studies in contemporary Arab societies have shown different patterns and were given different explanations. Neither a unitary interpretation nor a general model or pattern exists, maybe because in each Arab country, a certain variety is considered prestigious, and females direct their speech toward this variety. In addition, different social norms are expected of both sexes. For example, the social and religious pressures on women from Saudi Arabia are different from those on women from Lebanon.

However, in the current study, men, not women, used more Standard features, perhaps because even if a word is standard, it might be excluded from female speech when it refers to a stigmatized concept. Nevertheless, women were more prestige conscious than men.

Many other issues, such as language planning, language variation, and the study of local varieties in the Iraqi speech phenomena, open the door for academic research to thoroughly investigate societies that show clear language variation and change.

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Table 1. Mean values of 12 lexical variables by gender

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
hawasim	male	3	4.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	1.0000	1.00000	.57735
alas	male	3	5.6667	.57735	.33333
	female	3	1.3333	.57735	.33333
qaffas	male	3	4.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	2.0000	1.00000	.57735
tahshish	male	3	5.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	4.0000	2.00000	1.15470
ahsant	male	3	2.6667	.57735	.33333
	female	3	.0000	.00000	.00000
mawlai	male	3	5.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	2.6667	.57735	.33333
Mummam	male	3	3.6667	.57735	.33333
	female	3	2.3333	.57735	.33333
kiki	male	3	5.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	3.0000	1.00000	.57735
hata	male	3	2.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	.0000	.00000	.00000
militia	male	3	3.3333	.57735	.33333
	female	3	5.0000	1.00000	.57735
sahwa	male	3	6.0000	1.00000	.57735
	female	3	4.3333	.57735	.33333
irhab	male	3	4.0000	1.00000	.57735
	female	3	4.0000	1.00000	.57735

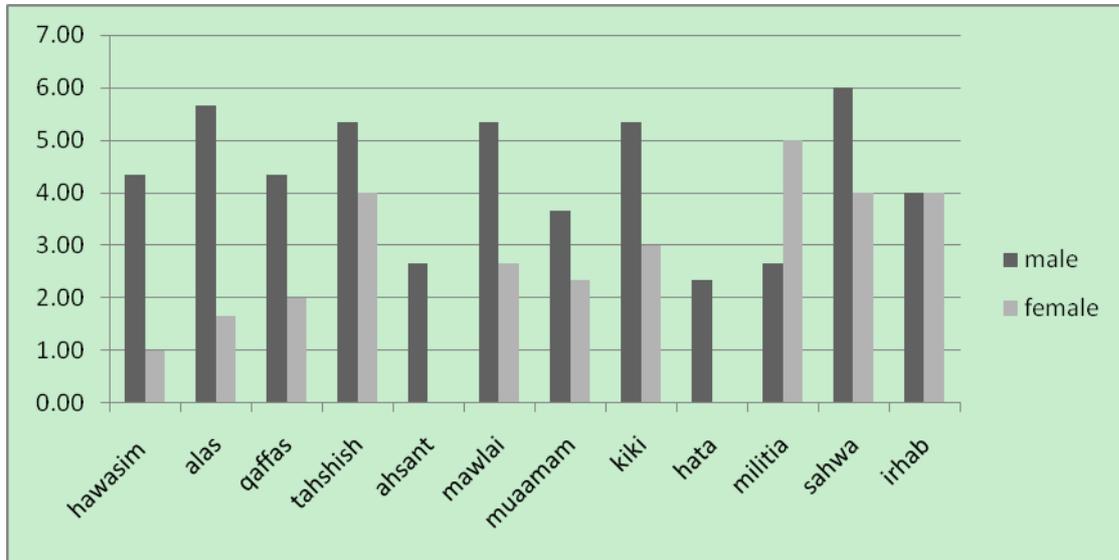


Figure 1. Differences in male and female use of 12 new words