

Examining the results of dialect contact between Palestinian communities in Gaza

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In this poster, I present findings from my recent sociolinguistic fieldwork in Gaza City. The sample includes 22 speakers drawn from a larger corpus of 39 speakers. These speakers represent three age groups, both genders, and two sectors of the Gaza population: indigenous Gazans and refugees originally from the city of Jaffa, roughly 40 miles north of Gaza.

Gaza presents an interesting site for the study of dialect contact, with only 25% of its population of 1.5 million being of indigenous Gazan heritage and the remaining 75% coming from various refugee communities arriving in Gaza after 1948. Outside of foundational dialectological work, little scholarly research has been conducted on the dialects of Arabic spoken in Gaza. Research that focuses on Gaza City sheds light on an understudied community while further contributing to our knowledge on the linguistic outcomes of dialect contact in non-English-speaking communities.

Rbrul analysis is presented on the vowel raising of the feminine ending morpheme, /ah/. In the traditional dialect of Gaza this morpheme is consistently realized as [a] (Bergsträsser 1915), making Gaza City unique in this respect, with all other Levantine city dialects raising the feminine ending to [e] or [i] except after back consonants (Al-Wer 2007). The following examples illustrate these differences:

Gaza	Urban Levantine (e.g. Jaffa Palestinian Arabic)
‘pretty [f.sg.]’ [hilwa]	[hilwe]
‘Gaza’ [yazza]	[yazze]
‘freedom’ [hurrija]	[hurrije] – <i>but:</i>
‘good [f.sg.]’ [mni:ħa]	[mni:ħa]

Results indicate that the feminine ending has emerged as a sociolinguistic variable in Gaza City. However, (ah) only exists as a variable in the speech of the Jaffan refugees in the sample, with indigenous Gazans realizing the ending with the traditional Gazan [a] realization almost categorically. In the speech of Jaffans, the raised [e] diminishes with each generation, signaling a complex process of change resulting in the decline of this raised dialect variant in the speech of Jaffan refugees in Gaza City.

References:

Al-Wer, E. (2007). The Formation of the Dialect of Amman: From chaos to order. *Arabic in the City*. C. Miller. New York, Routledge: 55-76.

Bergsträsser, Gotthelf. *Sprachatlas von Syrien und Palästina*. Leipzig: Hinrichs: n.p., 1915.