

**An Investigation of Dialect Variation Change
in Frenda Spoken Arabic:
Testing The Sedentary-bedouin Hypothesis.**



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Summary:

The present investigation undertaken under the Labovian paradigm (1966) of language variation and change is a preliminary attempt to shed light on dialect change in the speech community of Frenda with particular reference to the bedouin-sedentary dichotomy. In this respect, this study examines possible correlation between speakers' variable linguistic behaviour and other extra-linguistic variables. More particularly, much emphasis is directed towards quantitatively analysing the phonological variable /lqa/ and its variants [lqa] and [lga] and the Arabic standard diphthong /ay/ and its variants [ay] and /-i:/. The total number of population is (59) distributed by (45) male and (14) female speakers aged between 6-80 years old being born and raised in Frenda. Quantitative analysis shows tight correlation between speakers' linguistic use and social variables namely age and gender. Younger-age speakers lead variation towards sedentary/urban features shifting away from old bedouin/rural variants. Language attitudes represent a driving force towards dialect change as speakers avoid bedouin socially-stigmatised dialectal features and exhibit sedentary socially-accepted ones.

Keywords: Frenda Spoken Arabic, Dialect Variation, Dialect Change, Phonological Variation, Bedouin-Sedentary Dichotomy, Language Attitudes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Labov's pioneering work published in 1963 on variation in the Island of Matha Vineyard and his intriguing study of variation in New York City (1966)

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represented a methodological departure from previous traditional dialectological studies by considering social dialects as they exhibit variability in urban settings. This re-orientation was primarily fostered by the technological developments achieved in social sciences that could easily and quantitatively examine language change. In this respect, Chambers & Trudgill (2004) posit that “the main impetus has come from urban dialectologists, and the movement has gradually been joined by mathematical linguists who see linguistic variability as a testing ground for probability theory.” (p. 127). Investigators now pay serious attention to such matters as stating hypotheses, sampling, the statistical treatment of data, drawing conclusions, and relating these conclusions to such matters as the inherent nature of language, the processes of language acquisition and language change, and the social functions of variation (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p.139). The new variationist paradigm treated variability as a systematic attribute rather than a trivial matter of free variation although “most linguistic theories have started from the assumption that variability in language is unmanageable, or uninteresting, or both (ibid).

Albirini (2016) postulates that Labov is accredited to develop two interrelated areas in sociolinguistic research namely language variation as synchronically motivated linguistic alternation in relation to social factors and language change which refers to historical evolution of linguistic forms. Breaking away from early diachronic explanations of language change, synchronic variation is of a paramount importance to sociolinguists as it provides insights of on-going processes of linguistic change. Sociolinguists soon turned their interests to examine the variable features as part of speakers’ ‘performance’ rather than focusing on this idealised system known as ‘competence’. The central tenet of a variationist paradigm is to search and draw any possible correlations between linguistic (e.g., phonological, morphological, lexical, pragmatic, etc) and non-linguistic variables (age, gender, education, etc.). The present study is variationist in nature in which we attempt to shed light on variation in the speech community of Frenda through principally correlating speakers’ language use with their underlying age and gender as motivating social factors of variation. This article seeks to answer the following research questions:

1-Are Frenda speakers losing bedouin /g/ for /q/ in verb /lga/ in place of /lqa/? Are Frenda speakers losing bedouin /ay/ in place of sedentary /i:/ in imperfect verbs?

2-Is variation solely constrained by linguistic or extra-linguistic factors namely age and gender? Are people’s self-attitudes an intervening factor in language variation?

3-What is the direction of variation and change in Frenda spoken dialect? Is dialect change bedouin-oriented or sedentary-oriented?

In search of answering the above questions, the following hypotheses are put forward:

- Frennda spoken dialect is undergoing phonological variation in the use of variant [lqa] in place of /lga/ and /-i:/ in place of /ay/ in imperfect verbs.

- Dialect variation in Frennda speech community is constrained not only by linguistic factors but also by social factors namely age and gender in which male younger-age cohorts lead variation and change. More importantly, Frennda speakers demonstrate both positive towards some variants and negative attitudes towards other ones.

- Frennda spoken dialect is undergoing both on-going variation and complete change. Change is urban-oriented as speakers are gradually shifting from old rural variants towards urban ones.

2. Language Variation and Change

Language is referred to as a social system which defines the social structure of a speech community. It is what creates social solidarity and relations between its members. Change is a universal norm that affects life's span in general and language particularly is not resistant to such phenomenon. Observing variation in language is vital for understanding language change, as, although not all variability in language structure involves change, all change involves variation (Llamas et al, 2007, p.2019; quoted in Labed, 2015, p.11). Labov (1982a) considers that "social and stylistic variation presuppose the option of saying 'the same thing' in several ways: that is, the variants are identical in referential and truth value, but opposed in their social and/or stylistic significance" (p.271).

Language change is the product of people trying to consciously adopt standard linguistic forms in favour of socially stigmatised features. Within the same idea, Coates (2013) argues that "linguistic change can be said to have taken place when a new linguistic form, used by some sub-group within a speech community, is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm" (p.171). Speakers may adopt new features based on their individual attitudes constructed on their own spoken variety or others' varieties. Chambers and Trudgill (2004) state that speakers are more aware to a variable marker than to a variable indicator.

At a certain stage, speakers may be highly aware of variables in which their regional and social connotations become part of speakers' common knowledge. Hence, these markers may be stereotyped in public context based on individuals' social comment. For instance, Dendane (2007) observed that Tlemçani male speakers tend to avoid using the glottal stop [ʔ] as it marks women's feminine speech and prefer to use [g] and the former is highly stigmatized in the social context but shows their masculinity. Relatively, language attitudes highly intervene in this process as speakers tend to avoid stigmatized features which are subject to unfavourable comment and use linguistic forms which are adopted as the norm in the speech community. In the following section, an attempt is made to examine the relationship between language attitudes and language variation.

Sapir (1921) defines language as “a method for communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols” (p.4). However, language seems to do more than just transmitting ideas or information, it carries social meanings and creates social identities by which speakers are able to communicate their social belonging or regional affiliation.

Sociolinguists seem to be interested in examining the psychological factors that may intervene in the process of language change and lead speakers to vary their individual speech. Particularly, language attitudes are an integral part in sociolinguistic studies and used to refer to individual conscious reactions toward a variety of speakers or the variety itself. Also, speakers may demonstrate attitudinal reactions toward their own variety and self-report their language use. Dendane (2007) avows that “below the level of conscious awareness, listeners perceive peoples speech, and hence the speakers themselves, in positive, neutral or negative terms, an evaluation being triggered by social stereotypes associated with linguistic variables of the variety in question.” (p. 258). Accordingly, a self-filling questionnaire is designed to examine the extent to which attitudinal factors influence speakers’ linguistic behaviour. Shortly, we were encountered by the fact that many of our population are illiterate for that we asked our samples to report their own linguistic behaviour and language attitudes.

2.1 Bedouin-Sedentary Dichotomy and its Sociolinguistic Implications

The development of Arabic dialects is deeply rooted in the history subsequent to the first and second waves of Arabic tribes that settled in north of Africa consecutively. The first tribe known as pre-Hilali were purely urban people who settled in North Africa during the 9th while the second wave introduced by BanuHilal during the 12th century who brought “their specific dialect traits, particularly the voiced velar [g] for the Classical Arabic uvular qāf and lexical items specific to their dialect.” (Dendane, 2013, p.4).

These historical events had an impact on speakers’ linguistic use as many exhibit both bedouin and sedentary features in their speech. Ibn Khaldun argues that Arabic speech is either labelled as badawi or ḥadhari. Though this dichotomy explains the socio-cultural background of the Arabic city, it has been employed by (socio)linguists to describe dialectal discrepancies between speakers of different age, gender, education, etc. For instance, Miller (2007) argues that “categorizing a dialect X as a bedouin-bedouinized dialect does not mean that the speakers pursue a nomadic bedouin way of life but that they display in their speech a number of features associated with bedouin dialects.” (p.9). Categorising speakers as either bedouin or urban is more based on genealogy than geographical location. This could be interpreted by urban speakers’ conservation of family-related ties and thus preserve their old bedouin linguistic features inside their urban place of residency.

Based on this view, we will examine whether variation is urban-oriented or rural-oriented based on the linguistic and social characteristics of the selected

variables.

2.2 Context of Fieldwork

Investigating the social background of the region is helpful in determining the roots of language change and interpreting the linguistic discrepancies prevalent in Frenda's dialect. In this respect, we will shortly discuss the socio-demographic structure of the dialect under investigation and how it influences linguistic behaviour.

Geographically, the present research is conducted in the sub-wilaya of Frenda which is situated in the western part of Algeria (300) kilometres from Algiers and (200) kilometers from Oran. It installs at a rock-strewn mountain and known with its cold weather and diverse ecological structure.

Frenda appends five towns namely Takhmaret, Ain Hdid, Rusfa, Ain Kermes, and Medrissa. The area is a pivotal gate to south of the country and an essential trade route. The social composition of Frenda is genealogically diverse as there are family cohorts related by blood. These families formed tribes known as 'leGraf' in which each group installed in the suburbs of Frenda and owned their private lands, farming and raising animals. Benasla (2018) mentions that many of these groups are descendants from BanuHilal and include Houareth, Jebliya and Khalafa. Following the first waves of Arab conquests of North Africa during the 9th century which marked the arrival of sedentary pre-Hilali tribes then followed in 11th century by Bedouin Hilali tribes. Frenda was reached by BanuHilal as various tribal descendants succeeded to settle the area. This impact could be easily noticed in the speech of Freni speakers which stills demonstrate both bedouin and sedentary linguistic features. To avoid any terminological confusion, we will make reference to urban and rural speech to describe the possible dialect differences in the region.

During the black nineties, Frenda witnessed a rapid demographic growth as it represented a secure refuge for rural inhabitants who in-migrated to it fleeing terror caused by armed groups and to search for better life conditions. By 2019, the number of population reached 120.000 inhabitants. Social mobility from rural suburbs played a major role in urbanising Frenda and reinforcing family ties as members re-joined their pre-settled families inside the region. Soon, young family members joined schools while their parents still illiterate. Consequently, young-generation members rebelled against old rural norms and adopted the newly urban living type. Their language use could not escape such change as they began to demonstrate explicit linguistic discrepancies in their spoken dialect. This socio-historical background led a complex linguistic situation as variation is at its flux in the speech of Freni speakers. Cantineau (1940) posits that "As for the communes of Mascara, Cacherou (now SidiKada) and Frenda, they form a transition zone between the B-dialects and the D-dialects, as the latter dialect groups display important lexical differences" (p.223; cited in Raoud, 2016, pp.61-62). According

to Cantineau's classification FSA is of a bedouin-type and is regarded as a transitional zone between dialects (B) and (D).

Figure1. Geographical Location of Frenda. (adapted from Wikipedia).



In the following section we will introduce the methodological framework adopted to examine variability in Frenda's speech community.

3. Method

The hallmark of variationist studies is based on quantification of linguistic forms as they display speakers' language behaviour in relation to social factors. In this respect, the Labovian variationist method is employed in this paper. An attempt is made shortly to correlate linguistic variables with non-linguistic factors to examine and interpret variation that exhibits in the speech of Frenda speakers and whether it leads to change. In quest of this correlation, the initial step to be made is defining the linguistic variable while the second stage entails collecting quantifiable data in relation to speakers' social grouping. Relatively, this paper particularly investigates phonological variation which manifests in the use of uvular [q] and velar [g] as both manifest in verbs /lqa/ and /lga/. Also, it examines lexical variation in the use of diphthong /aj/ in opposition to long vowel [-i:] in imperfect verbs.

Data were collected by means of structured and unstructured sociolinguistic interviews. We opted for this sociolinguistic method as "interviewers attempt to elicit more extended stretches of unscripted, conversational speech." (Milroy and Gordon, 2003, p. 58). They further add that "the basic objective has often been to observe the subject's relaxed, "natural" usage" (ibid). Unstructured interviews would allow interviewees to produce extensive speech while structured interviews help to closely test the occurrence of the selected variables in various phonetic environments. Shortly, this method has a number of shortcomings which directly influenced the elicitation process represented in the issue of '*observer's paradox*' in which informants were directly influenced by the presence of a tape-recorder and soon started to monitor their speech. Other informants employed style shifting as they were inclined that this is a formal interview and started to lean toward formal speech. To overcome such limitations we used questions that would make samples emotionally engaged in the recording process.

3.1 The Sample

The samples selected for the study are native speakers, born and raised in Frenda and hadn't moved much outside the region for long periods. Interviews were conducted with eighty (59) interviewees; (45) male and (14) female speakers who were selected under judgmental sampling as they are native inhabitants, born and raised in Frenda. Number of males overweighs number of females as we encountered difficulty in recording females' speech due to their social conservative upbringing and their unwillingness to collaborate. For this, we employed a friend-of-a-friend technique to reach the targeted population. Samples were selected and interviewed in their local neighbourhoods, homes, work places, schools, streets so as not to affect the natural setting of recording.

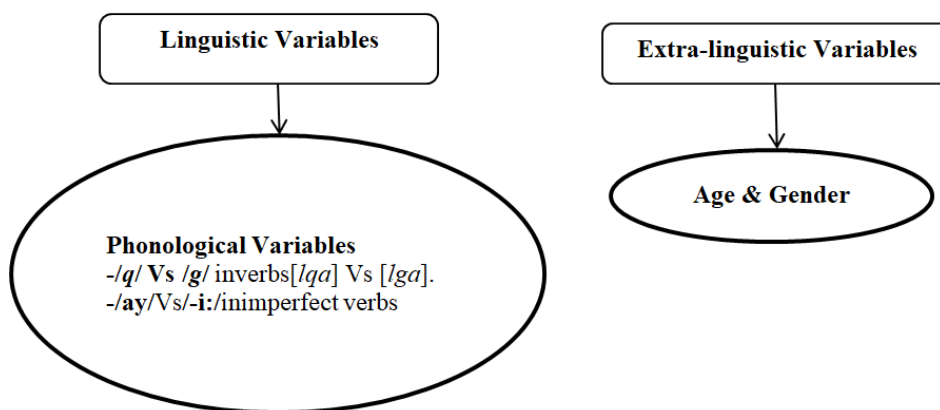
3.2 The Selected Linguistic & Non-linguistic Variables

Variationist studies entail correlating linguistic with non-linguistic variables in an attempt to interpret speakers' variable linguistic behaviour and investigate if variation leads to change. In this sense, Wolfram (2013) states that:

The heuristic utility of unifying a set of fluctuating linguistic variants within the structural construct of a linguistic variable and correlating the relative use of different variants with co-varying social and linguistic factors has now been reified in a full range of sociolinguistic studies. (Wolfram, 2013, p.21).

The selected variables in this paper are demonstrated in the below figure:

Figure 02. Linguistic Vs Extra-linguistic Variables.



In quest of consistency, we will initially introduce linguistic analysis of the variables under study then move forward to their quantitative occurrence in the speech of our samples controlled by the above mentioned extra-linguistic variables.

4. Results

We will initially introduce linguistic analysis of the selected variables and smoothly move forward to examining their quantitative occurrence in relation to social variables.

Linguistic Analysis

In this section, we will introduce phonetic features of the variables under study and their competing variants.

Uvular /q/ Vs Velar /g/

Historically speaking, the dual nature of both sounds reflects the development of Arabic language which went through various stages that began from Arab conquests during the two successive waves of 9th to the 11th centuries to the advent of modern dialects. Genealogically, the two sounds demonstrate the sedentary-bedouin dichotomy that still characterises most Arabic dialects and is prevalent in the speech of subsequent generations.

Niloofer Haeri (1991) considers uvular /q/ and velar /g/ as diglossic variables for they demonstrate the difference between standard prestigious and non-standard non-prestigious varieties of Arabic. A different view is held by Owens and Bani Yasin (1991) in which they employ parameters of 'power' and 'solidarity' to differentiate both sounds. In his study of sociolinguistic variation in Tlemcen speech community, Dendane (2007) notices that the use of glottal stop [ʔ] replaces the uvular [q] in which the former represents a marker of femininity and is stigmatised by men who use /g/ to index their masculinity. Again but adopting another stance, Haeri (1991) considers that [q] as a marker of 'genderlect style' which is frequently used by Arab women. Bouhania (2007) examines both sounds as they are being employed in Touat dialect and observes that both represent different allophones of the same phoneme [q].

Both /q/ and /g/ are distinct as they differ in their phonetic features. The following table summarises their main differences:

Table 01. Contrast Between /q/ and /g/.

| <i>/q/</i> | <i>/g/</i> |
|------------|------------|
| Voiceless | Voiced |
| Uvular | Velar |
| Sedentary | Bedouin |

Mindful of their above differences, we could notice within our recordings the occurrence of both sounds as they behave as allophones of the same phoneme [q]. We mention the following words:

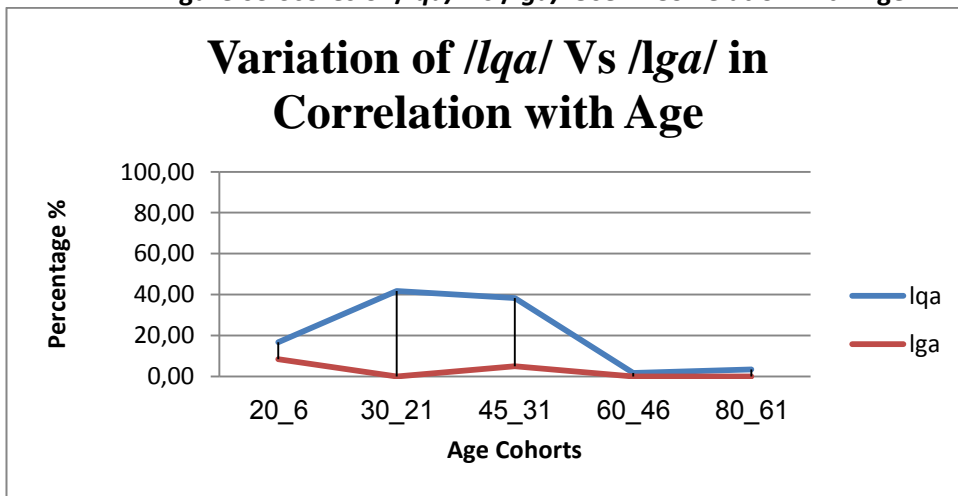
| CA/MSA | [q] | [g] |
|------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| [laqiya] | [lqa] | [lga] (find) |
| [ʿalsaaq] | [lessaq] | [lazzag]and[lassag] (stick) |
| [qari;bun] | [qri:b] | [gri:b] (near/ soon) |

[*'iqtaraba*] [*yqarreb*] [*ygarrab*] (approach)
 [*qamarun*] [*qmar*] [*gamra*](moon)

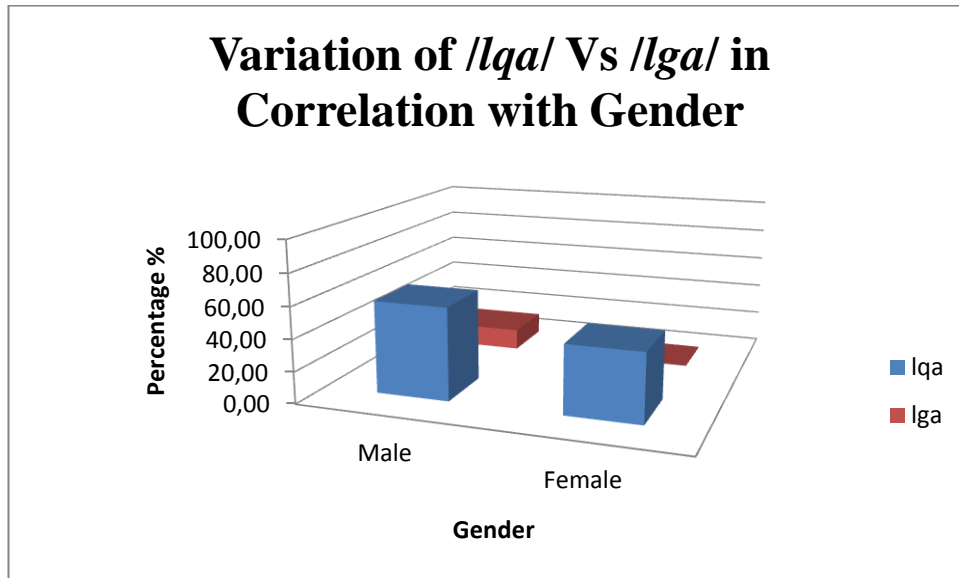
In the following section, we introduce main quantitative findings of the variable under investigation as it is manifested in the verb [*lqa*] in opposition to [*lga*] in correlation with social variable of age and gender.

Quantitative Analysis

Figure 03. Scores of /lqa/ Vs /lga/ Use in Correlation with Age.



From the above figure, we can clearly observe that young age cohorts between (12-30) and (31-45) lead change by (41.66%) and (38.33%) respectively toward the sedentary feature [*lqa*] in opposition to bedouin [*lga*]. However, change regresses when reaches old generation speakers (age cohorts 40-60 and 61-80) and this could be interpreted by speakers use of old bedouin verb [*sa:b*].

Figure 04. Scores of *[lqa]* Vs *[lga]* in Correlation with Gender.

As the above figure indicates, both male (58.33%) and female (43.33%) speakers use the urban feature */lqa/* in opposition to rural */lga/*. On the other hand, rural */lga/* is only used by male speakers (13.33%) while the same variable was not recorded in females' speech. The above results advocate the interference of speakers' educational level in the use of CA standard */q/* in opposition to rural/bedouin */g/* as they already acquired the variant at an early age.

Diphthong */ay/* Vs Long Vowel */-i:/*

This diphthong (*ay*) is principally of a CA and MSA variant. E.g. */baytun/* (house), */ʒaybun/* (poket), */ʃaybun/* (shame), */sayfun/* (sword). It is mainly maintained in Bedouin dialects and reflects the genealogical nature of many dialects. In many modern sedentary dialects, this feature has been de-diphthongised into long vowel */-i:/*. However, in other cases the diphthong is originally a CA variant and is derived from medieval hamza (ʾ) such as */ʃaʾila/* (family) becomes */ʃayla/*, */ʃeyla/* or */ʃila/*, */maʾila/* (sloping) */meyla/* or *mayla/*, */qaraʾtu/* becomes */qrayt/* or */qri:t/*. Ferguson (1957) argues that "a speaker who makes considerable oral use of CIAr (**Classical Arabic**) or mixed language may use in a given day dozens of such forms with diphthongs" (p.466).

This dichotomy shows the split that occurred during the successive conquests of Bedouin pre-Hilali and sedentary Hilali tribes between 9th and 12th centuries to North Africa.

The social connotation of diphthong *[ay]* in sedentary speech is regarded as rural and pertains to non-prestigious speech. Consequently, *[ay]* is regarded as a sociolinguistic stereotype which marks speakers' regional and genealogical affiliation. On the other hand, it is mainly realised in medieval positions:

/qrayt/Vs /qri:t/ (read/study)

/ʃqayt/ Vs /ʃqi:t/ (go in vain)

/bğayt/ Vs /bği:t/ (love)

/lqayt/Vs /lqi:t/ (find)

/ʃtayt/ Vs /ʃtit/(give)

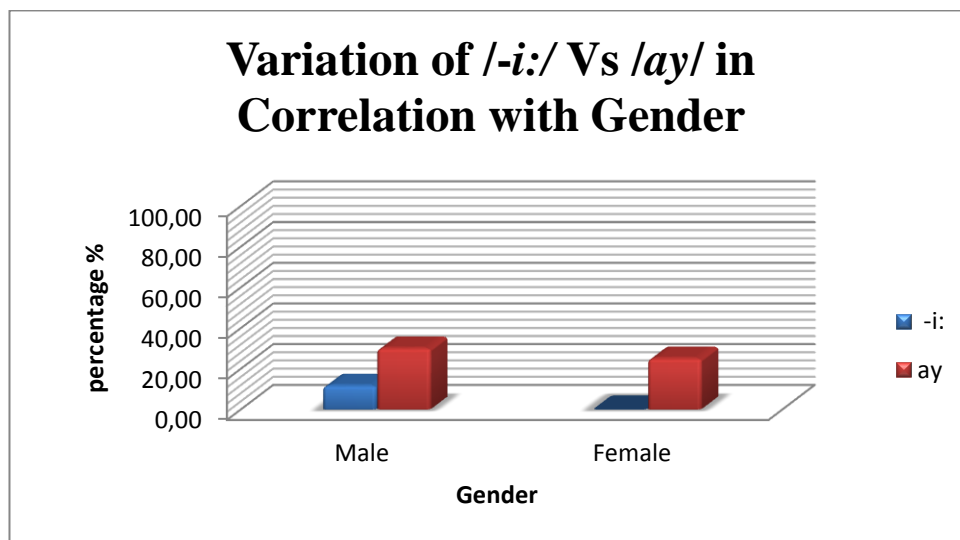
Difference between both items is represented in the following table:

Table 02. Contrast between /-i:/ and /ay/.

| <i>/-i:/</i> | <i>/ay/</i> |
|--------------|-------------|
| Oral | Oral |
| Voiced | Voiced |
| Sedentary | Bedouin |

The following above summarises the occurrence of the diphthong /ay/ in opposition to long vowel /-i:/ as both are realised in imperfect verbs.

Figure 05. Scores for [-i:]Vs [ay] in Correlation with Gender.



As noticed in the above figure, male (30%) speakers seem to preserve the old rural /ay/ as opposed to urban and rural /-i:/. The same behaviour was recorded in words which contain the CA diphthong /ay/ such as those mentioned previously.

Unpredictably, (25%) of female speakers use the same old feature which could suggest that female when asked about their attitudes, they have negative attitudes toward /-i:/ which they consider as non-local feature and are still loyal to

their old variant. Change for this variant is following a gradual line as both male and female maintain the same urban variant.

Figure 06. Scores of /ay/ Vs /-i:/ in Correlation with Age.

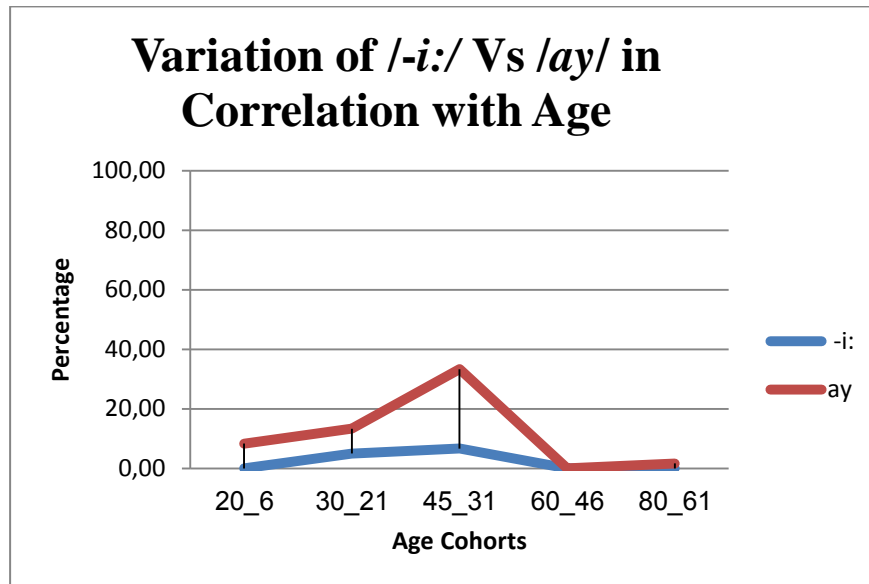


Figure 06 above demonstrates that variation is directed toward rural old /ay/ starting from age cohort (21-30) and peaks in age cohort (31-45) which suggests that younger-age speakers lead variation at a slow pace. Old-age speakers seem to preserve diphthong /ay/ which marks their bedouin speech and rural origin.

4. Discussion

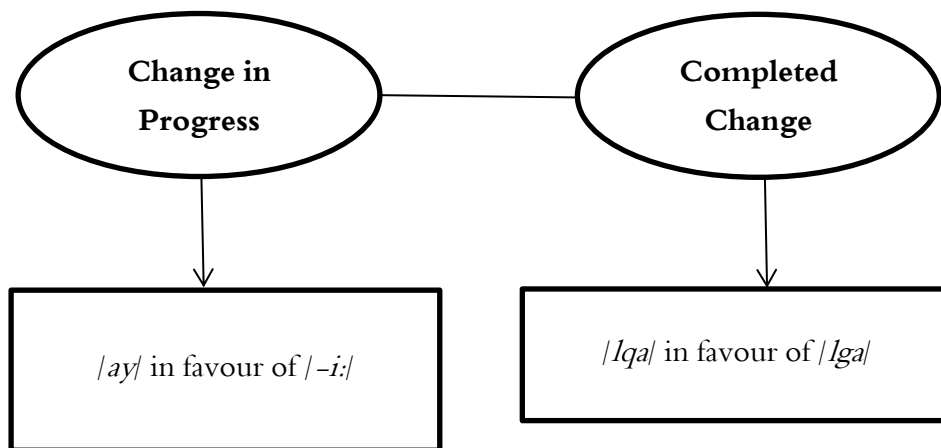
The central objective of this study is to examine whether Frenda spoken dialect is undergoing variation or not and an attempt is made to discover the direction of change whether it is bedouin-oriented or sedentary-oriented. From the previous quantitative results, we can evidently observe that Frenda's dialect is undergoing on-going variation which is still in its flux and is predominantly administered by extra-linguistic variables namely age and gender which confirm our first constructed hypothesis.

Male and female younger-age generation lead dialect change towards the sedentary variant /lqa/ with a score of 58% while change within female speakers is gradually escalating with a score of 43.33%. This suggests that they avoid socially-stigmatised and lean towards innovative features. Thus, younger middle-age individuals reject old bedouin linguistic norms and search to adopt other socially-accepted features that better demonstrate their identities.

Change drops for both variants within older-generation speakers as they preserve their old bedouin variant [sā:b] which marks their regional origin and bedouin/rural identity.

For the second phonological variable, Frenda speakers preserve the CA diphthong [ay] as it is realised in bedouin variant /ay/ in favour of long vowel /-i:/. However, linguistic innovation is recorded in male speakers as they start to shift to sedentary verb [lqi:t] by a score of 11.67%. This noticeably confirms second part of our first hypothesis that variation is sedentary oriented.

Figure 07. Nature of Dialect Change in FSA.



From the above figure, we can noticeably observe that variation and change are both sedentary-directed shifting from old bedouin features towards sedentary variants as demonstrated in the use /lqa/ in favour of /lga/ and /-i:/ in favour of /ay/. This confirms our third hypothesis. However, bedouin variants are still on the play as they are preserved by older-age speakers as part of their regional identity.

Considering the interference of language attitudes change is fostered by speakers' attitudinal reactions toward some features in their dialect which they consider as socially stigmatised and thus shift to more socially-accepted variants. Coates (1993) suggests that "linguistic change can be said to have taken place when a new linguistic form, used by some sub-group within a speech community, is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm" (cited in Dendane, 2013, p.8). This could be interpreted by speakers' demonstrated negative attitudes towards Bedouin/rural variants /lga/ and /ay/ in opposition to positive attitudes towards sedentary/urban variants /lqa/ and /-i:/ respectively and rural sedentary [lqayt]. This result confirms our second hypothesis.

7. Conclusion

Quantitative investigation of targeted morphological variables in Frenda's dialect revealed that dialect change is not solely administered by linguistic variables but also social variables namely age and gender. Socio-demographic and

ecological growth in the city including urbanisation led to shaping the linguistic landscape of the speech community of Frenda and thus speakers shifted from old bedouin to sedentary linguistic norms. On the one hand, speakers leaned toward sedentary variants which suggest that change is sedentary-directed in which speakers shifted away from old bedouin variants. On the other hand, speakers who preserve bedouin variants in their speech are said to do so as part of their regional identity.

Apparently, speakers' language attitudes highly intervene in dialect variation and change as speakers demonstrate negative attitudes toward socially-stigmatised linguistic features and thus shift toward other socially-shared and accepted features.

All in all, Frenda speech community is regarded as a transition, mixed and dialectal zone between Bedouin dialects of the region of Oran and it is undergoing on-going variation as young-age speakers are shifting towards sedentary speech. However, old bedouin features are still being preserved by some speakers as this still a marker of their regional rural identity.

The significance of any academic research lies in the openness of its results for further discussion and in-depth future analysis. The linguistic situation in Frenda is highly complex as various factors are on the play. The outcomes of our present study suggest the interference of various factors that had indirectly intervened in the examination of variation and change in Frenda's spoken Arabic. The location of Frenda as a trade route which connects the western north with the south resulted in dialect contact with various western regions such as Mascara, Saida, and Oran. Processes of short-term and long-term contact resulted in dialect accommodation which we deduced as highly significant in the results as most Frenadi speakers demonstrate a negative attitude toward Frenda as their place of residency and have a strong intention to leave Frenda to Oran. This suggests the interference of identity in the process of variation. All in all, taking into account dialect accommodation as implemented by long-term accommodation would give significant results.

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