

The Dialectal and Cultural Situation among Palestinians Living in Refugee Camps in Jordan: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

The paper aims at investigating the dialectal and cultural situation among Palestinians living in Jordan. It also aims at exploring the attitudes towards their ethnic dialect in addition to the factors which lead them to maintain or lose it. The researcher selects a sample of (50) people living in the Irbid refugee camp. The sample covers different people of ages, gender and educational background. The chosen sample of the study was based on availability. The instrument of the study was open-ended interviews to be analyzed later. The results show that Palestinians of Jordan living in Irbid refugee camp are experiencing a shift from their own ethnic dialect towards the Jordanian Arabic dialect called "Horani Dialect" in all domains of life, but most old people above 70 years old keep their own Palestinian dialect "Tirawi's dialect", but the study shows that all Palestinians keep a good amount of the cultural aspects and have positive attitudes towards their ethnic dialect.

Keywords: Language maintenance, Dialect shift, Ethnic dialect, Attitudes, Immigration and Cultural shift.

Introduction

Language is a means of communication and effective to sharing knowledge, ideas and feelings. Jancovic-Kramaric (2001) points out that language is a tool of communication and expressing thoughts. Every society is shaped by its language and dialects. There are several reasons that make a society use different languages and dialects. Voluntary migration is one of these reasons. Spolsky (1998) asserts that several factors make a society use two or more languages. One of these factors is voluntary or involuntary migrations. The culture of the society is directly linked to the language. Newmark (1988: 94) remarks that "culture is the

way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”.

Trudgill, P. (1993: 80) states that “although there were clear differences between men and women’s speech, only a relatively small number of vocabulary items were involved. The men and women, that is, did not speak different languages. Rather, they spoke different varieties of the same language.”

Palestinians living in Jordanian refugee camps try to preserve their dialects as part of their identity, but the coming generations are obliged to integrate into the Jordanian society and to use Jordanian dialects.

Tawalbeh et al (2013: 128) remark that “it is apparent that immigrants live with the dilemma of two conflicting wants: (a) the want to preserve their language as part of their heritage and identity, and (b) they want to be involved within their host community.” Following the first one may lead to language maintenance, whereas following the second one may lead to language shift through generations. Hudson (2004) distinguishes between language and dialect. He states that a language is larger than a dialect because it contains more items than a dialect. He also adds that language has prestige which a dialect lacks.

The terms language shift and maintenance are defined by Fishman (1966) as a field that is related with language change and language stability. He adds that when there is a contact between different speakers, their language may be shifted or kept. This is due to social, cultural or psychological factors. Holmes (2001) remarks that when people live in an urban area, they use the host language, but when they live in their ethnic place, they generally keep their ethnic language.

Language attitudes are essential in keeping or shifting a language. Baker (1988) goes along this trend when he points out that the attitude of the speaker is one of the most prominent factors that leads to maintain a language. If the speaker has a positive and loyal attitude towards his own ethnic language, he will keep it for identity assertion.

The study of language maintenance and language shift has been the focus of a large number of works (see Fishman, 1964, 1989; Ferguson et al, 1981, Dweik, 2000; Al-Khatib and Al-Ali, 2010).

We can conclude from such studies that minorities and immigrants living in tolerant societies preserve some aspects of their cultures, languages and dialects.

Language maintenance and language loss depend on where the speakers of languages settle. In a pluralistic system, minority language speakers tend to be satisfied about the status of their mother tongue. In contrast, in a totalitarian system, minorities are keen on their language for self-assertion. We can also conclude that adherence to a minority native language or dialect hinges on an important socio-political aspect. Fear of ethnic cleansity or disappearance would trend towards urgency to preserving the native language or dialect. Where there exists no discrimination against the minority language or dialect, language or dialect maintenance becomes a subsidiary issue.

Arabic has three major varieties: Classical Arabic; Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and colloquial dialects. MSA is a combination of classic Arabic and colloquial dialects considered as a diglossic language. Majadly (2012: 37) states that “Modern standard Arabic” is the language of culture and written communication of all speakers of Arabic everywhere. It is also used in speech as the language of news broadcasts or radio and television. Classical Arabic plays a very important role in the life of all Muslims, since it preserves the language of the Noble Quran and serves as the language of prayer.”

The Arabic colloquial language is divided into different dialects in the Arab world. Colloquial Arabic language is different from standard Arabic because it consists of a number of regional varieties used in everyday spoken language. Dialects vary from one region to another because of the geographical and sociolinguistic variables such as Urban, Rural and Bedouin.

Following the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, a large number of Palestinians were forced to flee and seek safe shelter in Jordan. Different refugee camps were then established for this purpose, such as Irbid refugee camp that was established in 1951. The camp was established on an area of 24 square kilometers near Irbid city in the north of Jordan.

The Palestinian Arabic dialect consists of several sub-dialects that differ from the standard Arabic language in phonology and lexis. Jarrar et al (2014: 19) state that “the Palestinian refugee problem has led to additional mixing among different Palestinian Arabic sub-dialects as well as borrowing from other Arabic dialects.”

In the Irbid refugee camp, the Palestinian Arabic language consists of different regional dialects depending on where the speakers come from. The most important dialect spoken in the Irbid refugee camp is the dialect of Tirat Haifa which is spoken by the people who came from the town of Al-Tira located in the coastal plain of Palestine. Most of Tirawis live in the middle of the camp. For the purpose of the study, the researcher investigates the Tirawi dialect and culture.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the current study is to investigate the cultural and linguistic situation among the Tirawi Palestinians living in Irbid refugee camp in Jordan in terms of their dialect use, attitudes and culture because their dialect is the main dialect used in the Irbid refugee camp.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study includes first and second generations of the Tirawis living in the Irbid refugee camp in Jordan. The first generation is the immigrants who migrated from Tirat Haifa between 1948 -1950. The second generation is the Tirawis who were born in Irbid refugee camp. Fifty participants are chosen for the purpose of the current study. The choice of the sample is based on availability. The selected sample is divided into four age groups, following the steps of Dweik (2000), Abd-el-Jawad (2006) and Al-Khatib and Al-Ali (2010) as the table below shows:

Table 1: Distribution of the sample by age, gender and place of birth

Age	Number	Gender		Place of Birth	
		Males	Females	Tirat Haifa	Irbid refugee camp
15 – 30	15	10	5	-	15
31 – 46	15	8	7	-	15
47 – 69	10	7	3	2	8
70 above	10	8	2	10	-
Total	50	33	17	12	38

One of the limitations of the current study is the small number of the sample because it is difficult to define all Tirawis living in the Irbid refugee camp and it is based on availability.

Instrument

To establish the objectives of the current study, the researcher designed an interview questions, following the methods used in some studies conducted previously by Dweik (2000) and Al-Obaidy (2013) with some changes to meet the objectives of the study. For the researcher, face to face interviews are the best instrument to be followed, because it serves the main objective of the study which is the Tirawi dialect in the Irbid Refugee camp. Accordingly, the researcher asks the participants questions in Arabic so that he could record and transcribe the language used during the interviews to be analyzed later. The questions of the interviews include historical and demographic data, communicative and cultural elements (See Appendix A). The researcher introduces himself to interviewees and gives them a summary of the objectives of the study. He asks them the questions as stated in Appendix A. The researcher could ask more questions, depending on the context of situation which might help in achieving the objectives of the research. The researcher prefer to carry out the interviews without any helping assistant; First, because he has lived in the Irbid Refugee camp for twenty years; i.e., most of the interviewees are either neighbors or relatives or friends. Second, the researcher believes that without any assistance leads to more accuracy in the results of the study.

Tirawi Dialect

The dialect used in the north of Jordan is called Horani. Horan is an area in Irbid of the north of Jordan. The main feature of the Horani dialect is the variant of the voiceless uvular stop /q/ which is used as the voiced velar stop sound /g/ as in /qaala/ (said) which is pronounced as /gaala/. Another feature is the use of the prefix /-b/ to express the indicative imperfect verb as /bigul/ (he says) in place of /yaqul/. There are several lexical items that are used in the Horani dialect such as /ʃobidak/ what do you want? and /Mabidiʃ/ I don't want.

The Tirawi dialect is different from the Horani dialect even though their speakers have lived in the same area for many years. The Tirawi dialect has the voiceless uvular stop /q/ which is used in standard Arabic without any change whereas it is used as glottal stop /ʔ/, voiced velar stop /g/, voiceless velar stop /k/ and voiceless velar affricate sound /tʃ/ in other Jordanian dialects. Suleiman (2004) states that the dialect variants of /q/ are /ʔ/ Madani (dialect of the urban area); /k/ Falahi (dialect of the rural area) and /g/ Bedouin. Tirawi dialect consists of specific lexical terms used by its speakers such as /xayta/ sister; /xaya/ brother and /qroqah/ a hen.

Results and Discussion

All the participants show positive attitude towards their ethnic dialect. It is considered as a symbol of identity. The participants in the first generation encourage the coming generations to use their home dialect because they live in a tolerant society and they have the freedom to use any dialect they want. Most elder people who are in the first generation are more enthusiastic of the use of the Tirawi dialect because, as they all think about their right to return to their town "Tirat Haifa". Most of them were born in Tirat Haifa, so they think that they are in temporary residence and using their own dialect reminds the world about their disaster and their right to return. To them, the ethnic dialect is essential for their identity assertion and it plays a decisive factor for their return. Fasold (1984) asserts that the attitudes toward a language are considered as a reaction of its speakers towards their ethnic group. Khadidja (2013: 12) assures that "attitudes play a significant role in the maintenance or shift of a language".

All of the participants in the first generation use the Tirawi's dialect acquired in their original town in "Tirat Haifa." The use of /q/ is the prominent feature of the Tirawi dialect which is

frequently used by first generation frequently and almost all time during the interviews. The result goes along with El- Salman (2008) who states that “All of the Tirawis who preserve the native /q/ belong to the old age group. These people who were very young when they first arrived to Jordan”. Twenty five participants out thirty eight from the second generation do not use Tirawi dialect, but instead they use Horani dialect or Urban (Madani) dialect. This is due to their direct contact with people who use different dialects in schools and in public. They all were also born in the Irbid Refugee camp in Jordan. All female participants in the second generation do not use neither Horani nor Tirawi dialects. They use the urban (Madani) dialect for prestige. Accordingly, they use glottal stop /ʔ/ in place of the/q/ sound in the Tirawi dialect. This result goes side by side with El Salman (2003). He states that younger generations of Tirawis abandon their own dialect as a result of their contact with new dialects. Unlike the second generation, the first generation uses special lexical items which belong to the Tirawi dialect as the following table shows:

Table 2: Tirawi’s lexical items

Lexical items in English	Lexical items in Horani Dialect	Lexical items in Tirawi Dialect
Dish, bowl	sʕāhin	qifnya
window	ʃibak	babalsir
Grandfather	Jiddi	siidi
Female dress	fustan	fistyan
Grandmother	jidditi	sitti
Orphant	yatim	qarut
Farm	sʕāhrah	miqṭah
Old shoes	Kundara	faqrawiye
Mule	qdeef	bayul
Muskmelon	ʃimam	harof
Spoon	mʃlaga	zalafa

The results show that the second generation does not use Tirawi dialect at home because they are not obliged to do so. The results are in line with Clyne and Kipp (1999) who assure that home is considered a crucial factor in language maintenance. They add if a language is not kept at home, then it cannot be kept elsewhere.

The interviews show that all the interviewees in first and second generations like the Tirawi food, and enjoy it. Food is preserved among Tirawis because it is prepared almost weekly at home. /Musaxan/ is the traditional dish that is mostly eaten among both generations. It consists of roasted chicken over bread with fried onions, olive oil and sumac. Maftool is also a traditional food that is popular among Tirawis. Both generations like and enjoy it. Maftool consists of a mixture of cooked, parched and crushed wheat (Bulgur), tomato paste, flour and roasted chicken.

To conclude, food is the major element that is kept among Tirawis regardless the ages. Such dishes are cooked at home regularly and on special occasions. The way of cooking these meals was passed by elder women in the first generation to the younger ladies in the second generation. The results go along the study conducted by (Chiu, 2003) who points out that the Indians of Hakkas kept their self-assertion through food.

Glasgow (2012) goes towards this trend and concludes that the Croatians of Kansas have maintained some of their cultural aspects such as food. These results also go parallel with the findings of Omar (2014) who states that circassian food was one of the cultural elements that are mainly preserved.

There are several sweet foods native to Tirawis that are familiar to all of them in first and second generations. For example, cake of pressed dates is a very prominent sweet that all Tirawis in both generations like and enjoy. The cake of pressed dates is usually prepared by women in both generations in Ramadan and in the feast of immolation. It is offered to the guests who come to congratulate in feasts. Mutabak (Mafrooka) is another sweet food that is popular in Tirawi community. It consists of dough, olive oil and sugar. It is usually prepared for children in winter. Again, all Tirawis like and enjoy it. These sweet dishes are preserved and they are passed from one generation to another.

Tirawi folklore is the most important issue for the first generation and they are proud of their folklore whereas the participants in the second generation are familiar with the folkloric events and they know how to be performed, but they are not interested in them. The Debkeh is the main issue the participants in the first generation focus on. It is considered as a symbol of happiness and celebration. Nowadays, the Debkeh is rarely performed and it is out of the interest of the second generation. The Debkeh dance is performed by jumping and quick moment up and down. It is like tap dancing. It has two versions. One is performed by men and the other by women.

To conclude, all participants in both generations show high appreciation and gratitude to Tirawi traditional food. Food and sweet are the major elements that are kept and preserved among Tirawi. Folkloric events "The Debkeh" and "Traditional Tirawi songs" are not preserved and performed nowadays. The participants in the first generation are very sorry and unhappy for that. This is due to the way of celebrating the wedding day. In Tirat Haifa the celebration of the marriage took place in the town, so men and women gathered and performed the Debkeh three nights before the wedding day. Nowadays, the celebration of the marriage takes place in a large hall. Most of the guests are sitting in their seats, listening popular Arab and English songs. There is no place for the Debkeh other than the dancing of young girls with new Arab or English young songs. This is why the young participants are not interested in performing the Debkeh.

The results go in line with most studies conducted in this area. Tirawis preserve some parts of their culture and their dialect is experiencing a shift towards the Horani dialect of Irbid. The results go side by side with El-Salman and Roche (2010) who assert that Tirawi dialect goes to the point of extinction because of the following reasons: 1) the death of many Tirawis who used this dialect; 2) the abandoning of this dialect by younger generations as a result of their contact with other dialects. The results may be justified in the light of the fact that "it is simply when two different speech communities come into contact, there is always one which has the status of the majority and the other the status of minority." (Khadija, 2013:37).

Another important factor concerning the preservation of the Tirawi dialect among the first generation is the internal marriage. All of the participants in the first generation got married to Tirawi women. During the interviews, they assured that internal marriage plays an important and decisive factor in keeping the Tirawi dialect. Most young men in the second generation got married to non-Tirawi women. According to them, this caused a dialect-shift. The results concur with Al-Rahal's study (2014: 57). She points out that "the internal marriage among the Turkmen ethnic group helps them preserve their ethnic language." The results are also in line with (Kittaneh, 2009: 104) who remarks that "the internal marriage that the Palestinian Arabs of Israel chose to adopt had a crucial role in using Arabic because it caused a constant use of Arabic among parents and children and a preservation of familial tradition, culture and religious practices".

The results also go side by side with Al-zoubi (2007) who emphasizes that the internal marriage plays a crucial and decisive role in keeping cultural elements. Al-Khatib and Al-zoubi (2009: 211) go to the same trend. They state "it is a well-known fact that internal marriage between different groups can lead to and accelerate language shift". The participants

of the first generation assure that living in neighborhoods helps preserve the ethnic dialect. When they first resided in the Irbid refugee camp, they lived in neighborhoods and there was strong social relation among them. They all used the Tirawi dialect and culture. They add that Tirawis do not live in neighborhoods nowadays and most of them live in different places in Jordan following their works. This situation leads to dialect and cultural shift and weak social relations among them including relatives. They also say that the highly educated people leave the refugee camp and live in distinguished areas in Jordan for prestige and high status. The results agree with Dweik et al (2014) who state that it is known that the Muslim Arabs of Vancouver use their mother tongue in different domains in their daily life i.e neighborhood among others. This reflects their efforts to maintain their language. The results go parallel with the findings of Holmes, (2001) and Myres-Scotton (2006) who stress that the demographic factors are considered as main elements that effect language maintenance and shift. Al-Rahal (2014:57) goes along with this trend. She emphasizes that “living in a neighborhood with a majority of Turkmen is a positive step that helps them maintain their ethnic language”.

Concerning the social events, Tirawis have two major cultural associations for them. These associations do not help in preserving the ethnic Tirawi dialect because they use them for special occasions such as feast congratulation, wedding and funeral condolence.

Conclusion

The Tirawi dialect is different from other dialects in Irbid city, north of Jordan, in using voiceless uvular stop sound /q/ whereas other dialects in the same region replace /q/ with glottal stop /ʔ/, velar stop sound /K/ or voiced uvular stop sound/g/. Accordingly, /q/ becomes the identity feature of Tirawis living in the Irbid Refugee camp in the north of Jordan. Fifty participants are chosen and interviewed to investigate the Tirawi dialect and cultural situation. The first generation of the participants who migrated from Tirat Haifa during 1948 -1950 preserves their dialect because they practised it in their original town “Tirat Haifa”. They also have positive attitudes towards their dialect and they keep it for self-assertion. Most participants in the second generation, who were born in the Irbid refugee camp, are not interested in their own ethnic dialect and they use Horani dialect by replacing /q/ with /g/. On the other hand, Tirawi women and girls in the second generation tend to use the Madini (the urban dialect) instead because it gives them a prestigious status. They use glottal stop /ʔ/ in place of voiceless uvular stop sound /q/. The results go along a study conducted by Habib (2005). He states that the/ʔ/ sound has more social prestigious status than the use of /g/ among women. The results also agree with Holmes (2001) and Bissoonouth (2011) who stress that the positive attitudes towards ethnic languages maintain it whereas the negative attitudes towards it play a decisive role in language shift. The results may be justified because the participants in the first generation have used their dialect for a reasonable time in their original town. Those who are in the second generation do not practice their own ethnic dialect in their original town. They also do not take enough time in practicing it in the Irbid refugee camp. They come into contact with different dialects used in the Irbid refugee camp, in schools and in public.

Appendix A

I would like to thank you and to express my gratitude for taking your time in answering the following questions which serve a study about the Tirawis of Haifa living in the Irbid Refugee camp:

A- Demographic Background

1. How old are you?

2. Where were you born?
3. What is your educational level?
4. What is your job?
5. Are you married?
6. Where were your parents born?
7. What is your original country?

B- Community Profile Questions

1. Where did the Tirawis of the Irbid Refugee camp come from?
2. When did you live in the Irbid Refugee camp?
3. How strong are the social relations among Tirawis in the camp?
4. Do Tirawis of the Irbid Refugee camp live in neighborhoods?
5. Where else in Irbid do they live?
6. Where do Tirawi children study?
7. Are there any cultural associations for Tirawis in the Irbid Refugee camp?
8. How do you celebrate the feasts in the camp?
9. What kinds of jobs do Tirawis have?
10. Is there special Tirawis food? Name them.
11. Are there special Tirawi songs or dancing groups (e.g. folkloric dancing)? If yes name them.
12. What dialects do your children, sisters and brothers use?
13. Do you encourage them to use the Tirawi dialect?
14. Which dialects do you like to use?
15. Are you proud of using your own dialect?
16. What is your attitude towards other dialects used in the Irbid city?
17. Is the Tirawi dialect considered as a moribund dialect?

Note: Other relevant questions may be raised during the interviews.

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