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Your ref: XXXXXXX

Our ref: 2013-XXXX

LOID - Linguistic Origin IDentification

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1. Background

Speaker identification is today, after decades of research and practice, a reasonably well established discipline. While the purpose of speaker identification is to identify a speaker, speaker profiling seeks to identify characteristics of a speaker, shared by some but not all, e.g. dialectal traits.

When investigating asylum claims where documents of identification is lacking, the claimant can be offered an alternative means of corroborating his or her claimed geographical origin by displaying a matching linguistic behaviour. This idea has been exploited by the Swedish migration authorities since the early 90's and has since been adopted by several other countries.

Research is still scarce. The demands on quality, and definitions of 'best practices' are still not arrived at. For a general introduction to the field, consult the website of Prof. Patrick (Patrick, 2010c).

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the linguistic analysis is to try the hypothesis that the subject of the linguistic analysis speaks a language or dialect which is consistent with the given place of origin. The analysis required to test the hypothesis includes two parts. Firstly, the linguistic behaviour of the subject displayed in the data is examined for consistency with the given speech community. Secondly, an examination to what degree the speech community that the person belongs to is consistent with the given place of origin.

1.2 Theory

Research, directly relevant to LOID, has been published only to a small extent. In one study, forensic phoneticians were given the task of attributing speech samples to German dialects (Masthoff, Boubaker, & Köster, 2010). The hope was to find success factors. Parameters examined included choice of method (auditive, acoustic, consulting speech corpora, consulting literature on relevant dialects), number of methods deployed, time spent or confidence expressed in the phonetician's own judgment. None of these showed any correlation to the degree of success. The authors concluded that ability to identify dialects is inherent in the individual, whether innate or acquired.

The above clearly shows that appropriate testing of prospective dialect identifiers is essential, while formal criteria are simply irrelevant. Cambier-Langeveld (2010) describes, with support in both theory and own practice, how best to benefit from having both native speaker and linguist at one's disposal for the analysis.

It has been shown that it is markedly easier to identify your own dialect than other dialects (Markham, 1999). Wilson (2009) compared success in dialect attribution between (naïve) native speakers and phoneticians (without prior academic experience of the particular linguistic variety at hand). The native speakers turns out to be correct more often and to express greater confidence in their judgments (even when not justified).

No generally accepted best practice has yet been agreed upon. An early attempt at rules of thumb for interpreting analysis reports was published 2004 as *Guidelines for the use of language analysis for the determination of the origin of asylum seekers* (henceforth Guidelines). The intention was to "assist governments in assessing the general validity of language analyses in the determination of national origin, nationality or citizenship." (Language and National Origin Group, 2004, p. 261). The document has been used as a manifesto and a diverse array of scholars endorsed it.

The criticism of the Guidelines has been launched both from the profession, practicing in the specific field (Cambier-Langeveld, 2010) and from academic phoneticians, specialized in forensic work (Eriksson, 2008). Eriksson reports difficulties seeing how the Guidelines could be of any assistance at all to the case officer faced with evaluating a language analysis report. In Eriksson's opinion, the text is merely a rather commonplace exposé of types of linguistic variation. Patrick, incidentally one of the original co-signatories of said Guidelines, suggests it is "a set of principles […] most linguists will find uncontroversial, even obvious" (Patrick, 2010a). Patrick (2011) also mentions certain pitfalls to avoid when using native speakers.

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Following the criticism of the Guidelines, the International Association of Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics (IAFPA) wanted to make a position statement regarding the methodology of this particular sub-discipline. A working group to investigate the matter was set up in 2007 and two years later a resolution was adopted. It is general in nature, but acknowledges the validity of the method whereby a linguist is carrying out the analysis by means of all tools at hand, including observations made and reported to the linguist by a native speaker. The resolution also accepts the same person making the observations and carrying out the analysis (in a way being one's own informant), albeit then demanding that such person should have in-depth research experience of the linguistic variety at hand (IAFPA, 2009a). IAFPA hence acknowledges two differing methods.

Verrips (2011) emphasizes the importance of the reasoning of the report to be transparent, thus allowing the evaluation of the report to be specific. De Graaf, Ten Thie och Verrips (2011) suggest that demands from a forensic perspective differs from those from a linguistic one and are sometimes contradictory.

1.3 Verified's method

The competence of the native speaker is unique. Several studies demonstrate a particular aspect of this, that one is better at identifying one's own dialect than other dialects (Markham, 1999; Clopper & Pisoni, 2006). Patrick (2010b) remarks that "native competence in a language is respected by linguists as a legitimate type of knowledge, but on its own it is naïve and inexplicit knowledge […]". The methodology used by Verified is designed to optimise the contribution of this unique competence of the native speaker with the theoretical foundation and professional experience of the linguist. Verified thus, like Dutch IND through its language analysis unit BLT (Cambier-Langeveld, 2010), adheres to one of the two methods sanctioned by IAFPA, while e.g. Swiss LINGUA (2010) has chosen to confine itself to the use of a linguist, albeit one with active competence in the language under analysis.

By native speaker is, for the present purpose, primarily meant someone who has been raised with the variety under analysis used in the home. There are certain varieties that are never used as a first language, but nevertheless, thanks to their stable markers, lend themselves to analysis, such as certain varieties of Pidgin English of West Africa (Simo Bobda, Wolf, & Lothar, 1999). Being a native speaker does not imply ability to acquire competence in dialect analysis. The experience at Verified is that extensive testing is needed for selection and to guide further education. The experience also shows that lay people tend to assign a higher degree of confidence in their judgments than do academics. The feedback between native speaker and linguist is a vital part of the analysis and it is hence valuable to adopt an initially sceptical attitude regarding individual statements concerning the speech sample.

The tests are designed to gauge several distinct aspects of suitability in the candidate. In addition to being able to discriminate one's own dialect and instances of particular features of it, aptitude for abstract reasoning, integrity and phonetic awareness is sought.

By linguist is, for the present purpose, meant a person who after academic studies in linguistics has passed the internal task-specific training. This comprises theoretical aspects, including dialectology, as well as extensive practical training and completion of analyses under senior supervision. Verified has about a dozen linguists in its employ, including phoneticians and computer linguists. For details about the linguist responsible for the analysis at hand, refer to Enclosure I.

An unconditional requirement on the analysis report is transparency (Verrips, 2011). This requirement comprises all elements, such as the method, the observations and the reasoning as well as disclosure of details about native speaker and linguist. References concerning specific parts of the analysis are crucial to enable a proper evaluation of the analysis to the scientific literature, with narrow indication of pages where possible.

The linguists at Verified will carry out basic literature research, and where required and possible own experiments or surveys, regarding the relevant linguistic varieties. Traits discriminating adjacent dialects as well as sociolinguistic and language regime facts are covered. Based on these findings, instructions to the native speaker are formulated. The task of the native speaker is, in addition to provide a general over-

all intuition, to identify instances of dialectal traits. As a rule, the report will annotate use of at least eight different traits at at least two distinct levels (phonological, morphological, syntactical and lexical).

The data of analysis must meet certain quality standards reading e.g. sound quality and duration to enable a reliable analysis to be carried out. Also the nature of the speech is important and repetitions and non-spontaneous portions reduce the utility. Verified recommends digital formats and an environment which does not negatively affect the recording or the subject of the recording and for the recording to be at least fifteen minutes of speech as basis for a linguistic analysis. Length requirements may also vary with the hypothesis.

1.4 Limitations

It is important to keep in mind that LOID by itself does not determine nationality. Linguistic borders do not necessarily coincide with political ones and when doing so, rarely do so in a strict sense. Linguistic varieties straddling borders are common. The aim of the analysis is to determine in what linguistic environment a person has been socialized.

Analysis regarding subjects with a more complex history of residence and regarding those having been socialized in particularly heterogeneous environments (e.g. refugee camps or certain portions of transit countries) merits extra caution.

Even at the time of recording there are a number of factors which affect the person's speech. In cases in which a person speaks several varieties of a language, these varieties can be used in different contexts; for instance, one can speak in a certain way amongst family and in another way, usually more prestigious, to outsiders (Ferguson, 1959). Linguistic behaviour can also change in order to increase comprehension between two specific speakers, e.g. between the interviewer or interpreter and the interviewee. This is particularly the case if one wishes to accommodate the person one is speaking to (Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert, & Leap, 2000). The choice of interviewer should thus be made with consideration. Verified selects interviewer based on the specification of dialect in the hypothesis. Should such not be available, refraining from carrying out the interview should be considered.

It is important to look at the report in its context. The linguistic report evaluates how the person is speaking at the data of analysis at hand; the results do not mean that person cannot speak in other, different ways. The user of the report should critically evaluate the report in light of the information that the person in question has provided and other available facts that are accessible to the user of the report.

Linguistic behaviour and linguistic norms are constantly changing. It is important to stay in touch with the natural habitat, if you like, of the linguistic variety you are to discern. Some areas, such as the Gaza strip and Eritrea presents special difficulties to visitors. A related problem is the lack of up-to-date data in the scientific literature for certain dialects. For specific information regarding the language under analysis in this report, please refer to Enclosure III.

1.5 Hypothesis and scale for expression of conclusion

The point of departure for the analysis is a hypothesis about the linguistic background. Typically, this is formulated by the linguist and based on the subject's own accord of residential history.

In accordance with the IAFPA Code of Conduct (§ 5) (2009b), the conclusion is accompanied by a gradation of the confidence with which it is given, as well as a comparison to available levels. The scale used corresponds to that of Statens Kriminaltekniska Laboratorium (2011). It should, however, be noted that Verified expresses how *consistent* the linguistic behaviour displayed is with the linguistic community of the hypothesis. No implications are to be construed as to how *specific* the speech sample is to the linguistic community which forms the basis for the hypothesis, nor about the likelihood to arrive at a corroboration or refutation of any alternative hypothesis. In the reasoning of the analysis, focus and distribution of the linguistic variety will be described as well as the specific relevant linguistic traits observed in the sample.

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2. Assignment details

Ordered by
Name   Organisation

Assignment
                                                        Assignment received
☐ Includes interview

Assignment conducted by
Linguist   Analyst (Verified's code)
'First name Surname'   1436

Data for analysis
Duration of recording (minutes)   Medium
                                       ☒ Audio file   ☐ Other:

Sound quality
☒ Satisfactory   ☐ Not satisfactory

2.1 Instructions from the order form

It is stated on the order form that the person claims to come from Syria. On the recording, the person claims to have lived in Nibbul in Aleppo province.

2.2 The linguistic community

Aleppo is located in north-western Syria. The dialect of Damascus belongs to the central Syrian variety, which is a sub-variety of the Lebanese-Syrian Arabic (Lewis, 2009). A northern Syrian variety (which forms its own group within the Syro-Palestinian dialects) is spoken in Aleppo (Fischer & Jastrow, 2002, ss. 21-24; Lewis, 2009; Versteegh, 2001, ss. 152-154). A person from Aleppo is therefore expected to speak a northern Syrian dialect.

2.3 Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that the person belongs to an Arabic linguistic community that exists in the Aleppo province.

3. Analysis – linguistic community

By linguistic community is, for the present purpose, meant a group of individuals sharing a common set of linguistic norms. Various factors contribute to intra-community variation in speech such as age, level of education, and gender. In the following the speech of the subject will be solely in relation to the linguistic community of the hypothesis.

The definition of adherence to the norm is the native speaker intuition of acceptability. It is determined whether the command of the variety is the expected one of a native speaker. In the absence of observations suggesting this not to be the case, the focus of the analysis will be dialectal discrimination. Examples are, as a rule, given in IPA, broad transcription, and for glossing the Leipzig Standard will be used (Max Planck Institute, 2008).

3.1 General comments

According to the analyst, the person's speech is consistent with that of a native speaker of Arabic. No indications of speech manipulation, such as hesitation, repetition, inconsistency etc. are noted.

3.2 Phonology

The interdental fricatives of Standard Arabic (/θ/, /ð/ and /ðˤ/) are realized in different ways, depending on the dialect. In Damascus dialect they are pronounced as the plosives [t], [d] and [dˤ], but are mostly represented by the sibilants [s], [z] and [zˤ] in Standard Arabic loanwords (Lentin, 2012). This is also the case in north-western Syria, including Aleppo (Behnstedt, 1997, pp. 2-3). In Dar'a the interdental fricatives are preserved (Behnstedt, 1997, pp. 2-3). In Beirut dialect both the plosives and sibilants occur (Naïm, Beirut Arabic, 2012). The person uses [d] and [z] in the pronunciations below, in line with north-western Syrian dialects.
/haːdiː/ 'this'
/axad/ 'took'
/daʔatzakːar/ 'I remember'
/izaː/ 'about'

Imala is a phonological process where a long /aː/ is shortened and raised and becomes /e/ or /i/ (Alfozan (1989), Owens (2006), Holes (2012)). Imala have also been described as a kind of "vowel harmony" (Owens, 2006), i.e. imala is motivated by the presence of other front vowels in the word (see also (Alfozan, 1989). According to the analyst, the process occurs in Syrian dialects in, for example, Damascus and Aleppo but is not present in, for example, Al-Hasakah in north-eastern Syria. The person uses imala in the vowel in first syllable the pronunciations below.
/deːrseː/ 'studies'
/dʒeːdʒ/ 'hens'
/dʒeːmiʕ/ 'mosque'

Standard Arabic /dʒ/ is realized in different ways, depending on the dialect. Standard Arabic /dʒ/ is preserved in central and north-western Syrian dialects, but occurs as /ʒ/ in Damascus, among others (Behnstedt, 1997, pp. 6-7). The person uses /dʒ/, in line with north-western Syrian Arabic, in the pronunciations below.
/freːridʒ/ 'chickens'
/dʒidːiː/ 'my grandfather'
/dʒeːmiʕ/ 'mosque'

Standard Arabic /q/ is realized in different ways, depending on the dialect. In Damascus dialect, the standard Arabic /q/ is realized as [ʔ], but /q/ occurs in Standard Arabic loanwords (Lentin, 2012). In Aleppo and in surrounding areas in north-western Syria both [ʔ] och /q/ are used (Behnstedt P. , 2012).
In Iraq, /q/ is realized as [g] in gilit-dialects, while /q/ is used in qeltu dialects. /q/ has been retained, or brought back into use, in many words in Baghdad Arabic. (Jastrow, 2012). The person uses [ʔ] in the pronunciations below, consistent with north-western Syrian.
/ʔasdak/ 'you mean'
/awʔaːt/ 'times'
/ʔabruː/ 'his grave'

The Standard Arabic diphthongs /aw/ and /aj/ are pronounced in different ways, depending on the dialect. In Damascus Arabic, these diphthongs are pronounced as monophthongs /eː/ and /oː/ respectively, except for in certain morphological contexts, and in loan words from Standard Arabic, where the diphthongs may occur (Lentin, Damaskus Arabic, 2012). According to the analyst, the monophthongs are used in the variety spoken in Aleppo as well. In the dialect spoken in Beirut, the monophthongs are used, but the diphthongs /aw/ and /aj/ may occur in open syllables (Naïm, 2012). The person uses /eː/ and /oː/ in the pronunciations below, which is consistent with north-western Syrian.
/deːf/ 'guest'
/beːd/ 'egg'
/yoːm/ 'a day'

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Noted phonological features in the person's speech are consistent with a northern Syrian dialect.

3.3 Morphology

The suffixed pronoun for 3PL has different realizations in different modern dialects. In Aleppo, /-on/ or /-un/ are used for both masculine and feminine. In north-eastern Syria, the following suffixes are used: /-hum/ (M), /-hin/ (F) and /-ən/ (Behnstedt, 1997, pp. 544-545) or, according to the analyst, /-un/. In Dayr az-Zawr, the pronoun /-hum/ is used, according to the analyst and Behnstedt (1997, p. 545). In Damascus dialect, /-(h)on/ (Lentin, Damaskus Arabic, 2012) and /-(h)un/ (Behnstedt, 1997, pp. 544-545) are used. The person uses /-un/ in line with the variety spoken in Aleppo in the constructions below.
/minbeːriklun/ 'we congratulate them'
/maʕun/ 'with them'
/ʕindun/ 'at their (place)'

The person's usage of independent personal pronouns is in line with Syrian Arabic in general, and, according to the analyst, also with northern Syrian. See examples below.
/niħne/ '1PL'
/hiwːe/ '3SG'
/ana/ '1SG'

Noted morphological features in the person's speech are consistent with a northern Syrian dialect.

3.4 Syntax

Negation of verbs is expressed with prefixes, suffixes and circumfixes. In Damascus dialect the prefix /ma-/ is used for verbal negation (Lentin, 2012). This is also, according to analysts, true of Syrian dialects in general. This can be compared with Palestinian Bedouin dialects and rural dialects, in which the circumfix /ma-…-ʃ/ is used in the perfective but the suffix /-ʃ/ in the imperfective (Shahin, 2012). The person uses negations in line with Syrian Arabic in general in the phrases below.
/maː daʕafham ʕaleːk/ 'I don't understand you'
/maː baʕrif ʃiː/ 'I don't know anything'
/maː fiː nahir/ 'there is no river'

The person uses numerals in line with Syrian Arabic in general, according to the analyst. This is illustrated with the following examples from the recording.
/alfeːnuːsitːeː/ 'two thousand and six'
/raːbiʕ/ 'fourth'
/tneːnuːxamsiːn/ 'fifty-two'

The verbal particle /da/ is used in the variety of Arabic spoken in Baghdad as a marker for present tense or intent (Jastrow, 2012). According to the analyst, the particle also occurs in the dialect spoken in Aleppo, which is illustrated in the phrases below.
/daʕafham/ 'I understand'
/dailːak/ 'I tell you'
/daʕidːun/ 'I count them'

Two of the noted syntactical features in the person's speech are consistent with Syrian Arabic in general, and one with a northern Syrian dialect.

3.5 Lexicology

No lexical items that substantially contribute to the conclusion have been noted.

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3.6 Conclusion

To the extent given below, the subject's speech in the sample is consistent with the hypothesis about linguistic community

+3 ☒ The language analysis shows with certainty that the results obtained are clearly consistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

+2 ☐ The language analysis clearly suggests that the results obtained most likely are consistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

+1 ☐ The language analysis somewhat suggests that the results obtained more likely than not are consistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

0 ☐ The language analysis can neither confirm nor refute the hypothesis, as the results obtained do not constitute a basis on which to assess the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

-1 ☐ The language analysis somewhat suggests that the results obtained more likely than not are inconsistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

-2 ☐ The language analysis clearly suggests that the results obtained most likely are inconsistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

-3 ☐ The language analysis shows with certainty that the results obtained are clearly inconsistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

Comments

The hypothesis is that the person belongs to an Arabic linguistic community that exists in Aleppo province, where a northern Syrian dialect is spoken. The person's speech is consistent with that of a native speaker of Arabic. Dialectal features noted in the person's speech are consistent with northern Syrian. The language analysis shows with certainty that the results obtained are clearly consistent with the linguistic community as stated in the hypothesis.

4. Geographical region and linguistic community

Aleppo is located in north-western Syria. The dialect of Damascus belongs to the central Syrian variety, which is a sub-variety of the Lebanese-Syrian Arabic (Lewis, 2009). A northern Syrian variety (which forms its own group within the Syro-Palestinian dialects) is spoken in Aleppo (Fischer & Jastrow, 2002, ss. 21-24; Lewis, Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International., 2009; Versteegh, 2001, ss. 152-154). The results show that the person's speech is consistent with what is expected in Aleppo province.

5. Other

n/a

Analysis conducted by:

'First name Surname'
Linguist
Verified AB
Enclosures

§   I Information about the linguist's competence
§   II Information about the analyst's/analysts' competence
§   III Information concerning the language in the report
§   IV Additional services (if applicable)

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Academic Background

The Linguist has a Master of Arts degree in Linguistics from the Department of Linguistics at Stockholm University (1996).

Publications include: *Phonotactically determined allophones of the j phoneme in Swedish*, Fonetik 96, Papers presented at The Swedish Phonetics Conference, Nässlingen, May 29-31, 1996, TNH-QPSR 2/1996. Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm (1996); *Spread zones and residual zones according to J. Nichols: implications for phonological typology*, Proceedings Fonetik 98, The Swedish Phonetics Conference, Stockholm University, May 27-31 1998; *Phonetic preconditions for historical sound change – evidence from the dialects,* Proceedings Fonetik 98 The Swedish Phonetics Conference, Stockholm University, May 27-31 1998 (Engstrand o, Björsten S, Bruce G) (1998); *Hur udda är Viby-i? Experimentella och typologiska observationer [in English: How unusual is the "Viby-i"? Experimental and typological observations]*, Folkmålsstudier 39, 1999, Forskningscentralen för de inhemska språken, Helsingfors (1999); *Swedish "damped" /i/ and /y/: Experimental and typological observations*, ICPhS99, San Francisco, August 1999.

Professional Experience

The linguist has been employed by Verified since 2009 to conduct language analysis. Alongside his main commission the linguist also conducts coverage of scientific journals.

During the years 1999-2000 the linguist received a scholar qualification at the Department of Linguistics at Stockholm University. The area of research is dialectology with specialisation in vowel systems.

During the years 1996-1998 the linguist has acted as a Research Assistant at the Department of Linguistics at Stockholm University. The undertaking covered speech synthesis and the launch of the Project "SWEDIA", which aimed to map and analyse Swedish dialects.

During the years 1979-1994 the linguist has worked at Statens Bakteriologiska Laboratorium (The Swedish Government Bacteriological Laboratory). The remit comprised of Medical Research and Investigation.

Language Skills

Besides native skills in Swedish, the Linguist has an excellent command of English and a fair competence in German.

Knowledge of languages

The analyst speaks Kurmanji and Arabic at mother-tongue level.

Education

The analyst has studied the Arabic language and Arabic culture at a university in Syria. The analyst also has a higher education from a Swedish university.

Experience

The analyst has been commissioned by Verified for language analysis since 2008.

Place of origin

The analyst is born and raised in northeastern Syria.

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Language family

The Syro-Palestinian dialects form one of the primary dialect groups within the Arabic linguistic community (Fischer & Jastrow, 1980: 21-24). Other names for this dialect group are Syro-Lebanese dialects (Versteegh 2001: 152-156) and Levantine dialects (Lewis, 2009). The terms refer mainly to the sedentary varieties. Bedouin dialects in the area are more closely related to Arabic in the Arabian Peninsula (Fischer & Jastrow, 1980: 21). This is particularly true of the Bedouin dialects in the Syrian desert (Versteegh, 2001: 153), that belong to the so-called Najdi varieties (Al-Wer 2006: 1919-20). Bedouin dialects do sometimes influence sedentary varieties however, as is the case in Jordan (Fischer & Jastrow, 1980: 23).

Distribution and number of speakers

The Syro-Palestinian dialects are spoken in the Palestinian areas (Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem), Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In the north-eastern parts of Syria (in Deir ez-Zor, for example), Qeltu Mesopotamian Arabic is spoken, which is a dialect that does not belong to the Syro-Palestinian group. Syro-Palestinian varieties are also spoken in Hatay province in Turkey (Versteegh 2001: 153). All in all there are about 20 million speakers of the Syro-Palestinian dialects (Lewis, 2009). The varieties spoken in the capital cities (Damascus, Beirut) are prestigious, and are rapidly replacing the rural dialects (Versteegh 2001: 153). The official language, however, in the countries in question, is Modern Standard Arabic (Lewis, 2009).

A number of minority languages are also spoken in the area, such as Kurdish (75 000) and Armenian (235 000) in Lebanon, Kabardian (56 000) and Adyghe (43 000) in Jordan, and Armenian (320 000), Kurdish (900 000), Kabardian (40 000), Adyghe (27 000), Domari (37 000) and Azerbaijani (30 000) in Syria. Hebrew is also spoken in the Palestinian areas (Lewis, 2009).

Grammar and typological features

Syntax and morphology

The b-imperfect serves as a verbal marker in the entire area, and occurs in both present and future tense (although some regional variation is noted) (Versteegh, 2001: 155). The continuous aspect marker is /ʕam/. Certain future tense nuances are expressed with the pre-verbal particle /laħ(a)/ (or /raħ(a)/). In general, there is no distinction between masculine and feminine plural forms of pronouns and verbal affixes.

Lexicology

Syro-Palestinian dialects contain many loan words (old and new) from Turkish, Aramaic, Persian, French and English, for example (Lentin, 2012; Sawaie, 2012). Dialectal expressions and expressions from Modern Standard Arabic and Classical Arabic appear side by side, which can lead to the phonemization of certain phonological processes (Versteegh, 2001: 153-154).

Phonology

The Classical Arabic phoneme /q/ is realized as /ʔ/ in most of the urban dialects in the area (Versteegh, 2001: 153). In Amman, /q/ and /ʔ/ are used interchangeably, according to complex sociolinguistic rules (Al-Wer, 2012). Similarly, plosives are commonly used instead of dental fricatives in urban dialects (Versteegh, 2001: 153), whereas both realizations occur in Amman (Al-Wer, 2012).

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Linguistic variation

The Syro-Palestinian dialects can be divided into three subgroups (Fischer & Jastrow, 2002: 23; Versteegh 2001: 153). They are:

Lebanese/Central Syrian dialects

This group can also be referred to as North Levantine Arabic (Lewis, 2009) and consists of the varieties spoken in Beirut and Damascus. This group is distinguished from the other two by the keyword /bjiktub/, /biktub/ (3SG and 1SG of the imperfect of the verb root 'ktb', meaning 'to write'). In the other two groups, the forms are /biktub/ and /bɑktub/, respectively. (Versteegh, 2001: 153).

The Lebanese varieties can be divided into four zones: north, central-north, central-south and south. The most characteristic feature of most Lebanese dialects is lengthening or diphthongization of the vowel in word-final syllables before a pause (Fischer & Jastrow, 1980: 23-24). Lebanese varieties are also spoken in certain parts of Syria, in the an-Nusayriyah Mountains for example. The dialect in south Lebanon is similar to Palestinian dialects (Versteegh 2001: 154).

The dialect in Damascus belongs to the Central Syrian subgroup (Versteegh, 2001: 153).

North Syrian dialects

Lewis (2009) includes this group in North Levantine Arabic. This variety is spoken, among other places, in Aleppo (Versteegh, 2001: 153).

Palestinian/Jordanian dialects

This group can also be referred to as South Levantine Arabic (Lewis, 2009). The subdivision below is based on Fischer & Jastrow (1980: 23) and Shahin (2011). This group is characterized by influences from Egyptian Arabic, particularly in the Gaza Strip (Mohammad, 2002; Horesh, 2003).

1. Palestinian urban dialects. These are spoken in Jerusalem, Hebron and Nablus and share many features with other urban varieties in the Syro-Palestinian area (Al-Wer, 2006). One distinguishing feature is that the Classical Arabic phoneme /q/ is realized as /ʔ/ in this subgroup.

2. Palestinian rural dialects. Within this subgroup, the Classical Arabic phoneme /q/ is realized as /k/.

3. Southern Palestinian/Jordanian dialects (Bedouin dialects). Within this subgroup, the Classical Arabic phoneme /q/ is realized as /g/.

Cleveland (1963) divides the Palestinian/Jordanian dialects into four groups. Group I and II refer to the original dialects in Jordan. These varieties are originally Bedouin dialects, but also occur in villages and cities where Bedouins have settled. The dialects in Group I are mainly to be found in the southern and eastern parts of Jordan, and can be seen as a subgroup to the Najdi dialects spoken in the Arabian Peninsula. The dialects in Group II are found further north and have many more speakers than the dialects in Group I. Among other areas, they can be found in the southern parts of the West Bank. The phonology of group II is practically identical to that of Group I, but the groups differ significantly in regards to morphology, idiom and basic vocabulary. Cleveland's remaining groups can be classified as Palestinian rural dialects and Palestinian urban dialects respectively. Central rural Palestinian dialects (Group III) are spoken in the central parts of the West Bank (around Jerusalem and northwards). The Jordanian capital of Amman is populated by groups of people from different areas who have settled there. A dialect which is typical for Amman is emerging among the city's younger speakers.

The dialectal map within the Syro-Palestinian group is complicated by the fact that many Palestinians have settled in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan since the 1950s (Al-Wer, 2006; Amara, 1999). There are a large number of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. They have lived there for two or three generations, and

the language spoken by the younger generations has adapted to Jordanian usage. More than half of the people living in the city of Amman are believed to be Palestinians (Al-Wer, 2012).

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