

***“Are /q/ and /g/ Standard or Prestige Variants
in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?”***

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Résumé :

In the Touat, South of Algeria, young and old AZRA speakers do not have similar linguistic behaviour. The young show a clear tendency towards the use of uvular stop /q/; whereas, the eldest have a clear preference for velar stop /g/.

Our communication is about the results obtained from several word-lists provided by Adrar university students. The informants were asked to write lists of terms they ‘think’ are their generation’s and not that of their elders. The end result is a number of ‘perceptual’ lists in which the young speakers show that their speech and that of their fathers and grandfathers are not the same. The analysis has shown that the tendencies are not only generation-based but are also sex-based.

The other approach we deal with is whether the use of velar and uvular stops is linked to such notions as ‘prestige’ vs. ‘standard’ forms. As such, we verify Labov’s (1966, 1982 and 1990) theories of men’s use of standard linguistic forms in an Arabic speech community. By the same tokens, we corroborate and/or infirm that associations that exist between linguistic forms and their social correlates in the West are not the same in North Africa.

Introduction

Arabic dialectology and sociolinguistics are characterised by the dichotomy between uvular stop /q/ and velar stop /g/. Although the variants are interrelated to the sociolinguistic concepts of ‘prestige’ vs. ‘stigmatised’ features, they remain clear instances of variation of style at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. This variation reflects people’s linguistic attitudes to both variants as well as to their shift in between degrees of formality and informality.

In the following sections, we deal with ‘prestige’ vs. ‘standard’ variants, since they are considered as sociolinguistic phenomena which split between the speech of educated and uneducated people. On another hand, they are important markers of Arabic dialectology, for they identify the language varieties as either ‘Beduin=rural’ or ‘sedentary=urban’.

The method referred to as “Folk Perceptual dialectology” (Preston 1986, 1989, and 1996; Garrett 2001; Kretzschmar, W.A. Jr. 1999; Iannàccaro and Dell’Aquila 2001) or “folk dialectology [which] is concerned with the beliefs that nonlinguists-“the folk”- have about language variation, factors that can play a critical role in language maintenance and change” (Benson, 2003:307) is used in present research. In so doing, both young male and female AZRA speakers are involved in the analysis; their perception of their mother-tongue is the most important variable in the research. The informants, who are university students from the department of English, are asked to provide the researcher with word-lists according to their own (subjective) perception of the difference between their

vocabulary and that of their elders. It is important to note that word-lists instantiate careful style (cf. Labov, 1966 and 1972). Starting from this basis, the lists are analysed from two angles; the first considers the age of the participants, i.e.: age-based variation. The second takes into consideration the sex of the participants, that is to say sex-based variation.

1. Defining ‘prestige’, ‘standard’, and ‘stigmatised’ forms

In diglossic situations, standard linguistic forms are often seen as more ‘prestigious’ than local variants, which are ‘stigmatised’. However, Janet Holmes points to the fact that: ... [in a diglossic situation]... the H variety is generally the prestige variety, but people may be attached to and admire the L variety...” (2001 [1992]:31).

According to Sallam (1980:83), the stigmatised/prestigious dichotomy between the velar and the uvular stops is oversimplified, since it does not illustrate the real social and psychological causes underlying this phenomenon. Throughout his article, Sallam shows that several factors (educational, morphological, phonological, regional, Syntagmatic, etc.) contribute to or constrain the variation.

Uvular stop /q/ is representative of ‘standard’ and ‘prestige’ forms. It is well used by the educated class and, as such, is a marker of ‘conservative’ ideologies for the oldest generation and that of ‘modernisation’ for newer generations. Velar stop /g/, on another hand, is a stigmatised linguistic feature; it is avoided by the elite and the learnt people. Conversely to /q/, velar stop /g/ does not occur in academic, literary and technical terms.

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

It is limited to low speech styles and characterises everyday words and expressions.

Velar stop /g/ has a certain prestige in western Algeria; however, it is sometimes described as a “vulgar” (Hassaine Z., 1984) variant of uvular /q/. Its prestige is challenged by Tlemcen’s glottal stop /ʔ/ (Dekkak, 1979), which is associated with female speech and is particular to informal situations. Men rarely use it. This shows that Tlemcen women have a preference for an emphatically local variant, and do neither favour standard /q/ nor the variant of general prestige [g], widely found in western Algeria. The velar stop is referential of masculinity, machismo, and toughness (cf. Haeri 1991 and 2000).

In most Modern Arabic dialects, depending both on region and variants, Classical Arabic /q/ has several surface reflexes: [q,g,ʔ,k] as in the “outstandingly frequent verb [...] “gāl” (cf. J.Rosenhouse 2001:71; Sallam 1980:77ff) where it is realised as: [qa:l-ga:l-ʔa:l-ka:l] ‘he said’. The colloquial reflexes of /q/, which are also stylistic variants, make of it a marginal phoneme. Variant [g] characterises Beduin dialects, uvular [q] is the urban=sedentary reflex, whereas [ʔ] is “peculiar for Maghrebine Judeo-Arabic and other Muslim urban dialects...” (Talmoudi, 1984:117).

Abd-el-Jawad (1987) studied the reflexes of proto-Arabic /q/ in Jordan and found that the variants [q,ʔ,g,k] are linked to several socio-political considerations,

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

such as /q/ the standard, /ʔ/ urban Palestinian, /k/ rural Palestinian and /g/ largely rural Jordanian. For him, a “bipolar prestige” (Owens, 2001: 436) between [ʔ] and [g] is developing in urban areas. Moreover, young Jordanian women tend to favour the glottal stop as a reflex of /q/, while men prefer velar /g/ as it is “tough, slightly macho and rugged” (Abd-el-Jawad, 1981:176).

In AZRA, the alternation or “bifurcated variation” (cf. Ibrahim 1986; Sallam 1980; Abd-el-Jawad 1981 and 1987; Haeri 1991) between /q~g/ consists of two tendential movements, one to local variant /g/ and the other to the standard /q/. The bifurcated usage of the /q/ variable in AZRA does not conform to the overall tendency found in other Machrek Arabic dialects: men tending towards the use of [q]; the women preferring [ʔ].

In our local language variety (AZRA), phoneme /q/ is largely used by men, particularly if they are educated and have an occupation. Educated women, on the reverse, keep on using both velar [g] and uvular /q/. This phenomenon, though contradictory to former observations (Bakir, 1986) in other Arabic speaking communities, does not carry on the idea that women are initiator of language change, but that they have their own female language. The reasons may be that AZRA women, especially rural dwellers, are not granted access to higher education, and as such no right of entry to the higher spheres of the community’s social ladder.

2. The Sample

The sample is chosen among second year students of the department of English, University of Adrar. The informants represent the ‘educated’ class of speakers, since they attend graduate “higher” studies. They have at their disposal not only their mother-tongue, but also ‘Arabic’ (CA/MSA), French, and English. The young speakers, who are sensitive to correctness and purity of language use (cf. Cameron 1994: 236; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:64ff), are conscious that there are overt and covert prestige variants. Their sociolinguistic attitudes, which are fostered onto them right from early childhood, reinforce social inequalities particularly if ‘prestige’ is a socially constant variable discriminating between language users.

Purity and correctness cause social stigmatisation and linguistic disadvantages among speakers. The will for a ‘prestige-based correctness’ (Myhill, 2004:391) causes the speakers’ rejection of certain usages. By extension, they would search for pure and ‘correct’ linguistic behaviours. Their linguistic awareness is influenced not only by the parents, but also by the school, the media and the various socio-cultural artefacts related to the various languages and varieties. Those diverse socialising agencies either encourage or inhibit the young speakers’ linguistic behaviours, which are, most of the time, based on stereotypes. (Garrett, 2001:626). The sample design is reported in the next table:

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

	Gourara	Touat	Total
Males	2	7	9
Females	6	10	16
Total	8	17	25

3. The Method

To account for the lexical age-based variation that characterises AZRA male and female speakers, we use the methods developed by “Folk linguistics” (Benson, 2003) and “Perceptual dialectology” (Long and Preston 2002). Lesley Milroy’s (1987) “friend-to-friend” technique is also employed. The informants are asked to participate to the research by approaching other informants who, they think, might accept taking part in the study.

The informants write and/or transcribe lists of words they feel or perceive as their generation’s proper speech. They are also invited to parallel between their speech and that of their parents. That is, boys and girls come up with word-lists showing differences between their vocabulary and that of their parents. The words, it is worth pointing at, are everyday terms; they may be highly formal, i.e.: cultural, or classical, or educated, and may be uneducated or vernacular.

As part of the approach developed by L.Milroy (1987) to gather data from and with the help of the informants, the students are allowed to ask their parents about their own perceptions of the differences that set off their speech from that of their children. As such, the researcher avoids any influence on the ‘perceptual data’ (Iannàccaro and Dell’Aquila, 2001) gathered. Yet, and it

is important to point to, most transcriptions are corrected by the researcher during other sessions.

4. Lexical Age-based Variation

Both young and old AZRA speakers have their own lexicon. The lexical difference between them is not only a matter of age but is also a matter of sex. Young male and female AZRA speakers diverge from their elders in their use of local Arabic speech forms. This observable fact is a sociolinguistic phenomenon referred to as “Age-grading” (cf. Trudgill 200 [1995]; Holmes 2001, etc.); it means that linguistic features change according to the age of the speaker. These features belong to pronunciation and grammar, and are quite noticeable in the vocabulary. As Janet Holmes puts it, Age-grading differences “are interpreted as indications of change in progress. Younger speakers tend to use more of the newer or innovative forms, and the older speakers use more of the older, conservative forms, the ones they adopted in their own teenage years.” (2001:206)

The contact of local language variety with north Algerian dialects, brought to the area by north Algerian immigrants, increased the phenomenon of Age-grading. Young AZRA speakers are attracted by the speech of the newcomers, and adopt it. The lexical and phonological differences are also the consequence of the fact that many AZRA speakers travelled to the north to study or to work. Their contact with those different language varieties has left linguistic imprints on their verbal behaviour. These traces are found in AZRA.

The lexical split between young and adult AZRA speakers may also be accounted for through the concepts

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

of “local-identity” vs. “expanded-identity” (Hazen, 2002), which are opposed to ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ prestige norms (Trudgill, 1972). Overt prestige norms are those used by speakers who project an expanded-identity. They identify themselves to the larger speech community. Covert prestige, on another hand, is the use of local, often stigmatised variants. Speakers who have covert prestige norms use local-identity features. They are aware of their stigma; however, they carry on their verbal communication as it is part of a general (local) positive sociolinguistic behaviour. (cf. Eckert, 2000:226)

At the reverse of Hazen who asserts that: “It should, therefore, be noted that the expanded-identity and the local-identity groups have no absolute sense of either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ when it comes to social prestige” (2002:243), AZRA speakers are aware of the overt/covert prestige of local and expanded-identity features. Old speakers make use of local norms, for example, through the exclusive use of [(ʔi)jji:h] ‘yes’, in the phonetic realisation of /θ/ as [s] and /ð/ as [z] by old Aoulefians, and through the use of velar stop /g/ more than uvular stop /q/.

So as to illustrate this sociolinguistic phenomenon, various examples are taken from different Ksours of Touat-Tidikelt-Gourara areas. The Ksours are reported in the following table:

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

Areas	Gourara	Touat
Ksours	Aougroun Lemtarfa Deldoul Timimoun	Adrar Bouda Ouled Brahim Mahdia

4.1 Males' Lexical age-based variation

Lexical age-based variation of AZRA male speakers is shown through comparisons between Gourara's (Lemtarfa and Aougroun) and Touat's (Adrar, Mahdia, Bouda and Ouled Brahim) young and old men.

Example1: Aougroun and Lemtarfa

Old people	Young people	Gloss
gdæh	ʔabsi	plate
gada	qadra	Cauldron
zga:g	zəNqa	Streets
aqarbi:ʃ	dʒa:maʔ	Mosque
lqu:s	lbi:t	Room
nəgba~fi:n ədda:r	ta:qa	Window
lqab	lʒi:b	Pocket
lmadga	laʔmu:d	The stick
ʃæ:ʃ	ħuwwa:q	Veil, gauze
lʔab	əʃʃdæ:d	//
dərba:l~ʃa:qqo	fra:ʃ	bed

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

We notice that the divergence between the older and younger generations of AZRA speakers is obvious in the list. The use of phoneme /q/ and its variant [g] depends on the speakers' attitudes towards each. Although the velar stop is a prestigious variant in western Algeria, young AZRA speakers prefer the standard form as it is a marker of high standards and of higher educational levels. On another hand, young AZRA speakers diverge from their elders' 'ways of speaking' (Hymes 1974, N.Coupland 2001, and Ervin-Tripp 2001), which are identified as stigmatised language forms. The youngest generation does not have any frequency of use of the velar stop; in the table above there are no instances where [g] is used instead of the variable /q/. On the reverse, the young people prefer to say [qadra] and [zəNqa] while their elders pronounce them as [gadra] and [zga:g], respectively 'cauldron' and 'street'.

Young AZRA speakers use /q/ as an 'overt prestige' form which represents the model of correct Arabic speaking. The old speakers, on the reverse, use the velar stop as their 'covert prestige' form, which results from the fact that they were not granted access to education during the colonial era. As such, they rank it positively as their vernacular norm.

The use of /q/ by the youngsters expresses their will for higher social status (or overt prestige); whereas the use of /g/ by the elder generation is a marker of both covert prestige and social solidarity. For old AZRA speakers, all Arabic terms containing uvular /q/ are

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

realised phonetically with the velar stop. The only exception is CA word /lqab/ ‘the pocket’ which is kept as it is.

Example2: Ouled Brahim, Mahdia, Bouda, and Adrar

Old generation	Young generation	Gloss
ʔa:ga	ta:qa	window
sra:ga	farra:qa	split system
lhəwa:g	ʃa:ʃ	veil
ʃu:g	ʃu:q	market
ʃalli	qi:s	throw, imp.
qurʔa:n	qurʔa:n	koran
qab	zi:b	pocket
tkaʃri:r	tmasxi:r	laziness
aqarbi:ʃ	ʒa:maʔ	mosque
zakram	qafl	door lock

Concerning the use of velar and uvular stops in the Touat area, we obtain the same results as those of Aougrou and Lemtarfa. The young people tend towards the use of the uvular stop; whereas the old keep the velar stop as in [ʔa:ga] vs. [ta:qa] ‘window’ and [ʃu:g] vs. [ʃu:q] ‘market’. Both young and old AZRA speakers respect the original pronunciation of the uvular stop in classical terms such as /qurʔa:n/ ‘Koran’.

The results obtained from above lists prove that there is a lexical gap between the two generations of

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

AZRA speakers. Not only the terms used are proper to one generation against the other, but even the phonetic realisations diverge. The young males (n=7) prefer the standard forms, while the old generation of speakers (n=7) tends towards the velar /g/.

Throughout the word-lists, the informants wrote (or transcribed) twenty-eight (28) words containing either /q/ or /g/. Concerning the use of those words and by the same token the use of /q/ vs. /g/ by young and old male AZRA speakers, the results can be analysed from two different angles; the first is by looking at each generation's use of the variables. The second perspective is by comparing their respective results.

-By generation

As reported by the young informants, old male AZRA speakers have an unbalanced use of /q/ and /g/. The next table illustrates this result:

Old speakers	N°	%
/q/	7	41.17
/g/	10	58.82

The young male speakers' use of /q/ and /g/ is as follows:

Young speakers	N°	%
/q/	11	100
/g/	0	0

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

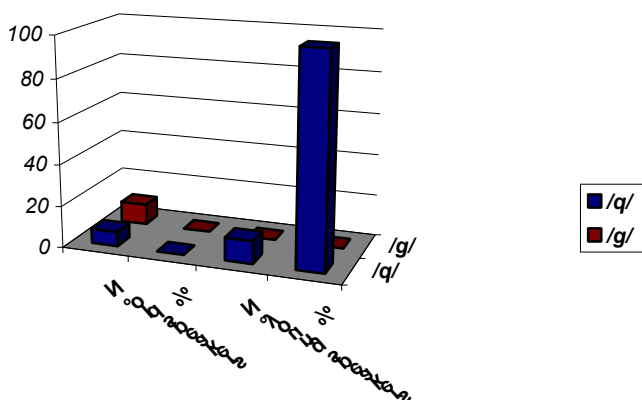
Out of the tables, it becomes clear that the ‘overt prestige’ form of the young people is standard /q/ used at the level of 100 %; whereas, the ‘covert prestige’ form of old male AZRA speakers is velar /g/(s=58.82%).

-By comparison:

	old speakers		young speakers	
	N°	%	N°	%
/q/	7	38.88	11	61.11
/g/	10	100	0	0

It is obvious, then, that there is a large discrepancy between the young and the old generation of male AZRA speakers concerning the use of both velar and uvular stops. The next graph illustrates the results:

Graph n° 1: Number and percentage of use of /q/ and /g/ by young and old male AZRA speakers



4.2 Female Age-based Variation

The comparisons of AZRA female speakers' use of the velar and the uvular stop are done between Touat (Adrar) and the Middle-Touat (Tilouline) women. The following lines exemplify the lexical variation that exists between AZRA young (n=16) and old (n=16) female speakers, as reported in the word-lists. They permit to draw the conclusion that there are characteristics appropriate to AZRA young and old female speakers.

Example3: Female Adrarians (Touat)

Old female speakers	Young female speakers	Gloss
xarga~kuwwa	gɔʔra	hole
fqa:la	qafɫa	button
ʃka:ra~zgi:ba	sa:ʃi	plastic bag
qɔ:te	ɣurra:f	pitcher
fajsa~qarɫɔ:na	karɫɔ:na	cardboard box
mɔʃ	qat	cat
maxɫa~maxlag	buʃu:n	cork
afkar~zakru:m	qfal	door lock
qɑ:ɣat	ka:ɣat	paper
qaʃri	ɫabsi	plate
maqlæ:h	qɔ:te	box
mhawad~ga:d	ra:jaħ	going
gaɫe:fa	zarbijja	carpet
qu:s	bi:t	room

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

<i>g</i> bu:ri	<i>g</i> di:m	old
xʃa:ʃa	qarʃa	gourd
aqarbi:ʃ	ʒa:maʃ	mosque
ʃa:ja	qaʃʃa:ba	robe; gown
ħuwwa:q	ʃa:ʃ	veil
ʈarrabijja	lguffa	basket
ʕægga:m~garg	ʂabba:ʈ	flat sole shoes
zɡæ:g	barra	Streets
ʔijji:h	wa:h	Yes
ɡʕad	ʒammaʃ	Sit down

Concerning the females' use of words containing the velar and the uvular stops, we can analyse the results in two manners. The first is by looking at each generation' uses and percentages; the second is through comparing their respective results. Twenty-eight words were transcribed with either /q/ or /g/.

-By generation

Old speakers	N°	%
/q/	9	50
/g/	9	50

Old female AZRA speakers have an almost equal use of both variables. The youngest, on another hand, do not have the same tendency.

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

Young speakers	N°	%
/q/	7	70
/g/	3	30

The young females have a different trend than that of their elders; they make use of the uvular stop more than the velar one. At the reverse of the old female speakers, the young do not have an equal use of the variables, but present a clear tendency towards the standard form.

-By comparison

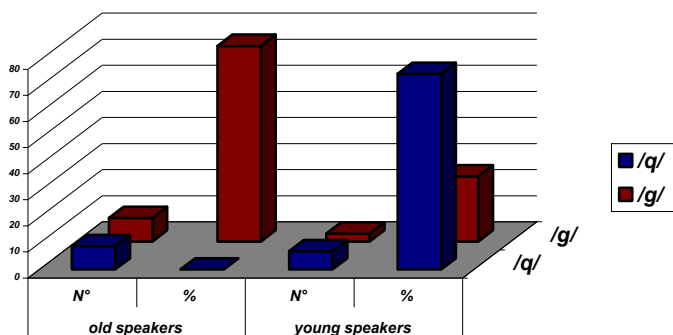
When we compare the figures obtained from the word-lists concerning use of the velar and the uvular stops, the divergence between young and old female AZRA speakers becomes obvious:

	old speakers		young speakers	
	N°	%	N°	%
/q/	9	56.25	7	43.75
/g/	9	75	3	25

The table shows that, according to the informants, young and old female AZRA speakers have an unequal use of the uvular stop /q/ (n=9 vs. n=7 for the old and the young generations, respectively), but the difference between them is not too significant. Their uses of the velar stop are not the same. The young speakers have a reduced frequency of use of words containing the velar stop (n=3 vs. n=7 for old female speakers). Next graph permits to see this divergence:

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

Graph n°2: Use of /q/ and /g/ by old and young female AZRA speakers



5. Stylistic Variation

Sallam (1980:79) asserts that the alternation /q~g/ underlies a stylistic rule: standard /q/ is the formal variant; whereas the local variant is the casual one. In other terms, there are two different sets of words: those where /q/ occurs in standard form and those where local variants occur along the standard one. If we apply this assertion to AZRA, we will have /q/ as the formal variant and /g/ the local casual alternative. The following table, proposed by Sallam (1980:79), summarises the situation where /q/ is realised variably in two lexical sets according to two different contexts:

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

	Formal	Casual	Transcription & Gloss
Set1	+	-	[qa : l] vs. [ga : l] ‘said’
Set2	+	+	always [qar ja] ‘village’

According to Holes (1987) in a standard-vernacular diglossic situation, the movement of change is expectedly towards the standard /q/ variant. However, field research has proven the contrary and several patterns of variation emerged concerning /q/ and its reflexes.

Holes discovered that there were some words where /q/ always occurred and which were mainly words borrowed from the literary/standard variety. The second consists of the “core items”, that is those words where /q/ never replaces the local variants, and the third set is the group of words which vary between /q/ and the local variants.

Present research confirms the results of Holes (1987:51ff) whereby three different sets are encountered: one having standard /q/ only (mainly for classicisms) and representing the formal style. A second set comprises words which have either /q/ or /g/, where the words pronounced with /q/ are mainly literary borrowings from CA/MSA into AZRA. The third set is casual style; it consists of words pronounced with velar [g].

Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

The second set may be referred to as ‘semi-formal’, since it is found in certain formal situations, such as radio broadcasts. However, this set remains problematic as there are words which can belong to two sets at the same time; for example, set1 [qa:dir] and [qa:dir-a], and set2 [qa:dər] and [qa:dr-a] ‘able (masc. and fem.)’. The next table illustrates this idea:

	Formal	Semi-formal	casual	Transcription and gloss
Set1	+	+	-	[qa:l] ‘said’
Set2	+	+	-	[qa:l~ga:l] ‘said’
Set3	-	-	+	[ga:l] ‘said’

The variation between the young and the old AZRA speakers concerning the use of the velar and the uvular stops is also stylistic. The words containing /q/ or /g/ range from formal to semi-formal to casual styles. The use of the standard/prestige form is more frequent in the formal level; it starts to decrease in set2 and disappears in set3.

To instantiate the latter argument, we compare the results of use of both variants by the young/old males and females. In the first case, we come up with a comparison between the males, and then we do the same with the females.

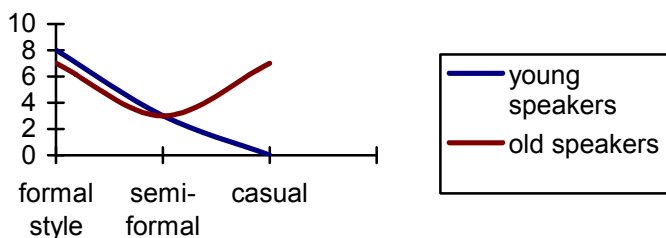
Are /q/ and /g/ standard or prestige variants in Touat Arabic (AZRA)?

5.1 Males' Stylistic Variation

The uses of the two variants according to styles of speech are as follows:

Speakers' age	Set1 (formal style)	Set2 (semi-formal)	Set3 (casual)
Old	7	3	7
Young	8	3	0

We represent these results under the form of a graph:



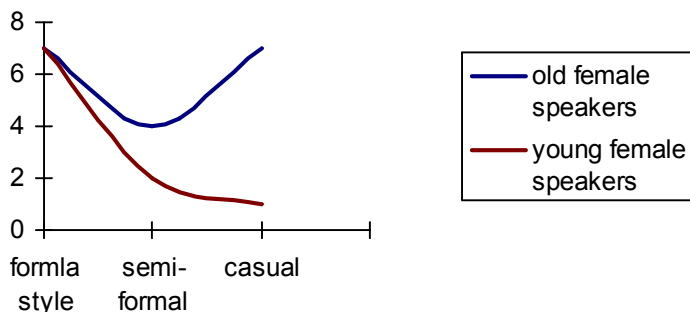
The graph shows that the young male AZRA speakers diverge from their elders in set3, i.e.: the casual style. It does also prove that the two generations do not have the same linguistic attitudes towards the variants under consideration. The oldest generation makes an equal use of the velar and the uvular stops. The youngest generation, at the reverse, uses the uvular more than the velar stop. The comparison between the two generations reveals a wider gap when the casual style is used: s=7 for the eldest vs. s=0 for the youngest. To verify these results, we do the same comparison between young and old female AZRA speakers.

5.2 Females' Stylistic Variation

The results obtained are reported in the next table:

Speakers' age	Set1	Set2	Set3
Old	7	4	7
Young	7	2	1

We indicate the results under the form of a graph:



We can conclude that the females vary their uses of the variants. The old people make use of the uvular stop when the situation requires a formal style, and make use of the velar when they turn to a more casual style of speech. The youngest females, on another hand, respect the formality of speech and use the uvular stop in that situation. However, when the styles are semi-formal and casual, the girls resort to a lesser use of the standard/prestigious form, i.e.: /q/. We also notice that, although the difference is insignificant, the young

females do use the velar stop more than their male counterparts ($s=1$ vs. $s=0$) in a casual style of speech.

Conclusion

Out of the results of the word-lists, two important conclusions can be reached. The first is that young AZRA speakers diverge from their elders when they use the uvular more than the velar stop. The second is that the youngest generation presents two tendential movements when sex of speaker is a determining factor. For instance, the girls use both variants whereas the boys prefer the standard one. In other words, the females are more 'innovative' and less 'conservative' (Haeri, 1991 and 2000) than males in their use of language forms.

The general conclusion is that young AZRA speakers show clear trends towards 'standard'/'prestige' norms of speech, i.e.:/q/. They do not make use of the often stigmatised variant /g/ even if this last represents a local 'prestige' linguistic feature for the older generations.

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