

Original Paper

Lexical Variation in the Rural North Jordanian Dialect

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Abstract

This study investigates lexical variation, which is due to more education, more mobility, and widespread use of the social media, in the dialect of three towns around Irbid City in north Jordan and its correlation with age, gender, and level of education. Labov's approach is adopted to examine the linguistic variation among 98 speakers of the Irbidite dialect. Around 100 words were collected and put in the form of a questionnaire to elicit the opinion of speakers from different age groups, genders, and levels of education towards the frequency of their use of these words. The study used the method of direct interview to elicit the feelings of the participants about the dialect they use. The results show that old speakers and less educated ones tend to preserve their native lexical items more than others. They indicated that they use the original lexical items because they are proud of their dialect which reflects their identity. The groups which tend more to neglect some lexical items are educated young and middle-aged female subjects. They indicated that they do so for prestige and imitation of peers in the Irbidite society.

Keywords

Level of education, Irbid, lexical variation, speakers, age, gender

1. Introduction

Language, as a system by which humans communicate and interact with each other, has been studied in its social and geographical contexts (Hall, 1968; Labov, 1972; Hudson, 1996) because it cannot be separated from the people who speak it and the place where it is used. Language may also vary from one person to another in the same place. Labov (1972) focused on the relationship between social and linguistic factors; since that time the door was opened to study various forms of language variation. The same author (1972, p. 261) states, "Every linguist recognizes that language is a social fact, but not everyone puts an equal emphasis on that fact". Labov's study on sociolinguistic variation in New York City made many scholars interested in language variation. Hudson (1996, p. 3) maintains, "to study

speech without reference to the society which uses it, is to exclude the possibility of finding social explanations for the structure they are used". The field of sociolinguistics studies the variety of dialects in a region and the social variables which affect the speaker's language. In general, the purpose of sociolinguistics is to answer the questions who speaks (age and gender), what language (dialect or subdialect), where (region), and on what occasion (social events).

Since the present study aims at investigating lexical variation in the rural dialect which is used in three towns around Irbid City in north Jordan, it is worth shedding some light on sociolinguistics, lexical variation and some terms used in this field. Trudgill (1992), for example, defines sociolinguistics as a term that describe all areas of the study of the relationship between language and society. For him, sociolinguistics research "is intended to achieve a better understanding of the nature of human language by studying language in its social context and/ or to achieve a better understanding of the relationship and interaction between language and society" (p. 68). One characteristic of language is variation. We can express an idea or a thought in more than one way, but certainly no one talks exactly the same way. Speakers who speak the same language can vary in their pronunciation or in their word choice or morphology and even in their syntax. Sometimes, these differences occur in the speech of men and women, old and young and some social classes. Sociolinguistics investigates all these language variations, between the standard and non-standard varieties of the language. The variety of the language is termed a dialect. Haugen (1966) created a distinction, and claimed that the distinction between language and dialect is in keeping with "prestige" and "size". First, language is wider than dialect. Language contains more varieties than dialect. For example, the varieties of Arabic spoken in the Arab world are most often considered as dialects. Second, a standard language is more prestigious than a dialect. For Chambers and Trudgill (1998, p. 5), a dialect is a "substandard [...] form of language lacking in prestige, [and...] often being thought as some kind of erroneous deviation from the norm". However, dialects are now widely used especially in interpersonal oral communication and are gaining, with the spread of new social media, more importance and prestige.

According to Wardhaugh (2006, p. 143), a linguistic variable is: "a linguistic item which has identifiable variants". Most linguistic variables are "Free Variants", which means that there are no clear linguistic constraints which could predict when one uses one variant rather another (Meyerhoff, 2006, p. 10). This means that variants can't be predicted according to any factor, but in Labov's work on Martha's Vineyard (1966, p. 84), it is stated that sociolinguistics has an impressive proof showing that speaker variability can be compelled by non linguistic factors (items outside the linguistic system, such as age, gender, social class, prestige and education) and by linguistic factors (pronunciation, for example). Chambers (2003) also maintains that the observation of speech reveals that its variants are correlated with social factors.

An example of a linguistic variable from the lexical level is the words "autumn" and "fall". According to Labov (1972) there are three types of linguistic variables: a marker, an indicator or a stereotype. A

marker is a variable that connects to stylistic variation as well as class, sex and/or age . Speakers are subconsciously aware of it ,as they use a variant or more in formal style and one or more variant in informal speech style. In Labov’s New York study, the /r/ variable has a social stratification marker. In the event that a speaker articulates the [r], at that point he is from the high class, yet in the event that not, at that point he is from the lower class, as in these models, [ha: rd] versus [ha: d], and [fa: r] versus [fa:].

The second variable, the indicator, is considered to be socially marked when it varies with social attributes. For example, some speakers in North America make a distinction between vowels in “Ben” pronounced as “bun”, “buses” pronounced as “bosses”, while others do not. Labov gives the merger of vowels in “hawk” and “hock”, as an example of indicators. The level of the merger of vowels is not the same across people, yet is regularly underneath the conscious awareness. Finally, a stereotype is the most marked variable and can be changed in the course of time. Consequently, the linguistic variable moves from the category of marker to that of the indicator and vice versa. A stereotype often becomes avoided because it is stigmatized.

Most scholars (e.g., Trudgill, 1972; Gray, 1998; Al-Wer, 2000; Fought, 2004) believe that social factors like age, gender, and level of education have an impact not only on language use in general but also on lexical choice, as speakers may change elements of their language several times during their life, and females generally speak differently from males, and so do well-educated and less educated people.

At the same time, social media like Twitter and Facebook seem to have triggered lexical variation and innovation in many languages such as English. Robinson (2019), for example, studies lexical variation across the UK focusing on region and jargon, and Grieve et al. (2019) investigates lexical dialect variation in British English using Twitter. Grieve (2016) handles regional variation in written American English. Moreover, Grieve et al. (2017) and Grieve et al. (2018) deal, respectively, with the emergence of new vocabulary in Modern American online ad with lexical innovation in American social media. For his part, Austen (2017) compares Black with White regional variation in the USA.

Different variations among the speakers of the rural dialect of three towns at the eastern edge of Irbid City appear at levels associated with variables such as age, gender and education. Besides phonetic variations, one especially notices lexical differences between the old and young, men and women and well-educated and less educated. These lexical differences are investigated in relation to age, gender, and education. The three towns which represent the locale of the study are Huwwarah (36,000 inhabitants), Bushra (28,000) and Sal (16,000) and they occupy an area of about 36 km² (Statistics obtained from Greater Irbid Municipality, 2020). The original inhabitants of the three towns all speak the type of Jordanian Arabic known as the rural sub-dialect, usually differentiated from the so-called Urban and Bedouin sub-dialects (see Al-Khatib, 1988).

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The study draws on Labov's approach since it focuses on studying the relationship between language and the society which uses it. Since the 1960s, Labov's work has introduced a groundbreaking approach to investigating the relationship between language and culture, creating an area that has been called "variationist sociolinguistics" and maintaining the linguistic structure inherent in a core theory of this field. How a language is spoken (and written) varies between people and situations faced by the same person. Labov argued that these variations are essential to the functioning of a language and are not only common but also necessary. This interpretation contradicts much of linguistic theory's historically prevalent thought and practice, from Ferdinand de Saussure to Noam Chomsky. Mainstream theoreticians do not deny that there is a variation but tend to diminish its relevance and consider it as a superficial phenomenon which obscures a fundamental uniformity that characterizes language. Labov's research shows that linguistic variations can be generalized and highly structured and that they reveal regular co-occurrence patterns between language forms such as the pronunciation of a certain vowel and socioeconomic classes. Such insights derive from a socially realistic perspective, which takes into account how a variety of speakers in day to day situations use the language. Labov advocated a stronger empirical basis for linguistics, called into question the relevance of analysis based on a native speaker's insights, and emphasized the value of observing speech that has been naturally generated. His approach is characterized by his focus on quantitative methodologies and others within sociolinguistics. Often only with the statistical analysis, patterns of co-variation between linguistic forms and social variables are apparent. During his career, Labov explored a range of language phenomena in the paradigm of variation. He also studied semantical (e.g., quantifiers *each* and *all*) and grammatical characteristics (e.g., copulation contraction and deletion) but predominated in his work on phonological variation. Labov has given significant attention to issues of the language change in addition to investigating the synchronic dynamics of social-linguistic variability. Most of his research studies English and he has played an important role in US dialectology, where he helped to deprive scholars of their traditional focus on maintaining regional patterns of expression.

Regarding variation in English, many studies have been conducted. For example, a study conducted by Warkentyne (1972) on lexical variation across the U.S.-Canada border revealed that there is no Canadian or American border region. They have the same amount of lexical variation in both nations as any other location. Eble (1996) indicates that there is a big shift in American slang, both in college and in school. Essentially, for many individuals in the South of the U.S., lexical variation is a cause of cultural identity, although the impact of personal variables on word use is dynamic. Many studies have also been conducted on Arabic dialectal and lexical variations. For example, Al-Essa (2006) investigated lexical and grammatical variations in the dialect of a small village in Jordan. The study showed that the speech of the village changed due to many social factors like the social development that influenced the area. It also made it clear that the highest rate of the use of the local dialect's lexical idioms distinguished

the speech of old males and females, followed by the middle-aged males and females, and then the young males. It was found that young females abandoned the local dialect and used the urban one. Palva (2008) surveyed two spoken dialects in Jordan: Salti (west of Amman) and Karaki (100 kms south of Amman). He found that, despite many similarities in the two varieties regarding phonetics, morphology and syntax, the Salti dialect exhibited many features of “Syro-Mesopotamian” rural Arabic, while the Karaki dialect had shared characteristics with the rural and bedouin dialects of the Sinai and the Negev as well as the Jordanian Bedouin dialect to the East of the Gulf of Aqaba.

El-Salman and Roche (2009) investigated the speech of Tirawi people who emigrated from Haifa (Palestine) to Irbid due to the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. The study dealt with the influence of migration on the lexical items in Tirawi dialect. It discussed how migration led to the abandonment of traditional farming practices, which in turn led to lexical items associated with that lifestyle disappearing from use. The results show that old people prefer to preserve their native lexical items when they talk about farming. On the other hand, the middle-aged and young groups use the Tirawi lexical items at a very low rate. Prestige did not play a central role in the variation. In sum, the study showed that when a person migrates from one place to another and leaves his traditional practices, the lexical items relating to those practices disappear.

Al-Bohnayyah (2011) studied language variation and change in Hufuf’s dialect Saudi Arabia). The study aimed to analyze some linguistic variation in relation to the extra-linguistic social variables of age and sex. The results show that the extra-linguistic factors of age and sex affect language variation and change. Al-Ali (2012) examined the phonological variation of Jordanian speech sounds among two classes of participants: university and school pupils. Participants were asked to tell a story and their speech was recorded. He discovered that gender and education influence dialect (rural vs. urban) and lexical choices. Finally, Al-Wer and Al-Qahtani (2016) found that gender and age influence the choice of the variants of several consonants in the dialect spoken in southwest Saudi Arabia.

3. Methods and Procedures

The sample of the study consisted of 98 (44 males and 54 females) native speakers of Irbidite dialect from the three towns under investigation. In detail, it consisted of three main age groups: the old group (55 and above), the middle-age group (35-54) and the young group (18-34) with various levels of education. The distribution of the participants is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Distribution of Sample by Age, Gender and Level of Education

Variable	Category	number of participants	Percentage
Gender	Male	44	44.9
	Female	54	55.1
	Total	98	100.0
Age	18-34 (young group)	48	49.0
	35-54 (middle aged group)	26	26.5
	55 and above (the old group)	24	24.5
	Total	98	100.0
Education Level	Below Secondary School	26	26.5
	Second School Certificate	16	16.3
	Bachelor	41	41.8
	Postgraduate studies	15	15.3
	Total	98	100.0

The data were collected using three complementary methods. The first method was observation. Through contact with relatives and friends who live in Huwwarah, Bushra and Sal, it was easy to gain a large amount of data and take notes from the interaction of the second author (a native of Huwwarah) with people. Milroy (2003) says: "Participants' observation can be an enormously fruitful method for sociolinguistic analysis. It precedes a tremendous supply of high quality data and crucial insight into community dynamics". Because this method faces some difficulty in analyzing the results, another instrument, the questionnaire, was needed to confirm and document more data. The questionnaire's final version included (99) words, and a five-point Likert scale was used to check the level of participants' agreement/disagreement with the use of a certain word: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The evaluation relied on the following classification of the rule on the averages as follows:

- Less than 2.33: Low agreement degree.
- From 2.34 to 3.66: Medium agreement degree.
- More than the 3.67: High agreement degree.

Following the questionnaire, the study used the method of direct interview to elicit some participants' feelings about the dialect they use. The interview consisted of two questions directed to four young speakers, four middle-aged and four old people. For young people, the question was "Why don't you speak like your parents or adults in general?" and the one for old people was "What is your attitude toward your dialect?" Table 2 below shows the distribution of the sample of the interview by age, gender and level of education.

Table 2. The Distribution of the Sample of the Interview by Age, Gender and Level of Education

Variable	Category	Number of participants
Gender	Male	6
	Female	6
	Total	12
Age	18-34 (young group)	4
	35-54 (middle aged group)	4
	55 and above (the old group)	4
	Total	12
Education Level	Below Secondary School	3
	Secondary School Certificate	3
	Bachelor	3
	Postgraduate studies	3
	Total	12

The following statistical treatments through statistical software packages (SPSS) version 20 for data analysis were used:

- Frequencies and percentages for demographic information.
- Cronbach-alpha was calculated to extract Reliability coefficient of the questionnaire as a whole
- Frequencies for “To what extent is lexical variation widespread in the study area” (n=98)
- (Independent Samples t-Test) to detect the differences of lexical variation due to gender variable.
- Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to detect the differences of lexical variation due to education level and age variables.

4. Findings

The results of the main questionnaire show that most speakers of Irbidi dialect in the three areas of Irbid tend to abandon some of their lexical items. They also show that the most effective social variable that affects lexical variation is gender, followed by age and level of education, respectively. These variables are analyzed in relation to the use of the list of the lexical items shown below. Table 3 shows the mean of the use of each item among the whole sample regardless of gender, age and level of education. The table also exhibits the lexical items, their meanings and the level of frequency.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviation for “Using Lexical Items in Colloquial Dialect” Measurement (n=98)

No	Lexical item	Meaning	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Agreement degree
1	tungur	pick on	3.04	1.41	Medium
2	igʕidi:ha	Wake her up (you feminine singular)	3.17	1.46	Medium
3	dafri:ha:	Leave her alone	3.54	1.30	Medium
4	guSama:T	A type of pastry	2.79	1.23	Medium
5	go:ma:na:	If not	3.57	1.32	Medium
6	migha:r	A tool to pick the bread out of the oven	2.78	1.28	Medium
7	tʃaltʃalat	Untidy and chewed	2.88	1.25	Medium
8	ımrannaxah may	Full of water	2.92	1.37	Medium
9	go:zali:n	Vaseline	3.45	1.38	Medium
10	ba:To:s	A swamp	3.33	1.47	Medium
11	Ta:gah	A hole	3.37	1.44	Medium
12	ʔuxrah	Too	3.53	1.40	Medium
13	nadžamat	Guess	2.93	1.47	Medium
14	biTi:hm	They go down	3.01	1.43	Medium
15	ʔusmul:i:hm	Check them out(you feminine)	2.85	1.35	Medium
16	yhangil ʕaly	Making fun of someone	2.95	1.32	Medium
17	tʃaʕtʃaba:n	Sort of sweets	3.39	1.34	Medium
18	la: titʃby ʕalah widʒhak	Don't fall on your face	2.74	1.49	Medium
19	Tarhat	she miscarried	3.18	1.40	Medium
20	uʕbuTi:ha:	Hug her (you feminine)	3.29	1.37	Medium
21	ʕaḍrabat	Disgracing something	3.44	1.34	Medium
22	itsahhıdʒ	Clapping hands	3.02	1.47	Medium
23	biʕa:bi: ʔali:h	Strengthens in somebody`s face	2.90	1.35	Medium
24	mitʃaʔwitʃih	Wrapped up	3.07	1.42	Medium
25	itdʒaxrıg	To hide something in a tight place	2.94	1.43	Medium
26	bizruTin	To swallow something very fast	3.45	1.32	Medium
27	bitrabiθ	gathering money for someone else	3.29	1.41	Medium
28	imTagmıf	Wearing something nice	3.82	1.19	Medium
29	umrusi:hm	desolidify (dry yoghurt) with water	3.04	1.55	Medium

30	yaffathin	Take something very fast(feminine singular)	2.87	1.48	Medium
31	itmaʕni: ʕali:h	Referring to someone else while talking to another	3.40	1.33	Medium
32	da:hu:tfih	Eating too much	3.14	1.49	Medium
33	yugburin	Die	3.26	1.38	Medium
34	itʕarbaʕ	Climbing	3.72	1.28	High
35	?uTmuri:	Forget it (cover with dirt)	3.61	1.29	Medium
36	inTammy	Shut up (be quit)	3.57	1.39	Medium
37	imʕaTmm	rotten	3.30	1.48	Medium
38	muztu:tih	Thrown away	3.53	1.42	Medium
39	itxid ʕali:ha:	The pain get less for her	3.26	1.39	Medium
40	inbarʕat	Insisting on	3.40	1.36	Medium
41	yiʕta:z	Need	3.49	1.29	Medium
42	naʕgah	sniff	3.22	1.52	Medium
43	iyzummuh	carry it away	3.27	1.48	Medium
44	magaʕʕih	broom	3.17	1.48	Medium
45	Tasih	pot	3.24	1.46	Medium
46	Layo:n	Cooked yoghurt	3.23	1.48	Medium
47	ilfurun	Bakery	3.21	1.49	Medium
48	ihu:ʕ ʕaleih	Attack someone	3.44	1.47	Medium
49	siddih	Attic	3.51	1.38	Medium
50	kadarah	A pile of earth	3.34	1.43	Medium
51	gizʕah	Very short	3.27	1.49	Medium
52	fidʒdʒih	A kind of local rug	3.24	1.46	Medium
53	waTah	Ground	2.97	1.45	Medium
54	kubarh	A cup	2.93	1.51	Medium
55	daksyih	A bowl	3.17	1.53	Medium
56	madʒannih	Grave yard	3.10	1.44	Medium
57	xa:berko:	Remember you	3.20	1.46	Medium
58	haʕu:t	A big lire	3.39	1.40	Medium
59	birʕa:ny	Itching me	3.39	1.43	Medium
60	bitbarTm	Mumbling	3.44	1.44	Medium
61	?idʒyam / ?ifyam	devour	3.33	1.45	Medium
62	ma:ʕo:n	Container	3.36	1.43	Medium
63	bitri:ʕ /bitgalʕiT/	disgusting	3.53	1.25	Medium

64	taTly	jam	3.14	1.46	Medium
65	imtʃartimih	Messy	3.01	1.32	Medium
66	bitbalʃaT	Playing in water	3.13	1.38	Medium
67	gaTTo:mah/ gaTTo:zih/	A bit	2.91	1.36	Medium
68	biTamTir	Hiding mistakes	2.83	1.43	Medium
69	?agalTak	Take someone some place	2.88	1.53	Medium
70	kado:mha/ bo:zha	Mouth / Beak	3.09	1.52	Medium
71	twahrifi:na	Driving fast and causing an accident	3.11	1.44	Medium
72	yitʃalalo:	Stay up late	3.10	1.43	Medium
73	iTTadzin?	Cooking	3.04	1.52	Medium
74	yʃantir	Sleeping after eating	2.99	1.48	Medium
75	xammantak/fakkartak	Guessed / thought you were	2.94	1.49	Medium
76	tifʃal il llaban	Make the yoghurt lose water	2.92	1.54	Medium
77	tiddahdar	To make something round	2.99	1.55	Medium
78	go:Tir min ho:n	Go away	3.43	1.42	Medium
79	garmiz	squat down	3.38	1.50	Medium
80	igTaz	Very short	3.23	1.48	Medium
81	xum/xuʃʃih	chicken coop	3.32	1.48	Medium
82	sinsilih	store wall/ garden	3.22	1.54	Medium
83	Saxlah	Baby goat	3.15	1.59	Medium
84	ʃarad/ fal/mazaT	Ran a way	3.53	1.49	Medium
85	dʒaxah	Excellent	3.85	1.26	High
86	mSo:kidʒ	Twisted	3.65	1.36	Medium
87	ʃanTaz	Disobey / rebel	3.28	1.53	Medium
88	yitlagaTo:/yitkamaʃo:	hand fight	3.41	1.50	Medium
89	ifnatʃ	Gone mad	3.23	1.60	Medium
90	ða:yih	corrupted	3.27	1.51	Medium
91	Za:ʃo:g	shower	3.17	1.56	Medium
92	Wihir/ xam	Bad	3.28	1.58	Medium
93	ka:bo:y	Jeans	3.01	1.62	Medium
94	bunid	Shirt button	2.89	1.60	Medium
95	ħubbah	A kiss	2.86	1.64	Medium
96	ħama:r	plain dirt land	2.87	1.60	Medium
97	igDab	Catch	3.22	1.55	Medium

98	iymulit	Success	3.52	1.44	Medium
99	indahir min ho:n / infaθir	Go away/ Get lost	3.67	1.39	High
Total			3.22	1.02	Medium

Table 3 shows that the highest means reached (3.85) out of (5) for lexical item (85) “d3axah”, by high agreement degree, and then came the lexical item (28) “imTTagmif”, with a mean of (3.82) and high agreement degree, and then came the lexical item (34) “itfarba”, with a mean of (3.72) and high agreement degree. After that came the lexical expression (99) “indahir min ho:n / infaθir”, by a mean (3.67) and high agreement degree, and then came the lexical item (86) “mSo:kid3”, with a mean (3.65) and high agreement degree, and the lowest means was (3.43) for lexical item (18) “la: titfby ʕalah wid3hak”, by medium agreement degree. The average mean was (3.22) for all items, representing a medium agreement degree.

In answer to the question: “To what extent is lexical variation widespread in the study area?”, it was found that the participants varied in their responses depending on the specific lexical item or expression and on the social variable (gender, age, and level or education). In general, awkward or funny-sounding items were not favored by young (mean = 2.72), female (mean = 2.68) and well-educated subjects (mean = 2.92). The means (reflecting level of agreement) were higher, ranging from 3.12 to 3.91, for old, male and the least educated subjects.

Independent Samples t. Test was carried out to investigate the role of (gender) in lexical variation. The results show that males tend to stick more to older items than females who prefer newly acquired terms. For the sake of economy and because of lack of space, Table 4 shows only the test results for the first 4 items, which are by the way representative of all lexical items under consideration.

Table 4. Results of (Independent Samples t. Test) for the Role of (Gender) in Lexical Variation (n=98)

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
tungur	male	44	2.95	1.31	-.543-	96	.588
	female	54	3.11	1.50			
igʕidi:ha	male	44	3.25	1.42	.467	96	.641
	female	54	3.11	1.50			
dafri:ha:	male	44	3.59	1.13	.342	96	.733
	female	54	3.50	1.44			
guSama:T	male	44	2.77	1.12	-.094-	96	.925
	female	54	2.80	1.32			

Similarly, Independent Samples t. Test was conducted to investigate the role of age in the frequency of use of the lexical items. Results indicate the people aged (55 years and above) were more keen on using traditional items than the adult age (35-54) and the young age groups (18-34 years). To detect statistical significance and explore the differences in lexical variation due to age, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied; Table 5 shows results for the first 4 lexical items.

Table 5. Results of (ANOVA) to Explore the Role of (Age) in Lexical Variation (n=98)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Sheffe result (to favor of)
	Between Groups	47.438	2	23.719			
tungur	Within Groups	146.399	95	1.541	15.391	.000	55 and above
	Total	193.837	97				
	Between Groups	75.205	2	37.602			
igŕidi:ha	Within Groups	130.846	95	1.377	27.301	.000	55 and above
	Total	206.051	97				
	Between Groups	22.096	2	11.048			
daŕri:ha:	Within Groups	142.240	95	1.497	7.379	.001	55 and above
	Total	164.337	97				
	Between Groups	18.678	2	9.339			
guSama:T	Within Groups	127.822	95	1.345	6.941	.002	55 and above
	Total	146.500	97				

The table above shows that there are statistically significant differences for the role of (age) in lexical variation. The differences due to age in all lexical items were in favor of (55 years and above), followed by middle-aged (35-54), and at last the young (18-34).

Table 6 shows results for the first 4 items of the sample when we explored the effect of level of education on the use of lexical items.

Table 6. Means for Lexical Items due to Education

#	Lexical Item	Postgraduate studies	Bachelor	Below High School	High School
1	tungur	2.20	2.63	4.31	3.38
2	igŕidi:ha	2.20	2.54	4.81	3.73
3	daŕri:ha:	2.80	3.07	4.75	3.96
4	guSama:T	2.27	2.41	4.00	2.92

The table indicates that means for (below High School) were higher than those for (Postgraduate studies education, Bachelors, and High School). To detect statistical significance and explore the differences in lexical variation due to education, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied. Table 7 shows results for the first 4 items.

Table 7. Results of (ANOVA) to Explore the Role of (Education) in Lexical Variation (n=98)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Sheffe result (to favor of)
tungur	Between Groups	46.333	3	15.444	9.842	.000	below Tawjihi
	Within Groups	147.504	94	1.569			
	Total	193.837	97				
igŕidi:ha	Between Groups	81.903	3	27.301	20.671	.000	below Tawjihi
	Within Groups	124.148	94	1.321			
	Total	206.051	97				
daŕri:ha:	Between Groups	45.195	3	15.065	11.886	.000	below Tawjihi
	Within Groups	119.142	94	1.267			
	Total	164.337	97				
guSama:T	Between Groups	33.769	3	11.256	9.386	.000	below Tawjihi
	Within Groups	112.731	94	1.199			
	Total	146.500	97				

Table 7 shows that there are significant statistical differences for the role of (education) in lexical variation. The differences due to education in all lexical items were in favor of (below High School) followed by (High School), then (Bachelor) and at last (Postgraduate Studies). To see if lexical variation in the three towns investigated affects mutual understanding, frequencies and a Chi-square test were carried out for each item to extract differences between understanding and not-understanding.

Table 8 shows results for the first 10 items:

Table 8. Frequencies for Lexical Variation due to Agreement Degree (n=98)

#	Lexical Item	understanding	Not-understanding	Chi-square	Sig.
1	tungur	22	11	3.667a	.056
2	igʃidi:ha	14	31	6.422a	.011
3	daʃri:ha:	27	6	13.364a	.000
4	guSama:T	13	14	0.037a	.847
5	go:ma:na:	28	7	12.600a	.000
6	migha:r	14	18	.500a	.480
7	tʃaltʃalat	15	13	.143a	.705
8	imrannaxah may	16	15	.032a	.857
9	go:zali:n	28	8	11.111a	.001
10	ba:To:s	30	12	7.714a	.005

Table 8 shows the following:

-There are statistically significant differences between Understanding and Not-understanding for most lexical items including (daʃri:ha:, go:ma:na:, go:zali:n, ba:To:s, Ta:gah, ʔuxrah, tʃaʃtʃaba:n, uʃbuTi:ha:, bizruTin, imTagmiʃ, itʃarbaʃ, ʔuTmuri:, inTamy, muzto:tih, yiʃta:z, ihu:ʃ ʃaleih, siddih, kadarah, fidzʒjih, daksyih, xa:berko:, haʃu:t, birʃa:ny, bitbarTim, bitri:ʃ /bitgalʃiT, go:Tir min ho:n, ʃarad/fal/mazaT, dʒaxah, mSo:kidʒ, iymuliT, indahir min ho:n / inʃaθir) in favor of (understanding). (See Table 3 above for meanings of these items).

-There are no statistical significant differences between Understanding and Not-understanding for a few lexical items including (igʃidi:ha) in favor of (not-understanding).

5. The Interview

To remind, the interview contained two questions: one directed to young speakers and a second directed to older individuals. The first question was “why don’t you speak like your parents or adults in general?” The goal of this question was to investigate why young speakers tend to use other lexical items instead of those of their parents. The respondents answered that they change their dialect and use other lexical items for prestige and to be different. Moreover, some speakers asserted that their aim in using certain items was to associate with their peers of the same age group.

The second question was “What is your point of view about your language?” Adults answered that they did not like to imitate others and they preferred Irbidite dialect since it is part of their identity. They also said that they were proud of speaking it.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated lexical variation in the dialect of people living in Irbid and its correlation with age, gender, and level of education. The specific objective was to study the interaction between linguistic structure and social structure according to social variables such as age, gender, and level of education. Therefore, Labov's approach was adopted.

Three methods were used in this study to gather the information. The first was observation; a large amount of data was collected through contact with friends and relatives, who live in the three towns under investigation, and through taking notes from interactions among people. The second method was the questionnaire with close-ended questions. After collecting the lexical items by observation, a questionnaire was designed for a male and female sample of subjects belonging to different ages and levels of education. The last method was the interview; this method was used to elicit the feelings of a convenient sample of participants about the dialect they use.

According to the results in table (3), the overall mean of using the local dialect's lexical items among the sample was (3.22) out of (5) with STD (1.02), which indicates a medium level of using the local dialect's lexical items. This also indicates that variation in lexical items is spread in the study area and it can be attributed to extra linguistic factors, as mentioned by the interviewees. The results agree with those by Al-Abed Al-Haq (1985) who studied variation in Jordanian Arabic as affected by other Arabic dialects and with Al-Ali (2012) and Al-Wer and Al-Qahtaani (2016) who investigated variation in some Jordanian and Saudi sub-dialects. These variations were also attributed to extra-linguistic factors like age, origin, gender, style and educational level.

At another level, the study results show that the variables of age, gender and education play an essential role in lexical variation. Participants aged (55 and above) have a high tendency to preserve their local dialect lexical items, followed by the middle-age group (35-45), and lastly by younger people (18-34). This finding agrees with other findings on various sorts of variation (see Al-Wer and Al-Qahtaani, 2016). Moreover, the education and gender variables, which seem interrelated in the findings, had a high effect on the results; females who are educated tend to neglect some of their local dialect's lexical items and replace them with new ones considered to be more prestigious while men use them with no reference to education level. For less educated people from the same group, the results show that subjects from both genders preserve their local dialect. The lowest mean in table (4) was for the young group (18-34), including young males and especially educated females who seem to have abandoned the lexical items used by their parents for the sake of prestige and to imitate their peers. This result agrees with Al-Essa (2006), who suggested that the highest rate of the use for the local dialect lexical items are old males and females, followed by middle-aged males and females and finally the young males. She found that young females abandoned their local dialect and used urban lexemes which were considered as being more prestigious.

On the basis of the study findings, one can conclude that there is indeed lexical variation and a tendency to abandon the local terms to other in the three towns around Irbid city. Many Irbidi lexical items are being replaced by new ones among young generations especially. This tendency may subject the Irbidite dialect to a number of linguistic changes.

For future research, one may suggest investigating morphological, phonological or syntactic variation in the Irbidite or other Jordanian and Arab dialects and look at the issue from other social factors like the origin of the mother, occupation, and length of stay outside the region of the original dialect.

List of Jordanian Arabic Phonetic Symbols

Arabic Consonants	Symbol	Description
ء	[ʔ]	Glottal stop
ب	[b]	Voiced bilabial stop
ت	[t]	Voiceless dento-alveolar stop
ث	[θ]	Voiceless inter-dental fricative
ج	[dʒ]	Voiced alveolar fricative
ح	[ħ]	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative
خ	[x]	Voiceless velar fricative
د	[d]	Voiced dental stop
ذ	[ð]	Voiced inter-dental fricative
ر	[r]	Voiced alveolar tap
ز	[z]	Voiced dental fricative
س	[s]	Voiceless dental fricative
ش	[ʃ]	Voiceless palatal fricative
تش	[tʃ]	Voiceless palatal affricate
ص	[S]	Voiceless alveolar fricative
ض	[D]	Voiced emphatic stop
ط	[T]	Voiceless emphatic stop
ظ	[ðˤ]	Voiced emphatic fricative
ع	[ʕ]	Voiced pharyngeal fricative
غ	[ɣ]	Voiced velar fricative
ف	[f]	Voiceless labio-dental fricative
ق	[g]	Voiceless velar stop
ك	[k]	Voiceless velar stop

ل	[l]	Voiced alveolar lateral
م	[m]	Voiced bilabial nasal stop
ن	[n]	Voiced alveolar nasal stop
هـ	[h]	Voiceless glottal fricative
و	[o:]	Voiced Approximant velar
ي	[y]	Voiced palatal semi-vowel

Short Vowels

فتحة	[a]	Short low vowel
ضمة	[u]	Short high back vowel
كسرة	[i]	Short high front vowel

Long Vowels: [a:], [u:], [i:] and [o:]

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