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Rural Migration and Language Variation in Hims, Syria

Abstract

This study deals with the variable use of the voiceless uvular stop, [q], and the glottal stop, [ʔ], in the Colloquial Arabic of Christian rural migrants to the city of Hims in Syria. This variation results from their attempt to adopt the urban form [ʔ] to appear urbanite. The study explores the roles of age, gender, residential area, and social class in this variation. The naturally occurring speech of fifty-two speakers constitutes the data set. A detailed quantitative analysis reveals that age, gender, and residential area play significant roles in this variation. Social class emerges as insignificant. The quantitative analysis shows interaction among age, gender, and residential area regarding the use of [q]. This interaction is insignificant with respect to [ʔ]. The data shows a clear linguistic shift towards the use of [ʔ] by the younger generation, whereas linguistic maintenance or variation are more likely to characterize the older generation's speech.

1. Introduction

This study deals with the variable use of the voiceless uvular stop, [q], and the glottal stop, [ʔ], in the Colloquial Arabic of Christian rural migrants to the city of Hims in Syria. The glottal stop is considered an urban feature in major Syrian cities (Cowell 1964: 4; Al-Nassir 1993: 37, 40), such as Damascus (Daher 1998a, 1998b), Aleppo, and Hims (Habib 2005, 2008) and other major urban centers in the Arab World, such as Cairo (Haeri 1996) and Amman (Abdel-Jawad 1981, 1986). The Himsi people are known for their pride in their dialect, in which [ʔ] is the prestige marker (Habib 2005). For this reason, they usually stigmatize other dialects, particularly those characterized by the use of the [q] that is dominant in many nearby rural areas (Behnstedt 1997, Map 9: 18–19). The stigmatization of [q] leads many rural migrants to switch to the use of the

prestigious form [ʔ] (and other urban speech features that are beyond the scope of this study) to integrate into the urban community and be accepted as part of it.

Acculturation and adopting an urban identity through language is very common in the Arab World. The phenomenon of linguistic urbanization, as Abdel-Jawad (1981) dubs it, is growing in many Arabic-speaking settings (e.g., Miller 2005; Hachimi 2007). In many languages of the world, prestigious forms draw the attention of lower classes that tend to adopt them for the sake of prestige or higher social status (e.g., Labov 1972; Gal 1978, 1979; Milroy 1980). The notion that prestigious forms are highly desired by other speakers also exists in the Arab World. However, it is not necessarily related to class distinction prestige. Rather, it could be related to the area or region in which a prestigious sound occurs. In most Arab countries, some urban dialects/forms are considered more prestigious than some rural dialects/forms even if rural and urban speakers have similar socioeconomic status. Thus, attempts to appear more prestigious or more urbanite are continuously observed in many Arab countries. However, the degree of success in achieving such a status differ from one speaker or group of speakers to another based on factors such as age, background, gender, social class, etc. It is also essential to draw a distinction between the prestige of Standard Arabic (SA) and that of the Himsi dialect and other dialects. The prestige of SA relates to formal reading and writing and formal speeches and interviews (Ibrahim 1986; Walters 1991; Daher 1998a; Hachimi 2001). In dialects, the notion of prestige is more complex because it is not only related to how certain sounds should be produced by speakers of those dialects but also associated with the identity the speaker desires to convey in front of the interlocutor and the social meaning and connotations that certain dialects or sounds carry. For instance, a rural migrant may adopt an urban form to sound city-like in one setting and retain his/her rural form in another setting. Thus, there could be in one community more than one type of prestige: overt and covert. Speakers may adopt either overt prestige or covert prestige or both depending on their choice of an identity. Thus, the prestige formally associated with SA is different from the prestige associated with dialects. The SA sound [q] could hold a special meaning and prestige in some rural and urban Arabic dialects but it may be stigmatized in other Arabic dialects. The latter case characterizes the situation in the city of Hims.

The variable (q)[1] has been investigated in a number of Arab countries from different perspectives. Abdel-Jawad (1981) showed that the variable (q) has different realizations in Amman in Jordan. [q] merged with [g] in the Bedouin dialect, [k] in the rural dialects, and [ʔ] in the urban dialects. For him, the "merger of the *qaf* [2] with the glottal stop has been one of the most sweeping phonemic changes that many dialects of Arabic have undergone" (Haeri 1996: 122). Abdel-Jawad (1981) treated [q] as the SA variant that appears in certain lexical items in colloquial speech. Haeri (1996: 156) introduced (q) as a "diglossic variable" during her investigation of the reappearance of [q] in Cairene Arabic (CA) after its disappearance and merger with the glottal stop sometime between the 11th to the 15th centuries (Garbell 1978 [1958]). Haeri (1996: 105) found that this reappearance of [q] is due to "a process of lexical borrowing" from Classical Arabic. Similarly, Daher (1998a), in his study of Damascene Arabic (DA), showed that the use of [q] in males and females' colloquial speech is due to lexical borrowings from SA. Thus, most of these studies focused on the effect of education, and thus SA, on the use of [q] in colloquial speech. Some researchers dubbed this phenomenon in a diglossic situation such as the one in the Arab World as lexical conditioning (e.g., Abdel-Jawad & Suleiman 1990), that is there is a correlation between the lexical term and its phonetic realization. This suggestion is borne out and is well received when referring to the use of SA lexical terms versus Colloquial Arabic lexical terms within speech.

Moreover, most previous studies on the variable (q) mainly referred to [q] as the SA variant and [ʔ] as the local urban variant. In this study, [q] is the salient rural variant that undergoes change in the speech of rural migrants. It carries a number of connotations and social meanings depending on the context, the social setting, age group, gender, and religion.[3] The latter is beyond the scope of this study. The variable use of

1 Parentheses are used to refer to the variable (q); brackets are used to refer to the variants [q] and [ʔ]; and / / are used to refer to a phonological unit, /q/ and /ʔ/.

2 Qaf is the Arabic name for the voiceless uvular stop, [q].

3 Religion could be considered a variable, as there is always the possibility that Christian rural migrants may behave differently from other rural migrants from other religions, such as Alawites. This variable is not tested in this study, but it could be a good source of information in future studies and comparisons among various rural migrant speakers to the city of Hims or any other urban area in Syria.

[q] and [ʔ] in the naturally occurring speech of migrant speakers is due to migration from rural areas to the city. Because SA lexical items that contain the [q] sound (i.e., lexical borrowings) are produced the same by rural and urban speakers, they do not play a role in this variation; hence, they are excluded from the analysis.

It is worth noting that rural migration to big urban centers, such as Hims, is not restricted to Syria. Other urban centers that are developing and growing industrially in many other Arab countries witness a similar phenomenon. For example, Casablanca in Morocco has seen a huge influx of rural migration in the second half of the twentieth century because of industrialization (Hachimi 2005, 2007). This migration also resulted in "social, cultural and linguistic changes" (Hachimi 2007: 97). Cairo is another urban center that experienced a huge influx of rural migration. This migration led to different degrees of accommodation to the Cairene forms by the first generation migrants to Cairo and the second generation migrants who were born in Cairo (Miller 2005). Thus, rural migration to urban (e.g., Hims and Cairo) or urbanized (e.g., Casablanca) centers seems to be a widespread phenomenon in the Arab world and usually results in linguistic variation because of dialect contact.

It would, thus, be of interest to examine how first and second generation migrants to the city of Hims behave linguistically regarding the use of [q] and [ʔ]. In doing so, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the social factors, age, gender, social class, and residential area, influence the choice between [q] and [ʔ] in the colloquial speech of rural migrants to Hims?
2. How consistent is the pattern of use of [q] and [ʔ] among those migrant speakers?
3. What kind of variation and change is taking place due to dialect contact between rural and urban speakers?

2. The Setting: The city of Hims

The city of Hims is located in the central western part of Syria (Figure 1, p. 6). It is the third most important city in Syria in industry (Gilford 1978), trade, and agriculture. The population of the city of Hims, according to 2002 estimates (Homs City Council 2008), is 1,033,000. Hims is the capital of the Hims Governorate. The population of the Hims Governorate

according to civil registration records is 1,791,000 (Syrian Arab Republic Central Bureau of Statistics 2004). This number includes both urban and rural areas (i.e., the city of Hims and the surrounding villages respectively). Excluding those who live outside Syria, the number of physically present residents of the Hims Governorate is estimated at 1,577,000.

From the late sixties and early seventies, a larger influx of rural migrants to major cities in Syria, particularly Hims, started taking place. The centrality of the city of Hims makes it an attractive center to a large number of rural people from the neighboring countryside. Those rural migrants find a haven in Hims' Al-Baath University, the third major public university in Syria; job market; and shopping and trading centers. Rural people started abandoning agriculture and their lands in their villages. With the government facilitating education and making it available free to everyone, they sought higher education to obtain governmental jobs, such as teaching, construction, and industry that includes the refinery and other major phosphate and chemical plants all of which are situated in Hims. However, Zakaria and Sibai (1989 cited in Mahayni 1990) suggest that migration was not only a response to industrialization but also to the dire socioeconomic situation in many rural areas of Syria. Thus, Zakaria and Sibai suggest that the search for better life style and higher level of income motivated many to move to the city, particularly those with higher levels of education. In addition to the growth of sectors such as building and construction and social and personal services, the higher growth in the government sector provided more employment opportunities for the educated from the rural areas, inducing more migration (Mahayni 1990).
Mahayni (1990) traced the population growth of both urban and rural areas in the Syrian governorates between the years 1960 and 1986 based on statistics from the Syrian Arab Republic Central Bureau of Statistics (1960, 1986). He found that the population of the city of Hims increased annually by 4.76% from 150,000 in 1960 to 502,000 in 1986, whereas the population of rural areas increased annually by 2.43% from 251,000 in 1960 to 469,000 in 1986. The higher growth rate of the population of the city of Hims is not ascribed to higher birth rate in the city; rather, it is the result of the migration of huge numbers of rural dwellers to the city of Hims. The proportion of rural migrants who lived in the city of Hims in 1970 was 25.4% of the total city population according to the Syrian Arab Republic Central Bureau of Statistics (reported in UNCEWA 1980).

Hims, like other Syrian cities, is home to a diverse population of Sunnis, Alawites, and Christians as well as Armenians and Palestinian refugees. Hims was mainly populated by Christians before it was taken by Muslims in 636 A.D. (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2008). It is also surrounded by a collection of Christian villages called Wadi Al-Nasara 'Valley of the Christians' from which almost all of the study participants come (Figure 1).[4]

[4] Recently, Wadi Al-Nasara is sometimes called Wadi Al-Nadara 'Valley of Greenness' to avoid the religious aspect of the name.

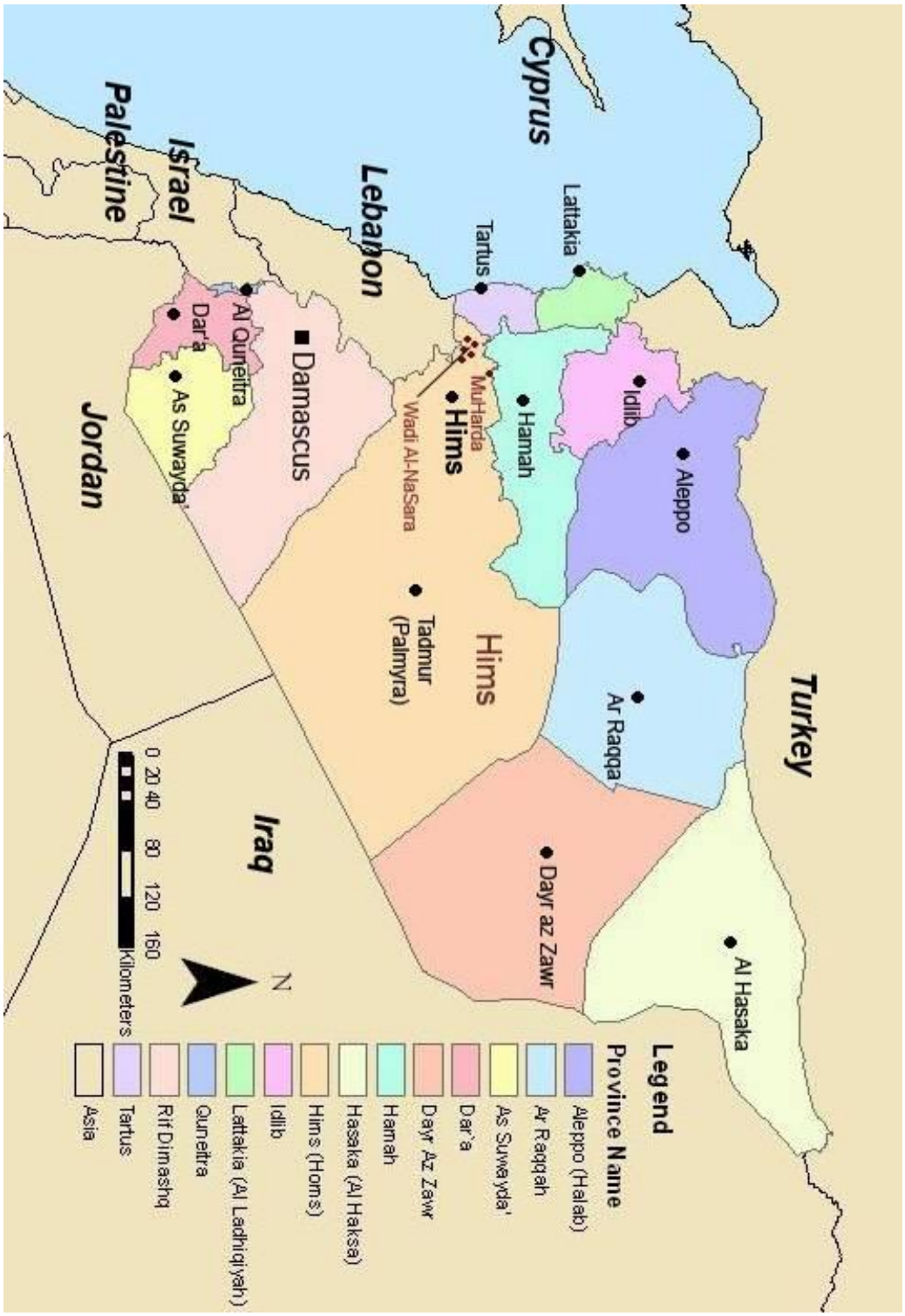

Figure 1. Map of Syria and neighboring countries

2.1 Prestige and urban vs. stigma and rural

It is essential to understand why and how stigma and prestige play a role in changing one's rural features in major urban centers in Syria, particularly Hims. It is also important to understand the historical background that led to the stigma of rural forms and the prestige of urban forms. The stigma of rural forms is particularly relevant to the salient rural sound [q] in relation to its urban counterpart [ʔ]. This is not to say that [q] does not have a special place and meaning for some people in Syria. It is important, however, to understand that the stigmatization of [q] is not limited to the city of Hims. It seems to hold countrywide. It is conveyed in a number of comedies that use the dialect of Alawites, which is characterized by the use of [q],[5] to elicit laughter from viewers. Examples of such comedies are the TV series: *Dunya* 'proper noun', *De'a Dai'a* 'a lost village', *Shafiq w Nazira* 'proper noun and proper noun'. Despite this stigma of [q], it maintains a high status in the speech of some people, particularly Alawites who want to assert their powerful political position. The widespread awareness of the stigma of [q] makes this sound a stereotype which could be abandoned by its native speakers out of embarrassment in pursuit of a more prestigious form such as [ʔ]. However, stereotype variables such as [q] can be maintained by its native speakers to assert a certain personality, power, loyalty to one's origin, or solidarity with one's social network. The stigmatization of rural features is documented in other Arab countries. For example, Abdel-Jawad (1986) indicates the stigma associated with the rural feature [tʃ] in place of [k] in Amman.

The negative image of rural areas in Syria derives from the fact that these areas remained underdeveloped until recently. Farmers were exploited by the feudalist system that lasted until the March 8th Revolution and the issuance of the Agricultural Reform Law in Syria in 1963. In the first half of the 20th century, rural people lived a primitive, agricultural life.

5 It is worth noting here that the [q] sound used by the Alawites is observed to be stronger and more prominent than the [q] sound produced by the Christians whose speech is characterized with [q]. Some people ascribe the strength of the [q] sound of the Alawites to their desire to distinguish themselves as Alawites. They feel proud to be Alawites because the leader of Syria is Alawite; they feel that they could obtain power over others through their speech. If they sound like an Alawite, other people may fear them or surrender to their wishes. Consequently, one would expect Alawites to behave differently from Christian rural migrants. In other words, they may cling to their native linguistic features more than Christian rural migrants.

Most of them grew cattle, poultry, and sheep in their homes for survival. Villages were deprived of many life essentials even into the second half of the 20th century. Paved roads and electricity were limited to cities (Al-Ma'louf 2008). Most rural people were illiterate until 1925. After 1925, education was limited to few people who received scholarships from the French mandate in Syria from 1920–1946 or whose parents were able to send them to study in a middle and secondary school in the city. The first secondary school in the whole countryside of Syria was opened in 1948 in Oyoun Al-Wadi (hereafter Oyoun) 'Springs of the Valley', one of the villages from which the majority of the study participants come (Al-Ma'louf 2008). These dire situations of villages created a backward image of villagers in the mind of urban dwellers, leading to undermining villagers' social and educational status and ridiculing their dialects up to the present day. Incidents of city people ridiculing villagers and their dialect are documented. For instance, when Dr. Hanna Al-Ma'louf (2008: 144), who is from Oyoun whose dialect is characterized with [q], went to study in the city of Tartus in Syria in 1934, he was ridiculed for his different dialect, although Tartus is known to be the home for many Alawites who use the [q] sound.

With the increase of education in the past 30 years, tremendous progress took place in rural areas, particularly Wadi Al-Nasara. The progress encompassed all aspects of life: economic, social, architectural, educational, etc. Despite this progress in the villages, which in some villages may exceed that in the cities, city-people continued to view rural people as backward *fallahin* 'peasants', particularly in Hims. Because of Hims's central position, it continuously witnesses all types of rural people and Bedouins dressed in their rural or Bedouin clothes to sell their products such as milk, yogurt, vegetables, etc. This explains the persisting image in Hims that all rural people are peasants, uneducated, and backward.

The superiority attitude of urban people towards rural people is evident in the city of Hims. For the longest while, rural migrants observe that native Himsis do not like to marry a rural person from the same religion, and they even object to their children entering into such marriage if they learn about it beforehand. Parents even try to deny that the person their son or daughter is married to is rural if marriage took place and relatives or friends brought up the issue. This superiority attitude of urban people is accompanied with an inferior feeling of villagers to city people

because they historically witnessed more progress and civilization in the city. The superior attitude of Himsis and the inferior feeling of rural people prompted many villagers, particularly migrants, to adopt the linguistic behavior of urban centers and to sound city-like. These issues are widely observed in society and people are highly aware of them. Similar observations came up in my interviews with speakers. I will not go into them in detail, but I will try to summarize them (see Habib 2005, Section 5.3). For example, Speaker-11 indicates that rural speakers change their speech due to a number of reasons: accommodating to one's environment (school, work, friends, neighbors, etc.); appearing more civilized and arrogant; feeling embarrassed of one's dialect; and fearing to appear "backward" or awkward. All of these reasons are due, in his opinion, not only to the pride of the Himsi people in their dialect but also to their low classification of rural people as *fallahin*. Similarly, Speaker-39 thinks that the main reasons that rural people change their speech when they come to the city are school; integration into the Himsi community; embarrassment of one's own dialect; and the Himsi people's ridicule of rural dialects. Speakers 11 & 39 also specifically referred to the use of *[ʔ]af* [6] in place of *qaf* in the speech of their relatives to avoid the stigma associated with [q] and to sound more civilized. These observations of ordinary people who have lived in Hims for a long period of time and know a great deal about the attitude of the Himsi speech community towards other speech communities confirm the stigmatization of the rural variant [q] in Hims.

2.2 Speech sample

The naturally occurring speech of fifty-two rural migrants comprises the data set (Table 2). The data were collected during two summer field trips to Syria in 2004 and 2006. The fifty-two speakers are almost equally distributed between males and females; lower middle class and upper middle class; and younger age group (18–35) and older age group (52+) (Section 2.4.2). The older age group represents the first generation of migrants to the city of Hims; their sons and daughters (i.e., the younger age group) who came at a very early age or were born in the city of Hims represent the second generation of migrants. Speakers reside in two

[6] *Hamza* is the Arabic name for the glottal stop, [ʔ]. However, in colloquial speech people replace the [q] in *qaf* with [ʔ] to give the name *[ʔ]af* to the glottal stop. This could also be due to the observed linguistic change within a community.

residential areas in Hims: Al-Hameeddieh and Akrama (Figure 2). One important criterion was choosing the participants from villages in which [q] is the dominant speech feature. Fourty participants come from the village Oyoun. The other twelve participants come from neighboring villages, mainly from Wadi Al-Nasara (Figure 1). The reason for choosing the village Oyoun and other neighboring villages is that I am originally from that village and familiar with the surrounding villages. Being an in-group member adds more naturalness to the conversations, having the opportunity to interview people who are relatives, friends, family members, and neighbors (e.g., Labov 1966, 1972; Eckert 1991; Milroy & Milroy 1992). Integrating into the investigated speech community has been the focus of many ethnographic studies, which required researchers to spend a long period getting to know the community (e.g., Gal 1978; Milroy 1980; Eckert 1989). My own family is from the village Oyoun, and I moved to Hims at the age of two years. Most of the speakers moved to the city around the same time as my parents, in the mid seventies, and we have strong social ties with them in one way or another. At home, my parents use the village dialect, but with distant friends and acquaintances, my mother more so than my father switches to the Himsi dialect. Thus, I am acquainted with both dialects. This phenomenon of switching between two forms is apparent in the speech of many rural migrants who live in the city and occasionally return to the countryside.

Informal conversations in Colloquial Arabic, lasting between 30–45 minutes with each individual, were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The recordings took place either in my family's home in Hims or in the informants' homes, whichever was more convenient at the time. In the interviews, I used the [ʔ] sound, which characterizes my everyday speech, with all the interviewees, some of whom were very open to using their village dialect with me despite my use of [ʔ]. Probably, some of them felt comfortable using their mother dialect because they know that I come from the same hometown. Had someone from the city led the interviews, I would think that more variation and thus more use of [ʔ] would have been observed. The participants were instructed that the interviews were intended to be as natural and as informal as possible, so they should not put any effort into thinking about what they should or should not say. All the conversations flew naturally not following any preconceived format. Speakers spoke freely after starting the conversations by my asking them

about their family, children and other matters of mutual interest. To maintain the naturalness of the conversation, other family members were allowed to be present during the recording of all the participants. Thus, occasional intervention from other attendees sometimes heated the conversation and made the speaker more oblivious to the recorder.

3. The variable (q)

The realizations of the variable (q) in the speech of non-migrant rural speakers, native Himsi speakers, and migrant rural speakers are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Variants of the variable (q) in the speech of non-migrant rural speakers, native Himsi speakers, and migrant rural speakers

Variable	Variant of non-migrant rural speakers	Variant of native Himsi speakers	Variants of migrant rural speakers
(q)	[q]	[ʔ]	[q] ~ [ʔ]

Table 1 shows that the variable (q) is realized in the speech of rural migrant speakers as two variants: [q] and [ʔ], taking into account that [q] is supposed to be their native form. Native Himsi speakers always use [ʔ], whereas non-migrant rural speakers always use [q]. There is no specific phonological context in which [ʔ] occurs as a replacement of [q] in the speech of rural migrants. It can occur word-initially, word-internally, and word-finally. For example, the rural migrants' words [qalb] 'heart', [raqbi] 'neck', and [ʔazraq] 'blue' become [ʔalb], [raʔbi], and [ʔazraʔ] respectively in the speech of those who adopt the Himsi variant [ʔ].

It is worth noting that lexical borrowings from SA containing the [q] sound (e.g., [mura:qib] 'proctor (N), [taqri:r] 'report (N)', [taqa:ʔod] 'retirement', [taqwi:m] 'orthodontia/orthodontics', [ϴaqa:fe] 'cultural', [quraʔa:n] 'Qur'an', [liqa:ʔ] 'meeting') are excluded from this study because rural and urban speakers pronounce them the same (Habib 2005, Section 4.1). Including them may skew the results, particularly in the speech of professionals who use jargons from their profession repeatedly in their speech. Hence, excluding lexical borrowings from the data yields better results and gives a better picture of the variation in the naturally occurring speech of rural migrants. The use of [q] in Arabic dialects that are characterized by the use of [ʔ], such as DA and CA has been attributed to lexical borrowings from SA (Haeri 1996; Ferguson 1997; Daher 1998a,

1998b). In my (2005) study, I investigated lexical borrowings in Himsi colloquial speech. I found that a native Himsi speaker also uses [q] in borrowed words from SA. I compared the words produced by that Himsi speaker with the [q] sound with other studies and found that they are similar to the borrowed words used in CA (Haeri 1996) and to the words produced with the [q] sound by the younger generation. Given the similarity among urban dialects characterized with [ʔ] and based on my (2005) study of lexical borrowings in Hims, I have no reason to believe that lexical borrowings should be included in this study.

4. Social variables

The independent variables included in this study are as follows:

1. Gender (24 males and 28 females).
2. Age (two age groups: 18–35 and 52+). Twenty-four (24) participants are in the younger age group, and twenty-eight (28) participants are in the older age group. The older age group consists of 13 males and 15 females; the younger age group consists of 11 males and 13 females. Age is divided into two age groups because the study focuses on two generations of migrants: the older age group represents the first generation of migrants. The younger age group represents the second generation of migrants. I chose people who migrated about the same time who are in the age range of 52+ and their children who are in the age range of 18–35.
3. Social class (two social classes: lower-middle and upper-middle). Social class is based mainly on the socioeconomic status of participants. In a study examining social class assignment in the community under investigation against the four universal socioeconomic indicators income, residential area, occupation, and education, Habib (2010) found that social class is highly associated with income followed by residential area. It is weakly associated with occupation and shows no association with education. Twenty-three participants are in the upper-middle class, and twenty-nine participants are in the lower-middle class.

4. Residential areas (two residential areas in the City of Hims: Al-Hameeddieh and Akrama). Thirteen speakers are from Akrama; thirty-nine speakers are from Al-Hameeddieh.

4.1 Overview of Al-Hameeddieh

Al-Hameeddieh is one of the oldest residential areas in Hims connected to the central downtown area of Hims (Figure 2). Al-Hameeddieh is mainly a Christian residential area with cultural and traditional values, which include the linguistic behavior of the native Himsi inhabitants (i.e., the use of [ʔ]). Most of its original occupants are native Himsis. This is probably changing recently because of the increased migration from Christian villages to the city. Al-Hameeddieh obtains many of its cultural and traditional values from the many historical and residential palaces and historical sites, which exist in it and surround it. Residential houses or palaces such as *Al-Zahrawi Palace* (a tourist site) and *Farkouh Palace* (currently a beau tiful restaurant) stand witness to the prominent people that historically lived in this area. Up to this day, people who live in Al-Hameeddieh are conceived of by other inhabitants of the city of Hims as upper class; thus, as a residential area, it is imbued with prestige. This general notion of prestige that is associated with Al-Hameeddieh, however, does not exclude the presence of some lower-middle class families in it. The cultural richness of Al-Hameeddieh contributes to this general view. Being a Christian residential area, many of the Christian rural migrants, who constitute the participants of this study, prefer living in it to living in the suburbs. Furthermore, kinship, family ties, and social ties with friends, relatives and neighbors are highly valued in most of the Arab countries and particularly for rural people (Barakat 1993). Hence, it is important for most rural migrants to the city to live in an area, such as Al-Hameeddieh, where they can maintain a connection with their own Christian traditions, practices, and rituals as well as keep their strong ties with relatives and friends who come from the same background and live in the same area. Living in the same area enables them to see each other more often and keep up with each other's life as well as have a solid support system.

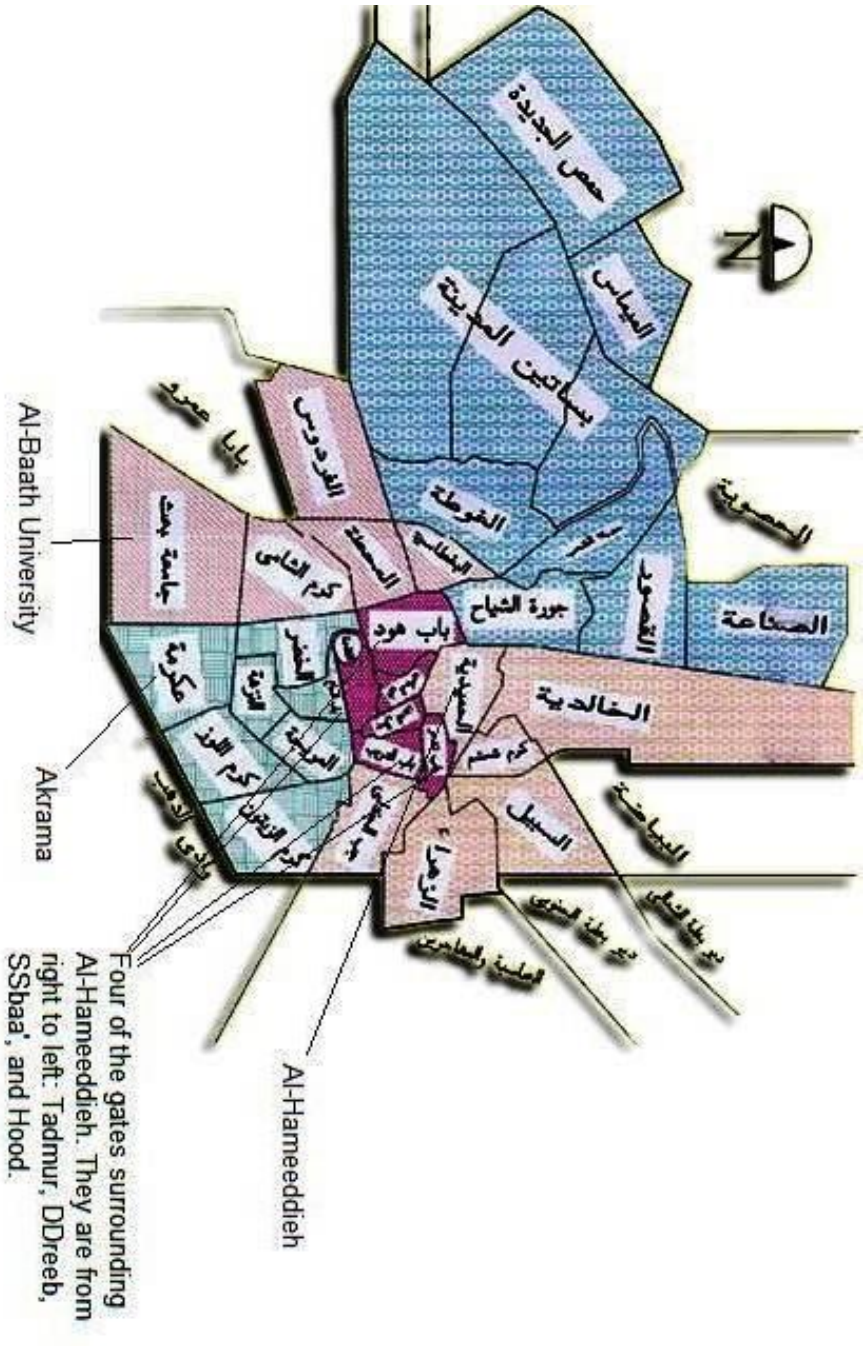

Figure 2. City Plan of Hims. Adopted from the Homs City Council (2008). I point to the areas of concern in this study and give their name in English, as a point of reference.

4.2 Overview of Akrama

Akrama is a newly developing residential area in the suburbs of Hims (Figure 2). It started developing and growing about thirty years ago. Its development is concurrent with the establishment and development of Al-Baath University (founded 1979), which is located in that suburban area. Akrama is mainly occupied by rural migrants, especially Alawites whose speech is characterized by the use of [q]. Hence, it is more diverse in terms of inhabitants than Al-Hameeddieh. Therefore, the two residential areas differ with respect to their history. As a new residential area, Akrama has not yet acquired the prestige associated with Al-Hameeddieh. The well-established linguistic tradition and prestige associated with Al-Hameeddieh are expected to have a greater influence on the newcomers, especially since the majority of the residents are native Himsis. This influence not only includes cultural and traditional values, but also salient linguistic features and values. This influence might be minor in Akrama, since the majority of the residents are not originally Himsis. Those residents have moved in recently and most of them maintain their native linguistic features since they come from diverse backgrounds. This, however, does not exclude the possibility that there may be some influence of the city linguistic features on some residents in Akrama. This could be due to exposure to the city linguistic features through school, university, workplace, and acquaintances from different parts of the city.

5. Quantitative analysis

After transcribing all the relevant words, the number of occurrences of [q] and [ʔ] in the speech of each informant is calculated (Table 2). The raw numbers of observations are transformed into percentages to have balanced comparisons among individuals (Table 2). Percentages within groups and among groups are also calculated to have an estimate of the difference in variation between males and females, the two age groups, the two residential areas, and the two social classes (Section 4). Negative binomial regression tests, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), are performed to measure the main effects of the extralinguistic variables and the interaction among them on the usage of the linguistic variants. Contrast tests are also performed to confirm the results of the negative binomial regression tests (see Habib 2008, Chapter 4, for more details).

5.1 Speakers' distribution of [q] and [ʔ]

Table 2 presents the speakers' distribution regarding their variable use of [q] and [ʔ] and the four social factors whose effect on this variable use is tested. Table 2 shows that the total number of tokens for [q] and [ʔ] is 11,548: 5874 tokens of [q], which constitute 51% of the total number of tokens; 5674 tokens of [ʔ], which constitute 49% of the total number of tokens. The higher percentage of [q] could be due to the higher number of older speakers (28) in comparison to younger speakers (24) because age seems to play a role in this variation. The data show that there are 25 speakers who use [q] predominantly (ranging from 61% to 100%). 22 of these speakers are from the older generation. 12 speakers use [q] categorically, indicating maintenance. 11 of them are from the older generation. 27 speakers use [q] predominantly (ranging from 53%–100%). 21 speakers are from the younger generation. 7 speakers use [ʔ] categorically, indicating a complete shift. 6 of them are from the younger generation. Most speakers from the younger generation show very high percentages of [ʔ] (i.e. higher than 90% and closer to 100%). Three younger male speakers residing in Akrama are exceptions (Speakers 29, 30, and 31). They show higher percentages of [q]. In contrast, the older generation show low percentages of [ʔ] and greater variation between [q] and [ʔ]. These initial observations indicate that the younger generation exhibit a linguistic shift towards the urban form [ʔ] and the older generation exhibit either maintenance or variation in their speech. Maintenance seems to be the more dominant feature of the older generation's speech.

Table 2. Distribution of study participants and of [q] and [ʔ] in their speech

Speaker	Gender	Age	Social class	Area	No. of [q]	% of [q]	No. of [ʔ]	% of [ʔ]	Total No. of [q] and [ʔ]
1	M	77	LM[7]	A[8]	222	96	10	4	232
2	M	67	LM	A	264	100	0	0	264
3	M	64	LM	H	467	99	3	1	470
4	M	60	LM	H	204	100	0	0	204
5	M	70	LM	H	80	78	22	22	102
6	M	67	LM	H	70	63	41	37	111
7	M	64	LM	H	122	100	0	0	122
8	M	53	LM	A	183	95	10	5	193
9	M	70	UM	H	79	61	50	39	129
10	M	69	UM	H	273	100	0	0	273
11	M	62	UM	H	286	94	19	6	305
12	M	62	UM	H	308	100	0	0	308
13	M	64	UM	H	205	100	0	0	205
14	F	75	LM	A	170	100	0	0	170
15	F	61	LM	A	278	100	0	0	278
16	F	61	LM	H	44	34	86	66	130
17	F	61	LM	H	0	0	154	100	154
18	F	59	LM	H	421	100	0	0	421
19	F	56	LM	H	56	43	75	57	131
20	F	52	LM	A	61	47	68	53	129
21	F	53	LM	H	7	8	87	92	94
22	F	67	LM	H	115	99	1	1	116
23	F	58	LM	H	44	68	21	32	65
24	F	58	UM	H	375	100	0	0	375
25	F	57	UM	H	163	75	55	25	218
26	F	61	UM	H	0	0	137	100	137
27	F	58	UM	H	361	100	0	0	361
28	F	57	UM	H	103	77	30	23	133
29	M	31	LM	A	239	88	32	12	271
30	M	25	LM	A	290	96	13	4	303
31	M	35	LM	A	254	100	1	0	255
32	M	30	LM	H	32	10	285	90	317
33	M	23	LM	A	2	2	118	98	120
34	M	19	LM	A	9	4	211	96	220
35	M	24	UM	H	2	1	292	99	294
36	M	23	UM	H	32	10	284	90	315
37	M	24	UM	H	2	1	179	99	181
38	M	36	UM	H	3	5	56	95	59
39	M	27	UM	H	6	3	209	97	215
40	F	35	LM	H	5	1	470	99	475
41	F	28	LM	H	11	8	132	92	143
42	F	24	LM	H	0	0	308	100	308
43	F	18	LM	A	0	0	65	100	65
44	F	29	LM	A	5	1	416	99	421
45	F	28	UM	H	1	1	123	99	124
46	F	33	UM	H	3	0	476	100	479

[7] LM and UM refer to lower-middle class and upper-middle class respectively.
[8] In this column, A stands for Akrama and H for Al-Hameeddieh.

47	F	32	UM	H	0	0	114	100	114
48	F	28	UM	H	7	2	378	98	385
49	F	23	UM	H	6	5	112	95	118
50	F	25	UM	H	2	1	176	99	178
51	F	21	UM	H	2	2	125	98	127
52	F	26	UM	H	0	0	230	100	230
Total					5874	51%	5674	49%	11548

5.2 Main effects of age, gender, area, and social class on the variable use of [q]

In the negative binomial regression test, age (p = 0.000), gender (p = 0.009), and residential area (p = 0.008) emerged as statistically significant in the variable use of [q]. In contrast, social class (p = 0.862) emerged as statistically insignificant. The coefficients (B) and the odds ratios (i.e., Exponentials of coefficients (Exp(B)) show that older speakers use more [q] than younger speakers and that the odds that older speakers would use [q] are 18 times the odds that the younger speakers would use it (B = 2.866; Exp(B) = 17.564). Males use more [q] than females and the odds that males would use [q] are 3 times the odds that females would use it (B = 1.117; Exp(B) = 3.055). Akrama speakers use [q] more than Al-Hameeddieh speakers and the odds that Akrama speakers would use [q] are 4 times the odds that Al-Hameeddieh speakers would use it (B = 1.481; Exp(B) = 4.398).

The estimated marginal means in the simple contrast tests indicate not only the difference between the two categories within a factor but also whether the variation observed in relation to the factors that emerged as statistically significant in the regression test is due to mere chance or not. The results of the contrast tests are as follows:

Age. The estimated marginal mean for older speakers is 333.42 and 18.98 for younger speakers. Multiplying 18.98 by the odds ratio, 17.564, yields 333.36, confirming that older speakers are expected to use [q] 18 times more than younger speakers. The contrast test reports a statistically significant difference between older and younger speakers (p = 0.003).

Gender. The estimated marginal mean is 139.06 for males and 45.51 for females. Multiplying 45.51 by the odds ratio, 3.055, yields 139.03, indicating that males use [q] 3 times more than females. The contrast test reports a significant difference between males and females (p = 0.023).

Residential area. Although the estimated marginal means for residential area show a great difference (166.85 for Akrama speakers and 37.93 for Al-Hameeddieh speakers), this difference is not significant according to the contrast test ($p = 0.092$).

Social class. The same applies to social class. The estimated marginal mean for upper-middle class is 76.74 and 82.48 for lower-middle class. This difference is not significant according to the contrast test ($p = 0.86$).

The significance shown in the contrast tests for age and gender indicates that the variation is not due to chance; it is a variation that is affected by those two social factors. The difference is significant even after the *p*-values are adjusted by the sequential Sidak method. However, the insignificance of residential area in the contrast test indicates that the variation between Akrama and Al-Hameeddieh speakers is a chance variation, i.e., not necessarily affected by residential area. Thus, the simple contrast test results for all social factors do not completely accord with the results of the regression test. Age and gender are significant predictors of the variable use of [q], but residential area is not.

5.3 Interaction effects on the variable use of [q]

A three-way interaction model shows statistically significant interaction among age, gender, and residential area ($p = 0.000$; Likelihood ratio Chi-squared = 103.808). I exclude social class because it emerged as statistically insignificant in Section 5.2. I do not exclude residential area, although it did not show significant difference between Akrama and Al-Hameeddieh speakers in the contrast test. The significant interaction among age, gender, and residential area does not hold among all categories within the three social factors. The results show that the interaction among the young age group, males, and the residential area Akrama is statistically significant ($p = 0.005$). Other interactions among other categories within the three social factors are insignificant. The interaction among the young age group, males, and the residential area Akrama has the highest coefficient ($B = 2.812$) among all other interactions. This means that younger male speakers from Akrama use more [q] than younger female speakers from Akrama. This is supported by the fact that in Table 2, there are three younger male speakers (29, 30, and 31) who reside in Akrama and use [q] almost categorically, in contrast to younger female speakers from the same area. In addition, the coefficient ($B = 0.484$) of the interaction among older speakers, females, and Akrama shows that older female

speakers from Akrama use slightly more [q] than older female speakers from Al-Hameeddieh and younger female speakers from both Akrama and Al-Hameeddieh.

If we exclude residential area based on the contrast test, a two-way interaction model also shows statistically significant interaction between age and gender (p = 0.000; Likelihood ratio Chi-squared = 71.153).

5.4 Main effects of age, gender, area, and social class on the variable use of [ʔ]

In the negative binomial regression test age (p = 0.000), gender (p = 0.005), and residential area (p = 0.035) emerged as statistically significant in the variable use of [ʔ]. In contrast, social class emerged as statistically insignificant (p = 0.321). These results are similar to the main effects of age, gender, residential area, and social class on the variable use of [q]. The coefficients and the odds ratios show that older speakers use less [ʔ] than younger speakers and the odds that they would use [ʔ] is 1.12% of the amount of use of [ʔ] by the younger speakers (B = -2.186; Exp(B) = 0.112). Males use less [ʔ] than females and the odds that they would use [ʔ] is 4.24% of the amount of use of [ʔ] by female speakers (B = -0.858; Exp(B) = 0.424). Akrama speakers use less [ʔ] than Al-Hameeddieh speakers and the odds that Akrama speakers would use [ʔ] is 4.12% of the amount of use of [ʔ] by the speakers from Al-Hameeddieh (B = -0.887; Exp(B) = 0.412).

The estimated marginal means in the simple contrast tests performed on the two categories within each factor show the difference between the two categories and can confirm or disconfirm the previous findings. The results of the contrast tests are as follows:

Age. The estimated marginal mean for younger speakers is 157.38 and 17.68 for older speakers. Thus, younger speakers are expected to use [ʔ] much more than older speakers. The contrast test shows that the difference between the two age groups in their use of [ʔ] is significant (p = 0.000).

Gender. The estimated marginal means for gender also show a great difference (81.01 for female speakers and 34.35 for male speakers). This difference is significant according to the contrast test (p = 0.017).

Residential area. The estimated marginal mean for Al-Hameeddieh speakers is 82.2 and 33.85 for Akrama speakers. In this sense, Al-Hameeddieh speakers' use of [ʔ] is more than double Akrama speakers' use

of it. The contrast test shows that the difference between Al-Hameeddieh and Akrama speakers is significant (p = 0.016).

Social class. The estimated marginal means show a small difference between the two classes (44.22 for the upper-middle class and 62.93 for the lower-middle class). This difference is insignificant according to the contrast test (p = 0.304).

The significance of age, gender, and residential area in the contrast tests indicates that the variation is not due to chance. The difference is still significant even after the p-values are adjusted by the sequential Sidak method. Thus, the simple contrast test results for all social factors accord with the results of the regression test.

5.5 Interaction effects on the variable use of [ʔ]

Unlike in the case of [q], a three-way interaction model among age, gender, and residential shows insignificant interaction (p = 0.395; Likelihood ratio Chi-squared = 56.678). Although the interaction among the three factors is insignificant, the coefficients and the odds ratio show that younger males from Akrama use less [ʔ] than younger males from Al-Hameedieh (B = -1.065; Exp(B) = 0.345 = 3.45% of the use of [ʔ] by younger males from Al-Hameeddieh). This is not surprising given the three young males (Speakers 29, 30, and 31) from Akrama who use [q] almost categorically. In addition, older females form Akrama use less [ʔ] than older females from Al-Hameedieh and younger females from both Akrama and Al-Hameeddieh (B = -0.866; Exp(B) = 0.421 = 4.21% of the other females' use of [ʔ]).

Also unlike in the case of [q], a two-way interaction model between age and gender shows insignificant interaction (p = 0.103; Likelihood ratio Chi-squared = 52.86). Because the three-way interaction model and the two-way interaction model do not show statistically significant interaction among age, gender, and residential area, we can conclude that these three social factors work independently regarding the variable use of [ʔ].

6. Discussion of the quantitative analysis

In this section, I will present a summary of the findings, their implications, and their relation to other variationist studies. First, I will explore each variable separately. Then, I will conclude with a general summary.

6.1 Age

Age has been investigated by many sociolinguistic studies and has been found to play a major role in linguistic variation (e.g., Walters 1991, 1992; Miller 2005; Sankoff & Blondeau 2007). Many researchers noted that younger speakers show greater adoption of innovative or incoming variants (e.g., Romaine 1984; Milroy & Milroy 1985: 341; Eckert 1988). From the statistical analysis above, age emerges as a major factor influencing the variable use of [q] and [ʔ]. Table 3 shows a great difference in percentage usage of [q] between younger and older speakers. Older speakers use [q] 85% of the time; younger speakers use it 16% of the time. The difference in the usage of [q] and [ʔ] between the two age groups is 69%.

It is worth noting that if we exclude the three young male speakers (29, 30, and 31) that appear to be exceptions to the other young speakers, regarding their use of [q], we will have a greater difference. Those three speakers live in Akrama and use [q] almost categorically. It seems that they show more solidarity with their surroundings than younger male speakers from Al-Hameeddieh who seem to be more influenced by the prestige of that area. Those three speakers' use of [q] constitutes 783 tokens out of the 913 tokens used by all 24 young speakers. The remaining 130 tokens are used by the other 21 speakers. If we divide 130 on the total number of tokens (4889) for the 21 young speakers, we get less than 3% use of [q] by the younger generation. The three speakers' total use of [ʔ] is 46 tokens out of the 4805 tokens of the 24 speakers. Subtracting these 46 tokens from 4805 and dividing the resulting number (4759) by the total number of tokens for the 21 young speakers (4889) gives a 97% use of [ʔ] by the younger speakers.

Table 3. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to age group

Variant	No. of Tokens for Younger Age Group	% Younger Age Group	No. of Tokens for Older Age Group	% Older Age Group	Difference in Percentage
[q]	913/5718	16%	4961/ 5830	85%	69%
[ʔ]	4805/5718	84%	869/5830	15%	69%
Diff. in percent between use of [q] and [ʔ]		68%		70%	

These findings have a number of implications. First, the great difference between the two age groups indicates that there is a linguistic shift towards the urban, prestigious form by the younger generation migrants, and this shift is quick. The younger generation is more inclined towards the new form than older speakers. It took only one generation to adopt the new form. Although the younger generation, in this study, are the sons and daughters of the older generation and have been exposed to their parents' linguistic forms from birth, they show a complete shift in their linguistic interest. This situation is comparable to Miller's (2005: 924) study of migrant speakers to Cairo. She suggests that the contact situation in Cairo leads "to a long-term accommodation for the first migrant generation and to total accommodation or dialect shift for the second generation, for example, those born in Cairo who speak almost dominantly CA." It seems that the younger speakers' exposure to schools, which involves mixing with native Himsi children, at an early age, has greatly influenced their choice of a variant. In this sense, they started understanding the social stigma associated with [q] at an earlier stage and were able to evade it by completely adopting the Himsi form, [ʔ]. The urban identity became their identity, leading to their selection of [ʔ] over [q]. This is the core of Mufwene's (2005) theory of language evolution and selection. Selection is very much influenced by the species' surroundings and their relationship with their environment. Adopting the social identity of their surroundings leads to restructuring of their parents' initial input to adapt to their environment, an environment that could be demanding linguistically and socially.

Second, some parents may be showing a struggle with this stigma, particularly older females who show greater variation than older males.

They are trying to adopt the new form. Intra- and inter-speaker variation results from such attempts. Not all older speakers adopt the prestigious form to the same degree. Such variation may be very indicative of a number of issues. Older speakers are aware of the social stigma associated with [q], but they are unable to employ their social knowledge to its fullest. Some of them show almost complete acquisition of the new form (e.g., Speakers 17 & 21). Others do not show any kind of adaptation to the new form. Rather, their speech is best described by language maintenance as they maintain their 100% use of their native form, [q]. There are also those who oscillate between the two forms within the same conversation with the same interlocutor. In the latter case, speakers probably have an internal struggle between their original rural identity and the new urban identity that imposes pressure on their linguistic behavior. This internal struggle between two social identities leads to linguistic struggle because the social and linguistic are highly associated. Those who do not show any adaptation to the new environment could be the result of a fully developed social identity that is very difficult to interfere with after full development. It could also be a sign of showing their solidarity with their fellow villagers and their strong attachment to their rural identity. The comments of Speaker-11 support this argument. For him, a rural person who has a strong personality does not care about changing his dialect; he continues to use and protect his original dialect. Such a person, according to Speaker-11, does not care if Himsi people describe him as peasant or ridicule his accent. He is proud of his dialect that reflects his rural identity.

6.2 Gender

Gender has played a major role in linguistic variation as well (e.g., Fischer 1958; Trudgill 1974; Macaulay 1977, 1978; Romaine 1978; Gal 1979; Milroy 1980; Abdel-Jawad 1981, 1986; Milroy & Milroy 1985, 1992; Eisikovits 1987, 1988; Eckert 1991; Walters 1991, 1992; Sawaie 1994; Coates 1996; Haeri 1996; Daher 1998a, 1998b; Al-Wer 1999, 2002). Most of these studies have shown that women are more inclined towards the prestigious forms. Abdel-Jawad (1981) and Al-Wer (1999, 2002), for example, showed that women in Jordan use the urban prestigious forms more than men. Likewise, in this study, the statistical analysis has shown that gender is statistically significant in the variable use of [q] and [ʔ]. Men

tend to use the rural form, [q], more than women; women are more inclined towards the urban prestigious form, [ʔ]. Table 4 shows that women use [ʔ] 63%, whereas men use it 34% with a 29% difference.

Table 4. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to gender

Variant	No. of Tokens for Males	% Males	No. of Tokens for Females	% Females	Difference in Percentage
[q]	3634/5469	66%	2240/6079	37%	29%
[ʔ]	1835/5469	34%	3839/6079	63%	29%
Diff. in percent between use of [q] and [ʔ]		32%		26%	

If we examine the social meaning of each of [q] and [ʔ] in Hims against their use by men and women, we may be able to understand the linguistic difference between men and women in this study. [ʔ] is associated with urbanism, refinement, civilization, modernity, and femininity (Sawaei 1994). [q] is associated with rural, peasant, backwardness, funny dialects, and masculinity (Sawaei 1994). The higher use of [ʔ] by females indicates that "women are more aware of the social significance" of [ʔ] in Hims than men (Habib 2005: 26). They are in general more sensitive to social norms and thus linguistic norms in their environment (cf. Labov 1972: 303). It also indicates that rural females like to climb up the social scale from being viewed as backward peasants to sounding city-like, refined, modern, and civilized. It seems more important for women to appear prestigious in a society that implements more limitations and restrictions on women. Women in restricted communities usually learn to adapt more to their environment than men who have barely any limitations. This leads women to higher levels of linguistic adaptation (cf. Trudgill 1972; Eckert 1988, 1990). Language becomes an escape gate to the world around them. It becomes a tool to declare their difference from and superiority over men in one aspect of life, as Habib (2005: 27) asserts:

> Women probably compensate for their general social inferiority in Syrian society by presenting themselves as more linguistically capable and prestigious (…) They may be more inclined towards the prestigious forms because of the social pressure that is imposed on them: sounding pleasant and aspiring to appear more educated and urban, so that they can attract a good husband from a good social status and prosperous economic position.

Furthermore, language becomes a tool to construct a new identity to evade not only embarrassment of their vulgar and harsh dialect as Speaker-39 describes it, but also the Himsis' ridicule and description of them as peasants. Appearing more refined and civilized becomes important to them. They desire to change and find in language a way to achieve that change. According to Norton (1997: 410), "identity relates to desire – the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety." Thus, adopting the new urban form helps in constructing their new urban identity to reflect a cultivated image within the community. In the process of constructing a new identity, some speakers exhibit intra-speaker variation that reflects some linguistic insecurity (Labov 2001). This linguistic insecurity is apparent in the interviews with varying older women. Most of those older women speakers employed correction towards the prestigious forms. Sometimes they showed a reverse type of correction towards the rural form. The latter could be slips of the tongue, which they probably could not control. For example, Speaker-20 shows great variation in the same conversation. Table 5 presents her use of a number of words, sometimes with the [q] sound and at other times with the [ʔ] sound. Speaker-20's correction towards the prestigious form is an indication that this speaker recognizes "an exterior standard of correctness" (Labov 2001: 277) and tries to adopt that standard. If we reconsider what Speaker-11 mentioned about rural migrants who do not change their speech because they possess a strong personality and like to cling to their original rural identity. Then, we can conclude that those with a shaken sense of belonging to a rural or an urban identity feel socially insecure and thus linguistically insecure and tend to change their speech, resulting in intra-speaker variation.

Table 5. Variability in the speech of Speaker-20

Words with [q]	No. of word with [q]	Words with [ʔ]	No. of word with [ʔ]	Glossary
qabl	1	[ʔ]abl	1	Before
qilt	3	[ʔ]ilt	17	I said
hallaq	3	halla[ʔ]	12	Now
qiḍḍainaa	1	[ʔ]iḍḍainaa	1	We spent time
qallee	4	[ʔ]allee	10	He told me
waqt	2	wa[ʔ]t	2	Time
qal	2	[ʔ]al	2	Discourse marker

Following the same line of thought, we can say that rural men appear to behave in a manner which, to other speakers, suggests a strong personality as they use the rural stigmatized form [q] more. The strong personality that is mainly associated with males can be interpreted as being socially and linguistically secure. This could be due to two reasons. First, men in general possess more power and control in Arab societies. Because they feel in control, they do not feel the need or have the desire to change their identity through language. Retaining their original form gives them a sense of control over their lives and their choices in life. Their language becomes indicative of their masculinity that is not shaken by moving to the city. If they change their speech and stop using [q], they are no longer men. In other words, they lose their masculinity and strong personality because [q] carries a meaning of strength and manliness to them. Unlike women, it is acceptable for men to sound harsh and vulgar. Male friends sometimes comment negatively on a male's switch to the urban feature [ʔ] as if the man who uses the [ʔ] has lost his manhood. Second, rural male migrants keep close-knit social ties with their rural friends and relatives in the city. Not expanding beyond their rural social network to include native Himsis aid them in retaining their rural stigmatized feature. Although similar close-knit social ties exist among rural migrant women, they show more use of the urban form. Thus, it is more likely that the different social meaning of the variants [q] and [ʔ] for men and women is the main reason that women and men differ in their use of them.

Statistics have also shown that the interaction of age and gender is statistically significant. Table 6 shows that the difference between older female and male speakers is very small with respect to the use of [q].

Although the number of older males (i.e., 13) is smaller than the number of older females (i.e., 15), they use [q] 12% more than older females. This difference is greater regarding the use of [ʔ]. Older females use [ʔ] 64% more than older males. The difference between younger male and female speakers with respect to the use of [q] is greater than that between older speakers. Although the number of younger males (i.e., 11) is smaller than the number of younger females (i.e., 13), they use [q] 90% more than younger females. Younger females use [ʔ] 30% more than younger males.

Table 6. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to age and gender

	No. of speakers	No. of [q] Tokens	% [q]	No. of [ʔ] Tokens	% [ʔ]
Older males	13	2763/4961	56%	155/869	18%
Older females	15	2198/4961	44%	714/869	82%
Difference in percentage			12%		64%
Younger males	11	871/913	95%	1680/4805	35%
Younger females	13	42/913	5%	3125/4805	65%
Difference in percentage			90%		30%

However, if we exclude the three young male speakers (Speakers 29, 30, and 31) who seem to behave differently from all other younger speakers, we get completely different percentages. These three male speakers are brothers and have lived all their lives in Akrama, a linguistically less influential area because of its abundance in rural migrants whose speech is characterized with [q]. Living in Akrama seems to have hindered them from adopting the prestigious form, [ʔ]. Table 7 shows that excluding those three speakers brings the difference between younger male and female speakers down to 36% more use of [q] by younger males. In addition, the difference regarding the use of [ʔ] goes up to 32% more use of [ʔ] by younger female speakers. Regardless of which table we adopt, there is a difference when gender is grouped according to age. In other words, gender and age work together in influencing this apparent variation.

Table 7. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to age and gender excluding speakers 29, 30, and 31

	No. of speakers	No. of [q] tokens	% [q]	No. of [ʔ] tokens	% [ʔ]
Older males	13	2763/4961	56%	155/869	18%
Older females	15	2198/4961	44%	714/869	82%
Difference in percentage			12%		64%
Younger males	8	88/130	68%	1634/4759	34%
Younger females	13	42/130	32%	3125/4759	66%
Difference in percentage			36%		32%

6.3 Residential area

Residential area showed statistical significance, particularly regarding the use of [ʔ]. Table 8 also shows a difference in the use of [q] between Akrama and Al-Hameeddieh speakers. Akrama speakers use [q] 23% more than Al-Hameeddieh speakers. The results of this study are similar to those of Miller's (2005) findings in Cairo. Miller found that the speech of migrant speakers was affected by the area of residence. Those who lived in the suburban area, Giza, showed less accommodation to the Cairene forms. The reason is that the Giza area is occupied with more rural people than the Cairo area. Consequently, people have less contact with the new forms than those who live in the Cairo area and show more accommodation towards the Cairene forms.

Table 8. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to residential area

Variant	No. of Tokens for Akrama	% Akrama	No. of Tokens for Al-Hameeddieh	% Al-Hameeddieh	Difference in Percentage
[q]	1977/2921	68%	3897/8627	45%	23%
[ʔ]	944/2921	32%	4730/8627	55%	23%
Diff. in percent between use of [q] and [ʔ]		36%		10%	

In some studies, suburban areas rather than inner city areas are the leaders in the use of innovations. Ismail (2007), for example, investigated the use of the innovative form, [ɹ], a reflex of (r), in two residential areas in Damascus. Ismail (2007: 205) found that the innovative form is used more in the suburban area, Dummar, than in the more traditional, inner city area, Shaghoor, although young males in Shaghoor exhibit the highest use among all groups.

Furthermore, examining the interaction between age and area is useful because age has shown throughout the study to be the most important factor in influencing the observed variation. Table 9 shows that older people from Akrama use [q] 20% more than younger speakers from Akrama. Younger speakers from Akrama use [ʔ] 82% more than older speakers form Akrama. Older speakers from Al-Hameeddieh use [q] 94% more than younger speakers from Al-Hameeddieh. Although the number of younger speakers from Al-Hameeddieh (i.e., 17) is smaller than the number of older speakers form Al-Hameeddieh (i.e., 22), they use [ʔ] 66% more than older speakers form Al-Hameeddieh. These results indicate that younger speakers from Akrama are less susceptible to [ʔ] in their environment. Thus, their degree of use of [q] is not much different from that of older speakers. On the other hand, younger speakers who reside in Al-Hameeddieh seem to have less exposure to [q]. Consequently, they use [q] much less than older speakers. Furthermore, the smaller difference between older and younger speakers from Al-Hameeddieh with regards to their use of [ʔ] indicates greater exposure of the older speaker in Al-Hameeddieh to [ʔ]; hence, their greater use of [ʔ] than those who live in Akrama. It is important here to reassert the greater social communication with native Himsis in Al-Hameeddieh. As mentioned in Section 4.1, Al-Hameeddieh is an older area in the inner city of Hims and many of its occupants are native Himsis. Rural migrants who live in this area are in constant, sometimes daily contact with the nearby grocers, butchers, other shop owners, and schoolteachers and headmasters, many of which are Himsis. In addition, the workplace for most people living in Al-Hameeddieh is usually in the same residential area or in nearby areas that are within one-kilometer radius, i.e., in the range of five to ten minutes walking. Schools are abundant in the area and are within few minutes' walk from each home. Furthermore, living in Al-Hameeddieh gives people easy access to the downtown area where most shopping stores that are mainly

owned by Himsis are located. Such a congested atmosphere creates greater contact and closer networks with Himsi people in Al-Hameeddieh than in Akrama, which is mainly occupied by rural migrants and is far away from the downtown area where most businesses and jobs are. Akrama's distance from the Himsi population concentration and from the daily interactions in the condensed inner city limits contact with Himsis and reduces social ties with them, and thus decreases the urban linguistic influence.

Table 9. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to age and residential area

	No. of speakers	No. of [q] tokens	% [q]	No. of [ʔ] tokens	% [ʔ]
Older speakers from Akrama	6	1178/1977	60%	88/944	9%
Younger speakers from Akrama	7	799/1977	40%	856/944	91%
Difference in percentage			20%		82%
Older speakers from Al-Hameeddieh	22	3783/3897	97%	781/4730	17%
Younger speakers from Al-Hameeddieh	17	114/3897	3%	3949/4730	83%
Difference in percentage			94%		66%

6.4 Social class

Social class did not show any significance in the statistical analysis with respect to the variable use of both [q] and [ʔ]. Table 10 shows that there is only a 16% difference between the two social classes. This difference emerged as insignificant in Sections 5.2 and 5.5.

The fact that the upper-middle class is slightly more inclined towards the prestigious form is not surprising. Many studies have shown that the lower-middle class aspires to appear prestigious. Members of the lower-middle class try to imitate those from the upper classes. For example, Labov (1972) found that the use of (r) increases by social class and formality of style. However, he found that women from the lower-middle class use the upper class form, *r*, in word-lists and minimal pairs more than other speakers. He describes this phenomenon as hypercorrection towards the more prestigious form among lower-middle class females. Speakers from the lower-middle class realize the importance of the *r*-pronunciation. Consequently, they outperform the upper-middle class in the *r*-pronunciation when they are able to monitor themselves in formal styles.

This phenomenon is also termed the "crossover pattern" (Labov 1972) or "apparent deviation" (Labov 1966: 227). Such crossover patterns are taken as a sign for change in progress. Like Labov (1966, 1972), Trudgill (1974) found a crossover pattern in the use of the variable (ing) in Norwich. Female speakers from the lower-middle class showed a great shift from the use of *-in* in casual style to the use of *-ing* in formal style. This shift is much greater in the lower-middle class than it is in any other social group. However, in other studies like Milroy's (1980), speakers from working classes that have close-knit social networks generally showed more use of local, non-standard forms in Belfast than those who have weak ties social networks. This shows that different patterns of socialization may affect a speaker's linguistic behavior more than social class affiliation.

Table 10. Distribution of [q] and [ʔ] according to social class

Variant	No. of Tokens for LM	% LM	No. of Tokens for UM	% UM	Difference in Percentage
[q]	3655/6284	58%	2219/5264	42%	16
[ʔ]	2629/6284	42%	3045/5264	58%	16
Diff. in percent between use of [q] and [ʔ]		16%		16%	

7. Conclusion

The statistical analysis shows inconsistencies among speakers regarding the variable use of [q] and [ʔ]. It shows that the social factors, age, gender, and residential area play a role in this variation. Younger speakers are more inclined towards the urban form, [ʔ], whereas the majority of older speakers are more inclined towards the [q] sound. Females are more inclined towards the prestigious form [ʔ] than men. Men, mainly elderly men, are more inclined towards the [q] sound. Furthermore, residents of Al-Hameeddieh show higher usage of [ʔ] than residents of Akrama because their environment is more demanding linguistically. Thus, intra- and inter-speaker variation is observed. Some speakers show not only variation in their speech within the same conversation but also correction towards the new form. In addition, speakers who use [q] and [ʔ] interchangeably differ

from each other in the degree of usage of each variant. Other speakers used either the [q] sound or the [ʔ] sound invariably. What is particularly observed is a linguistic shift towards the use of the urban prestigious form [ʔ] by the second generation migrants in comparison to maintenance or variation in the speech of the first generation migrants. Some older speakers show partial accommodation to the new form; many others show maintenance of their native form, [q], an indication of pride in their rural identity and solidarity with their rural roots.

While this study focuses only on Christian rural migrants, future comparisons with the speech of rural migrants from different religious backgrounds (e.g., Alawites) will be beneficial to examine the role of religion in linguistic urbanization. A discrepancy among different religious groups may emerge because certain linguistic features may have different social meanings to them and may enable some of them, particularly those in power, to gain more power and prominence in society. Linguistic differences among different religious groups have been documented (Behnstedt 1989; Abu Haidar 1991; Amara 2005). For example, Amara (2005) showed that Christians in Bethlehem are more inclined towards using the urban forms of East Jerusalem whilst younger educated migrant Muslims are inclined to use more SA forms in their speech. On the other hand, Gralla (2002) found no linguistic differences between Christians and Muslims in the Syrian city of Nabk. However, the high dialectal variation in Syria may allow two social/religious groups to use the same variant but have different attitudes and social values for it (cf. Germanos 2009; Lentin 2009). Thus, further investigation in this terrain would be enlightening.

Based on my personal observations and the comments of some speakers, I believe it is important to trace the sound change of [q] into [ʔ] in some villages of Wadi Al-Nasara that are characterized by the use of [q]. Such change may be taking place due to constant contact with urban speakers through marriage or increased commuting between these villages and urban areas. The spread of the use of [ʔ] to the villages and the difference in spread among these villages is worth investigating. Conducting such research may enable us to foresee a change in progress in the villages themselves and draw a sociolinguistic typology of the area.

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