

Submission ID: 57

Title: How Observational Method, Participant Typology, Urban Sprawl and Mobility Impact Isogloss Opacity in Sociolinguistic Inquiry

Primary Language of Investigation: Jordanian Arabic

Location of Study: Amman, Jordan

Abstract:

This paper highlights issues relevant to dialectologists involved in the identification and mapping of particular codes. The language choice corpus presented here consists of 93 naturalistic bargaining exchanges from the suq or central market of Amman, Jordan. The participants included six vendors of antiques/crafts/souvenirs, 188 customers and four trained bilingual researchers. A primary aim of the investigation was to determine the codes in use between vendor and customer in the Ammani bargaining event. The five codes employed for such purposes were: Arabic; English; Arabic-English Mixed; French; and French-English Mixed. Nine other languages were also identified in use between the customers. Utilizing available markers, Arabic codes could be further delineated as: Jordanian; Palestinian; Saudi; and Iraqi.

As the corpus was assembled, it became clear that the observational methods selected greatly impacted the richness of the corpus obtained, as well as the prevailing conceptualizations of network and participant typologies. It may become increasingly difficult in today's fast-paced multilingual world (with many dense, multiplex networks) to continue to put forward Type IA informants from relic areas as ideal participants, given the complex realities that are often at play. Since variables such as

age, gender, race/ethnicity and social class are now being scrutinized more carefully (Rickford, 1986; Schilling-Estes, 2004), alternative frameworks and concepts should be pursued if they correlate with observed linguistic variation (Wardhaugh, 2006: 146-152). Urban sprawl and mobility are two such concepts. When the above factors are more carefully acknowledged, isogloss opacity might be more accurately addressed. Questions and comments from the audience are encouraged and a comprehensive bibliography will be provided.

