

Linguistic Accommodation between Arabic Speakers: Target traits, contexts, styles

INALCO – LACNAD, CERMOM (Paris)

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References

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Aim

This conference is interested in sociolinguistic and linguistic issues related to convergence and divergence between speakers of Arabic. For this event’s purpose, both terms are used in the sense given to them by Communication Accommodation Theory. In other words, what is targeted here is “short term accommodation”, following the distinction made by social dialectology (P. Trudgill).

This conference takes part in the « projet blanc – jeunes chercheurs » (2017-2019), entitled *Accommodation linguistique entre arabophones: Maghreb, Moyen-Orient et diaspora (France)*, and financed by Inalco’s Scientific Council.

State of the art

(Socio)linguistic analyses of interactions between speakers of Arabic vernaculars pertaining to different dialectal areas have mostly been based on corpora gathered in Europe or North America and consisting of conversations between—often male—students or teachers. Works based on these corpora point to the following tendencies:

- The asymmetrical nature of convergence between speakers of North African and Middle-Eastern varieties. Indeed, the former frequently bear the “communicative burden” (Hachimi 2013) in cross-dialectal encounters (Abu-Haidar 1994, S’hiri 2002, Chakrani 2015), although exceptions have been noted (Abu-Melhim 1992);
- Speakers sociolinguistic attitudes may be related to their accommodative behavior (Abu-Melhim 1992, S’hiri 2002);
- Accommodative behavior is often accompanied by other linguistic strategies such as code-switching between Vernacular Arabic and Standard Arabic as well as the majority language in the contexts of investigation (Swedish, English) (Blanc 1960, Talmoudi 1984, Abu-Melhim 1991).

A comparison of the (extracts of) published corpora from the above cited works leads one to believe that it is often the same type of traits that are targeted by convergent speakers (in particular: pre-verbs, genitive exponents, adverbs). However, this question is not really discussed in these academic studies published so far.

Call

In view of the state of the art, the organizing committee believes that addressing the following questions would increase our knowledge of the mechanisms underlying linguistic accommodation between speakers of Arabic:

Practical information

The conference will be held on Friday, 8 March 2019 at INALCO's Grands Moulins campus (Paris).

Each presentation will have 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of discussion.

Panels will focus either on sociolinguistic (factors, motivations and types of convergence) or linguistic ('targeted' traits, stylistic variation, etc.) aspects of linguistic accommodation between speakers of Arabic.

The languages of the conference are French and English.

Members of the organizing committee are Alexandrine Barontini, Julie Haslé, Marie-Aimée Germanos and Dora Tanoubi.

- (a) To which extent are the tendencies highlighted by previous works valid in other sociolinguistic contexts? Is it possible to observe reverse tendencies either in other place (i.e., in Arabic speaking countries instead of Europe or North America), or between speakers with different linguistic profiles (for instance in terms of education), or in local situations where the numerical and social balance between North African and Middle-Eastern speakers may be different (e.g. in France)?
- (b) Is it possible to refine these general tendencies through a comparison of various speakers and contexts? For instance, do social factors such as gender or does the nature of social relationship between speakers (in hierarchical terms, amongst others) favor or inhibit convergence, in favor of other phenomena like code-switching?
- (c) Is it possible to identify linguistic traits that are more likely to be targeted by convergent speakers? And if it is possible to do so: does the nature of these traits vary according to the targeted vernaculars or to contexts of observation?
- (d) To which extent do accommodative behaviors vary in the course of an encounter, and according to which factors?

We invite researchers wishing to address one of these questions to send a proposal in French or in English before September 30th, 2018 at: accommodation2019@gmail.com

Proposals should mention a title and an abstract (not exceeding 300 words), and a bibliography.