

One Piece of the Puzzle: Notes on the Historic Interdental Fricatives /θ, ð, ð^s/ in the Arabic Dialect of Gaza City

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Abstract

Although a great deal has been written about the Gaza Strip within the fields of political science, history, and international relations, very little linguistic research has been conducted in the coastal territory. This study aims at filling one gap in the linguistic record of Gaza through an examination of one set of phonemes, the Arabic interdentals /θ, ð, ð^s/, in the dialect of Gaza City. The results of this study suggest that the present day dialect of Gaza City is largely in line with the earliest report on the realization of the interdentals as reported by BERGSTRÄBER (1915), contrasting data presented in later published work by SALONEN (1979, 1980).

Keywords: Arabic dialectology, Levantine Arabic, Palestine, Gaza, classification, urban

1. Introduction

Lying along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, the Gaza Strip forms the southernmost edge of historic Palestine's coastal plain. Today Gaza consists of a diverse mix of both urban and semi-rural areas, with Gaza City as the largest population center. Although it has played a major role in international politics since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, very little is known about the Gaza Strip from the perspective of language. Limited scholarly work on the Arabic varieties native to this area has been conducted, and this dearth of research has left the community of Arabic scholars with numerous gaps in the linguistic record of an area that forms part of a larger transitional zone between Palestinian and Egyptian varieties of Arabic.

The present study fills one of the gaps in the linguistic record of Gaza: the realization of the historic interdental fricatives, /θ/, /ð/, and /ð^s/ in the Arabic dialect of Gaza City. The Arabic interdentals show considerable variation across Arabic dialects, ranging between realizations as true interdentals and their stop counterparts /t/, /d/, and /d^s/. The limited literature available on Gaza City Arabic suggests some degree of variation within the city's traditional dialect and I take this reported variation as a starting point in moving towards a

more up to date account of the dialect of Gaza City, over a century after the earliest initial report (BERGSTRÄBER 1915).

2. A city called Gaza

Gaza City lies in the northern third of the Gaza Strip, between the cities of Nuseirat and Jabaliya, and represents the largest urban area of the Gaza Strip with a current population of over half a million. The western border of the city is formed by the Mediterranean Sea, with the far eastern reaches of the city being defined by the political border between the Gaza Strip and Israel. In addition to its collection of traditional city neighborhoods, Šāṭi' refugee camp, administered by the United Nations and home to over 40,000 Palestinian refugees, has effectively been incorporated into the urban fabric of the city.

Present day Gaza City rests near the site of Tel El-Ajjul, the Ancient Egyptian administrative capital in Canaan until it was conquered by the Philistines and then the Israelites in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE (KUHRT 1996: 320). The political history of Gaza has been marred by a revolving door of control under the Greek, Roman, & Byzantine empires. Followed by the eventual conquest of the greater Palestine region by Muslim armies in the 7th century (MEYER 1907: 43, 74-75). Gaza came under Ottoman rule in the beginning of the 16th century and continued unabated until the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. Gaza subsequently became part of the British Mandate in Palestine before being occupied by Egypt in 1948 and Israel in 1967 (MEYER 1907: 96; MORRIS 2008: 377).

Israel maintained a direct military occupation of Gaza until the Oslo Accords of the 1990s and the creation of Palestinian National Authority. In 2005, it removed the remainder of its military forces and settlers from the Gaza Strip, however following the election of the Hamas government in 2006, a military blockade was imposed on the coastal territory. The present blockade has created a situation in which Gaza has been near hermetically sealed for almost a decade.

Following the creation of Israel in 1948 and the forced migrations that took place during this period, a massive influx of roughly 750,000 Palestinian refugees entered the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. This population has today swollen to over 5 million registered refugees. Despite its small size, the Gaza Strip is home to eight official United Nations refugee camps and based on the most recent demographic information, at least 70% of Gaza's residents today are refugees. Of those refugees who have settled in Gaza, most originally hail from the areas of Ramle, Lydd, Jaffa, Bīr is-Sabi', and dozens of villages surrounding Gaza which were depopulated or completely destroyed in 1948.

The turbulent political history of Gaza has created a site of intense contact between different varieties of Palestinian Arabic and recent sociolinguistic work on Gaza City and neighboring Jabalia refugee camp has begun to shed light on the outcomes of this contact (AL-SHAREEF 2002; COTTER 2016; COTTER & HORESH 2015). However, the long-term effects of this politically induced and maintained contact are an area of linguistic inquiry that deserves a great deal of further research.

3. Methods

3.1 The Fieldwork

The corpus of data from which this analysis is drawn is comprised of speakers who are indigenous residents of Gaza City. A sample of 9 females and 23 males was drawn for investigation from a larger corpus of 39 speakers. The remaining seven speakers in the larger corpus are Palestinian refugees originally from Jaffa, 69 km north of the Gaza Strip and also on the Mediterranean coast. As this analysis focuses on the status of the interdental fricatives in the speech of indigenous Gazans, these seven refugee speakers have been excluded from the present study, though their speech has been examined more closely in the sociolinguistic work cited above by Cotter.

Data was collected by the author during a period of sociolinguistic fieldwork conducted in Gaza City in 2013 with the help of a team of local university students. The interviews themselves were open-ended and semi-structured, and were carried out in a manner that has become indicative of sociolinguistic research more generally (LABOV 1984; MILROY & GORDON 2003). Topics of regular conversation during these interviews centered largely around issues relevant to life in the Gaza Strip: politics, cultural change, wedding and culinary traditions, and the history of the area. As a result, when focusing on a specific linguistic feature as I have done in this analysis, the data is limited to those lexical items and instances of the historic interdentals that occur naturally in casual conversation.

3.2 The Sample

A demographic overview of the speakers represented in the corpus is provided in Table 1. The bulk of the corpus, 26 speakers, are residents of the Shaja'iyya neighborhood on the eastern edge of Gaza City, close to the present day border with the State of Israel. In addition, one of the younger female speakers is a resident of the Daraj neighborhood, northwest of the Old City. This speaker is, in reality, the product of a marriage of mixed linguistic heritage. Her father is an indigenous Gazan, while her mother is a refugee originally from the Palestinian city of Lydd, roughly 63 km northeast of the Gaza Strip. This mixed marriage is emblematic of the demographic and linguistic complexity that is today the norm in Gaza City and makes documentation of the demographic backgrounds of those individuals included in any linguistic study on Gaza crucial.

Table 1: Corpus demographics

Age	Gender	
	M	F
17-39	9	4
40-64	12	3
65+	2	2

The remaining five speakers are residents of the Rimal and Zaytun neighborhoods, respectively. These five speakers, all of whom are young and middle aged men, are also members of Gaza's dwindling indigenous Christian community. Two of these Christian speakers, both in their twenties, trace their family histories back to Khan Younis, but their families emigrated at least two generations ago to Gaza City and as the data below suggests, their speech conforms to that of other speakers in the corpus.

Given that this study was confined to Gaza City itself, the comments presented below on the status of the historic interdental fricatives should not be considered an argument on the current status of these phonemes across the Gaza Strip. I limit my generalizations to the indigenous residents of Gaza City. As a result of the widespread dialect contact that has been happening in the Gaza Strip since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent waves of refugee migration, finding variation in this set of phonemes in other areas of the Gaza Strip would not be surprising. Still, the analysis presented below offers a first step towards a more thorough documentation of the dialect of Gaza City as it is spoken today, in the wake of this contact.

4. Urban and rural, sedentary and Bedouin in Gaza City

Before moving forward to a description of the historic and present state of the interdental fricatives in Gaza City, I briefly mention the ecolinguistic taxonomy of Arabic dialects laid out by CADORA (1992) as it relates to Gaza City. DE JONG (2000) put forward the hypothesis in his reanalysis of the texts published in SALONEN (1979, 1980) that the dialect of Gaza City may represent an older urban Arabic dialect which has taken on a number of Bedouin Arabic features as a result of dialect contact (DE JONG 2000: 583). This hypothesis is plausible given a long history of Bedouin migration in the area (BAILEY 1985; STEWART 1991). Recent work on the historic voiceless uvular stop /q/ as a sociolinguistic variable in Gaza City lends at least some additional support to this hypothesis, with the present dialect of indigenous Gazans in the city overwhelmingly favoring the voiced velar realization, [g] (COTTER 2016; COTTER & HORESH 2015), a common feature of Bedouin Arabic dialects.¹

The recent sociolinguistic work conducted in Gaza suggests that today Gaza City is most probably a mix of both urban, rural, and historically Bedouin speakers. In addition to the indigenous population, Palestinian refugees originally from cities like Jaffa live throughout the city's many neighborhoods and are of a traditional urban Palestinian dialect background. Large numbers of refugees from rural areas outside of Jaffa and Majdal also live in Gaza City, along with speakers from Bedouin dialect regions like Bīr is-Sabī' and the surrounding areas.

However, this is not to suggest that a new koineized "Gaza" dialect appears to be emerging in the coastal city that is an amalgamation of features from these different dialect types, as has happened in other regional urban centers like Amman (AL-WER 2007).

1 Crucially, however, these are not features that are exclusively Bedouin. The Ammani dialect of Arabic as documented by AL-WER (2007) is a case in point. Historical Arabic /q/ is in reality a sociolinguistic variable in Amman, with both the [g] realization of (q) standing alongside the glottal [ʔ]. (AL-WER 2007: 66-68).

Rather, this demographic makeup suggests that continual urban growth, with over 500,000 residents today calling Gaza City home, alongside large scale migration of Palestinians into the Gaza Strip has created an environment of intense and prolonged dialect contact and mixture. Investigating the larger outcomes of this contact is an important area of future research.

Based on qualitative interviews with elderly indigenous Gazans, areas that are today well incorporated into the urban fabric of Gaza City were historically rural areas. In particular, the Shaja'iyya area in the east of Gaza City was, according to residents, historically a rural community. However, today Shaja'iyya is part of the urban sprawl that is Gaza City, although the neighborhood does still contain agricultural land resting on the border with the State of Israel.

Speakers in Gaza City note that today the remainder of Gaza's indigenous Christian community lives almost exclusively in the Rimal and Zaytun areas of the city. Community members put the present number of Gazan Christians at between 1200-1300, with most now living in the Zaytun neighborhood close to Gaza's orthodox church: the Church of Saint Porphyrius, originally constructed in 425 CE (COHEN & LEWIS 1978: 119). Members of the community suggest that many of Gaza's Christian residents left in earlier years when gaining exit from Gaza was more realistic, while those that remained have emigrated to Gaza City from other areas in the Strip, concentrating the Christian population in Gaza's defacto capital.

Based on speaker reports, the Rimal and Zaytun neighborhoods of the city appear to historically have been areas of higher socioeconomic wealth compared to some of the city's other neighborhoods. For instance, speakers report that throughout Gaza City's history Rimal has consistently been a somewhat affluent urban center. In addition, interviews with Christians suggest that in many cases these speakers were historically of professional backgrounds that are emblematic of this higher socioeconomic status. Community members report long family histories as pharmacists, doctors, jewelers, and goldsmiths. If these reports are accurate, it would suggest that at least historically the Christian community of Gaza City may have represented the urban upper, or upper-middle class.

The potential linguistic correlates of religious identity are outside of the scope of the current analysis. However, as recent research conducted in Jordan by AL-WER et al. (2015) has shown, Christian communities tend to be more conservative in their speech, retaining older features of the varieties in question. Given the small size of Gaza's Christian community and the lack of intermarriage between Christians and Muslims, a similar situation to that reported by AL-WER et al. is plausible in Gaza City. Further research may show that the Christian community retains older features of the Gaza City dialect, whereas Muslim speakers may have participated more readily in any process of leveling that could have occurred over the past seven decades of Gaza's history.

5. The historical status of the interdental fricatives in Gaza City

As DE JONG (2000) has pointed out, the current status of the interdental fricative set in Gaza City is opaque based on the earlier literature. Although all of the available documentation of the Arabic of Gaza City makes mention of these phonemes, the picture painted by these

varied sources is incomplete. BERGSTRÄBER (1915), in his cartographic and dialectological account of Arabic in historic Palestine, describes the stop counterparts; [t], [d], and [dʕ], as the primary realizations of the interdental fricatives in Gaza City (BERGSTRÄBER 1915: Map 1). Although Bergsträber's earliest account provides an invaluable historical record of the dialect situation in Gaza City prior to the First World War, it provides very little information beyond a surface view of some of the prominent features of the dialect.

Drawing on BERGSTRÄBER (1915), PALVA's (1984) work on the classification of the dialects of the greater Palestine and Transjordan region describes Gaza as a typically urban dialect with respect to the interdentals (PALVA 1984: 361-62). Bergsträber's account also presents other features from Gaza City that suggest it is an urban Arabic dialect. In particular, Bergsträber describes the glottal [ʔ] realization of /q/ as predominate in Gaza City, a common feature of urban Arabic dialects (AL-WER 2007; BERGSTRÄBER 1915: Map 2; SHAHIN 2007). The present status of /q/ as a sociolinguistic variable with dialectal realizations in Gaza City ranging between [g] and [ʔ] has been analyzed in greater detail in COTTER (2016).

Beyond Bergsträber's account, SALONEN's (1979, 1980) work on the dialect provides a number of texts that represent a much more recent view of Arabic in Gaza City. Salonen's account is interesting in that it was published well after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and the large waves of refugee migration that took place during this time. However, Salonen's texts are linguistically troubling in that they were collected from Gazan Palestinians living and interviewed outside of the Gaza Strip in the diaspora, with little indication of the degree of contact that these speakers may have had with other Arabic dialects (SALONEN 1979: 4). In addition, despite the texts being presented as examples of the Arabic of Gaza City, a portion of the speakers attest that they are not residents of the city itself. At least two of the speakers in Salonen's work are from village areas between Gaza City and Khan Younis, based on their own accounts (SALONEN 1979: 5; SALONEN 1980: 5). As DE JONG (2000: 590-91) pointed out in his reanalysis of Salonen's texts, the fact that some of these speakers were not actually residents of Gaza City could have very real linguistic consequences. This is particularly true for the case of the interdental fricatives, whose realization often varies between dialects across the urban vs rural, and sedentary vs Bedouin divides common in Arabic varieties.

Bearing the issues of reliability discussed above in mind, when examining the historic interdentals, the texts published by SALONEN (1979, 1980) show usage of the interdental reflexes /θ/ and /ð/, along with a questionable status of /ðʕ/. For /θ/ and /ð/, the texts in SALONEN (1979) contain example of the interdental reflexes in cases such as: *haḏōla* 'these', *hāḏa/hāḏi* 'this', *tamar* 'fruit', *ṭāni* 'second', and *tālāt* 'three'.² With respect to /ðʕ/ Salonen's texts present realizations in Gaza City varying between [dʕ] and [zʕ], with examples such as *əḏ-ḏāhir* 'appearance' and *ḥāfaḏt* 'maintained' surfacing with the emphatic stop realization [dʕ], and others such as *nizām* 'system', *z-zurūf* 'the circumstances' and *bi-z-zabt* 'exactly' surfacing with the emphatic alveolar fricative realization, [zʕ] (SALONEN 1979: 39).³

2 It's curious that SALONEN has transcribed this word as *tālāθ*, with one stop reflex and one actual interdental token. It's possible this was a transcription error in the original text.

3 Transcription conventions retained from SALONEN (1979) throughout.

However, as DE JONG has extensively noted (2000: 590 comment 8), the issues of accuracy and reliability with respect to Salonen's informants and their dialect backgrounds makes gathering sufficiently reliable information from the texts challenging. The case is further complicated by the reality that Salonen's texts also contain instances of the stop counterparts of the interdental fricatives as well, ex. *t-tāmānya* 'eight' or *iktīr* 'a lot' (SALONEN 1979: Text 1, 5 and Text 2, 5).

Given the questionable nature of some of Salonen's texts, examining the interviews compiled by Aharon BARNEA (1973, 1975) provides additional information on the position of the interdentals in Gaza City. Although little linguistic attention has been paid to these texts, based on the narratives contained in the transcripts, Barnea's texts may in reality be more reliable than Salonen's later published work. The speakers interviewed in Barnea's texts appear to be residents of Gaza City and the texts themselves also provide additional metacommentary on the linguistic situation in Gaza as a result of the refugee migration mentioned above.

With respect to the historic interdental fricatives in Barnea's texts, an examination of the transcripts presents a situation more in line with Bergsträßer's earliest account. The texts show ample examples of the stop counterparts of /θ/ and /ð/, and a realization of /ð^s/ varying between [z^s] and [d^s] (BARNEA 1973). For /θ/ Barnea's data shows evidence of the stop realization in cases such as, *tāni/tnēn* 'two', *ektīra* 'a lot', *talāta* 'three', while evidence of the [d] variant of /ð/ is apparent in examples like, *hāda/hādi* 'this m/f', *hadōl* 'these', and *kida* 'such, like this' (BARNEA 1973). The data with respect to /ð^s/ is limited given the relative infrequency of this phoneme in the transcripts. However, based on Barnea's data the realization of historic /ð^s/ appears similar to the situation reported by SALONEN (1979, 1980), as being split between [z^s] and [d^s]. Examples of /ð^s/ presented by Barnea include, *en-nādir* 'the principal', *z-zurūf* 'circumstances', *gaḍiyya* 'case', and *aḍ-ḍuhur* 'noon' (BARNEA 1973, 1975).⁴

The limited number of tokens of actual interdental fricatives that surface in Barnea's data appear to be words from more formal Arabic registers and not actual occurrences of the interdentals in casual speech. This is perhaps unsurprising as one of the speakers in Barnea's texts notes that he is a teacher and attended university, so it is likely that some of the speakers interviewed by Barnea may have been educated, potentially having a greater faculty in Modern Standard Arabic. Although the historical record on these phonemes is uncertain, the available data paints a picture more in line with the early account presented by Bergsträßer in 1915, with the stop counterparts prevailing in Gaza City. The presence of the stop realizations as the predominant reflexes in Gaza City is further reified by the more recent data presented below from the 2013 fieldwork.

5.1 Jabalia refugee camp

Before presenting data on the present state of the interdental fricatives in the Arabic of Gaza City, it is worth briefly discussing the linguistic situation in the neighboring area of Jabalia refugee camp, northeast of Gaza City. Although it is outside of the scope of the present analysis, AL-SHAREEF (2002), in his sociolinguistic analysis of Jabalia camp,

4 Transcription conventions from BARNEA (1973, 1975) were retained in these examples

investigates the interdental fricatives in the speech of refugees in the camp. Al-Shareef's findings are worth mentioning given its close proximity to Gaza and despite its focus on speakers that are of refugee backgrounds, the present dialect of the camp appears to mimic the situation that I present below from Gaza City.

Al-Shareef's study investigated the status of the interdentals as a sociolinguistic variable in the speech of Palestinian refugees originally from the areas of Jaffa, Majdal (modern day Ashqelon), Burayr, and Huj who are currently residents of Jabalia camp.⁵ Al-Shareef describes a situation in which for younger speakers all of the historic interdentals have been replaced by the stop counterparts (AL-SHAREEF 2002: 69-70). However, he does note that in many cases the elderly generation in these communities retained the historic interdental reflexes, which he suggests are the historical realizations of their dialects. Based on these claims, the speech of the youngest generation in his study is similar to what I present below based on my data from Gaza City with respect to the interdentals.

6. The present status of the interdental fricatives in Gaza City

Based on the data collected in 2013, the information presented below offers more up to date observations on the status of the historic interdental fricatives in Gaza City. As the examples presented below suggest, the general pattern of realization of the interdentals as stops is apparent in speech of speakers of all ages, with no internal variation in the realization of these phonemes across different generations. The result is a situation that is generally in line with what BERGSTRÄBER (1915) reported for Gaza City, contrasting with the data presented in SALONEN (1979, 1980).

6.1. The voiceless interdental /θ/

When examining the current position of the voiceless interdental /θ/ based on the most recent data collected from Gaza City, the dialect appears to favor the stop counterpart of the interdental overwhelmingly. Limited instances of an actual interdental /θ/ are present in the data as loanwords from MSA and are discussed below. Examples of the voiceless stop realization for the historic interdental fricative can be seen in the cases presented below, in both transcription and English translation:

Mariam – 20yrs old – Daraj

alfēn iw *tamānya* kulha batzakkarha *kīr*
 kānt say'a al-intifāḍa il-'abil kunt ana b-
 ṣaff *tāni* iṣ-ṣaff ibtidā'i, ēh batzakkar
 awwal yōm kān yōm *itnēn* kān *kīr* say',
 ah kān yōm *itnēn*

2008, I remember all of it. It was really bad
 year. For the (previous) *intifada*, I was in year
 two (second grade) primary school. I
 remember, the first day there was Monday, it
 was such a bad day, eh (yeah) it was Monday.

5 al-Majdal, Burayr, and Huj were all within the historical Gaza District at the time of the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. While today al-Majdal is the modern Israeli city of Ashkelon, Burayr and Huj were depopulated and destroyed in 1948.

David – 49yrs old – Rimal

kunna šabābⁱ šgār *itnēn* iw ‘ašrīn ‘arba‘a
iw ‘ašrīn kunna b-siyāsa ba‘idēn xalaṣna
sana fil-ḥayā^ʿ iw bil-‘ē^ʿila

*We were young men, twenty or twenty-four
(years old). We were political and after a year
or so of that life we stopped and (focused on)
the family.*

Nabil – 85yrs old – Shaja ‘iyya

w-ana baḥrut b‘īd ‘annu yimkin b-xamas
sitta kēlo, b‘īd ‘annu *aktar* ḥatta yimkin
yīdwi l-kaššāf ‘alay w-ana baḥrut fil-lēl

*And I farmed far away from him, about 5 or 6
kilometers away from him or maybe more, he
used to shine his spotlight at me when I farmed
at night....*

Abdul Malik – 55yrs old – Shaja ‘iyya

sab‘a iw *tamanīn* tagrīban, sab‘a iw
tamanīn yitgāyir al-ḥāl kullu f giṭā‘
ḡazza iw fī ḍaffā l-ḡarbiyya illi huwwa
kān faqaṭ intifāḍa il-fatra hādi sabagha
aḥdās *iktīr* fil-balad

*In approximately 1987, in 1987 the situation
changes completely in the Gaza Strip and West
Bank so that there was only intifada. This
period lasted longer than many of the people in
the country thought it would.*

Halima – 64yrs old – Shaja ‘iyya

ana inwalidit fi *talāta* iw ‘ašrīn *itnā‘aš*
alf iw tis‘a mi‘a tis‘a iw ‘arba‘īn ya‘ni
ba‘id in-nakba b- sana

*I was born on December 23rd, nineteen
hundred and forty nine, after the Nakba by a
year.*

As noted above, the data does provide some limited instances of an actual voiceless interdental /θ/. However, these are cases of words from MSA that have been realized in the dialect with the interdental fricative retained. As a result, they do not represent true occurrences of the phoneme in casual speech. Examples in this respect can be seen in cases such as: *θānawīyya* ‘secondary’ and *ḥadīθ* ‘hadith’. Setting aside these limited instances of the interdental from formal Arabic registers, on the whole the present situation for /θ/ in Gaza City appears to be in line with Bergsträßer’s earlier claim that the dialect has a voiceless stop [t] as its realization for /θ/. This stop realization is also in line with the data collected by BARNEA (1973, 1975).

6.2. The voiced interdental /ð/

When speaking of the historic voiced interdental fricative /ð/, based on the data presented below the present dialect of Gaza City appears to strongly favor the voiced interdental stop [d] with additional occurrences of /ð/ also being realized as [z]. Dialectal realizations of /ð/ can be seen in the examples presented below:

Najah – 22yrs old – Shaja'iyya

fiš walā ḥadan ēš hāda, iš-šāri' fādi hiye
sākna bi(n)-našir šāri'hum fādi w-fiš fiyu
ḥadan

*There wasn't (anyone) really, what an empty
street. She lives in annasir street, their
neighborhood is empty and no one used to be
around in the street.*

Salaam – 17yrs old – Shaja'iyya

iw humma bigūlu hādi filastīn arḍna iw
ya'ni 'āšimitha il-guds hān

*They say this is Palestine, our land, and its
capital is here, its Jerusalem!*

David – 49yrs old – Rimal

ana tarakt il-madrasa iw ištaḡalt fi tijārat
id-dahab

*I dropped out of school and worked in the gold
business*

Khadija – 78yrs old – Shaja'iyya

kul šinna min 'inna ya'ni mnaxudiš min
barra

*Everything we have is from us, we don't take
anything from outside*

Um Majid – 55yrs old – Shaja'iyya

li ṭifl izḡir bagga yamōt hāda il-ṭifl hāda
wal-ḥarb šaḡḡāla wa-la lugma kān f
baṭnu wa-la lugma min ax-xōf

*A young child endures death and war, working
with no food in their stomachs, they're not
eating from fear.*

Abdul Malik – 55yrs old – Shaja'iyya

ya'ni s-sab'a sanawāt hadōla la-li-kbīr
wa-la-li-šḡīr 'āš ḥayā' ṭaba'iyya kānt
ša'ba ktīr

*These seven years (of the Intifada), for the old
and young living life naturally was very hard.*

The realization of the voiced interdental /ð/ as an interdental stop [d] is widespread across the corpus. This realization surfaces frequently in casual speech and based on the examples presented above replaces the voiced interdental in some of the most common demonstrative pronouns: *hāda/hādi/hadōla* 'this(m), this(f), these'. At the same time, [d] surfaces in less frequent lexical items such as *dahab* /ðahab/ 'gold'. In addition, lexical items containing a historic /ð/ borrowed more directly from MSA are realized with /z/ replacing /ð/. This is evident in examples like *bizikkir* 'he remembers' and *gazīfa* 'shell' and is in line with what we would expect for MSA lexical items being borrowed into the dialect.

Based on the data from the 2013 corpus, for /ð/ the present dialect of Gaza City again appears to be in line with Bergsträßer's early account, with the voiced stop [d] realization being widespread. The present findings also support the data presented in BARNEA's (1973, 1975) work on the dialect. As was the case with the status of /θ/, the present findings for /ð/

contrast with SALONEN's (1979, 1980) account wherein he noted an actual voiced interdental reflex of /ð/ in Gaza City.

6.3. The emphatic interdental /ðˤ/

One of the primary areas of uncertainty in the available earlier data on the interdentals in Gaza City relates to the emphatic interdental /ðˤ/. As discussed above, Bergsträßer's early dialect atlas described the emphatic stop counterpart /dˤ/ as prevailing in Gaza City, despite the emphatic interdental being present in the Bedouin dialects of the area (BERGSTRÄßER 1915: Map 1). BARNEA's later data from Gaza suggests a similar pattern, with the realization of the emphatic /ðˤ/ varying between [dˤ] for words occurring in casual speech and [zˤ] with lexical items from more formal registers, similar to the realizations of this phoneme as described by SALONEN (1979, 1980).

The same pattern emerges in the recent data from Gaza City, with variation in the realization of /ðˤ/ between a pharyngealized alveolar fricative, [zˤ] and a pharyngealized voiced interdental stop, [dˤ]. The [dˤ] and [zˤ] variants of /ðˤ/ dominate in the present day dialect of Gaza City, with the true emphatic interdental being absent. Examples of /ðˤ/ from the 2013 corpus can be seen in the examples below:

Halima – 64yrs old – Shaja'yya

ya'ni huwa zˤrūfu masalan fi bigūla kana
kul šay jāhiz

*I mean, his circumstances, for instance, he
says everything is ready*

iw itwazˤzˤafat halgēt bitdarris maˤ
ħakūmat ġazza

*And she was hired, now she teaches for the
government of Gaza*

Omar – 21yrs old – Rimal

ruħna ʿal baħar kān maˤzˤim il-wagit, kān fi
istirāħa

*We went to the sea most of the time, when
there was a break*

Nabil – 85yrs old – Shaja'yya

walla galli bagēt muxtār lal-kibutz w-hay
ʿiħna halgēt fil-sabʿa w ʿašrīn sana galli
wana ħāfizˤ šūrtak fi ʿēni

*Really he told me he was a Mukhtar of the
Kibbutz, and here we are, twenty seven years
he said and I still remember your face.*

Abu Majid – 53yrs old – Shaja'yya

axūi li-kbīr iw ana bagēt ndˤall al-āxir

My older brother and I we stayed together

Despite the relative infrequency of this phoneme, it seems unlikely that an actual emphatic interdental [ðˤ] is present in Gaza City today. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the sources available on the dialect from as early as 1915 do not suggest the existence of an emphatic interdental realization. Even SALONEN's (1979, 1980) texts, which have proven to be problematic for the realizations of the interdentals, appear to be in line with the recent

findings from the dialect of the city. The present situation in Gaza City for /ð/ seems to be one in which the emphatic stop [dʕ] is the predominant dialectal realization, in variation with [zʕ], particularly in lexical items borrowed from MSA. Collectively this suggests that the dialect of the indigenous residents of Gaza City today with respect to the set of interdental fricatives is in line with the situation that BERGSTRÄBER (1915) described, while also bearing similarity to the sedentary dialect of neighboring Al-ʿAriš reported by DE JONG (2000: 491), which lacks the interdental reflexes of these phonemes.

7. Conclusion

As was noted at the outset of this analysis, despite its prominent position in the international political arena we still know very little about Gaza linguistically. The earliest sources on the dialect date to the period of the First World War, while the later sources discussed above take the form of scattered texts published throughout the 1970s, a number of which are of questionable reliability. This study has aimed at providing a more up to date view of the status of the historic interdental fricatives in the Arabic dialect of Gaza City based on recent fieldwork that collected data from a sample of speakers across various neighborhoods, ages, genders, and religious backgrounds within the city.

The results presented above suggest that Gaza City today appears to be very much in line with BERGSTRÄBER's (1915) account of the dialect for the case of the interdental fricatives, which places it in line with other major urban Palestinian dialects in maintaining the full set of stops for these phonemes. Additionally, fieldwork conducted in 2015 with elderly Gazans from the Shaja'iyya neighborhood who were already adults when they were expelled from Gaza in 1967 and became refugees in Jerash refugee camp in Jordan appears to further support this claim. These speakers regularly realize the historic interdental fricatives as stops, despite now living in the heart of the Horan region, a dialect area that often realizes these phonemes as interdental fricatives (HERIN 2014).

The findings of this analysis have also further problematized the texts provided by SALONEN (1979, 1980) and the information they contain on the interdental fricatives.⁶ However, I am hesitant to advocate for dispensing with Salonen's work completely. Some of his informants describe being from areas between Gaza City and Khan Younis. What Salonen's work suggests to me is that the linguistic situation internal to the Gaza Strip has probably always been and continues to be dynamic and vibrant. Simply examining the history of the Gaza Strip from the period of the creation of the State of Israel to the present day is evidence of just how complex the demographic and linguistic situation of Gaza has become. Gaza today is a mix of not only varied indigenous communities that almost certainly ran the gamut of CADORA's (1992) taxonomy of Arabic dialects, a point for which Salonen may still be useful, but the Gaza Strip has for decades been home to massive numbers of refugees from areas across Palestine, communities which historically spoke a wide array of Palestinian Arabic dialects.

6 In other work (COTTER 2013, 2016; COTTER & HORESH 2015), additional cases have been noted where Salonen's texts do not come to bear on the linguistic reality of Gaza City as it is today.

This large scale and ongoing dialect contact has played a major role in shaping the evolution of Arabic in the Gaza Strip (COTTER 2013, 2016; COTTER & HORESH 2015). The result is a linguistic situation which represents somewhat of a puzzle, given its complexity and the evolution of the linguistic situation as a result of this continual contact. Still, the observations I have presented above offer a snapshot of a specific aspect of the dialect of indigenous Gazans in Gaza's largest urban area as it is today. Future research has much to offer in describing other aspects of the city's dialect, moving towards a more holistic picture of the present linguistic situation of Gaza City's indigenous residents.

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