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Negation in Ammani Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This study explores how three sociolinguistic factors—age, gender, and region—affect the use of negative particles in Jordanian Arabic (JA) across different areas of Amman: Hay Al Yasmeen, Hay Nazzal, and Shafa Badran. Using Labov's variationist sociolinguistic approach, the researchers analyzed negation variation in a collection of vernacular JA recorded in Amman Governorate in 2020. The analysis involved 1,684 tokens collected from 83 participants who answered 40 questions and were asked to negate 30 sentences. These tokens were analyzed using the SPSS/Chi-square test. The results show that region, age, and gender all play a role in the choice of negative particles in JA. Younger speakers tend to favor *ma*, while females in certain areas exclusively use *ma* for prohibitions. Some less common negative particles also reflect similar social influences, occasionally diverging from expected developmental patterns. While some negation patterns consistently show social influences, others do not seem to be significantly affected by age or gender. This analysis emphasizes how social factors interact to shape language variation and change, suggesting that changes are ongoing and that previously observed trends in JA negation could potentially reverse.

Keywords: Ammani Arabic, Language Variation, Negation, Sociolinguistics, Vernaculars.

1. Introduction

Negation is an essential part of how we think and communicate, appearing in every language and shaping our understanding of statements. It is a key element of the human mind (Al-Momani, 2011). In Jordanian Arabic (JA), which is a dialect of Levantine Arabic, negation is particularly important for conveying meaning. The way negation works in JA is somewhat similar to other Levantine dialects found in the Eastern Mediterranean region (Jabbari, 2013). The use of negation in JA is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also reflects cultural and social norms (Omari, 2011). Thus, politeness, formality, and respect can be conveyed through the choice of negation and the overall structure of sentences. Negation in Arabic has been widely studied by many linguists. However, the focus in most pertinent research conducted on negation has been placed on the syntactic and morphological aspects of this phenomenon (see Benmamoun 1992, 1997, 2000, Lucas 2009, Fassi-Fehri 1993, Alqassas 2012, Alrashdan 2015; Hamdieh et al. 2022; Yasin et al. 2023).

Due to the focus of research on the syntactic and morphological aspects of negation, this research explores the sociolinguistic perspectives of variation in negation in JA. It also aims at describing and explaining the complex distribution of the negative particles used in JA. In this research, it is proposed that there is a significant interaction between variation in negation and different sociolinguistic factors such as gender, age, region, education, occupation, prestige, social class, ethnicity, among others. However, for limitation of space and time, the focus of our research is to explore the influence of only three sociolinguistic factors; namely, gender, age and region on the use of negation in JA. More specifically, this study is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the frequencies of using the different negative particles in JA?

2. What is the effect of region, gender and age on the use of negation in JA?

3. How do negation patterns vary across the three Amman regions, and what insights do these variations offer regarding the potential influence of Jespersen's Cycle on the variation of JA negation?

By going beyond the syntactic and morphological dimensions, the understanding of negation in JA would be expanded, providing a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive examination of language variation and change in the context of negation in JA. Overall, this research aims at offering a more contextualized understanding of negation in JA. It also contributes to ongoing discussions on language variation, identity, and cultural influences on linguistic choices.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Jespersen's Cycle

As part of historical linguistics, the concept of the 'Jespersen Cycle,' alternatively referred to as 'Negative Cycle,' refers to the phenomenon that preverbal negation is felt weak and therefore strengthened by a postverbal element and finally dropping the preverbal negator mainlining only the postverbal one which eventually becomes the sole negator. The notion Jespersen's cycle dates back to Dahl (1979), who used it in recognition of Otto Jespersen's pioneering work which identifies this now well-known phenomenon. Jespersen (1917: 4) states the following:

The history of negative expressions in various languages makes us witness the following curious fluctuation: the original negative adverb is first weakened, then found insufficient and therefore strengthened, generally through some additional word, and this in its turn may be felt as the negative proper and may then in course of time be subject to the same development as the original word.

The following examples from French are given as a description of the set of changes suggested by Jespersen (Jespersen 1917: 7; Poppe 1995: 102; Rowlett 1998: 90). There are, broadly speaking, three stages (Rowlett 1998:90):

I. A single preverbal element is used to show negation:

Je   **ne**   dis

I   **NEG**   say

'I do not say.'

II. Negation is expressed by a preverbal and a postverbal element:

Je **ne** dis **pas**

I **NEG** say **NEG**

'I do not say.'

III. The main preverbal element becomes optional or is omitted altogether:

Je dis **pas**

I say **NEG**

'I do not say.'

The following examples from JA represent the three stages of Jespersen's Cycle:

I.   In stage I, one preverbal element is used to express negation:

ma   baʕraf

NEG   I know

'I don't know.'

II.   In stage II, the element in stage one is weakened, and a new postverbal element appears to support the first element:

ma   baʕraf-**iʃ**

NEG   I know-**NEG**

'I don't know.'

III.   In stage III, the first element is optionally deleted as the three variants are being used side by side in JA, and the new element becomes the only marker of negation:

baʕrafi-**ʃ**

I know-**NEG**

'I don't know.'

2.2 Labov's variationist approach

This research adopts Labov's variationist approach (Labov 1969, 1972, 1980, 1982). Labov (1972) characterizes a linguistic variable as the ability to convey a single idea in multiple ways. This concept of linguistic alternation over time is termed by Hopper and Traugott (2003) as "layering" or "variability".

Tagliamonte (2006) points out that language variability is a structured phenomenon shaped by social and linguistic factors. This idea highlights not just how systematic language change can be, but also its natural variability. To grasp how these factors influence our language choices, researchers often turn to statistical analyses (Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001, Tagliamonte 2006). These analyses help reveal which variable structures are common and suggest any ongoing changes in the negation system of JA, particularly in areas like Amman.

Variationist sociolinguistics is built on three key principles, as outlined by Tagliamonte (2006). The first principle highlights that language change happens in a systematic way, a concept referred to as 'orderly heterogeneity' by Weinreich et al. (1968) and 'normal heterogeneity' by Labov (1982). This means that variations in language are not just random; they follow certain patterns. The second principle recognizes that language is always evolving, reflecting its dynamic nature. Lastly, linguistic changes

often mirror the non-linguistic (or social) facets of the speaker, highlighting the intertwined relationship between language and society.

In sociolinguistics, new dialects, such as the Ammani dialect, emerge as a consequence of, as Al-Wer (2007, 551) puts it, 'prolonged and frequent contact between speakers of mutually intelligible but distinct varieties.' The main motivation for choosing the Ammani dialect for this study is based on Al-Wer's (2007, 556) observation that "there is no geographically neutral variety of spoken JA. All speakers therefore use some form of local dialect, regardless of social class". The dialect in Amman used nowadays is new as it is a result of dialect contact (see Trudgill 1986). In this study, the participants were sourced from three regions of Amman: Hay Al Yasmeen (West Amman), Hay Nazzal (East Amman), and Shafa Badran (North Amman).

Dialect contact in Amman is due to the fact that people from different countries and diverse cultural backgrounds such as Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon move to reside in Amman or interact with the people there for different purposes such as tourism, trading, etc. Additionally, people from different regions in Jordan itself also settle in Amman driven by economic opportunities and urbanization. This altogether results in dialect contact (Palestinian, Iraqi, Syrian and others) which eventually gave rise to the new dialect used nowadays in Amman in its current form.

Based on Trudgill's *Dialects in contact* (1986), Al-Wer (2007, 553-554) summarizes the 'theoretical foundations' that lead to dialect formation:

• Stage I (first generation): rudimentary levelling. This stage stipulates that at the initial point of contact and interaction between adult speakers of different regional and social varieties, minority and very localized linguistic features are levelled out.

• Stage II (second generation): variability and mixing. At this stage, the first locally-born generation of children are presented with a plethora of features to choose from. Their speech contains considerable inter-individual and intra-individual variability, and new combinations of features.

• Stage III (third generation): emergence of stable and relatively uniform dialect. At this stage, focusing (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985; see §1.3.2) gives rise to a crystalized dialect.

Al-Wer's investigation deals with three generations, "spanning a period of approximately the last eighty years" (557). Hence, her study, in short, confirms the following (ibid):

• A new dialect has emerged, and its usage has stabilized.

• This dialect is unique – it grew as an outcome of the contact between Jordanian and urban Palestinian dialects but is distinct from these input varieties.

• The formation of a distinctive dialect in Amman is closely associated with relative stabilization in the population, possibly during 1970–1990, and the development of an Ammani community with its own identity.

In a nutshell, Language variation, as Labov (1972) suggests, intertwines linguistic forms with social contexts. Mougeon et al. (2010) emphasized this interplay, distinguishing linguistic variation, where context determines choice, from sociolinguistic variation, where choice is socially motivated. The principles established by Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) and Labov (1982) suggest that language

variation influenced by various sociolinguistic factors is not random; it's actually systematic. In addition, Tagliamonte (2006) emphasizes that language is always evolving, serving not just as a way to communicate but also as a means of expressing nuanced societal signals.

Variation in negation in which various forms of negation can be used within a sentence is found in different languages such as French, Sgaw Karen, and Ojibwe, among others. Thus, speakers may use one of three forms: (i) a preverbal negative particle, (ii) a combination of preverbal and post-verbal particles, or (iii) just a post-verbal particle.

Variation in negation is also attested in JA. Recall that Labov (1972) states that variation is not random. Hence, it is assumed that variation in negation is governed by structural, pragmatic, phonological, and social factors. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the dominant negation forms used and emerging trends that lead to the choice of one negator over the others in the selected regions in Amman.

3. Previous Studies

Negation in Arabic, both Standard and colloquial, has been extensively studied since the 1990s by researchers such as Benmamoun (1992), Fassi Fehri (1993), Ouhalla (2002), Soltan (2007), Alsarayreh (2012), Alqassas (2012, 2019) among many others. Most studies, however, largely focused on the morpho-syntactic aspects of negation. For instance, Benmamoun (1992) delved into the distribution of negative adverbs in syntactic structures; Fassi Fehri (1993) and Mohamed and Ouhalla (1995) also investigated the syntactic position of negative particles; Alsarayreh (2012) studied the relation between negation and licensing negative polarity items.

Håland (2011), for example, explored why some speakers of Cairene Arabic (CA) prefer certain negation forms over others, analyzing factors like age, gender, and social class. She interviewed 24 California speakers and discovered that young women from higher social classes used negative markers more noticeably. However, the difference in how acceptable these markers were between genders was minimal, indicating only slight variation.

Hafida (2012) investigated how education and gender affect the use of the negative marker *ma* among residents of Mascara, Algeria. In her study with 100 participants, she found that women generally shy away from using *ma*, seeing it as something more masculine. Surprisingly, education level did not play a big role in how often *ma* was used, even though it was more commonly found among those with a primary education.

In Jordan, Talhouni (2019) explored the sociolinguistic factors that affect how negation varies in Ma'ani Jordanian Arabic (MJA). He based his research on over 20 hours of recordings from 33 native MJA speakers, taking into account their age, sex, education, and where they come from. The study aimed to look at how often different forms of negation are used, identify common stages of JA in MJA, understand what influences the choice of negation forms, and see if any linguistic changes are happening. By analyzing 1,208 examples of negation with GOLDVARB X, Talhouni found notable variations in MJA negation. Interestingly, the negation system in MJA is changing more noticeably in nonverbal sentences compared to verbal ones, with rural background playing a significant role. Importantly, his

findings align with current research that also examines how social factors impact the use of negative particles.

Moreover, Alqassas (2012) explored the complex use of negation particles in Levantine Arabic, specifically looking at how the markers ma and -ʃ are used in different contexts. Alqassas distributed a grammaticality judgment questionnaire among 83 participants aged 18-71 from Irbid City. The study highlighted that age significantly influenced the change process, whereas college education and gender had a negligible effect on the use of Jespersen's negation Cycle stage I. Below is a description of negation in Arabic examined by Alqassas (2012).

In JA, the negative adverbs *ma, ma... ʃ, mu, miʃ/muʃ, la, la...ʃ, and ʃ*[1] are used to express negation as exemplified in the following examples:

Negation can be indicated by the sole particle *ma* which is used in verbal sentences, as illustrated in the examples below:

(5) **ma**   truħ   ʕal-madrasə
    NEG   you-go   to-the-school
    'Don't go to school.'

(6) **ma**   tirmi   ʔil-luʕbə
    NEG   you-throw   the- toy
     'Don't throw the toy.'

(7) **ma**   ħada   idʒa
    NEG   somebody   came
    'Nobody came.'

The discontinuous negative particle *ma... ʃ* consists of *ma*, which usually appears as a proclitic on the verb, and *-ʃ* which shows up as an enclitic on the verb. This negative particle appears in verbal sentences, as exemplified below:

(8) **ma**   raħu:-**ʃ**
    NEG went. they-**NEG**
    'They did not go.'

(9) **ma**   na:mat-i**ʃ**
    NEG slept. she-**NEG**
    'She did not sleep.'

(10)   **ma**   darasū-**ʃ**
        NEG studied. they-**NEG**
        'They did not study.'

The two elements *ma* and *-ʃ* sometimes appear as one word or a continuous morpheme; **miʃ/ muʃ**[2], which is predominantly used in verbless sentences:

(14) ʔana   **miʃ/muʃ**   zaʕlān
        I   **NEG**   sad
        'I am not angry.'

(15) ʔil-walad   **miʃ/muʃ**   nāyem

The-child **NEG** sleeping

'The child is not sleeping.'

(16) ʔil-bāb   ***miʃ/muʃ*** ʔimsakkar

the-door   **NEG**   closed

'The door is not closed.'

The negative particle *la* differs from *ma* in two ways. First, *la* is used mainly in prohibitive contexts whereas *ma* is used in both prohibitive and neutral negative contexts. Second, *ma* combines with -*ʃ* giving thereby rise to the negator *miʃ /muʃ* whereas *la* does not combine with -*ʃ*; hence the absence of *lash*.

Here are some examples on the use of *la* and *la…ʃ*:

(17) ***la***   tirmi   ʔil-luʕbə   ʕal-ʔarḍ

NEG   you-throw   the-toy   on- the- floor

'Don't throw the toy on the floor.'

(18) ***la***   tirmī-ʃ   ʔil-luʕbə   ʕal-ʔarḍ

NEG you-throw-**NEG**   the toy   on-the-floor

'Don't throw the toy on the floor'

Finally, -*ʃ* alone is possible in many structures. It can be used, according to Alqassas (2012), when the negated predicate is a *b*- or *t*- prefixed present tense verb as in (20) and (25) or when the past tense copula ***bageit*** as in Example (21). Notably, the negation -*ʃ* is realized as a post-verbal marker, which phonetically starts with a bilabial, corresponding to the voiceless palato-alveolar fricative [ʃ]. It can also be used when the pseudo verb[3] ***bad-*** is used as shown in (22), or when ***maʔ*** is used as in (23). It can also be used in ***fi-***contexts as shown in (24).[4]

(20)   baʕrif-iʃ

           I.know-**NEG**

           'I don't know'

(21)   wagt-ha   bageit- iʃ   aʕrif

           at that time   I-was-**NEG**   know. I

'Lit. At that time, I did not know.'

(22)   badn- aʃ   nruḥ

           want-we-**NEG**   we-go

           'We do not want to go.'

(23)   maʕn-aʃ   maṣaari

             have-we-**NEG**   money

             'We do not have money.'

(24)   finaʃ   ḥail

             have-we-**NEG**   strength

             'We do not have the strength.'

(25)   truḥiʃ

             you.go-**NEG**

             'Don't go.'   (Alqassas 2012, 17)

Inspection of the previous studies on negation in vernacular Arabic reveals that past studies like Benmamoun (1992, 2000) and Lucas (2009) focused mainly on syntactic and morphological aspects. This study, on the other hand, delves into the sociolinguistic aspects of negation in JA, especially how gender, age, and region influence the use of the negative markers across three areas in Amman: Hay Al Yasmeen, Hay Nazzal, and Shafa Badran. By examining these three areas in Amman and applying Labov's (1972) variationist approach, this study fills a gap in the research on negation in JA. It also explores the sociolinguistic dynamics of negation, highlighting the importance of understanding language variation within its social context, as noted by Mougeon et al. (2010) and Tagliamonte (2006).

4. Methodology

This study explores the social factors within a specific speech community regarding the use of different negative particles. To select participants, the researcher focused on three regions in Amman, the capital of Jordan, which is home to about 2,182,000 residents. The choice of participants from these areas is rooted in ethnographic consideration, which means understanding the social and cultural contexts in which language is used. The researcher took into account the linguistic backgrounds and social environments of the participants to see how dialect contact influences language use. This method ensures that the sample captures the diverse linguistic influences found in Amman and allows for a deeper examination of variations in negation.

In particular, participants from Shafa Badran come from families that speak JA; those from Hay Nazzal are all from families that use Palestinian Arabic; and participants from Hay Al Yasmeen are raised in families where one parent speaks a different dialect, either Palestinian or Jordanian. This stratified sampling strategy enabled a focused investigation into how varying degrees of dialect contact affect the participants' choices of negation forms. Overall, this approach sheds light on the impact of language contact on the evolution of Ammani Arabic.

The researcher conducted interviews with 30 native JA speakers from the Amman Governorate, specifically from three neighborhoods: Hay Al Yasmeen, Hay Nazzal, and Shafa Badran. To ensure a diverse selection, the participants were balanced in terms of gender, with 16 females and 14 males. They were also grouped by age: young adults (over 20), middle-aged individuals (over 40), and seniors (70 and older). Each region contributed 10 participants, maintaining a balanced gender distribution, except in Shafa Badran, where there were 6 females and 4 males.

This study aimed to explore how social factors influence the use of negation in JA, drawing on methodologies from earlier research by Blattner and Williams (2011) and Håland (2011). While the study primarily relied on quantitative data, it also included qualitative aspects, particularly focusing on the less commonly used negative particle (-ʃ). The conversational interviews followed Labov's 1984 sociolinguistic approach and consisted of 40 questions covering various topics, such as education and experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each participant was also asked to negate 30 sentences, resulting in 900 negation tokens from these prompts, while an additional 731 tokens were collected from spontaneous speech. This distinction is crucial, as it provides different types of data for analysis, especially in sociolinguistic contexts.

To find interviewees, the researcher utilized personal and extended networks and employed public place approaches, as recommended by Labov (1972) and the friend-of-a-friend method by Milroy and Milroy (1977). Data collection wrapped up once enough socially contextual data, as described by Tagliamonte (2013), was gathered. This suggests that further data collection is unlikely to reveal significant new insights into negation patterns in the three selected regions of Amman. By following Tagliamonte's (2013) focus on socially contextual data, the researcher ensured that the data collected accurately reflected the social contexts in which negation is used.

5. Results and Discussion

The relevant tokens were extracted from the recorded interviews, and they were coded based on speakers' choice of negation variants. Two types of sentences were investigated, namely: verbal and non-verbal sentences. Table 5.1 represents the distribution of the different types of negative sentences in the data. This distribution shows that the speakers who were selected from three different regions in Amman (Hay Al Yasmeen, Hay Nazzal, and Shafa Badran) use verbal negative sentences (71.3 %) more than non-verbal negative sentences (28.7 %).

Table 5.1: Overall distribution of negative sentences

Sentence type	Number	%
Verbal (la/ la…ʃ, ma/ ma… ʃ, -ʃ)	1163	71.3
Non-verbal (mu/ miʃ-muʃ)	468	28.7
Total	1631	

Table 5.2 below presents the overall distribution of non-verbal negative markers. The results ascertain that speakers in all regions under discussion vary with respect to the use of the non-verbal negation with a preference of the variant *miʃ/muʃ* (68.6%) over the variant *mu* (31.4%). Therefore, the influence of the social factors (region, age, and gender) that lead to such a preference will be thoroughly discussed.

Table 5.2: Overall distribution of non-verbal sentences

Variant	Number	%
miʃ/muʃ	321	68.6
mu	147	31.4
Total	468	

Regarding verbal negative sentences, Table 5.3 below summarizes the usage of the variants *ma*, *ma…ʃ* in the examined regions. The results show that speakers use the negative particle *ma* the most, standing for (84.1%) of the data, whereas the negative particle *ma… ʃ* constitutes only (15.9%) of the data.

Table 5.3: Overall distribution of verbal sentences with *ma, ma… ʃ*

Variant	Number	%
ma	886	84.1
ma… ʃ	167	15.9
Total	1053	

With regards to the verbal negative variants *la, la… ʃ*, Table 5.4 below presents an overall distribution of using these variants *la, la… ʃ*. The results show that the negative particle *la* is used the most, constituting (93.5 %) of the data, whereas *la…ʃ* constitutes only (6.5 %).

Table 5.4: Overall distribution of verbal sentences with *la, la… ʃ*

Variant	Number	%
la	43	93.5
la… ʃ	3	6.5
Total	**46**	

Given the three stages of JC, it appears that speakers use the three stages in the regions under discussion; yet the preference is for stage I over the other two stages. This result is in fact surprising as it seems to be reversing JC.

In the following sections, the influence of the social factors (region, gender, and age) on the use of different negative sentences will be discussed. Our results will then be compared to these of Talhouni (2019) who provided the effect of social factors on the use of verbal and non-verbal negative variants in MJA. The results of the current study also support those of Hamdieh et al. (2022).

5.1. Distributional analysis of the effect of social factors on verbal negative variants

In this section, the impact of social factors (region, age, and gender) on the use of verbal negative variants *ma, ma…ʃ* and *la, la…ʃ* is analyzed. Table 5.5 displays the usage percentages. The variants *la, la…ʃ*, which are typically used for prohibition in negative imperatives, are less frequent among speakers. However, this is mainly due to context-restrictions on the use of the prohibitive negators *la, la…ʃ* as opposed to the use of *ma, ma…ʃ* which are used more commonly in various contexts.

A Chi-square test was employed to assess the influence of the social factors on the usage of these negators (See Table 5.6). Overall, speakers from all regions favor the *ma, ma…ʃ* variants over *la, la…ʃ*; a result expected due to the restrictions on the use of *la,* and *la…ʃ* in only prohibitive contexts.

Table 5.5: The overall distribution of using verbal variants by speakers in the three examined regions

Negative- Variables	Number	%
ma, ma… ʃ	1053	96
la, la… ʃ	46	4
Total	1099	

5.1.1 Distributional analysis of the effect of social factors on using ma, ma… ʃ

For the aim of testing the relationship between using *ma, ma… ʃ* and the social factors, we use the Chi-Square test. In the following section, the influence of each social factor on using the negative variants *ma, ma… ʃ* will be discussed.

5.1.1.1 The influence of age on using ma, ma… ∫

Table 5.6 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of *age* on using *ma*, *ma… ∫*. The participants are divided into three groups based on their age: the young age group (< 20), the middle age group (< 40) and old age group ($<= 70$).

Table 5.6: Chi-square test/the correlation between using *ma*, *ma… ∫* and *age*

Age	Statistic	ma…∫	ma	Total	χ2	P.
Young	N	42	404	446		
	%	9.4%	90.6%	100.0%		
Middle	N	54	286	340		
	%	15.9%	84.1%	100.0%	36.92	.000*
Old	N	71	196	267		
	%	26.6%	73.4%	100.0%		
Total	N	167	886	1053		
	%	15.9%	84.1%	100.0%		

The results in Table 5.6 suggest a significant link between the use of *ma, ma… ∫* and age, with a P-value less than 0.05. The majority (84.1%) prefer the negative variant *ma*, representing the first stage of JC, while 15.9% use *ma... ∫*. Across all age groups, *ma* is used more often, a result that is consistent with findings by Tahouni (2019). The young age group uses *ma* the most (90.6%) compared to (9.4%) for *ma... ∫*. Middle-aged participants show (84.1%) using *ma* and (15.9%) for *ma... ∫*. The old age group uses *ma* the least (73.4%) compared to the use of *ma... ∫* (26.6%). In summary, age significantly influences the use of *ma*, *ma... ∫*, as supported by Talhouni (2019).

5.1.2.1 The influence of gender on using ma, ma... ∫

Table 5.7 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of *gender* on using *ma*, *ma… ∫*. In this section, the sample is divided based on *gender* into female and male groups.

Table 5.7: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *ma*, *ma… ∫* and *gender*

Gender	Statistic	ma…∫	ma	Total	χ2	P.
Male	N	116	382	498		
	%	23.3%	76.7%	100.0%		
Female	N	51	504	555		
	%	9.2%	90.8%	100.0%	39.13	.000*
Total	N	167	886	1053		
	%	15.9%	84.1%	100.0%		

The results in Table 5.7 show a strong connection between the use of ma, ma… ∫ and gender, with a P-value of less than 0.05 indicating significance. Most people tend to prefer the negative variant ma (84.1%), which represents the first stage of JC, while 15.9% choose the variant ma… ∫. When looking at gender differences, females use the ma variant more frequently, with 504 instances, compared to 382 instances for males. We believe this tendency has to do with prestige as females believe that *ma* is more prestigious than *ma... ∫*. Conversely, males, who apparently care less about prestige, use *ma... ∫* more

frequently with 116 instances in contrast with females' 51 instances. This aligns with Talhouni's (2019) findings. Despite her research being in Ma'an, distinct from Amman, similarities in linguistic patterns prevail, possibly due to the non-influence of regional factors. In conclusion, gender significantly impacts the usage of *ma, ma…ʃ*, with a general preference for the *ma* variant. This further supports the observation that *ma* is the variant that is spreading, while *ma…ʃ* is receding. Several sociolinguistic studies have shown that women's speech tends to be more innovative compared to men's (see Schilling, 2011).

5.1.3.1 The influence of region on using ma, ma… ʃ

Table 5.8 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of the *region* factor on using the negative variants *ma*, *ma… ʃ*. Based on the place of residence of the speakers, the data is divided as mentioned before into three regions, namely: Hay Al Yasmeen, Hay Nazzal and Shafa Badran.

Table 5.8: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *ma*, *ma… ʃ* and *region*

Region	Statistic	*ma… ʃ*	ma	Total	χ2	P.
HY	N	89	308	397		
	%	22.4%	77.6%	100.0%		
HN	N	18	289	307		
	%	5.9%	94.1%	100.0%	36.25	.000*
ShB	N	60	289	349		
	%	17.2%	82.8%	100.0%		
Total	N	167	886	1053		
	%	15.9%	84.1%	100.0%		

Table 5.8 reveals a significant correlation between the usage of *ma, ma… ʃ* and region. Participants across regions predominantly use the negative variant *ma*, the first stage of JC (84.1). In (HY), ma…ʃ accounts for 22.4% of the tokens, reflecting a greater directness to innovative linguistic forms in this area. In contrast, speakers in (HN) show a strong preference for ma, with ma…ʃ appearing in only 5.9% of the data, indicating a more conservative linguistic trend. ShB sits between two extremes, with ma…ʃ appearing in 17.2% of the cases. These findings show that regional factors significantly affect how different forms of negation are used, even within the same city. The increased use of ma…ʃ in HY might be linked to socioeconomic factors, like a greater openness to linguistic innovation or exposure to new expressions. In contrast, the lower frequency in HN may indicate the area's more traditional demographic. The mixed pattern seen in ShB points to a blend of conservative and innovative language trends. This highlights the significance of local variations in sociolinguistic research, challenging the idea that urban areas are linguistically uniform. Moreover, although these regions are geographically close, social and cultural differences seem to play a larger role than mere physical distance in shaping how people use language.

5.2 The effect of social factors on using la, la… ʃ

Most of the negative examples mostly feature the variants *ma, ma… ʃ*, making up 96% of the cases. In comparison, the other variants *la, la... ʃ* only represent 4%, and they are mostly found in contexts of prohibition. To explore how factors like age, gender, and region influence the use of *la, la... ʃ*, we used

the Chi-Square test. The next section will look into how these social factors affect the negative variants *la, la... ʃ*.

According to the results shown in Tables 5.9, 5.10, and 5.11, there is a clear preference for the negative variant *la*, with 71.7% indicating it represents the first stage of JC. Conversely, the variant *la... ʃ* is observed in just 5.0% of the cases. Interestingly, 14 participants abstain from using either variant, opting instead to employ the *ma, ma... ʃ* variants for prohibition purposes, bypassing the use of *la, la... ʃ*.

5.2.1.a. The influence of age on using la, la... ʃ

The table below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of *age* on using the negative variants *la*, *la... ʃ*. The participants are divided into three groups based on their age: the young age group (< 20), the middle age group (< 40) and old age group (< = 70).

Table 5.9: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *la*, *la... ʃ* and *age*

Age	Statistic	*la… ʃ*	*la*	No use	Total	χ^2	P.
Young	N	0	8	9	17		
	%	0.0%	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%		
Middle	N	1	14	3	18		
	%	5.6%	77.8%	16.7%	100.0%	12.62	.013*
Old	N	2	21	2	25		
	%	8.0%	84.0%	8.0%	100.0%		
Total	N	3	43	14	60		
	%	5.0%	71.7%	23.3%	100.0%		

Table 5.9 shows that *la* is favored over *la... ʃ*. Old participants use *la* the most with 84%, whereas only 8% for *la... ʃ*. Middle-aged participants use *la* in 77.8% of instances and *la... ʃ* in 5.6%. Young participants record the least *la* usage at 47.1% and no instances of *la... ʃ*. In summary, age significantly affects the preference for *la* over *la... ʃ*, with all age groups favoring the former.

5.2.2.b The influence of gender on using la, la... ʃ

Table 5.10 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of *gender* on using *la, la… ʃ*. In this section, the sample is divided based on *gender* into female and male groups.

Table 5.10: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *la*, *la... ʃ* and *gender*

Gender	Statistic	*la…ʃ*	*la*	No use	Total	χ^2	P.
Male	N	3	19	6	28		
	%	10.7%	67.9%	21.4%	100.0%		
Female	N	0	24	8	32		
	%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%	3.62	.164
Total	N	3	43	14	60		
	%	5.0%	71.7%	23.3%	100.0%		

The results in Table 5.10 show statistically significant relationships between the use of *la* and *la… ʃ* and the gender factor, with a P-value less than 0.05. This indicates that the gender factor does have a

significant impact on the use of these variants. The data reveal that females use *la* more frequently than males, with usage rates of 75% and 67.9%, respectively. This finding is in accordance with the findings regarding the use of *ma* and *ma… ʃ* as shown in table 5.7 above. Again it seems that prestige pays a significant role here.

5.2.2.c The influence of region on using la, la… ʃ

Table 5.11 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of the *region* factor on using the negative variants *la*, *la… ʃ*.

Table 5.11: *Chi-square test/The correlation between using la, la… ʃ and region*

Region	Statistic	*la… ʃ*	*la*	No use	Total	χ2	P.
HY	N	0	4	7	11		
	%	0.0%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%		
HN	N	1	25	3	29		
	%	3.4%	86.2%	10.3%	100.0%	14.32	.006*
ShB	N	2	14	4	20		
	%	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%	100.0%		
Total	N	3	43	14	60		
	%	5.0%	71.7%	23.3%	100.0%		

The table above indicates a statistically significant correlation between the usage of *la, la… ʃ* and region, as indicated by a P-value below 0.05. Usage varies by region: HN has the highest preference for *la* at 86.2%, followed by ShB at 70%, and HY at 36.4%. The regional variation in the use of negation variants may reflect sociolinguistic factors such as local language norms, generational shifts, and the influence of language contact and urbanization in Amman. In summary, while *la, la… ʃ* is not widely used across the three regions in Amman, dialects predominantly exhibit the first stage of JC, marked by *la*, with minimal presence of the stage II variant.

5.3 The variant (negative particle -ʃ)

As this variant has not been used as frequently as other variants in this study, we analysed it qualitatively in relation to speakers' linguistic behaviour in each region.

The enclitic negator *-ʃ* represents the third stage of JC. Alqassas (2012) proposed that using *-ʃ* in JA is possible in many forms. He suggested that this type of negation can be used when the negated predicate is a present tense verb, or when it is a pseudo verb/preposition such as: *bed-*, *maʕ-*, and *fi-*, as we see in the following examples:

- <u>bed</u>hommi*ʃ*   yeṭlaʕu   (interviewee 7)
  want.they.NEG   go out.they
  'They don't want to go out.'
- <u>maʕ</u>na:*ʃ*   waʔet   (interviewee 3)
  have.we.NEG   time
  'We don't have time.'
- <u>fi</u>*ʃ*   tʃu:f   garaybak   (interviewee 10)

there is.NEG   you.see   your relatives

'You can't see your relatives.'

The number of instances with -ʃ is (18), and the influence of the gender factor is clear on speakers' linguistic behaviour as most instances are made by males (13/18). In contrast, only five instances were made by females; three of them are with present tense predicates as illustrated in the examples below.

• beʕraf-iʃ   eash   momken   yṣer   mʕah   (interviewee 3)

    know.HE.NEG   what   could   happen   with.him

    'He doesn't know what could happen to him.'

• baʕraf-iʃ   (interviewee 11)

    know.I.NEG

    'I don't know.'

• baʕraf-iʃ,   ʔana   aḥyanan   bastaɣreb   min   ʔnnas   (interviewee 22)

    know.I.NEG,   I   sometimes   surprised.I   out of   people

    'I don't know, sometimes I feel surprised out of peoples' actions.'

The other two instances are used with the pseudo verbs (maʕ-) and (bed-) as shown in the following examples:

• maʕnaʃ   waʔet   (interviewee 3)

    have.we.NEG   time

    'We don't have time'

• beddeʃ   aḥki   (interviewee 22)

    want.I.NEG   talk

    'I don't want to talk.'

The negative particle -ʃ usage is broken down as: present tense predicates (22/64), pseudo verb fi- (18/64), pseudo verb maʕ- (11/64), imperatives (10/64), and pseudo verb bed- (3/64). Its usage varies by age and gender. For females: middle-aged (2 instances), old (3 instances), none from young females. For males: old (26 instances), young (21 instances), and middle-aged (13 instances). According to region, HY speakers use -ʃ most (33 instances), followed by HN (18), and ShB (14).

5.4 The Effect of Social Factors on Non-Verbal Negative Variants mu, miʃ/ muʃ

However, in this section, the effect of the social factors (i.e., age, gender, and region) on the use of the non-verbal negative variants *mu*, *miʃ/ muʃ* is distributionally analyzed using a Chi-square test.

5.4.1 The influence of age on using mu, miʃ/muʃ

Table 5.12 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of *age* on using *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ*. The participants are divided into three groups based on their age: the young age group (< 20), the middle age group (< 40) and old age group ($< = 70$).

Table 5.12: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ* and *age*

Age	Statistic	miʃ/muʃ	mu	Total	χ2	P.
Young	N	106	70	176		
	%	60.2%	39.8%	100.0%		
Middle	N	137	47	184		
	%	74.5%	25.5%	100.0%	9.31	.009*
Old	N	78	30	108		
	%	72.2%	27.8%	100.0%		
Total	N	321	147	468		
	%	68.6%	31.4%	100.0%		

Table 5.12 reveals a significant link between the usage of *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ* and age, evidenced by a P-value below 0.05. Most participants prefer *miʃ/muʃ* (68.6%) over *mu* (31.4%). Middle-aged speakers use *miʃ/muʃ* the most (74.5%), followed by old (72.2%) and young (60.2%) speakers. However, there is an increasing trend among young participants to use *mu*. In summary, while *miʃ/muʃ* is favored, young speakers are leading a gradual change towards using *mu*.

5.4.2 The influence of gender on using mu, miʃ/muʃ

Table 5.13 below shows the results of Chi-square test that examine the effect of *gender* on using *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ*. The selected sample is divided into two groups based on gender.

Table 5.13: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ* and *gender*

Gender	Statistic	miʃ/muʃ	mu	Total	χ2	P.
Male	N	162	45	207		
	%	78.3%	21.7%	100.0%		
Female	N	159	102	261	16.11	.000*
	%	60.9%	39.1%	100.0%		
Total	N	321	147	468		
	%	68.6%	31.4%	100.0%		

Table 5.13 indicates a significant association between the usage of *mu, miʃ/ muʃ* and gender, with a P-value below 0.05. The results in Table 5.13 show that males use/favour *miʃ/muʃ* more than females. The pattern is reversed in the case of *mu-* in that females use/favour it more than their male counterparts. In summary, while *miʃ/ muʃ* is preferred, females are leading a shift towards *mu* (see Zibin et al., 2024).

5.4.3 The influence of region on using mu, miʃ/muʃ

Table 5.14 below presents the results of Chi-square test that examine the influence of the region factor on using *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ*.

Table 5.14: Chi-square test/The correlation between using *mu*, *miʃ/muʃ* and *region*

Region	Statistic	*miʃ/muʃ*	*mu*	Total	χ2	P.
HY	N	143	50	193		
	%	74.1%	25.9%	100.0%		
HN	N	71	64	135		
	%	52.6%	47.4%	100.0%	22.74	.000*
ShB	N	107	33	140		
	%	76.4%	23.6%	100.0%		
Total	N	321	147	468		
	%	68.6%	31.4%	100.0%		

Table 5.14 indicates significant regional variations in the use of *mu, miʃ/muʃ*. All regions favor *miʃ/muʃ* (68.6%) over *mu* (31.4%). HY participants use *miʃ/muʃ* most frequently (143 instances), followed by ShB (107 instances), and least by HN (71 instances). However, for *mu*, HN records the highest usage with (47.4%). In other words, while *miʃ/muʃ* is the preferred variant, a notable shift towards *mu* is emerging particularly in the HN.

6. Conclusion

Speakers in the three Amman regions exhibit preferences in using certain negative particles, influenced by some social factors, namely region, age, and gender. We have observed potential shifts in the usage of less frequent negative particles. For the verbal negative particles *ma, ma... ʃ*, the negator *ma* is predominantly used among younger generation. As for *la, la... ʃ*, they are less common due to their usage in prohibition contexts. Notably, females in HY exclusively use *ma, ma…ʃ* for prohibition, and *la… ʃ* is almost absent among all females across regions. The seldom-used negative particle *-ʃ* still reflects the impact of social factors. Its absence in young female speech across regions potentially suggest a deviation from the third stage of JC- perhaps a process reversing JC. Among non-verbal negative particles, there is also a clear tendency towards using *mu* over *miʃ/muʃ* especially among younger participants.

Occasionally, some social factors do not influence negation variation. For example, both HN and ShB have identical usage rates of *ma*, and there is negligible gender-based difference in the use of *miʃ/muʃ*. Moreover, gender does significantly influence the use of *la, la...ʃ*, as females in HY exclusively use *ma, ma…ʃ* for prohibition, with *la…ʃ* being absent among all females across regions. This suggests a gender-specific pattern in the use of these variants.

From ten hours of recordings across 32 native JA speakers, it is evident that social factors significantly impact potential shifts in the JA negation system. The research also assessed which JC stage the participants tend to use which seems to be the first stage- an unexpected result. The question then is whether JC is continuing forward to stage III or changing direction back to the first stage as it seems from the data analyzed in this research.

النفي في اللهجة العَمانيّة: دراسة اجتماعيّة لغويّة

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الملخص

تبحث الدراسة الحالية في العوامل الاجتماعيّة اللغويّة المختلفة التي تؤثر في التباين في استخدام أدوات النفي في اللهجة العمانيّة الأردنيّة كما يتم التحدث بها في ثلاث مناطق مختلفة من عمان، وهي حي الياسمين، وحي نزال، وشفا بدران. ووفقًا لمنهج لابوف الاجتماعي اللغوي التبايني، أُجريَ تحليل للتباين في النفي باستخدام مجموعة بيانات للهجة العاميّة الأردنيّة المسجلة في محافظة عمان في سنة 2020، وتألفت المجموعة من 1684 رمزًا، وحُلّلت من خلال تحليل إجابات 83 مشاركًا على 40 سؤالاً، علاوة على نفي 30 جملة، وخضعت هذه الرموز للتحليل التوزيعي باستخدام برنامج التحليل SPSS/اختبار مربع كاي. وتؤكد النتائج وجود تباين في استخدام النفي في اللهجة العاميّة الأردنيّة المحكيّة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم الاجتماع اللغوي، العربيّة العَمانيّة، التنوع اللغوي، النفي، اللهجات العاميّة.

Endnotes

[1] It is assumed that -ʃ is a reduced from of ʃayʔ 'thing' (cf. Ouhalla, 2000: p.3, Benmamoun, 2000: p.77, Aoun et al, 2010: p.106, Lucas, 2009: p.23).

[2] The negative particle ***miʃ***/ ***muʃ*** is sometimes used in verbal sentences/ cleft structures as in: ***miʃ*** il-walad illi raħ (it's not the boy who went), and in: ***miʃ*** abooy illi sakkar il bab (it is not my dad who closed the door).

[3] 'Pseudo-verbs' and 'quasi-verbs' are synonyms of the term 'semi-verbs'. Comrie's definition which suggested that the terms 'pseudo-verbs' or 'quasi-verbs' are used to describe elements that have some of the properties of a verb but do not have its morphological properties.

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