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Gender Switch in Female Speech of an Urbanized Arabic Dialect in Israel

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Abstract. We investigate the patterns of and conditions for a special kind of gender switch found in an urbanized Arabic dialect spoken in Israel—the use of masculine instead of feminine forms in women's speech in the dialects spoken in the towns of Tire and Nazareth. We find that gender switch appears mainly when a speaker of the Tire dialect speaks about herself. Differences in the lexical distribution of this phenomenon and in women's attitudes to it are also evident. Besides features dependent on geographical dialect rules, the described situation seems to reflect differences in recent patterns of urbanization.

1. Introduction. The process of urbanization in the Arabic-speaking world is not new: already in the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldun (1967) described Bedouins' sedentarization (mainly by urbanization) as a cyclic and normal social process. Movement of rural or nomadic populations to urban centers, which is the most frequent direction of demographic migration, has not stopped since then. Sedentarization and urbanization have probably increased in the last century due to changing cultural and economic conditions throughout the world. Contact between different populations has always led to language contact and linguistic change (see, e.g., Cadora 1992; Owens 1998; Thomason 2001). The occurrence of these processes in the Arabic-speaking world is therefore neither unique nor surprising. A detailed study of current processes may, however, uncover aspects of them that previously have not been clear or known to researchers, or may not even exist elsewhere.

Studies of urbanization of Arabic dialects today often analyze change in phonological or lexical elements (e.g., Benrabah 1994; Jabeur 1987; Miller 2003; Owens 2004). The present article, however, deals with a type of morphosyntactic change that to date has not been studied in Arabic dialects spoken in Israel, or elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world[1]—namely, "gender switch," the use of masculine instead of feminine forms in female speech. Our research has been motivated in part by anecdotal accounts of gender switch encountered in the field. In this study, we systematically investigate the manner, extent, and conditions of usage of gender switch in two urban dialects: that of the town of Tire in the "Triangle" in the center of Israel, and that of Nazareth in the Galilee area in the north of Israel. (See table 1 for population census data.)

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Table 1. Population of the Locations Studied in Galilee and the Triangle

LOCATION	POPULATION
GALILEE	
Nazareth	62,700
Kafar Kanna	16,600
Reine	15,000
Mashhed	6,500
TRIANGLE	
Tire	19,800
Kafar Qara	13,500

SOURCE: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003.

The towns of Tire and Nazareth are both officially considered "urban" because of their demographic composition and the way of life of their inhabitants. However, each town exhibits a different geographical dialect—that of the Triangle and that of Galilee; thus, gender marking in these dialects can be examined comparatively.

Arabic is well-known for its diglossia (Ferguson 1959) between the many dialects of spoken Arabic and the more prestigious literary language ("Literary," "Written," "Modern," or "Standard" Arabic), which is used for official and written communication (and sometimes for spoken communication) by Arabic speakers throughout the world (Holes 1995). Literary Arabic has therefore also been taken into consideration in our research. In the following sections, our study is described and its findings are summarized.

2. Our study.

2.1. The towns studied: Nazareth and Tire. The town of Nazareth has a long and continuous history starting before the Christian era, and it has held an especially important place in the history of Christianity. In the twentieth century, the population of Nazareth grew considerably, and its Christian communities became the majority for the first time in history with the beginning of British Mandate rule of Palestine in 1918. At that time, the population of the town was about fifteen thousand. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, however, Nazareth has attracted many new inhabitants, so that its population is now more than sixty thousand. Of this number, two-thirds are Muslim and one-third are Christian (Havelova 2000). It is the largest Arab town in Galilee, and the center of economic and industrial activity for the Arab population. (Jewish speakers of Hebrew live in the nearby town of Natsrat Illit 'Upper Nazareth', which is also inhabited by native speakers of Arabic.)

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Tire is located in the northern part of the Triangle. This region includes several villages and small towns that exhibit a complex variety of dialects. The region can be divided into at least two areas—the "northern" and "southern" Triangle, as they are called informally. The dialect of Tire differs to some extent from other dialects of the Triangle, but even Jastrow (2004), whose article is the only study in English (as far as we know) that describes the Triangle dialect, does not refer to individual localities within the Triangle and differences between them. Unlike Nazareth, the demographic composition of the population in Tire has not changed significantly during the twentieth century, and its dialect has developed without external interference. All of the Triangle inhabitants are Muslims (no Christians live there). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Tire was a village, but since 1948 its population has grown without significant immigration, and it is now officially recognized as an "urban locality."

The urban municipalities of Tire and Nazareth differ in geographical setting, demographic composition, and economic development. The differences in demographic composition and economic development are likely due to the religious, social, and historical differences of these particular areas. It should be noted that in Nazareth it is often impossible to distinguish one's religious affiliation by speech features alone (Havelova 2000). (However, sometimes Muslim women use [k] for the phoneme *q*, while Christian women almost always use the glottal stop [ʔ] for *q*. There are also dialectal differences between the Muslim speakers in Nazareth and the Triangle, but they will not concern us here.)

2.2. Features of the dialects under study. The dialects of Tire and Nazareth form two geographical groups. As described at the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g., Bauer 1915; Bergsträsser 1915), some of the basic distinctions between these two dialect groups involve the morphology of plural number and gender forms in pronominal and verbal declensions. In the dialect of Nazareth, there is no gender distinction for the plural forms of personal pronouns and verb paradigms (a phenomenon sometimes called "gender neutralization"). Gender distinction is retained, however, in Tire and other Triangle dialects, as in Literary Arabic, and in other rural and Bedouin dialects of Galilee (see Fischer and Jastrow 1980; Rosenhouse 1984). The dichotomy between rural and urban dialects seems to be valid also for the use of plural feminine adjectival forms. Table 2 summarizes the main morphological distinctions between the urban and the rural dialects for personal pronouns and verb paradigms. Some morphological forms are common to both dialectal areas (e.g., demonstrative pronouns and active participles), but the inflected verb forms and personal pronouns differ, since the urban dialects do not distinguish gender in these forms, unlike the rural dialects. Demographic and social changes since 1948, however, have brought about transitional changes in the details of this morphological classification (see Rosenhouse in press).

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Table 2. Morphological Differences between Galilee and Triangle Dialects

CATEGORY	GALILEE FORM		TRIANGLE FORM	
PERSONAL PRONOUNS	COMMON		MASCULINE	FEMININE
Second person plural	*intu*		*ʔintu*	*ʔinten*
Third person plural	*hinne*		*humme*	*hinne*
DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS	COMMON		COMMON	
Near plural	*hado:la*		*haḏo:l*	
Far plural	*hadla:k*		*haḏla:k*	
VERB, PERFECT	COMMON		MASCULINE	FEMININE
Second person plural	*katabtu*		*katabtu*	*katabten*
Third person plural	*katabu*		*katabu*	*kataben*
VERB, IMPERFECT	COMMON		MASCULINE	FEMININE
Second person plural	*btikitbu*		*btikitbu*	*btikitben*
Third person plural	*bikitbu*		*bikitbu*	*bikitben*
VERB, ACTIVE PARTICIPLES	MASCULINE		MASCULINE	
With masculine plural subject	*ka:tbi:n*		*ka:tbi:n*	
	MASCULINE	FEMININE	MASCULINE	FEMININE
With feminine plural subject	*ka:tbi:n*	*ka:tba:t*	*ka:tbi:n*	*ka:tba:t*

In this context, we examine the phenomenon of gender switch in the Tire dialect in comparison with the Nazareth dialect.

2.3. Methodology. This article is based on the findings of fieldwork reported by Dbayyat (2004). The latter study began with a comprehensive questionnaire with 209 sentences containing all of the person-number combinations (first, second, and third persons, singular and plural) of the basic verb forms and patterns in verbal sentences, as well as adjective and nominal patterns in nominal sentences.[2] Since the study revealed that only adjectives (including present participle forms) were statistically significant, only this morphological category is discussed here. This category included seven different adjectival patterns (such as *taˤba:n* 'tired', *ʔasmar* 'darkish', *xawwi:f* 'coward', *baTi:ʔ* 'slow') and active (e.g., *ħa:ki* 'speaking') and passive (e.g., *mažru:ħ* 'wounded') participle forms, all with semantically positive or negative meanings (e.g., *farħa:n* 'happy', *taˤba:n* 'tired'). Active participles in Arabic can be used in either verbal (aspectual) or nominal functions (as adjectives or nouns), depending on syntactic and semantic context (see, e.g., Wright [1962] for Literary Arabic and Eisele [1990] for Cairo Arabic). Our questionnaire included examples of both kinds of function (e.g., *ʔana ša:ˤir* 'I'm a poet' or 'I'm feeling, sensing'). Adjectives, like most other lexical categories, are inflected for gender in Arabic. The (unmarked) masculine

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form, which is usually shorter than the feminine, is considered to be the base form. The feminine is usually formed by adding a suffix to the masculine adjective, pronounced as *-a*, *-e*, or even *-i* in these dialects; for example, the masculine adjective *taʿbaan* in (1a) has the corresponding feminine adjectival form *taʿbaane* in (1b).

(1a) *huwwe taʿbaan*
he tired.M
'He is tired.'

(1b) *hiyye taʿbaan-e*
she tired-F
'She is tired.'

Altogether, our questionnaire contained thirty-one different adjectives embedded in 117 sentences. Each sentence presented a masculine adjective form as a predicate related to a subject in one of the different persons (first, second, and third person in the singular and the plural) instead of the feminine form that standard grammar would require. Thus, for example, in (2a) (from the questionnaire) the masculine active participle *ħa:ki* was presented, rather than the expected (normal) feminine active participial form, as seen in (2b).

(2a) *ʔana ħa:ki bi-l-mni:ħ*
I speaking.M of-DEF-good
'I am speaking good things.'

(2b) *ʔana ħa:kiy-e bi-l-mni:ħ*
I speaking.F of-DEF-good
'I am speaking good things.'

Those who administered the questionnaire explicitly specified that all these utterances were to be used by a female speaker talking about herself, about a female speaker, or to a female listener. The test sentences were thus presented in the nonstandard masculine form in various persons and numbers and the participants had to say whether or not those forms were correct or acceptable in their own dialect.

The feminine form of a small group of adjectives is marked by a different syllabic structure; thus, feminine *samr-a* in (3b) shares its consonantal root with masculine *ʔasmar*, shown in (3a), but not its syllabic structure.

(3a) *ʔana ʔasmar*
I darkish.M
'I am darkish.'

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(3b) *ʔana samr-a*
I darkish-F
'I am darkish.'

As it turned out, respondents to the questionnaire invariably rejected test sentences with masculine forms for this group of adjectives.

Other examples of sentences from the questionnaire with masculine forms for feminine referents are given in (4)–(10).

(4) *ʔana da:iman farħa:n*
I always happy.M
'I am always happy'
(expected: *farħa:ne* [F])

(5) *ʔana mažru:ħ min illi Sa:r*
I hurt.M from that.which happened
'I am hurt by what happened.'
(passive participle; expected: *mažru:ħa* [F])

(6) *ʔana mnarfez ʕaša:n el-ħarb*
I nervous.M because.of the-war
'I am nervous because of the war.'
(passive participle; expected: *mnarfeze* [F])

(7) *ʔinti naSra:wi/qarʕawi*
you.F.SG Nazarene.M/from.Kafar.Qara.M
'You are Nazarene/native of Kafar Qara.'
(expected: *naSra:wiyyi/qarʕawiyyi* [F])

(8) *ʔinti mabsu:T ʕaša:n el-ʕi:d*
you.F.SG happy/satisfied.M because.of the-holiday
'You are happy/satisfied because of the holiday.'
(passive participle; expected: *mabsu:T-a* [F])

(9) *hiyye baTiʔ kti:r*
she slow.M much
'She is very slow.'
(expected: for *baTiʔa* [F])

(10) *hinne mitwattri:n kti:r*
they.F.PL tense.M.PL much
'They (female) are very tense.'
(expected: *mitwattra:t* [F.PL])

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The items in this list were presented in random order to sixty female participants, thirty from each of the two dialect areas, Galilee and the Triangle. In each dialect group, the participants belonged to three age groups: ten teenage schoolgirls, ten young women aged twenty to twenty-five years old, and ten women over fifty years old.

In addition to the questionnaire, the participants performed three other tasks. First, they took part in a "role-play" telephone conversation with a close female friend. Second, immediately after the role play, they were asked to write a letter to a close female friend in Literary Arabic. Not all the participants agreed to write these letters, and thus only twenty letters were used for the analysis. Lastly, they were asked to express their opinions about the use of the gender switch phenomenon that we were investigating—its use in their specific dialect or in other dialects where they knew it existed, even if they had not been aware of its use prior to our research. This discussion was recorded and transcribed. Only at this stage, by this task, did they learn that gender switch was the focus of the study. (See examples of such texts in the appendix.)

The findings of the tasks were collected, classified, and analyzed, and the questionnaire results were subjected to statistical analysis. The study thus combines direct and indirect methods, enabling us to draw valid conclusions about the studied feature.

3. The findings. The main results of our study are presented here separately for each town (and area). The data are summarized in table 3, which shows the location of gender switch and its distribution for the various persons in the two dialect regions.

Table 3. Summary of Rates of Use of Masculine Forms in Different Morphological Categories in Galilee and the Triangle Based on the Questionnaire

	SINGULAR			PLURAL		
	PRONOUNS	VERBS	NOUNS	PRONOUNS	VERBS	NOUNS
GALILEE						
FIRST PERSON	–	–	+4%	–	–	+46.4%
SECOND PERSON	–	+	+	–	–	+29.7%
THIRD PERSON	+	+	+	–	–	+12.9%
TRIANGLE						
FIRST PERSON	–	–	+73%	–	–	+82.2%
SECOND PERSON	–	+	+	+	+	+0.9%
THIRD PERSON	+	+	+	+	+	+0.6%

NOTE: A minus sign (–) indicates that the dialect does not distinguish gender for this person and category; a plus sign (+) indicates that the dialect distinguishes gender for that person and category. The table summarizes all of the places studied, not only Nazareth and Tire.

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The table presents the percentage of use of the masculine form rather than the expected feminine form in pronouns, verbs, nouns, and adjectives for subjects in different persons and for singular and plural forms. The plus sign means that for a given category, the grammar of the dialect in question distinguishes masculine from feminine forms, and therefore that gender switch (i.e., replacement of feminine by masculine form) is technically possible. The minus sign means that the normal grammatical rules of the dialect in question do not distinguish masculine from feminine forms for a given category (as they usually use the masculine forms also for feminine sentence components), so that the phenomenon of gender switch as found in the Triangle is not possible. For those instances where gender switch is possible, the rates (in the form of their percentage) with which it actually occurred are shown, if greater than zero. (For statistical details, see Dbayyat [2004].)

3.1. Tire (the Triangle). Most speakers in Tire used the type of gender switch in which singular masculine forms substitute for singular feminine ones in their speech. Most of these special gender switch cases by the Tire speakers occurred in the first person singular.[3]

Lexeme-dependent differences were found in the rate of use of gender switch. Some forms were used in the masculine more than others; that is, not all the lexemes studied were treated equally.

Differences were found in the use of masculine forms (including active and passive participle forms) for semantically positive or negative adjectives. For the most part, it was semantically negative lexemes that occurred in the singular masculine form (as when the speaker says about herself that she is tired, sad, or unhappy), rather than positive lexemes.

Education was not a significant factor in the Triangle. Both educated women (e.g., teachers and lawyers) and schoolgirls used singular gender switch forms.

Age was found to be statistically significant in the development of this kind of gender switch in words with first person singular referents. The older the age category, the greater the number of women in it who used (any amount of) gender switch.

In the role-play phone calls and the free conversation tasks, Triangle speakers used gender switch and considered it as positive, normal, and legitimate, and not something to be ashamed of (see example 2 in the appendix).[4]

Written performance in the letters in Literary Arabic (a task not included in the questionnaire) revealed no trace of the gender switch phenomenon.

3.2. Nazareth (Galilee). Most of the women in Galilee did not use this gender switch pattern for the first person singular. When women did use masculine instead of feminine forms, it was only in participles referring to a first person plural subject, as well as for other persons in the plural, as expected for this dialect in accordance with the general convention there (see table 2).

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Older women showed a greater tendency than young participants to use feminine forms where Literary Arabic rules require them (in singular and plural persons), rather than masculine forms, which are the dialectal norm (this is the reverse of the tendency in the Triangle). This tendency could likely be correlated to education or to employment, but it has not been statistically studied.

Traces of the gender-switch phenomenon in the Triangle have been found in the speech of a very few old women (over seventy years old) with little formal education. The expression *ʔana ʿa:ref* 'I know (M.SG)' occurs in the questionnaire and a few times in the recorded data. Since this is the only expression in the Nazareth data where a masculine singular form is used for a feminine referent (besides *ǧa:y*, discussed in section 4.2 below), it should be regarded as a fixed formula—a fossilized form. (The same fixed formula, again usually with masculine form, is well known beyond Nazareth as well.)

A large proportion of the participants had not heard about the gender switch phenomenon of the Triangle prior to our research. When asked about gender switch in the free conversations, the women's attitude to this phenomenon was entirely negative (see appendix).

Written performance in the letters in Literary Arabic (a task not included in the questionnaire) revealed no trace of the gender switch phenomenon.

4. Discussion. The study of gender as a category and its use in modern colloquial Arabic has taken many directions, since gender is expressed in various differing manners in the various Arabic dialects.[5] The particular phenomenon discussed here—the use of masculine instead of feminine forms by female speakers—is entirely different from those and has not been investigated in earlier studies.

Nonetheless, gender switch phenomena have been reported in many languages, including Modern Hebrew (for a survey, see Tobin [2001]).[6] The motivation for the development of gender switch in Hebrew as described by Tobin (2001) seems to differ from that of the Arabic phenomenon studied in the present article. In Hebrew, gender switch can refer equally to the interlocutor or to the speaker herself in a rather caritative (endearing) function; in Arabic, gender switch appears only when referring to the speaker herself and in a function that cannot always be described as caritative.[7]

This article has shown that this kind of gender switch occurs in specific lexemes or morphological patterns and semantic categories; some conditions seem to be active for adjectives of certain forms, while other conditions apply to verbal forms. Dbayyat (2004) shows some significant trends, but the exact details of the lexical phenomena included in these groups require further research. These details are not considered here because they are beyond the scope of the present article.

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We have seen this type of gender switch in the singular (at least) in other urban and rural Triangle dialects. Since it does not exist in Galilee as a living, productive feature, it may be viewed as a Triangle feature. In the Triangle locations studied, this feature seems to be thriving and expanding, but according to testimonies collected in Galilee, it still may not be acceptable outside the Triangle. Moreover, many of the Galilee speakers interviewed were not aware of the existence of gender switch prior to our study.

4.1. Differences between dialect areas. A number of observations can be made about the differences between the two dialect areas and their implications regarding the phenomenon of gender switch.

As in most Arabic-speaking communities, there is variation between urban and rural dialects in Israel. But this variation is not significant enough to explain the development of gender switch, since both in the Triangle and Galilee there is no difference between the behavior patterns of rural and urban women with respect to the features at issue—gender switch is found in both urban and rural dialects in the Triangle, but not in both urban and rural dialects in Galilee.

Education (obligatory schooling in Israel), however, plays a significant role in speakers' linguistic development. The fact that children learn the "correct" feminine forms at school, that is, those conforming to Literary Arabic, has a strong influence on shaping adult language habits and writing skills (and linguistic or metalinguistic awareness). Triangle women know that they should use the feminine forms and in what circumstances they should do so. Nevertheless, they use gender switch. When asked about it, they admit to using gender switch in the first person singular in spontaneous discourse. Regardless of differences in the level of education, Triangle women use gender switch. Accordingly, education in itself cannot be a determining factor in the use of gender switch. In Galilee, however, there are significant differences among the different age groups. We assume that the education that women acquire, including exposure to the use of "normative" feminine forms, may affect these results over the course of time.

External social pressure on female speakers of non-Triangle dialects is apparently a major factor in Triangle women's decision to discontinue the use of gender switch (see text 1 in the appendix). Similar dialect-internal sociolinguistic factors also seem to play a role in the development of this phenomenon in the Triangle (see text 3 in the appendix).

The behavior pattern of Triangle women might be thought to conflict with sociolinguistic findings for other languages that have exhibited a tendency for women to use prestigious language models more than men (Chambers 1995; Trudgill 1986). Since Arabic has not only dialects, but also diglossia (Ferguson 1959), role models of good speech for Arabic speakers are either Literary Arabic or the prestigious local dialect (e.g., Ibrahim 1986), which is usually urban. In several Arabic linguistic communities, women often (but not always) tend to

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identify the features of the prestigious local dialect with men's speech (see Benrabah 1994). In this regard, gender switch in Tire and the Triangle has some peculiarities (since it is morphosemantic rather than phonological or lexical, as in other studies), but probably does not contradict the above sociolinguistic theories described, e.g., by Chambers (1995:139–43).

In the Triangle, both rural and urban women use gender switch spontaneously, unlike in Galilee, where urban and rural women do not diverge from the normative or conventional rules of either Literary Arabic or the local colloquial dialects. A locally prestigious feature as a factor on its own is thus also insufficient to explain the different situation in the two dialect areas (towns) under discussion, because our study demonstrates differences between the linguistic behavior of women in the Triangle and Galilee in this respect.

The gender switch phenomenon in the Triangle is remarkable also because, unlike features of phonology or morphology that distinguish rural dialects from urban dialects, it does not distinguish between rural and urban dialects. An example of a phonological distinctive feature is the pronunciation of *q*. The "original" or traditional Nazareth pronunciation of this consonant (as a pharyngealized *k*) is quite distinct from its pronunciation in the rural, Bedouin, and urban dialects around it, whether [q], [g], [ǧ], or [ʔ] (depending on dialect and speaker's gender). In the Triangle, phonological and morphological phenomena seem to be similar both in the localities that have become officially urban, such as Tire, and in adjacent villages. Rural features of this area, such as an affricated *k* (i.e., *č*) as well as gender distinctions in the plural of verbs and pronouns, persist, preserving the Triangle's "rural" nature even in towns (see Jastrow 2004).[8]

Gender switch is found throughout the Triangle area, where it seems to be expanding (although we still do not know in detail how widely it occurs there and how much variation exists even within the groups studied). Further investigation is needed to determine whether gender switch should be considered a rural or a regional feature shared by both urban and rural speakers in the Triangle area, and whether there is any distinction between these dialects in this and other respects in this area.

The kind of gender switch reported on in this article may also have existed in Galilee in the past, as suggested by a few testimonies we collected there. Thus, theoretically, it could have been a rural feature that, for some reason, has become prevalent in the Triangle, but has disappeared from Galilee for other reasons. Apparently, it is also attested in a collection of stories from Bir Zet (another rural dialect area to the south of the Triangle) from the beginning of the twentieth century (Schmidt and Kahle 1918–30). Moreover, al-Wer (2004) notes that this feature also exists in some Jordanian dialects. These facts may imply that gender switch used to be a recessive rural feature that somehow survived in certain related areas and populations, disappeared in others, and has begun to flourish now in the Triangle. This kind of gender switch may also be considered a neo-urban feature in the Triangle, if further study demonstrates

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its growth in the urban localities of the Triangle in particular, regardless of their origin and history.

Alternatively, the dialect of female speakers in the towns of the Triangle region might be undergoing an innovative stage of gender neutralization that affects singular adjectives and not plural participles and verbal forms, as in Galilee and other dialects; however, this possibility seems rather far-fetched.

4.2. Restrictions on the use of gender switch. The present study reveals that gender switch is practically limited to the first person singular. It is also restricted, on the whole, to semantically negative linguistic forms (words such as 'tired', 'sad', or 'unhappy'). We wish to suggest the following explanations for these restrictions.

The limitation of gender switch to the first person could be assumed to follow from analogy to the verbal and pronominal systems, in which gender is distinguished (in certain dialects) only for second and third persons in the singular and, in certain rural dialects, for second and third persons in the plural. In Arabic, the active participle (also included in our test questions) generally forms an integral part of the verbal aspectual system (Eisele 1990; Henkin 1985), but can also simultaneously have nominal functions (see Piamenta 1964:455–95), depending on its lexical-semantic features, and the distinction between the two syntactic functions is sometimes blurred. Thus, gender switch of active participles could have been the basis for the analogy, and as a result of the functional association of participles with nominals, it later spread to other nominal adjective patterns.

Our suggestion that gender switch is restricted to semantically negative words is not the whole story, since our examples also include nonnegative items. Still, the frequency rate of gender switch in negative forms is higher than that in nonnegative forms.

We would also like to suggest an articulatory phonetic motivation for gender switch. There is some reason to think that articulatory effort was involved in gender switch, since the feminine suffix is omitted in other contexts, too—for example, the active participle form of the verb 'come' (*ğa:y* 'coming.M.SG' for *ğa:ye* 'coming.F.SG') and some nouns whose stems end in *a:y* (which fluctuate between omitting and retaining the feminine suffix), such as *kanaba:y(e)* 'sofa' and *mra:y(e)* 'mirror'. Admittedly, *ğa:y* was the only active participle in Galilee that was not found with the feminine suffix in our study (except for the fossilized *ʔana ʿa:ref* 'I know' mentioned in section 3.2 above). Nonetheless, it is clear that the background, scope, and motivation of gender switch need to be further explored.[9]

Since at present intercommunal communication occurs frequently in Israel, the Triangle pattern of gender switch may spread more rapidly in the future and, perhaps, also to the second and third persons (as in Hebrew when a speaker addresses her friend or speaks about another female [Tobin 2001]). Gender

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switch in its present form might then be only the beginning of a general linguistic change. However, in the long run, it might also simply die out as a result of sociolinguistic pressures from non-Triangle speakers.

4.3. Urban dialects. As mentioned in section 1, in the early twentieth century, Arabic spoken in Israel was characterized by a dichotomy between sedentary dialects (urban and rural) and Bedouin dialects (e.g., Bauer 1915; Bergsträsser 1915). We would like to suggest that during the century three types of urban dialects have emerged in this region—original urban, original rural, and mixed. The original urban dialects, such as those of Jerusalem (Piamenta 1964, 2000; Levin 1994), Haifa (Geva-Kleinberger 2004), and Nazareth (Havelova 2000), contrast with the original rural dialects that still exist in many villages today in Galilee, the Triangle, and elsewhere. It seems that such "pure" urban dialects are gradually dying out in Israel, however, because of recent internal migration (see Piamenta [2000] concerning Judeo-Jerusalem Arabic and its gradual deterioration, as well as Geva-Kleinberger [2004] for Haifa and Havelova [2000] for Nazareth).

Some urban dialects, such as that of Tire, in fact, seem to be a continuation of the rural dialects. They are "urban," not because of linguistic changes that have taken place in their structure, but because of a change in the designation of these localities for official state purposes, following modernization trends. This change in official designation is not unmotivated, since it accords with the new ways of life of the inhabitants in these locations, including places of employment, profession types, socioeconomic status, etc., as well as with population growth. In time, such a designation may have implications for the status of the new towns when compared to villages in the same region; this, in turn, might even lead to the emergence of new dialectal features and the transformation of these towns into centers of linguistic influence.

Gradual or sudden immigration of inhabitants from rural or other localities into large towns, such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, and Nazareth has resulted in mixed urban localities. It is often still possible to distinguish the various origins of the speakers, but, on the whole, these dialects have become mixed with the original urban dialect and are slowly beginning to crystalize into a koiné of "neo-urban dialects" in these towns.

5. Conclusion. Although various types of urban dialects exist elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world (e.g., Miller 2003) and in other languages (see Trudgill 1986:110), Arabic dialects in Israel have to date not been explicitly described in this light. Moreover, our description of the situation in Israel differs from that of Miller's classification (2004). As a result, the feature of gender switch provides an opportunity to study the effects of urbanization in Israel, not only in one area, but from a global perspective.

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Appendix: Examples of Recorded Opinions about Gender Switch by Participants from Nazareth, Kafar Qara, and Tire

1. A Christian computer studies student, twenty-three years old, single, from Nazareth (Galilee).

ʔana b-ħaya:te ma: fakkarteš ʔinno fi: na:s biħko he:k. bas sitte ka:nat tʔu:l "ʔana ʕa:ref" w-kolna kunna nistaġreb minha. bas lamma sakanet b-iž-ža:mʕa maʕ binet min il-mutallat konet ʔafakkirha btimzaħ ʔaw btitxawwaT bas maʕ il-waʔet ^{H}hoftaʕti^{H} inno ha:y luġatha w-ʔultilha w-hi: S:arat tintbeh. ʔawwal ma ka:nateš tintbeh ^{H}bexlal^{H}, . . . hu ʔiše ^{H}mikubal^{H} ʕindhin bas ħasab ra:ye ^{H}pogeyyaʕ^{H} b-il-mara w-b-il-^{H}maʕma:d^{H} tabaʕha.

'In my life I never thought that there were people who talk like that. But my grandmother used to say, "I know" (M), and we all used to wonder at her. But when I lived in the university with a girl from the Triangle, I thought that she was joking or kidding, but in time I ^{H}was surprised^{H} [to find] that it was her language and I told her [so], and she started to pay attention [to it]. At first she did not pay attention to it ^{H}at all^{H}. . . . This is ^{H}accepted^{H} among them [in the region], but in my opinion this ^{H}damages^{H} the woman and her ^{H}status^{H}.'

2. A Muslim student of education, twenty years old, single, from Kafar Qara (the Triangle).

ʔana b-Sara:ħa kont ʔaħke b-il-mod̲akkar koll il waqet, bas min lamma roħet w-itʕallamet fi: be:t berl w-šufet bana:t min iš-šama:l Sa:ren yqu:len la-ʔile le:š he:k btiħki fa maʕ il-waqet roħet ʔaħke b-il-moʔannat̲, bas ʕinna b-il-manTiqa ha:da ʔiše ʕa:di w-koll in-na:s btiħke he:k w-fi koll il-kalima:t meš kalima:t xa:SSa b-il-mod̲akkar w-kalima:t xa:SSa b-il-moʔannat.

'The truth is that all the time I spoke in the masculine form, but since I went and studied at Beit Berl [College] and saw girls from the north and they started asking me why I was talking like that, then with time I started talking in the feminine. But with us, in our region, this is a usual thing and all the people speak like that, and [say so] in all the words, and not that in some words the masculine is used and in other words the feminine.'

3. Social worker, fifty-five years old, mother of children, nineteen years of education (doctoral student) from Tire (the Triangle; the speaker is originally from Ramallah).

baʔu:l ʔana ʔinno ha:d̲a l-ʔiše mintšer b-il-qura ʔaktar min il-mudon. ʔana šaxSiyyan kont sa:kne b-il-madi:ne iw-wala marra marr ʕalayy ʔiše min haz-zay. bas lamma ʔaže:t ʕala ʔisraʔi:l b-ži:l t̲amantaʕeš smiʕet ha:d̲e eZ-Za:hira. xawwafatne kt̲i:r li-ʔanno istiʕma:l il-kalima:t inʕika:s l-al-možtamaʕit-tarbawi w-it̲-t̲aqa:fi ʔille ʔinti ʕa:yše fi:. fa min ho:n bdi:t ʔawʕa ʔinno ʔana ʔimma baġu:s maʕhom w-baSi:r ʔaħke zayhom w-ha:d̲a ʔashal ħatta ma ʔaku:n naša:z bena:thom w-ʔimma battxid̲ mawqef. ʔana b-Sara:ħa ʔamra:t bastaʕmel Si:ġet il-mod̲akkar b-il-mofrad bas bantbeh la-ħa:le w-batra:žaʕ. . . .

'I say it is more widespread in the villages than in towns. I personally lived in a town [Ramallah] and never came across such a thing. But when I came to Israel at eighteen years of age I heard this phenomenon. It frightened me very much because word use is a reflection of the educational and cultural community you live in. And from here I started to understand that either I would sink with them and start talking like them and it's easier, so that I won't be exceptional among them, or I would have to take a position. I

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truly sometimes use the masculine singular form but I pay attention to myself and retract [correct] myself. . . .'

NOTE: Hebrew words in the Arabic texts and their English translations are bracketed by superscript [H].

Notes

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Abbreviations. The following abbreviations appear in grammatical glosses: DEF = definite; F = feminine; M = masculine; PL = plural; SG = singular.

Transcription. The following special consonant symbols are used: *ʔ* glottal stop; *ṯ* voiceless interdental fricative; *ḏ* voiced interdental fricative; *ǧ* voiced postalveolar affricate; *ž* voiced postalveolar fricative; *ħ* voiceless pharyngeal fricative; *x* voiceless velar fricative; *š* voiceless postalveolar fricative; *ʿ* voiced pharyngeal fricative; *ġ* voiced velar fricative; *č* voiceless postalveolar affricate; *q* voiceless uvular plosive. Pharyngealized or "emphatic" (*mufaxxama*) segments are written in capital letters: *S* pharyngealized *s*; *D* pharyngealized *d*; *T* pharyngealized *t*; *Z* pharyngealized *ḏ*, *Ḏ*. Long vowels are indicated by a colon (:). Geminated consonants are written double (e.g., *mm*).

1. A similar phenomenon seems to exist in certain dialects in Jordan and Morocco, according to comments made at the workshop "Arab Urban Vernaculars" referred to in the acknowledgments. However, in Israel it may be related to the fact that the concord of verbs and adjectives with nouns is one of a number of features of colloquial Arabic dialects that seem to be undergoing changes. As far as we know, no research has been conducted there on this subject, nor is it mentioned in Prochazka (2004), the latest review on gender as a language category in Arabic dialects, nor in Jastrow (2004).

2. In Arabic, a sentence may have a verbal or a nominal element as predicate.

3. First person verb forms in the perfect or imperfect are neutral to gender indication in Arabic and therefore cannot exhibit such differences. Our findings concerning gender switch are limited to adjectives and participles referring to the first person singular form. (Neutralization occurs in plural forms of verbs, including the first person plural, in many Arabic dialects, including that of Nazareth.)

4. The negative evaluation of gender switch by the speaker of example 3 in the appendix reflects that speaker's origin outside the Triangle.

5. See Prochazka (2004) for a discussion of noun gender in spoken Arabic.

6. The case of Modern Hebrew is mentioned here because Hebrew is another Semitic language, and thus related to Arabic, and because Hebrew is the dominant language in Israel.

7. Though adjectival lexemes with meanings such as 'tired' or 'unhappy' may perhaps belong functionally to a subgroup of "caritative" expressions (i.e., expressions of endearment, extended to self-pity), they are not the only lexemes in this subgroup.

8. At present, other linguistic changes are also in progress in the Triangle, and further studies are needed to clarify the actual situation.

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9. We thank the anonymous reader whose suggestions stimulated us to consider the motivation for limitation of this feature to the first person.

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