

## Overt/Null Subjects in Algerian Arabic: A Quantitative Approach

Although the pro-drop phenomenon has received much attention in the previous literature of Arabic (Eid 1983, Parkinson 1987, Moutaouakil 1989, Schulte-Nafeh 2005), only a few studies have examined this phenomenon using quantitative methods (Owens et al 2010, Omari 2016, Al-Shawashreh 2016). The present study aims to fill in this gap in the literature by investigating the potential influence of a number of sociolinguistic factors on the choice of subject form (null/overt) in Algerian Arabic using the variationist framework (Labov 1972). The factors coded in the study include co-referentiality, topicality, tense form, grammatical person and number, transitivity, semantic class of the verb, animacy, clause type, gender and the bilinguality level (Arabic & French).

The data for this study are based on a spontaneous speech of 22 bilingual speakers obtained through recorded interviews. All the participants acquired Algerian Arabic as their first language; however, they differed in the age period they acquired/learned French. Accordingly, the participants are stratified into two social groups: early and late bilinguals. Early bilinguals (8 females; 3 males) are identified as those who acquired French at home before going to school. The late bilingual group (8 females; 3 males), on the other hand, did not acquire/speak French at home. They started learning French as a school subject at the age of 10.

A total of 2139 tokens were extracted and then analysed in Goldvarb. The multivariate analysis of the data shows that the choice of subject form in Algerian Arabic is constrained by co-referentiality, topicality, tense form, person, the semantic class of the verb. However, none of the extra-linguistic factors was selected as significant for determining subject form. These results reveal that external-social factors do not play a role on subject choice. Only linguistic factors are found to constrain the choice of subject form. Algerian speakers under the influence of L2 French do not seem to undergo attrition, thus encouraging further studies questioning the interface hypothesis (Tsimpli et al. 2006).

Subfield: sociolinguistics, pragmatics.

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