Speech Variation in the Dialect of Basrah

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Abstract:

This research investigates the characteristic phonological and morphological features of Basra dialect in comparison to other *gilit* dialects. The investigation is based on collecting qualitative data in addition to personal observations. Data on the dialect and its varieties were investigated through a questionnaire and interviews with informants. Results showed that the urban dialect of Basra 'Basri' is considered a prestigious variety to which most speakers living in Basra aim for; and that there are even those who aim at a more 'prestigious' variety than Basri, which is urban Baghdadi. Nevertheless, there are unavoidable practices which tend to trace these speakers back to their origin. Despite that many speakers try avoiding the rural features, there are still many features and words which are being used and very common among Basra city-centre due to the huge numbers immigrating to it. While elderly people tend to be the most preservers of dialect tradition and features of their original dialects, many speech features have been replaced and are starting to be extinct.

Key words: Iraqi Arabic, *gilit*, Basri, dialect levelling, phonological features, morphological features

التنوع اللغوي في لهجة البصرة

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الملخص:-

تتناول الدراسة الحالية تحديد الصفات الفونولوجية (البناء الصوتي) والمورفولوجية (البناء التشكيلي للكلمة) المميزة للهجة البصرة بالمقارنة بغيرها من مجموعة لهجات ال (گلت). بالاضافة الى الملاحظات الشخصية، تم جمع البيانات المتعلقة باللهجة وتنوعاتها من خلال استبانة ومقابلات شخصية. اظهرت النتائج توجه أغلبية المتحدثين الساكنين في مدينة البصرة الى اللهجة البصرية الحضرية باعتبارها المرموقة، حتى ان هناك من يحاول ان يتحدث بلهجة اكثر مرموقة من البصرية وهي اللهجة البغدادية الحضرية. ومع ذلك، فان هناك ممارسات لامفر منها والتي يمكن من خلالها تتبع الاصول الجغرافية لاولئك المتحدثين. فبالرغم من ان الكثير من المتحدثين يحاول الابتعاد عن الصفات القروية، الا ان هناك الكثير من الصفات والكلمات القروية التي يتم تداولها والتي تكون شائعة بين اهل مركز المدينة بسبب هجرة الكثير من تلك المناطق اليها. في الوقت الذي يكون فيه كبار السن هم من يحافظ على تقاليد وصفات اللهجة التي ينحدر منها المتحدثون، يبقى هناك الكثير من الصفات التي استبدلت والتي بدأت بالانقراض.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العربية العراقية، لهجة گلت، البصرية، التسوية اللغوية، صفات فونولوجية، صفات مورفولوجية

1. Introduction

The present research investigates dialect levelling within the characteristic phonological and morphological features of the *gilit* dialect of Basra 'Basri', in relation to the other Iraqi dialects. Research on Iraqi Arabic was conducted on the dialect itself or within general investigations of Arabic and its dialects: Van Ess (1918, 1938), O'Leary (1925), Rabin (1951), Erwin (1963), Obrecht (1968), Hetzron (1969), Al-Ani (1970), Ghazeli (1977), MacCurtain (1981), Laradi (1983), Ghalib (1984), Butcher and Ahmad (1987), Abdul-Hassan (1988), Jastrow (1994), Versteegh (2001, 2014), Holes (2004), Rashid (2005, 2006), Bellem (2007), Hassan and Esling (2007), Heselwood (2007), Hassan et al. (2011). Particular dialects in Iraq have been investigated as follows: Baghdadi by McCarthy and Raffouli (1964), Abu-Haidar (1988, 1991); Mosuli by Ahmad (2018); and Hiti by Mohammed (2018).

This dialect has been investigated within the group of the other *gilit* types (Blanc, 1964; Ingham, 1974, 1976, 1982, 1997; Alsiraih, 2013, 2020; Khattab et al., 2018; Alsiraih and Ali, 2019), but not all its features have been tackled and still many aspects have not been unfolded. There are areas and sub-dialects of rural and marsh areas, such as those of the north of Basra, which have not been given special notice despite the diversity of features they contain. Particular focus has been given to Zubairi dialect, a dialect south-east of Basra bordering Kuwait, with investigations tackling its intonation (Ahmad, 1987), syllable structure and syllabification (Ibrahim, 2006), syllabic consonants (Ibrahim, 2007), word stress (Ibrahim, 2014).

Mahdi (1985) carried out a descriptive study of the spoken Arabic of Basra, but he only confined his research to urban Basra and the surrounding suburbs, districts, outskirts and provinces, from al-Fao to al-Haartha; i.e. his study only included areas of the bank of Shatt-al-'Arab. Therefore, his investigation did not cover the north of Basra areas. It is also noted that Mahdi (ibid) did not make any distinction between urban and rural characteristics. The present researcher does not particularly

agree with all of his phoneme descriptions or with some of his examples, but he (ibid) provided a thorough description of the dialect whereby follow up research whether sociophonetic or acoustic is still required in its many aspects in order to further highlight the beautiful diversities before they die out.

2. Iraqi Arabic Varieties

In investigating the dialect of Baghdad, Blanc (1964) found it to have three speech communities based on religious rather than regional classifications: Muslims, Christians and Jews. These three communities have dialectal differences which divide them into two types: the *gilit* (spoken by Muslims) and the *qiltu* (spoken by Christians and Jews). He also found that the rest of the country also follows the same division of sub-dialects, this time based on both geography and religion: the *gilit*, spoken by Muslims of Lower Mesopotamia, and the *qiltu*, Muslims of Upper Mesopotamia and Christians and Jews of the rest of Iraq. That division was made on the basis of one key component which Blanc (ibid: 3) refers to as "the unusually profound and sharply delineated dialectal cleavage". Blanc (ibid: 183) also mentions a third religious community of non-Muslims, the Mandaeans, who speak the dialect of surrounding Muslim speakers of Lower Mesopotamia.

Since the work of Blanc (1964), many researchers have adopted the two dialectal types suggested for Iraqi/Mesopotamian Arabic (see Jastrow, 1994; Ingham, 1974, 1976, 1982 1997; Versteegh, 2001; Bellem, 2007; Alsiraih, 2013; Ahmed, 2018; Mohammed, 2018). However, further classifications to the dialect were later made by other researchers. Ingham (1997) studied the 'Lower Mesopotamia' dialects, and further divided the *gilit* into two sub-dialects he called: Central Mesopotamia, including the speech Baghdad, Mussayab, Hilla and Karbala; and Southern *gilit*, including the speech of Basra, Nasiryya and 'Amara. He also made a distinction between urban and rural areas of Iraq, what he called ḥaḍar /ħaðˤar/ referring to the "riverine-palm-cultivating Arabs of mixed tribal descend" and the 'arab /ʕarab/ referring to the "larger territorially organized tribes living away from the river in the plain or

bādiya /ba:dija/". Ingham's latter distinctions are mostly referred to as the ones between sedentary and nomadic and semi-nomadic populations. In 1974 Ingham started investigating the dialects of Iraq and Khuzistan (Khūzistān /xu:zista:n/), and in 1997 he states that even then "on this outpost of the Arabic Language it became obvious to me that clues of what went on in the dialect could be found by looking across the Shatt-al-ʾArab /ʃatˤtˤalʕarab/ towards Arabia" adding that (1997, ix):

The 'Rural' dialect ... showed considerably more resemblance to the dialects of Arabia than did the Urban and even among speakers of the Urban type, archaisms reflecting Arabian speech were often used to gain an effect of solemnity or high flown importance on particular occasions. This suggested a picture of differential kinship towards the dialects and culture of Arabia, the Urban type being more strictly Mesopotamian than the Rural. It also showed that the Arabian type of society still functioned as a 'reference group' for the rest, as manifested in poems, stories and in certain regard for the presumed unchanged purity of the way of life across the rivers in the 'deserts' of Arabia.

Following the classifications of Ingham (1997), a similar, yet narrower, classification was made by Abu-Haidar (1988) who found a distinction between varieties of Muslim Baghdadi speech. That distinction differentiates between an urban /xaʃʃ/ ('he entered', i.e. 'he went in', which she considers as "the well-established Baghdadi term") and a rural /tˤabb/ whereby the latter had "found its way" into the speech of the former through immigrations from rural areas to the city of Baghdad. Abu-Haidar (1988) also found that speakers of /xaʃʃ/ would also use /dixal/ but never /tˤabb/, while speakers of /tˤabb/ would never use /xaʃʃ/ (also see Bellem, 2007: 229; Alsiraih, 2013).

Basra, a city in the south of Iraq, has an urban dialect variety that has similarities to what Abu-Haidar (1988) distinguishes as the rural type. However, urban Basri speakers would never use /tˤabb/ nor would they by any means use /xaʃʃ/ either. There are also other distinctions particular to urban Basri speakers which differ from rural Baghdadi and resemble those of the urban or look nothing like any of them. Therefore,

a distinction could be established between urban and rural areas thus adding another variety of speech that is particular to Basra. This establishes a new classification to the *gilit* dialectal type.

3. Basra Populations and Speech Communities

Basra governorate is situated in the south-east of Iraq. It is the only Iraqi city that lies on the Arabian Gulf and is bordered with three countries: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran. It is also considered the most important economic city as it contains Iraq's major oil-fields and all of its harbours. Furthermore, for historical, economic and social reasons, it comprises a diverse of social sectors with dialectal differences based on religion and geographical backgrounds. These characteristics led to it being a major demographic attraction of populations from both outside and inside of Iraq. As a result, Basra is now second in number of population following the capital Baghdad, with about 4 million.

One of the distinctive sub-dialects of Basra is that of the marsh dwellers, locally known as 'Mi'daan', and their dialect known as the Marsh dialect. These people have lived in a remote area being isolated from other communities living on fishing and raising cattle with no or little interaction with town and city dwellers. For generations they kept to themselves and preserved both their traditions and speech. Their dialect has unique vocabulary being pronounced in a unique way with a unique style of speech which distinguishes them from others. They kept isolated until during the regime of Saddam Hussain when the marshes were deliberately dried off for political reasons, leading many of the population to migrate to nearby towns and eventually to the city centre. Kbah (2019: 1) summarises these events stating:

Following the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the marsh dwellers were important elements in the uprising. To end the rebellion, the regime implemented an intensive system of drainage and water diversion structures that desiccated over 90% of the marshes. The reed beds were also burned and poison introduced to the waters. It is estimated that more than 500,000 were displaced, 95,000 of them to Iran, 300,000 internally

displaced, and the remainder to other countries. By January 2003, the majority of the marshes were wastelands.

This resulted in them having to blend in with the people living in these places, which drastically affected their way of living as well as their speech. Consequently, they also had a great impact on the towns and city-centre changing many of its sectors as well as their speech.

An emerging dialect that came with immigrants is that of 'Amara who migrated to Basra in the 1950s in tens of thousands within a few number of years due to poverty and depravation as well as fleeing from the dangers of the flooding of their areas, particularly the flood of 1954. When they fled to Basra, they lived in secluded parts of the city, which helped preserve their original way of life and speech being among it. They have their unique speech reflecting their home dialect 'Amara dialect. However, their speech has many similarities to that of rural areas of Basra; but their immigration was towards the urban city centre with which there were more differences than similarities. With time, they started to mix with the rest of the city-dwellers making changes to their lives and absorbing the new cultural differences and speech variety. Gradually, their dialect was changed particularly that of the younger generations who were born in Basra city. However, the older generations preserved their original culture and dialect as they lived and mostly socialised within their crowded communities. These two distinctions between the two generations led to many still being distinguished as 'Amari from some of their unconscious pronunciations of words or choice of vocabulary.

Another group of immigrants is that from Nasiryya who likewise came in large numbers, although less than those from 'Amara. They also differ from 'Amaris in that they do not live in particular secluded communities and instead live in all places of the city and do not seem to have particular dialectal features that distinguish them from others as is the case with the 'Amari population. They still may have some particular vocabulary items but these do not particularly distinguish them as being from Nasiryya as do in the case of 'Amara.

The original city-dwellers are also from different origins and many still preserve their own dialectal differences. There are those who originate from Gulf countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (particularly from areas of Ihsaa, Najd and Qateef). This population are mainly residents of Basra city. There are also those who speak similar to the cities they are bordering with. People living in Zubair have a dialect similar to that of Kuwait in many of its characteristics. People living in al-Tanuuma (or what is known as 'Shat-al-Arab) have a dialect very similar to people in Khuzistan in Iran (Ingham, 1974, 1976, 1982, 1997). People living in the north of Basra, in villages and small towns, are closer in their speech to varieties of 'Amara.

Basra also has a few minorities, Christians and Mandaeans, who are both religious groups but each speaks a different variety of Iraqi Arabic. Most Christians are divided into two main groups: a group originating from Mosul, and a group originating from Armenia. The latter are of the *qiltu* type and Mendaeans are of the *gilit* (Blanc, 1964: 183). However, many of the Christians, particularly young speakers along with those who spend many hours of the day with *gilit* speakers, have changed their speech towards the *gilit*-type, although a few *qiltu* words and pronunciations would sneak their way into their speech. However, many Christians have fled the city and all of Iraq due the events that happened after 2003 which targeted Christians among others. Basra also had a community of Jews but those left or were forced to leave the country after 1949. Their speech variety belongs to the *qiltu* type (Blanc, 1964).

Let us not forget the dialects of rural areas of Basra. They are the areas of north of Basra: al-Madaina, al-Huwair, al-Qurna, Bany-Mansour, al-Sharish, al-Haartha, al-Garmaa, al-Diar; areas of south of Basra: al-Tanuuma, Abu-al-Khaseeb, al-Fao, Zubair (or al-Zubair). These areas have particular characteristics which differentiate them from others (see: Mahdi, 1985; Ahmad, 1987; Ibrahim, 2005, 2006, 2014). They also carry features similar to neighbouring cities or countries to which they are bordered. We might not see much of these features in people working or studying in the city-centre or who live in educated families and therefore

do not produce them, with some even unaware that such features exist because they do not hear them within their social circle. Others would use them even if they have left their place of origin as they live with a person of an older generation who has an impact on the speech of the entire household. There are also those who tend to live neighbouring relatives and friends from their place of descendent which help preserve many of their dialectal features.

There are also certain practices of speakers which require preserving their rural dialects which is considered as part of their identity. We tend to hear this in the speech of tribal representatives who tend to show pride in their origin and being descendants of their areas and their tribal traditions, among which is their dialectal features. Poets also reflect dialectal features and they usually use vocabulary of rural origin when aiming for sentimental and emotional impacts.

4. Dialect Levelling

Basri dialect is no longer how Blanc (1964) described it 56 years ago. Many demographic changes have taken place which accordingly changed the dialect in many ways. As was earlier mentioned, large numbers of people made their way into the city of Basra through inner-migration from both surrounding rural areas and neighbouring cities as 'Amara and Nasiryya. No real clear-cut distinctions were noted before that, but due to the new-comers the original people of Basra have noticed many changes to their dialect in regard to the vocabulary used as well as how they tend to be pronounced. Despite that, there has been a general tendency for dialect levelling whereby differences tend to gradually fade away towards the more prestigious version of the dialect.

As was earlier mentioned, Basri dialect is considered one of the *gilit* sub-types. However, similar to other *gilit* varieties, it was affected by tribes migrating from the Arabian Peninsula towards Southern and Central Iraq. These tribes brought with them their Beduin and Beduinised dialects, them being either fully nomads, semi-nomads (semi-sedentary) or sedentary populations migrating to Iraq (Blanc, 1964). Sedentary and semi-sedentary populations of Basra have been influenced by these

immigrations leading their speech to be influenced by Beduinism (Blanc, 1964; Ingham, 1997).

Of course many other changes took their way into their speech depending on many variables such as the cities or countries they border: Kuzistani Arabic (Iran), Persian (Iran), and Kuwaiti Arabic (Kuwait); the many occupations they underwent from ancient Mesopotamia to the near present: Persian, Uthmani (Turkish) and British and American (English); and inner-migration from other Iraqi cities or rural areas of Basra itself. All these factors influenced and still continue to influence the speech of Basra.

Gradually, many of the differences underwent changes particularly in Basra city-centre, where almost half of Basra's population lives. As a result, new vocabulary started to emerge, which affected the original sub-dialects of the city with many words fading away or not used at all due to the new comers. Nevertheless, the original Basri dialect, remained the dominant, with immigrants from the rural areas of Basra and the other Southern neighbouring cities, 'Amara and Nasiryya, trying to use this dialect in the aim of becoming part of the city and therefore should speak its dialect; despite the fact that many of their own vocabulary unwillingly impose themselves on their speech. People immigrating from rural areas and towns of Basra to its city, despite having less diversions in dialectal features from those of the city, have gradually changed their speech losing many if not all their original dialects.

Accordingly, all these varieties undergo change in the direction that regional variation would be reduced as a result of the processes of dialect mixing and 'levelling' (Trudgill, 2004: 22). In fact, dialect levelling is one of the 'consequences of dialect mixing' whereby there is a loss of forms that are related to minority as well as socially and linguistically markers (ibid: 23). Trudgill (ibid: 84) also states that levelling comprises losing the variants related to demographic minorities. With the passage of time, the varieties involved in the mixture will undergo reduction. However, Trudgill (ibid: 85) argues that:

...this reduction will not take place in a haphazard manner, or as a result of social factors such as status. In determining who accommodates to who – and therefore which forms are retained and which lost – demographic factors involving proportions of different dialect speakers present will be vital. It should be understood that this is not a matter of one dialect supplanting all other dialects, but of a particular dialect variant of an individual feature supplanting all other variants.

Nevertheless, despite the mixture and levelling processes, some variants would survive, be reallocated and may develop into becoming social class variants, stylistic variants or phonological (i.e. allophonic) variants (ibid: 87).

Dialect levelling is a normal and expected phenomenon which happens within and among dialects due to people moving to and from places. It is "where the features of local accents and dialects are reduced in favour of new features that are adopted by speakers that cover a wider area" (Wyse et al., 2013: 89-90). It is also defined as a "movement toward greater uniformity or decrease in variations among dialects" (Fromkin et al., 2017: 486). "New dialects begin life through levelling, which involves reducing the distinctive characteristics of particular input varieties and adopting new features specific to the peer group" (Cox and Fletcher, 2017); i.e. there is a "loss of distinctive features in favour of features with a high degree of mutual intelligibility and/or high prestige. Sometimes this involves a fair amount of dialect mixture" (Hickey, 2013).

It would be normal for people from rural areas to use their own sub-dialect when in their residential area, but once they leave it, they try their best to avoid it and aim for a more 'prestigious' Basri. They still tend to 'give it away' in a certain word or some pronunciation which would show their origin. Such cases would mostly be found at work, university or when going to a school away from their residential area and further into the city. They might also get laughed or mocked at when using their own sub-dialect so they aim for the Basri. People tend to be cruel and

offensive at times, which do have an impact on rural comers and make them very conscious about how they speak.

The tendency of aiming for the most prestigious variety is termed dialectal 'koines', to which Vesteegh (2014: 182) refers stating that its development is "a special case of dialect contact". In describing the situations in national states, he adds that the dialect of the capital tends to have a huge impact on speakers of nearby areas particularly those living in the countryside. The dialect of the capital becomes the prestigious dialect with people from other areas aiming for it. Versteegh (ibid) gives an example of the situation in Iraq whereby the people aim for the dialect of Muslim Baghdadi even if their own local dialects have more features of Classical Arabic, such as the realisation of /q/ as /q/ and not /g/, whereby considering the voiceless realisation of /q/ being "associated with rural and minority varieties". A particular example is one related to the public speeches of Iraq's former president Saddam Hussein whom Verseegh (ibid) noted to have altered /q/ to /g/ instead of using the rural dialect (his birthplace) of Tikrit.

It is normal for a Basri to hear rural versions of speech. Even speech sounds which used to be only heard by rural populations have grown to be common of Basra speech. Some rural settlers into the city of Basra have retained their speech spreading it into the dialect while speakers of the dialect seem to have been out-numbered or have not tried to preserve their dialect.

Some speakers from the north of Basra and 'Amara would produce words such as the name 'Hussain' as /ħsi:n/ which is produced as /ħsiən/ in urban Basra. The sound /ʒ/ which would never be produced by urban speakers, is a common feature of rural areas; so a word like /dʒi:b/ which is the urban of 'bring' would be pronounced as the rural /ʒi:b/. The question word /ʃma:lkʌm/ meaning 'what's wrong with you (pl.)?' is the rural version of /ʃbi:kum/, which is on its part is the closest to the Standard Arabic /ma:ða: bika/.

What is also interesting is when a non-urban Basri origin would correct the pronunciation or the word choice of an urban Basri origin believing

their speech is the norm. This has happened many times to the informants of the present study, who said they were even mocked for using the Basri-origin word, after which they feel very offended. Such an example is the word /rahaʃ/ 'sesame paste, or what is well-known as Tahinia' which is mostly heard nowadays as /ra:ʃi/, the way other Iraqi cities would call it. A friend from Saudi Arabia said they call it /rahaʃ/ and a friend from Syria who has made linguistic studies on Arabic dialects confirmed this fact. This means that the actual norm of the Gulf area is /rahaʃ/, which means it being a Bedouin word, and that /ra:ʃi/ is the new addition, which has become the norm.

Therefore, these days it is very likely that you come across second generation settlers, who if asked, they will either deny originally being from other places other than Basra city, or admit it but do not feel belonging to them. They do not want to relate to rural or rural-like origins. Nevertheless, their speech 'gives it off' and even if they try to use a Basri dialect a word or two tend to slip off. At the same time, there are people who feel proud of that origin and boast about it. The latter settlers tend to comfortably use their original dialect without feeling the need to change having strong patriotism to their origin, yet they still consider themselves speaking Basri.

Consequently, despite the fact that most immigrants changed their speech in favour of the urban Basri version, they still had effects on the general Basra speech as well as many preserving their variety due to their closed communities. Accordingly, their speech has either become normally heard or has affected Basra speech one way or another.

5. Characteristic Features of Iraqi Arabic Dialects

Previous research on the different Iraqi Arabic dialects show characteristic features common to particular dialectal groups related to religion and/or geographical backgrounds. However, most of what is outlined in the literature is related to the dialects of Baghdad or the general *gilit*-types, with few tackling Basri Iraqi Arabic. The following are the main features outlined in the literature.

- The urban Baghdadi vowel feature particular to them is /u/ whereby the rural Baghdadi use /i/ instead: Abu-Haidar (1988: 78) states that this is related to some imperfect tense forms.
- Vowel length in the negative particles /la:, ma:/ as opposed to short vowels in /la, ma/: According to Abu-Haidar (1988: 78), these are contrasting features between the rural and urban Baghdadi groups, whereby the rural tends to preserve the Standard Arabic long vowel while the urban tends to use the shortened one.
- Short vowels of the *gilit* dialects have undergone 'a merger' of old /i/ and /u/ to /i/, e.g. /ʔuxt/ 'sister' and /bint/'daughter' → /ʔixit/ 'sister' and /bitt/ 'daughter' (Jastraw, 1994: 120). The merger in /bint/ has led to omitting the /n/ and replacing it with another /t/.
- A final consonant cluster: this feature is found in the *qiltu* dialectal groups which tend to preserve Classical and Standard Arabic word-final consonant clusters (-CC), while the *gilit* groups insert a vowel /i/ or /u/ (Versteegh, 2001: 157):

qiltu   *gilit*

'A dog'   /kalb/   /tʃalib/

'Heart'   /qalb/   /galub/

In the case of triple consonant clusters (–CCC-), the vowel is inserted following the first consonant (ibid):

  -CCvC-   **-CCC-**   **-CvCC-**

'They hit'   /juðˤrubu:n/ →   /juðˤrbu:n/ →   /juðˤurbu:n/

- According to Abu-Haidar (1988: 79), the patterns for nominal forms *faʕʕa:l* (CvCCv:C) and *faʕʕa:la* (CvCCv:Cv), have the first vowel /i/ as the urban Baghdadi and /a/ as the rural one.
- Affrication of the phoneme /k/ realised as /tʃ/ (also preserve the Classical and Standard Arabic as /k/) in the *gilit* dialects but mostly preserves as /k/ in the *qiltu* dialects. However, it is also very common that *gilit* speakers would pronounce them as /ka:n/ and /kalb/, although /kalb/ would mostly be meant to be an insult, despite it being a Standard Arabic pronunciation.

        Standard   *qiltu*   *gilit*

Arabic

'He was'   /ka:n/   /ka:n/ **(1)**   /tʃa:n, ka:n/

    'A dog'   /kalb/   /kalib/   /tʃalib/ **(2)** and /kalb/

On the other hand, it is also very likely that *qiltu* speakers would pronounce /tʃ/. This is mostly in loanwords originated from Turkish or Persian whereby both dialectal types produce the following words with /tʃ/ (Abu-Haidar, 1991: 13):

'Tea'   /tʃa:j/   (**of Persian** /tʃɑj/)

'Fault, Guilt'   /sˤu:tʃ/   (**of Turkish** /sutʃ/)

The *gilit* speakers would also use /tʃ/ to differentiate between masculine /-ak/ and feminine /-itʃ/ in the pronominal suffix of the second person singular as in:

  Masculine   **Feminine**

'Your house'   /bɛ:tak/   /bɛ:titʃ/ **(3)**

- Realisations of phoneme /q/: The phoneme /q/ is preserved in *qiltu* dialects almost all the time (Abu-Haidar, 1991), while it is mostly realised as /g/, /k/ and even /dʒ/ and /j/ in the *gilit* dialects. This again is another distinction created by the Bedouin influence on the *gilit* dialects.

    Standard   *qiltu*   *gilit*

'He said'   /qa:la/   /qa:l/   /ga:l/

'Heart'   /qalb/   /qaleb/ or /qalb/   /galˤubˤ/**(4)**

Other examples of the /g/ realisation in Basri are the following (Mahdi, 1985: 57):

        Standard *gilit*

'Scales'   /qabba:n/   /gabˤbˤa:n/

'He cut'   /qasˤsˤa/   /gasˤsˤ/

'A dance'   /raqsˤa/   /ragsˤa/

It is less common to have /q/ realised as /k/ in the *gilit* types and with fewer words as:

Standard   *gilit*

'Time' /waqt/ /wakit/

'He killed' /qatala/ /kital/

However, preserving the Standard Arabic /q/ is also very much common in the *gilit* dialects. Mahdi (1985: 57) believes that the words which preserve /q/seem to be cultural words, neologisms or personal names:

'Old' /qadi:m/

'Train' /qitˤa:r/

'Material (fabric)' /qma:ʃ/

- Shifting the realisation of /q/ to /ɣ/ and /ɣ/ to /q/: This is a phenomenon common to some areas of Basra. The original pronunciation of the phoneme is similar to Standard Arabic and shifted by speakers living in: al-Tanuuma (Shatt-al-'Arab area), Abu-al-Khaseeb and al-Fao, being affected by Khuzistani dialects, with these areas being bordered with Iran; and Zubair, with that area bordering Kuwait. Mahdi (1985: 58) found it to be used by uneducated people Shatt-al-'Arab and Abu-al-Khaseeb. These bordering countries also have the same phenomena present in their speech. Kuwaiti speakers are also divided on its basis into two ethnic groups (Taqi, 2010): those who make the shift from /dʒ/ to /j/ and /ɣ/ to /q/ are Najdis (of Saudi Arabian origin), who have the highest prestigious state in Kuwait; and those who preserve these phonemes 'Ajamis (of Iranian origin), who have the least prestigious state. Interestingly, one would expect 'Ajamis to be the ones making the shift similar to Iranian Kuzistanis, being of Iranian origin themselves.
- The realisation of /dʒ/ as /dʒ/, /j/ and /ʒ/: this feature tends to be found in rural areas of Basra but with each area differing in which realisation to shift to. Mahdi (1985: 50-1) noted the same feature in the areas along the Shaṭṭ-al-'Arab (al-Tanuuma, Abu-al-Khaseeb, al-Fao, al-Haartha).
- The production of the interdental fricatives /θ, ð/ are produced as so by both *qiltu* and *gilit* speakers except Christians who produce them as stop consonants /t, d/ (Blanc, 1964: 19). The same applies

to the interdental pharyngealised consonant /ðˤ/ which again is realised as /dˤ/ by Christians only (Blanc, 1964: 17; Al-Ani, 1970; Abu-Haidar, 1991: 7). Blanc has also noted that the Iraqi *gilit* speakers would realise the interdental fricative /ð/ as the stop /d/ in words of Standard Arabic origin containing the interdental:

Standard Arabic   ***gilit***

'A rat'   /dʒurð/   /dʒrɛ:di:/

- The *gahawa* (*gahāwa* /ɡaha:wa/) *syndrome* (CvCvCv /CCvCv): is a term that refers to the "process of resyllabification in the neighbourhood of gutturals" (Versteegh, 2001: 149). This feature is found in North-east Arabian dialects and Egyptian dialects south of Asyut (influenced by immigrating Bedouines) (ibid):

'To write'   /kitab/   would become   /jaktib/

'To dig'   /ħafar/   would become   /jħafir/

The latter has evolved as follows: /jaħfir/ → /jaħafir/ → /jħafir/

Versteegh's reference to the term *gahawa syndrome* is following Blanc's (1964: 166) comparison between the syllable structure of the urban Baghdadi Muslims and those of the rural speakers of Lower Iraq. Blanc (ibid), who dubbed the term, states that the rural areas show a "typical Bedouin syllabic reshuffling and alternation", which he says is not present n urban Baghdadi.

Abu-Haidar (1988: 78) indirectly refers to the features of the syndrome in the form of what occurs in initial consonant clusters which result from vowel elision in initial syllables. She (ibid) noted them to be occurring only in the *xaʃʃ*-group and labelled them in accordance to the Standard Arabic terminology of syllable-structure /*faʕala*/ (CvCvCv) deriving from it /*faʕa:li:l*/ (CvCv:Cv:C) and /*fʕilla*/ (C'CvCCa). Palva (1984: 16) refers to the syndrome also being shared by the dialects of sheep-rearing tribes in Syro-Mesopotamia. The following are examples from Palva (1984) and Abu-Haidar (1988) which show the *gahawa syndrome* but in a variety of forms of *faʕala*.

CCvCCv   →   'he wears it' *xaʃʃ* /jlibsa/ and *tˤabb* /jilibsa/ [5]

Cv'Cv:C   →   'he says' /ji'ɡu:l/ and 'heavy' /θi'ɡi:l/ [6]

CvCvCv   →   'he became deaf' *xaʃʃ* /tˤraʃʃ/ and *tˤabb* /tˤiraʃ/ [7]
CvCv:Cv:l →   'keys' *xaʃʃ* /mfa:ti:ħ/ and *tˤabb* /mifa:ti:ħ/ [8]

Ingham's (1997: 36) reference to the stem of the 'nomadic' structure /-faʕıl-/ (CvCvC) and the stems of the 'sedentary' structures /-fʕıl-/ (CCvC) or /-fıʕl-/ (CvCC) plus /-vC/, when followed by a suffix beginning with a vowel in strong and final weak verbs with one of the guttural sounds /h, ʕ, ħ, x, ɣ/, also fit the syndrome profiling with similar Standard Arabic terminology. Palva (1984: 11) refers to the same syllable structure with the stem -aXC- (-vCC-) as opposed to -XaC- (-CvC-), X being one /x, ɣ, ħ, ʕ, h/, all of which are part of the Bedouin origin *gahawa* syndrome:

 -XaC-   **-aXC-**
'We, us'   /ħinna/   /ʔiħnna/

- The expressions of Baghdadi /da:/ and /laʕad/ as opposed to the Basri /dʒa:j/ and /tʃa;/, respectively: Versteegh (2014: 145) refers to the /da:/ as being used to express 'continuous/habitual actions'. There is also a third expression /ra:ħ/ referred to by Verdteegh (ibid) in relation to /da:/ and having the same meaning.
- The words /xaʃʃ/, /tˤabb/ and /dixal/ (fig. 17): These were used by Abu-Haidar (1988) to distinguish between the two dialectal type groups: urban and rural Baghdadi (see page: 4).

6. Methodology

6.1 Participants

A total of 259 males and females participated in filling out the questionnaire. They were all Muslims [9] with an age range between 14 and 58. They were approached via personal contacts and contacts of friends who have a wide-range of acquaintances [10]. They occupy different jobs and have different levels of education. The participants come from different backgrounds, 124 (47.8%) from rural areas of Basra and 122 (47.1%) from its city-centre. Only 13 (5%) out of the 259 are originally from other cities: 'Amara, Nasiryya, Baghdad, Najaf, Hilla, Tikrit, Anbar, Samawa, and Waasit. The questionnaire was in Arabic

because not all participants understand English. They received the link to the questionnaire and answered then submitted their answers.

As for the interviews, participants were personally contacted and interviewed through social media and every day friendly 'chatting'. They belong to different age groups. One of the informants is a 77 year old retired Professor of Geography, who was the main informant both professionally and age-wise due to experience, being a Basri himself. They were asked questions about their particular Basri dialect, other dialect groups, and any historical information they know about the populations living in Basra. They were also asked to pronounce words related to the findings of the questionnaire. Their knowledge and information of Basra and its dialects has enriched the findings of the present research.

6.2 Data Collection

Basra dialect has features particular to it distinguishing it from other *gilit*-types. Therefore, in order to describe these features and to see how much they share with the other *gilit* dialects, three types of investigations were carried out over a time-period of 10 months: a Google Forms questionnaire, personal interviews, and personal observations.

The questionnaire [11] consisted of 32 questions none of which revealed the identity of the participants except their age and religion. The questions were divided into two parts. *Part One* is about their place of residence in Basra, which city their parents are originally from, which area of Basra their parents are originally from, in addition to 9 questions about different aspects of the dialects they speak such as their feelings towards how they speak in comparison to the dialect of Basra city-centre, if they use or pronounce words different from the city-centre, and how would they feel if they were told they speak a different dialect from it. *Part two* consists of 18 questions about different words and contexts asking them to choose which words they themselves, their families, the people in their area of residence or elderly people would use.

However, some features required participants to hear the pronunciation of words to understand how to respond. In a pilot investigation, it was

noted that merely explaining in writing how the sound or word is pronounced created confusion and after enquiries it was revealed they have misunderstood it to be quite the opposite of what was intended, some did not even read the full explanations and so hastily replied. Due to the large number of participants and most being friends of friends, such questions could not be part of the final version of the questionnaire. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, i.e. based upon observations of the researcher, the informants, and a questionnaire, no statistical tests were conducted and only percentages in regard to the number of participants will be presented. Nevertheless, the next section will contain charts representing the results. These required English translations of all the written details displayed on the items, along with phonetic transcriptions of the vocabulary under investigation, since they were all in Arabic in the questionnaire.

6.3 Analysis of Results and Discussion

Analysing the results of the questionnaire showed very impressive results presenting some clear-cut lines distinguishing what the informants use in their speech and what their family, people in their area of residence, and elderly people in general tend to say. It is worth noting that the participants were asked to choose not only what they use but also what they know others use. Results show them being very much aware of what their elderlies and people living in their area use. In many contexts, the participants tend to differ from their own family members in their choice of words as well as how to produce certain sounds. This is what makes these results very interestingly vivid representing the diversity in relation to age and geography.

This section will start with tackling *Part One* of the questionnaire. It is related to how the participants feel about their dialect in comparison to that spoken in the city-centre of Basra. The following is a sum-up of the results (see fig. 1):

1- 'Do you speak a dialect different from that of Basra city-centre?'192 (74.5%) said 'No' and 67 (25.5%) said 'Yes'. These

results show that when it comes to the participants themselves, they do not want to be related to rural areas.

2- 'Do you consider the dialect of Basra city-centre more prestigious than yours?' 195 (74.9%) said 'No' and 64 (25.1%) said 'Yes'. This result is similar to the previous one, showing that those who speak a dialect different from the city-centre also believe it to be more prestigious than their own.

3- 'Do you feel embarrassed when speaking a dialect different from Basra city-centre?' 180 (69.5%) said 'No', only 22 (8.5%) said 'Yes' but yet another 57 (22%) said 'Sometimes'. They still do not want to be related to rural areas but the number of people saying 'No' has started to decrease. It is also noted that saying 'yes' and 'sometimes' are very similar as being totally or partially embarrassed when speaking a different dialect means they have that feeling.

4- 'Do you try to use words different from the ones you are used to? 100 (39%) said 'No', 65 (24.7%) said 'Yes' but also 94 (36.3%) said 'Sometimes. Here, 159 (61%) of the participants are saying that they tend to change their use of vocabulary. This may or may not be rural vocabulary because not all of the 159 said that they spoke a different dialect nor were they all among those who feel embarrassed. Nevertheless, they still are aware that they are changing their use of vocabulary for many reasons mentioned in this research, such as being embarrassed and/or aiming for a prestigious version or merely wanting to fit it.

5- 'Do you try to pronounce words in a different way to the one you are used to?' 124 (48.3%) said 'No', 61 (23.2%) said 'Yes', but also another 74 (28.6%) said 'Sometimes'. These results show how 135 (51.8%) of the participants change their pronunciation of words. This is again similar to no.4 and also be due to the same different mentioned reasons.

6- 'Can you use your dialect in the city-centre without being taunted by others?' 167 (64.5%) said 'Yes', only 12 (4.6%) said 'No' but

also 80 (30.9%) said 'depending on place'. These responses also give an idea that a significant number of speakers are conscious about how they speak and are sensitive to other people's opinions regarding it.

7- 'Does your family or any of your relatives speak a dialect different to that of the city-centre?' 136 (52.1%) said 'Yes' and 123 (47.9%) said 'No'. Questions are gradually allowing us into the real picture of the participants' speech patterns and origins. To this question, more than half (52.1%) of the participants said they have a family member or relatives who speak differently from that of the city-centre.

8- 'Does your family or any of your relatives speak a dialect different to your own?' 154 (59.5%) said 'Yes' and 105 (40.5%) said 'No'. Even more participants than those saying 'Yes' to question no. 8 responded that they have relatives who speak differently from them. This is a clear indication that many people try to avoid dialects of origin and aim for a prestigious one. It also shows the opposite whereby some speakers in rural areas who have relatives speaking other dialects, presumably of the city. This is due to working or studying in the city, and many due to marrying a city-dweller or merely moving into the city after marriage.

9- 'How would you feel if you were told that you speak a rural dialect or merely not speaking the dialect of Basra?'; their answers were as follows:

a- 'The subject is of no importance so I will not give it any thought' was chosen by 94 (36.7%)

b- 'I agree with them and I'm very proud of that' was chosen by 89 (34.4%)

c- 'I agree with them as the matter is out of my hand' was chosen by 20 (7.9%)

d- 'I don't agree with them because I don't speak in any different dialect' was   chosen by 43 (16.6%)

e- 'I don't agree with them and I might be embarrassed' was chosen by 10 (4%)

f- 'I don't agree and I will be raged' was chosen by 3 (1.4%)

Results of question no.9 show that 109 (42.3%) agree, 56 (22%) do not agree, while 94 (36.7%) say they do not consider being told they speak differently as being important. The percentage 42.3% out of a population of 259 shows that many believe they speak a different dialect of Basra city-centre with 34.4% feeling proud to do so. On the other hand, 4% of the participants say if they were told so they would be embarrassed and another 1.4% would be raged; so the latter 5.4% seem very sensitive towards the thought of such a claim and believe they would act upon it by being ashamed or angry.
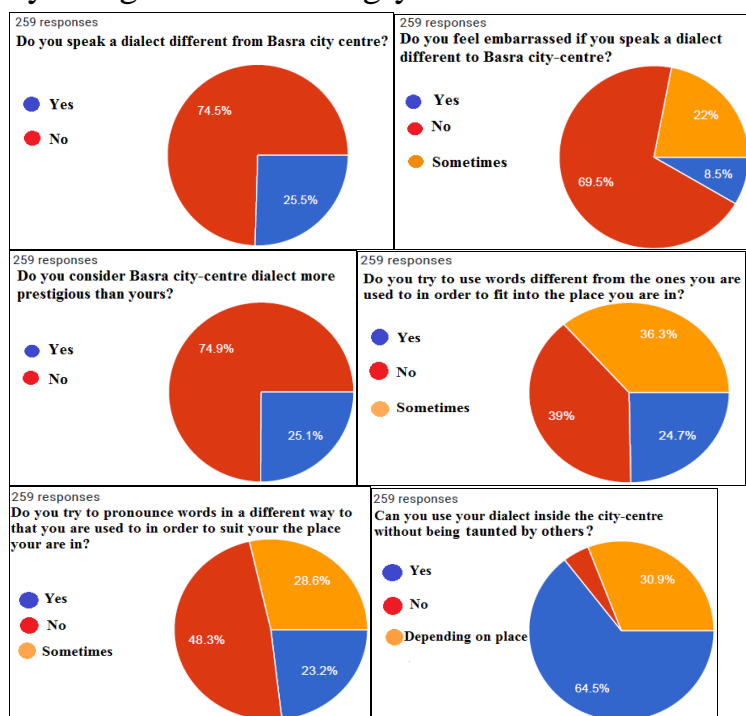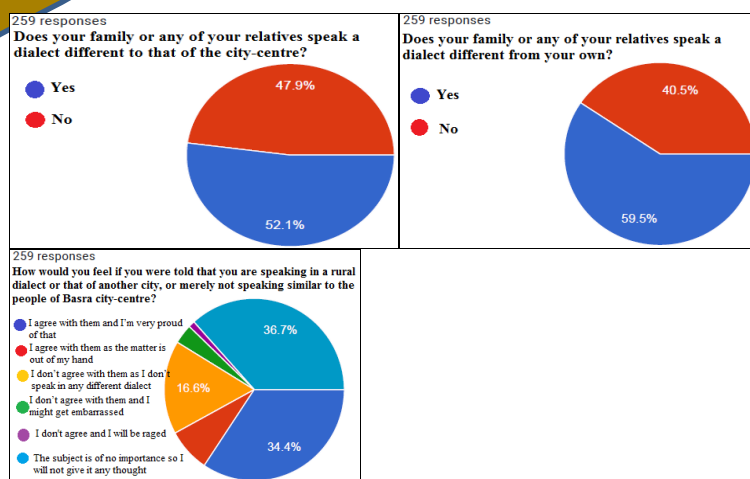
Fig. 1: Percentages of responses of participants towards *Part One* of the questionnaire

The remainder of the section will be tackling **Part Two** of the questionnaire supported by figures of the charts generated by Google Forms. It will contain the description of the main characteristic phonological and morphological features of the *gilit* dialect of Basra (urban/rural) resulting from the present investigation in relation to features of the general *gilit* (urban/rural) and *qiltu* dialects [12]. The following described features are characteristic of Basri dialect and sub-dialects based on personal observations, informants living in Basra city centre and its surrounding areas, and the submitted electronic questionnaire, which is the main source of data.

- The vowels /u/ and /i/: From a personal observation and experience of talking to people from urban Baghdad, the present researcher disagrees with Abu-Haidar (1988) that this characteristic is confined to some imperfect tense forms. It is in fact a general feature to all their speech and is the most common identifying them as being Baghdadi. The /i/ is the general feature of Basri. However, it is still common to hear people from urban Basra to use /u/ to sound Baghdadi (also see fig. 9):

Basri (urban/urban)	Baghdadi urban	Baghdadi rural
'I eat' /ʔa:kil/	/ʔa:kul/	/ʔa:kil/
'She works' /tiʃtiɣil/	/tiʃtuɣul/	/tiʃtiɣil/

'All'   /kill/   /kull/   /kill/ **(13)**

  Vowel length in the negative particles /la:, ma:/ as opposed to short vowels in /la, ma/: For these, Basri is similar to the rural Baghdadi; yet we also hear some people pronouncing the /ma, la/ in Basra nowadays targeting a more prestigious variety:

Basri	**Baghdadi**	**Baghdadi**
(urban/rural)	**urban**	**rural**

'We do not study'   /ma: nidris/   /ma nidrus/   /ma: nidris/

Results show that the characteristic difference between speakers using /ma:/ and those using /ma/ clearly goes for /ma:/ as the norm although some speakers tend to aim for Baghdadi /ma/, not forgetting that few of the informants are of Central Iraqi origin (fig. 2). We can also see that the use of /ma/ tends to decrease gradually when it reaches elderly people.
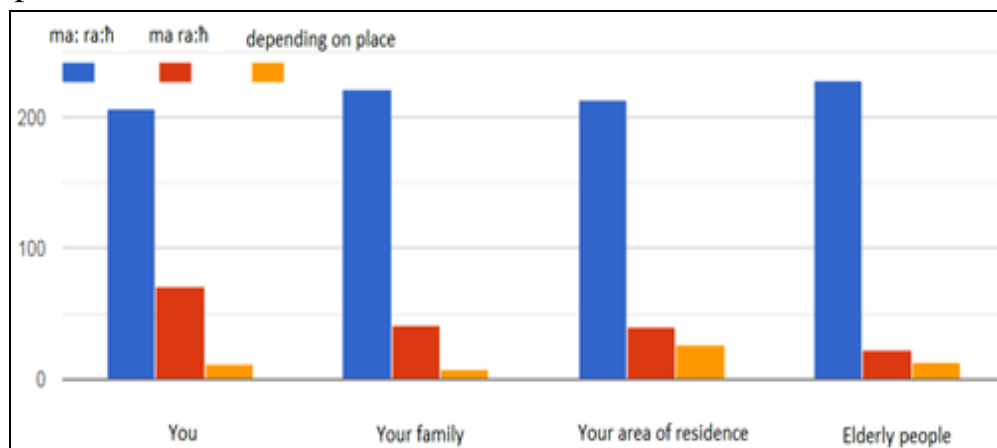
  Fig. 2: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they use /ma:-/ or /ma-/

- The short vowels which have undergone 'a merger' of old /i/ and /u/ to /i/, as in /ʔuxt/ 'sister' and /bint/'daughter' → /ʔixit/ 'sister' and /bitt/ 'daughter'. According to our observation, although the two versions can both be used by urban speakers of Basra, it would be more likely to hear /ʔuxt/ and /bint/being used by the younger and educated speakers, while /bitt/ would be used by rural speakers and urban older generations. In the present research, the

words /binti/ and /bitti/ 'my daughter' and /ʕinda/ and /ʕidda/ 'he has, he has got' are used, which follow the same procedure mentioned above; the /n/ is omitted and replaced by another /t/ or /d/ respectively. There is a significant distinction of responses when participants were asked about which of the two words /binti/ and /bitti/ 'my daughter' would they use. Results show that the use of /binti/ decreases in the direction of people in the areas of residence and elderlies, while the opposite happens to /bitti/ where we see an increase in that direction (fig. 3).
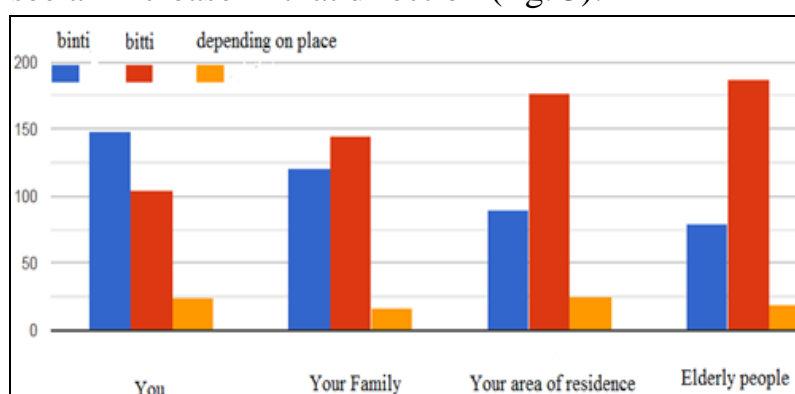
Fig. 3: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they use /binti/ or /bitti/

This also applies the words /ʕinda/ and /ʕidda/ 'he has, he has got' (fig. 4), where the /n/ is omitted and replaced by another /d/. Rates also go in the same direction with a decrease in the use of /ʕinda/ and an increase of /ʕidda/ by elderly people, although not as much as in the case of the word /bitti/.
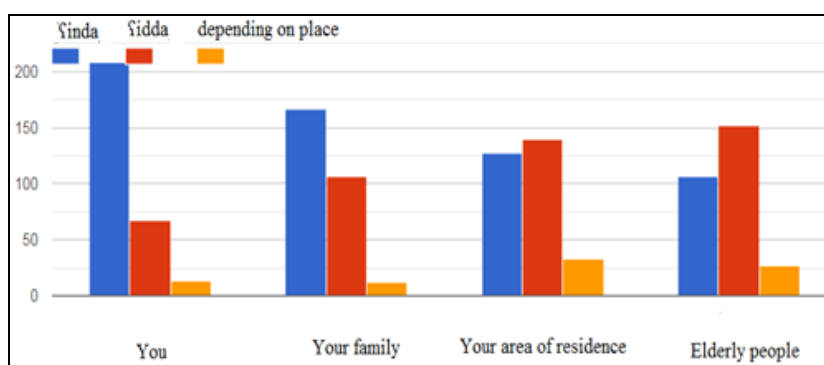

Fig. 4: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they use /ʕinda/ or /ʕidda/

- The ending vowel /a:/ as opposed to /ε:/: This is another noted characteristic between Baghdadi and Basri speakers. Its use was also noted in the speech of speakers of other *gilit*-type varieties. To the knowledge of the present researcher, no previous research has mentioned this feature despite it being an obvious one, to the extent that a Baghdadi speaker would recognise a Basri speaker from simply saying /bε:tna bil basˤra:/ 'our home is in Basra' due to the last vowel in 'Basra'. All the words which have this feature are nouns which seem to contain /r/, a pharyngealised /sˤ, tˤ, dˤ, ðˤ, lˤ, bˤ, mˤ/, a velar /k, g, ɣ, x, q/, or a pharyngeal /ħ, ʕ/ consonant in the mid consonant cluster preceding the word-final vowel [14], as in the following examples:

Basra   **Baghdad**

'Basra'	/basˤra:/	/basˤrε:/
'Police'	/ʃirtˤa:/	/ʃurtˤε:/
'A hat'	/ʃafqa:/	/ʃafqε:/ or /ʃabqε:/
'A squad'	/firqa:/	/furqε:/
'A mouse'	/fa:ra:/	/fa:rε:/

- The diphthong /ie/ or long vowel /ε:/ as opposed to the long vowel /i:/: The tendency of some parts of north of Basra as well as 'Amara comers to pronounce the diphthong /ie/ or the long vowel /ε:/ as a long vowel /i:/, which is considered as a very rural characteristic and most people who pronounce them would aim for the urban diphthong:

Diphthong /ie/   **Long Vowel /i:/**

'Hussain (a name)'	/ħsien/	/ħsi:n/
'Why'	/lieʃ/	/li:ʃ/

Long Vowel /ε:/   Long Vowel /i:/

'Where'	/wε:n/	/wi:n/

- The vowel /u/ realised as /u/ or /ʌ/: This characteristic differentiates urban from rural speakers, respectively. It is used in questions addressing more than one person. You would never hear an urban using it and a rural would shift to /u/ when among

urbans; unless they are fine with their rural version which usually occurs among elderly people and tribal representatives (fig. 5):

Urban		**Rural**	
'How are you? (pl.)'		/ʃlɔ:nkum/	/ʃlɔ:nkʌm/
'Where are you? (pl.)'		/wɛ:nkum/	/wɛ:nkʌm/
'What is wrong with you? (pl.)'	/ʃbi:kum/	/ʃbi:kʌm/

Results show another fine distinction made between the use of urban /ʃlɔ:nkum/ and rural /ʃlɔ:nkʌm/, with the urban version decreasing and the rural increasing for the elderly people (fig.5).
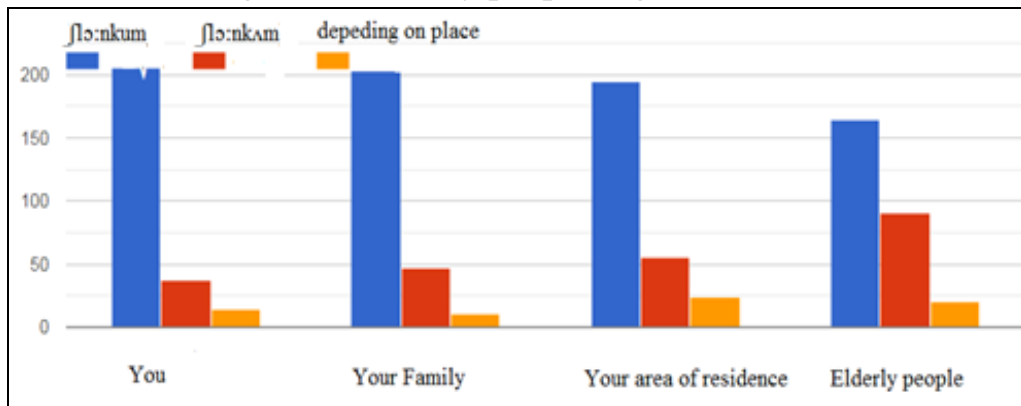
Fig. 5: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they use /ʃlɔ:nkum/ or /ʃlɔ:nkʌm/

- There are the cases where Basri speakers show similarities to speakers of other *gilit* dialects by inserting a final consonant cluster of Classical and Standard Arabic with a vowel /i/ or /u/, and where a triple consonant cluster (–CCC) has the vowel inserted following the first consonant. The vowel insertion as -CvC- and –CvCC- is a feature of Basri and with the vowel being /i/ in /jiðˤirbu:n/ rather than the Baghdadi /u/ (see page 10).
- The patterns for nominal forms *faʕʕa:l* (CvCCv:C) and *faʕʕa:la* (CvCCv:Cv), have the first vowel /i/ as the urban Baghdadi and /a/ as the rural one. In the urban Basri dialect, the common is /a/, but interestingly they show more diversity also using /i/ and /u/ depending on the word. It is also noted that many urban Basris aim for the Baghdadi /i/. Rural Basri would use /a/ alongside other changes to some of the consonants in the word. Furthermore, rural

speakers would use /i/ in these words alongside the changes in the consonants:

Urban Baghdadi	Rural Baghdadi	Urban Basri	Rural Basri
'A man' /ridʒdʒa:l/	/radʒdʒa:l/	/radʒdʒa:l/	/radʒdʒa:l, raʒʒa:l, rajja:l/
'Palm shoots' /dʒimma:r/	/dʒamma:r/	/dʒumma:r/	/dʒimma:r, ʒimma:r, jimma:r/
'Refrigerator' /Θilla:dʒa/	/Θalla:dʒa/	/Θalla:dʒa/	/Θalla:dʒa, Θalla:ʒa/
'Flies' /ðibba:n/	/ðabba:n/	/ðibba:n/	/ðibba:n, ðabba:n/

Results show the responses of participants towards which pronunciation is used for the Standard word /radʒul/ 'a man' (fig. 6). Interestingly, some people have even chosen a fifth pronunciation /riʒʒa:l/ which was only added as an option to check people's understanding of the descriptions. They may have confused it with the /raʒʒa:l/ option, but it still can only be categorised as rural due to it containing the rural /ʒ/ sound replacing the urban /dʒ/.
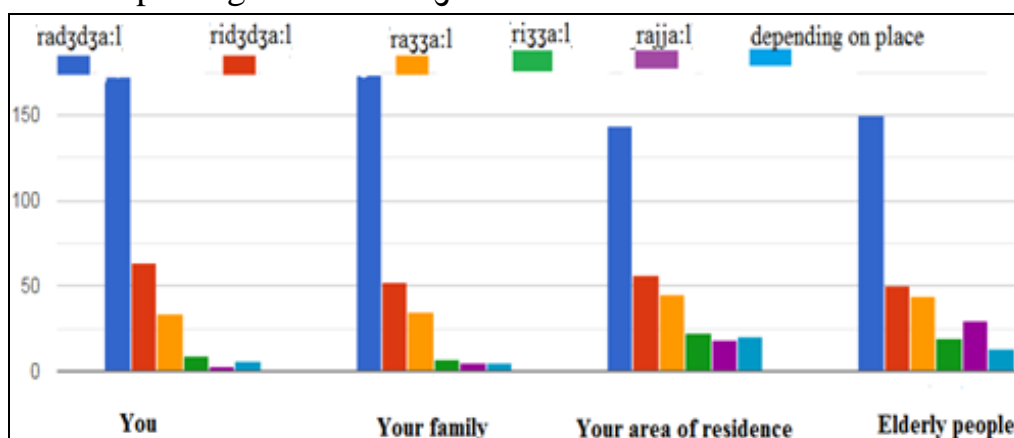

Fig. 6: Responses of participants towards the question towards the question of which form they would use /ridʒdʒa:l/, /radʒdʒa:l/, /raʒʒa:l/ /riʒʒa:l/ or /rajja:l/

- Realisations of phoneme /q/: The phoneme /q/ is mostly realised as /g/, /k/ and even /dʒ/ and /j/ in the dialects of Basra. This is a

distinction created by the Bedouin influence on the *gilit* dialects. However, Basri speakers also preserve the Standard Arabic /q/. This is particularly found when pronouncing standard and religious words, names of places, proper names, ranks, and other words with a /q/ preserving the original Standard pronunciation [15], as in:

'Cairo'   /alqa:hira:/
'Qaasim (proper name)'   /qa:sim/
'Commander'   /qa:ʔid/

Furthermore, Basra speakers living in rural areas near Shatt-al-'Arab river would realise /q/as /dʒ/:

	Standard	**Urban**	**Rural**
'The direction of prayer'	/qibla/	/qibla/	/dʒibla/
'Old'	/ʕati:q/	/ʕati:g/	/ʕati:dʒ/
'Pot'	/qidr/	/gidir/ /dʒidir/	/dʒidir/

Although this is a feature mostly noted in speakers of the Gulf countries, in nomad and semi-nomad tribes, and in some rural areas of northern Iraqi areas such as of Tikrit. It was very common to hear previous president Saddam Hussein using it in his speech being of that rural Tikrit origin, such as in:

	Standard	**Basra**	**Tikrit**
'Continuous or habitual action'	/qa:ʕid/	/ga:ʕid/	/dʒa:ʕid/

Shifting the realisation of /q/ to /ɣ/ and /ɣ/ to /q/: As earlier mentioned this shift is common to areas of Basra and is a distinctive feature of speakers of these areas. How

Original	**Shifted**
'Garden' /ħadi:qa/	/ħadi:ɣa/
'Lunch' /ɣadɛ:/	/qadɛ:/

Results show that most of the participants say they do not tend to change the pronuciation of /q/ to /ɣ/, or vice versa (fig. 7). As we reach the elderly people, we find less people preserving the original phoneme and more making the changes. However, the present researcher has heard it

throughout the years produced by university students and slips of the tongue of some university lecturers who live in these areas or are originally from there.
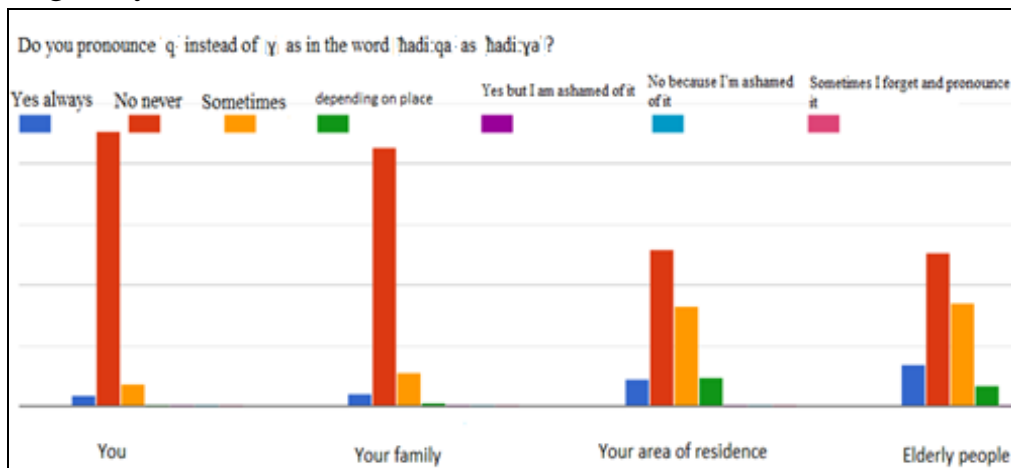

Fig. 7: Responses of participants towards the question whether or not they pronounce /ɣ/ instead of /q/as in the word /ħadi:qa/ as /ħadi:ɣa/

- The realisation of /dʒ/ as /dʒ/, /j/ and /ʒ/: Further research is required on this aspect, but based on a personal observation and personal enquiries with the informants, it tends to show that a word like /dadʒadʒa/would be produced as /didʒadʒa/ by speakers of Basra city-centre, as /dija:dʒa/ or /dija:ʒa/ by speakers of north of Basra, and as /dija:ja/ by speakers of the south and south-west of Basra (al-Tanuuma, Abu-al-Khaseeb, al-Fao, Zubair) (fig. 8). The following are more examples:

Standard   Urban Basra   Rural Basra

'Stars'   /nudʒu:m/   /ndʒu:m/ /ʔindʒu:m/ /ʔinʒu:m/ /nju:m/

'Face'   /wadʒh/   /wadʒih/   /waʒih/ /wajih/

Reults show that preserving /dʒ/ or shifting it to /ʒ/ and/or /j/ also seem to take the same path with the preserved /dʒ/ decreasing as we reach elderlies although not as much as other features have shown (fig. 8). The shift is almost rare in the participants' speech themselves and the families with the people of residence and elderlies showing the highest shift. Elderly people tend to also show all contexts.
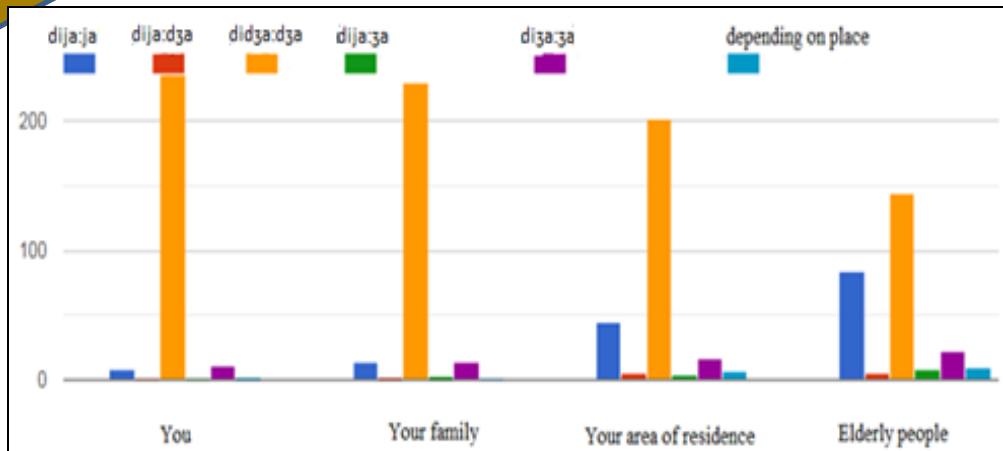
Fig. 8: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use in words like /didʒa:dʒa/ 'hen, chicken' containing /dʒ/: change both to /j/, change one to /j/ and preserve the other, preserve both, change one or both to /ʒ/, or depending on place.

- The production of the interdental fricatives /θ, ð/ as stop consonants /t, d/, and the interdental pharyngealised consonant /ðˤ/ as /dˤ/: Despite this being a non-Iraqi or non-*gilit* characteristic, but nowadays Iraqi *gilit* speakers working in broadcasting, among them speakers from Basra, would be heard producing the stop version /dˤ/ instead of /ðˤ/. This is due to them aiming for the more common version used by other Arabic dialects and avoiding what they believe is the less prestigious and Bedouin version.

- The *gahawa* (*gahāwa* /ɡaha:wa/) *syndrome* (CvCvCv /CCvCv): Although Blanc (1964) and Versteegh (2001) state that the rural areas of Baghdad and Lower Iraqi show this feature which is not present in urban Baghdadi. Being from Basra myself, I can argue that not all of their examples are found in rural Basri (it being part of what they classify as rural Lower Iraq), with most being pronounced similarly to urban Basri and urban Baghdadi but with a slight vowel difference as shown below:

Muslim Baghdadi	Rural Lower Iraq (Blanc)	Basri urban	Basri rural
'To write' /jiktib/	/jiktub/	/jaktib/	/jiktib/

'To dig'   /jiħfur/   /jħafir/   /jiħfir/
/jiħfir/
'Coffee'   /gahwa/   /ghawa/   /gahwa/   /gahwa/
'Reeds'   /gusˤabˤ/   /gisˤabˤ/   /gisˤabˤ/   /gisˤabˤ/
'A reed'   /gusˤbˤa/   /gsˤibˤa/   /gisˤbˤa/   /gsˤibˤa/

Following Palva's (1984) and Abu-Haidar's (1988) syllable-structure /faʕala/ (CvCvCv) deriving from it /faʕa:li:l/ (CvCv:Cv:C) and /fˈʕilla/ (CˈCvCCa), the following are examples from the urban and rural Basri varieties (see page 13):

CCvCCv   →   'he wears it' in urban Basri /jlibsa, jilbasa/ and rural /jilibsa, jlibsa/

CvˈCv:C   →   'he says' in urban Basri /jgu:l/ and rural /jgu:l, jigu:l/

CvCvCv   →   'he became deaf' in urban and rural Basri it would be mostly /intˤiraʃ/ and less /tˤiraʃ/

CvCv:Cv:l →   'keys' in urban Basri /mafa:ti:ħ/ and less /mfa:ti:ħ/ with rural /mfa:ti:ħ, mifa:ti:ħ/

Results show how the participants responded to the word 'keys' above (see fig.9). Interestingly, it shows how they went more for /mafa:ti:ħ/, which is actually the Standard Arabic of the word /mafa:ti:ħ/, less towards /mfa:ti:ħ/ and the least towards /mifa:ti:ħ/. It also shows an increase for the latter two among people living in the area of residence and elderlies.
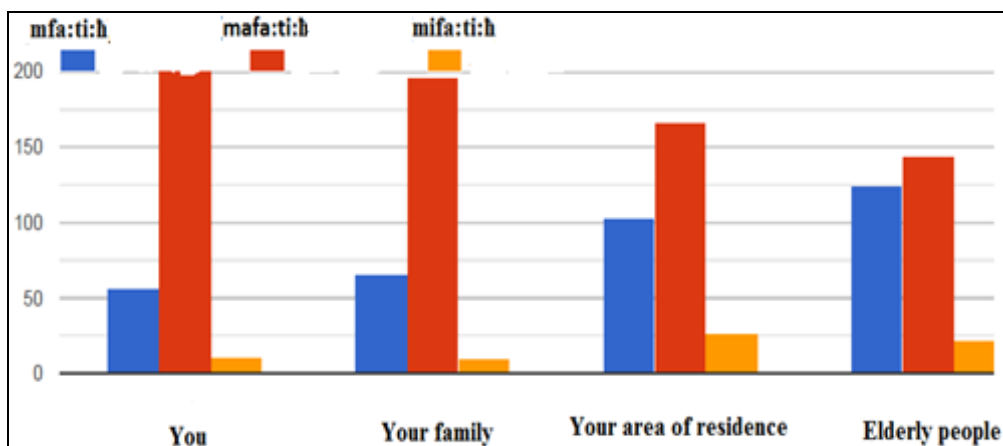
Fig. 9: Responses of participants towards the question of which would they use /mfa:ti:ħ/, /mafa:ti:ħ/ or /mifa:ti:ħ/

Ingham's (1997) 'nomadic' /-faʕɪl-/ (CvCvC) and 'sedentary' /-fʕɪl-/ (CCvC) or /-fɪʕl-/ (CvCC) plus /-vC/ structures also show the same distinction being found in urban and rural Basri and Baghdadi:

Nomadic   Sedentary Baghdadi   Basri (urban/rural)
'He digs'   /jˈħafir/   /ˈjiħfir/(16)   /ˈjiħfur/   /ˈjiħfir/

The same syllable structure referred to by Palva (1984) with the stem -aXC- (-vCC-) is found in the Iraqi *gilit* dialects as /ʔiħnna/ but not the version -XaC- (-CvC-) as /ħinna/, which is mostly found in Arabian Gulf versions, Zubari Basri being one of them since the area is bordered with Kuwait. However, the following examples, all of which are pronouns, with the same two syllable-structures and both can be found in the Iraqi *gilit* dialects:

	-XaC-	**-aXC-**
'Him'	/huwwa/	/ʔihwwa/
'Her'	/hijja/	/ʔihjja/
'Them'	/humma/	/ʔihmma/

The feature is also present in words which begin with a /ʔ/ in Classical and Standard Arabic and changed to /faʕal/ (CvCaC) in rural areas especially those areas investigated by Mahdi (1985), but are retained by urban speakers. That however does not occur in all similar words:

Standard	**Urban**	**Rural**
'Red'	/ʔaħmar/	/ʔaħmar/	/ħamar/
'Green'	/ʔaxdˤar/	/ʔaxðˤar/	/xaðˤar/
'Black'	/ʔaswad/	/ʔaswad/	/ʔaswad/

The suffixes /-aw/ and /-awwi/ (plural): These are added to verbs when speaking about actions carried about by more than one person. The /-awi/ is attached to the urban Baghdadi and the other could be its rural version. This happens in certain contexts in urban Baghdadi and not in all cases. However, the /-aw/ is the common urban Basri version; although it has become very common for many to use the /-awi/ as well or instead, it is still not considered a Basri feature. In Basra, what

differentiates urban from rural is what happens to the rest of the words containing it:

Urban Baghdadi Urban Basri   Rural Basri

'They came' /ʔidʒawwi/   /ʔidʒaw/   /ʔidʒaw, ʔiʒaw, jaw/

- Affrication of the phoneme /k/ realised as /tʃ/: This is a very common feature of the *gilit* dialectal types particularly that of Bara due to it being influenced by two bordering countries, Iran and Kuwait. In fact, this feature seems to show up in the speech of Basris more than any other *gilit* speakers especially with the use of such words as /tʃa;/ (see fig. 11). Basri speakers would also preserve the Standard Arabic /k/ in many words [17] (see page: 10).

- The expressions of /da:, dʒa:j, ra:ħ/ which are used to express 'continuous/habitual actions' and /laʕad, tʃa:/ which are used to express the meaning of 'but': The two sets are very much characteristic of the *gilit* dialects but with many Basris nowadays using /da:/ and /laʕad/ to show a prestige of speech towards the Baghdadi versions. From the researcher's perspective, /ra:ħ/ is found in the speech of both sub-dialects. A fourth word which is also very common in the *gilit* dialects of the south is /ɡa:ʕid/ 'I'm sitting', which makes it a strange word to show 'doing an action' when it means sitting down. It however gives a similar meaning to /da:/, /dʒa:j/ and /ra:ħ/ when used in the same contexts. Nevertheless, the results in figures (10 and 11) show that /tʃa:/ and /dʒa:j/ are still the common Basri version despite many aiming for the other two.
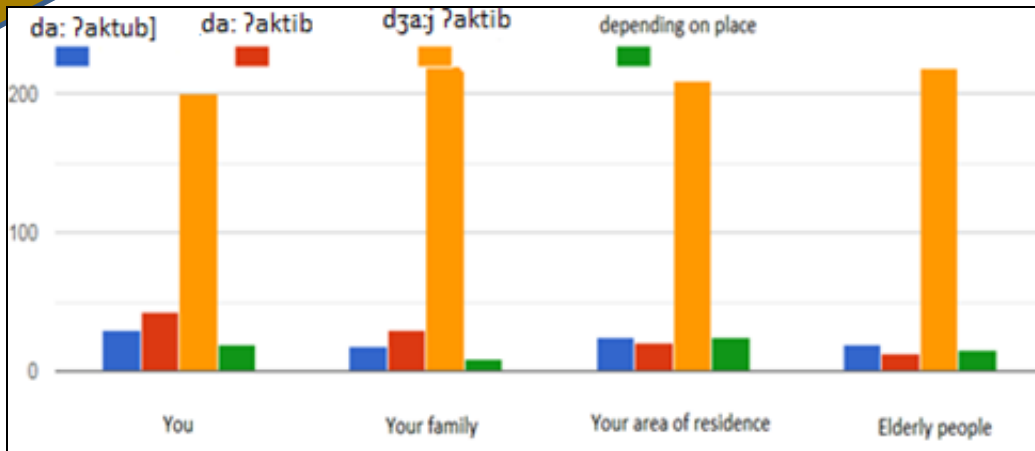
Fig. 10: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use for 'continuous/habitual actions' words starting with /da:/ or with /dʒa:j/
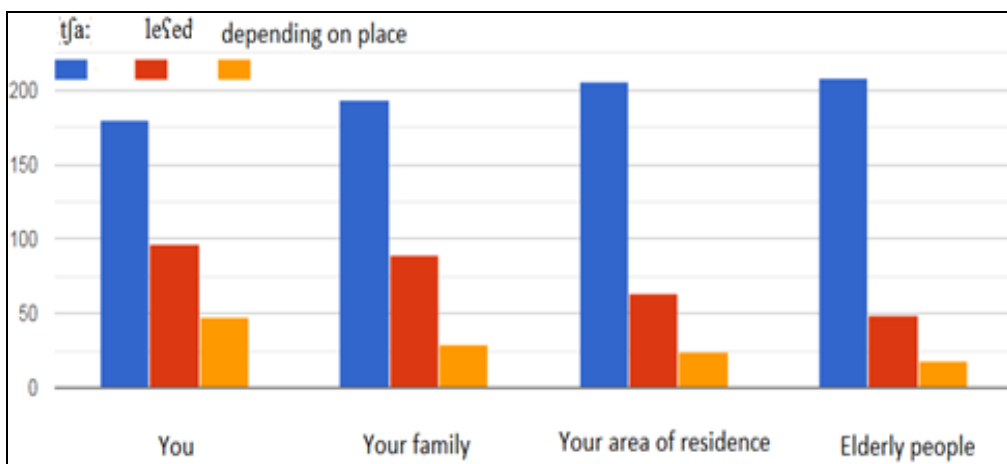

Fig. 11: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use /tʃa:/ or /laʕad/

- The words /ʔintu/, /ʔintum/ and /ʔintan/ 'you (pl.)': These words are used to address two or more females. This /-an/ is originally a Standard Arabic feature referring to plural feminine pronouns or a possessive suffix added when addressing females. The first two could also address males, but when produced to address females they tend to be regarded as the prestigious versions. In this accord, Basri speakers tend to use /-an/ to distinguish the gender of the addressee as being females more than Bghdadis would. However, Basris try to produce the more prestigious versions when they are

in a more public place or when at work, with the younger generations aiming for it more than others. The older generations would not think much of it, but it is usually considered rural and/or 'anti-feminist'. Nevertheless, the use of /-an/ to refer to plural females seem to be more common than the more prestigious alternative (fig. 12).
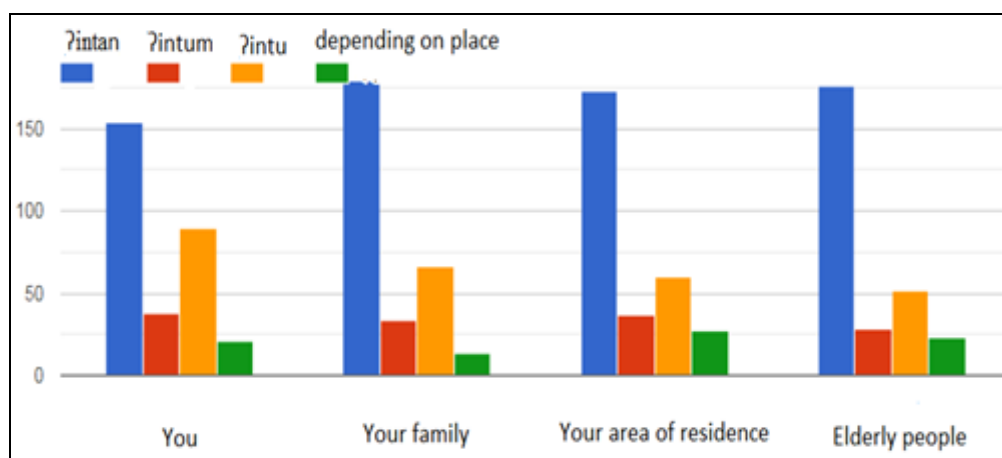

Fig. 12: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use to address two or more females /ʔintan/, /ʔintum/ or /ʔintu/

This also applies to other examples as follows:

Prestigious	**-an**	
'Hey you!'	/wilkum/	/wiltʃan/
'All of you'	/kulkum/ /kilkum/	/kiltʃan/

This result is also similarly repeated in figure (13) whereby the less prestigious word with /-an/ is used by the participants themselves, which was interestingly unexpected since /wiltʃan/ is considered by many females as being a very 'anti-feminist' word since it both uses the feminist sound /tʃ/ and the addition /-an/.
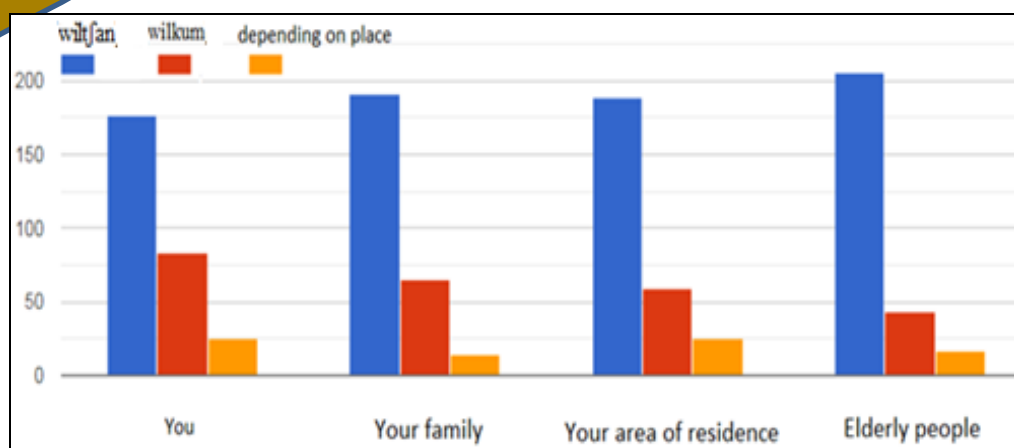
Fig. 13: Responses of participants towards the question of which for they would use to address two or more females /wiltʃan/ or /wilkum/

There is also another /-an/ addition, which is not related to the feminist distinction, but rather added to the verb of the first person singular when wanting to show emphasis of an action s/he is about to do or see others do. It would be added to the last syllable if the person is speaking about him/herself and before plural /-um/ when speaking about others, as in the following:

Urban		**Rural**
'I see'	/ʔaʃuːf/	/ʔaʃuːfan/
'I see them	/ʔaʃuːfhum/	/ʔaʃuːfanhum/
'I will go'	/ʔaruːħ/	/ʔaruːħan/
'I want'	/ʔariːd/	/ʔariːdan/
'I want them (to …)'	/ʔariːdhum/	/ʔariːdanhum/

Participants were asked to choose which form they would normally use out of /ʔaʃuːf/ and /ʔaʃuːfan/ 'I see' with the option ending in /-an/ being more rural. Most clearly do not prefer the rural option despite some using it. This option however seems to be more common among the elderly people (fig. 14).

Fig. 14: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use /ʔaʃu:f/ or /ʔaʃu:fan/

- The words /ʔa:ni:/ vs. /ʔa:na/ 'I, me': These two words are another distinguishing feature between Baghdadi and Basri, respectively; although nowadays there seems to be a trend whereby many Basri speakers of different age groups and educational backgrounds are heard using /ʔa:ni:/ to show prestigious speech. However, one can also hear such speakers unwillingly use the common Basri version which tends to flow up in their speech (see fig. 15).
- Adding the prefix /hal-/: This is a feature of rural Basra speakers which is added to apply more emphasis on the action one or more persons intend to do. It is another non-favourite option is adding /hal-/ to a word to show a strong confirmation of intending to do something whether for the singular (fig. 15) or the plural (fig. 16). The choice is in favour of the /ʔa:na ra:jiħ/ 'I am going' or /ʔiħna rajħi:n/ 'we are going' which are comon urban Basri expressions. The words to which /hal-/ is added denote a more rural expression but tends to show its way in elderly people's speech. The urban Baghdadi /ʔa:ni ra:jiħ/ 'I am going' (fig. 15) is also not very common even among the participants themselves and least used among elderlies.

Urban   **Rural**

'I am coming'   /ʔaːna dʒaːj/   /ʔaːna haldʒaːj/ /ʔaːna haljaːj/ /ʔaːna halʒaːj/

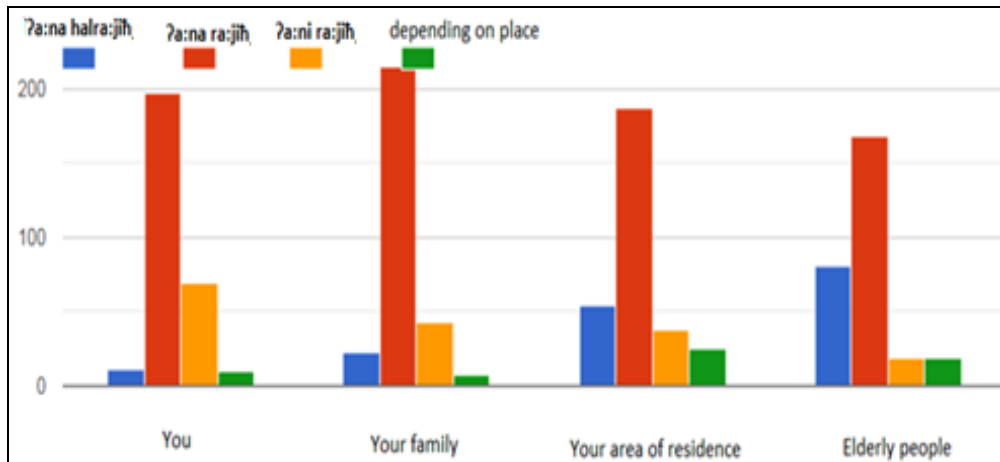'We are going'   /ʔiħna raːjħiːn/   /ʔiħna halrajħiːn/

Fig. 15: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use /ʔaːna halraːjiħ/, /ʔaːna raːjiħ/ or /ʔaːni raijiħ/
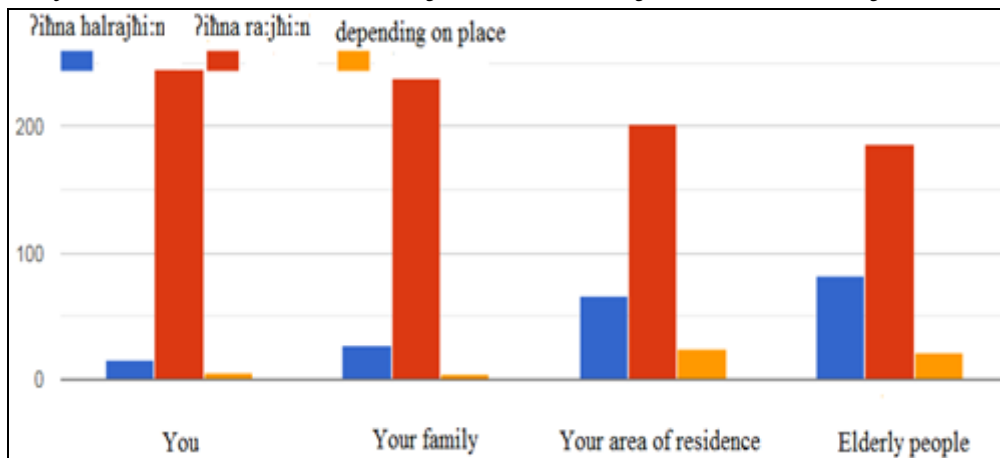

Fig. 16: Responses of participants towards the question of which form they would use /ʔiħna halraːjħiːn/ or /ʔiħna raːjħiːn/

- The words /ħam/ as opposed to /ħammɛːn/ and /ħammatɛːn/: These words are used to mean 'and, plus, in addition to'. The /ħam/ is the Basri version while the other two are very much particular to Baghdad. In fact, the present researcher has come across many Basris who mock other Basris who use the latter two. They feel Baghdadis are adding too many syllables to a simple /ħam/. For them, it is typical Baghdadi and therefore not keen on the fact that its use has started to spread into Basri. The present

researcher for one does not utter it much but tends to write it when messaging, feeling it working better than just plain /ham/.

- The words /xaʃʃ/, /tˤabb/ and /dixal/ (fig. 17): These were used by Abu-Haidar (1988) to distinguish between the two dialectal type groups: urban and rural Baghdadi (see page: 4). In urban Basri, /xaʃʃ/ used to be uncommon but nowadays it has become familiar although is still considered by Basris as being awkward and not belonging to Basra. The most common word to be used by urban Basra would be /dixal/ but with less use of /tˤabb/. Rural Basra, on the other hand would mostly use /tˤabb/ and a less use of /dixal/ (also see Alsiraih, 2013).

There is a fourth alternative /fa:t/ which is another more urban Baghdadi alternative. It seems to be used by some speakers of Basra and not others. The present researcher would not use it nor have heard it within the circle of relatives or acquaintances. However, the present researcher has heard it used by some university students, who live in rural areas, which was thought as being very strange since it does not belong to Basra. When asked, they turned out to have one parent descending from Baghdad, Karballaa or Hilla, which are of the same dialectal type, i.e. cities of Central Iraq. Therefore, the present researcher finds it strange that Abu-Haidar did not mention it in her investigation of Baghdadi dialects.
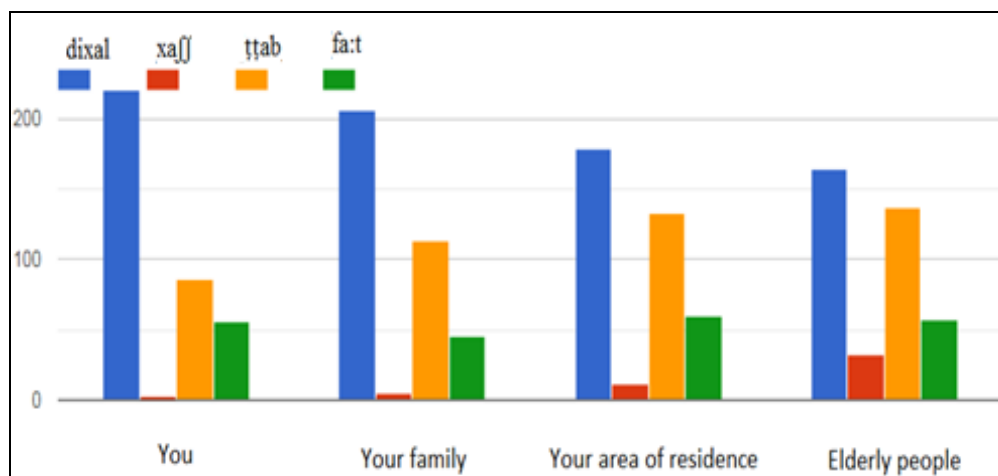

Fig. 17: Responses of participants towards the question of which would they use between /dixal/, /xaʃʃ/, /tˤabb/ and /fa:t/

7. Conclusions

The present study investigated the characteristic phonological and morphological features of Basra dialect with its urban and rural varieties. A questionnaire, interviews and personal observations in the light of the available literature have revealed that Basra urban dialect has gone through many changes and was affected by numerous influences. On the one hand, large numbers of inner-immigrates entered the city, and on the other hand an increasing number of speakers are aiming for a more prestigious Baghdadi dialect.

The dialect nowadays is different from what the literature has pointed out, with new words added and others dying out. A huge wave of inner-immigration hit the city with their different dialect varieties. Some of these varieties have been able to preserve their features due to the fact that their speakers live in the same secluded neighbourhoods, with many being non-educated so have less chances of interacting with the original city-dwellers. Their varieties affected the speech of urban Basra, but at the same time many of them, particularly educated speakers, aim at a more prestigious Basri. By doing so, they aim for belonging to the city as well avoiding to be categorised as rural.

The dialect has had its share of dialect levelling with its original dialect overpowering the rest of varieties. Nevertheless, all these varieties have uniqueness in themselves and are in a threat of being extinct someday due to the fact that they seem to be mostly preserved by older generations. Even people living in rural areas tend to change their speech after working or studying in the city centre, feeling urban Basra dialect is prestigious. Many showed sensitive feelings towards their original dialects but also towards being categorised as rural speakers. Nevertheless, they do not have problems in categorising their families, relatives, neighbours and elderly people they know or have come across.

Additional work is required in many of the aspects investigated in the present study, and on each of the areas of Basra. Detailed research on each aspect and characteristic separately is necessary, taking into consideration age, gender, social class, education and origin, on large

numbers of people. Results will be fascinating as is noted by the overall results presented in this study. Furthermore, each feature is a characteristic of identity to each area of Basra and accordingly need to be documented before one day they no longer exist.

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[1] Abu-Haidar (1991: 90)

[2] Blanc (1964: 25)

[3] Versteegh (2001: 157; 2014: 203)

[4] Blanc (1964: 26)

[5] These are in Abu-Haidar (1988: 78) categorised as being among words being "3rd person singular imperfect of the *faʕala* form verbs + the object pronoun suffix"

[6] Palva (1984:16)

[10] These are in Abu-Haidar (1988: 78) categorised as being "verbs of the *faʕala* form expressing defect".

[11] These are in Abu-Haidar (ibid) categorised as being "the plural of nominal forms of the *faʕali:l* pattern".

[9] Knowledge of the participants' religion was as necessary as knowing their geographical background since dialectal features in Iraq are also related to religion (see Blanc, 1964).

[10] A special thanks goes to Haneen Sajjad and Huda Abdul Hadi who helped in sending the questionnaire to their wide-range of contacts.

[11] All investigations were electronic due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of the research.

[12] Most of the ways the examples are presented follow a personal understanding and layout that does not necessarily represent what is found in the literature. This also applies to the Cv patterns which are provided for further clarifications.

[13] Blanc (1964: 166).

[14] This is the result of personal observation. Further research is required on this feature and the contexts in which it occurs.

[15] Further research is required to investigate when and why /q/ is realised as /g/ and at others as /q/.

[16] Ingham (1997: 36)

[17] This feature requires further investigation in order to find out why and when the /k/ is preserved in Basri or the *gilit*-types in general.