Regional Dialect Leveling in Iraqi Arabic: The Case of (q) in the Hīti Dialect

Fuad Jassim Mohammed

Jinan Abdul Razzaq Al-Heety

[1,2]Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq.

Abstract: *It has been argued that mobility is an efficient motive of the deterioration of large-scale close-knit localized networks, which have over time preserved highly systematic and convoluted sets of socially-built linguistic standards (Milroy, 1980). Previous research on the qəltu dialects of Iraq has indicated that these dialects are in a state of levelling in favor of the gilit dialect group. This paper explores a war-induced Regional Dialect Levelling in the qəltu dialect spoken in Hīt in relation to Social Network Integration. Recordings were made of 18 Hīt-born informants, native speakers of the qəltu dialect in three age groups (20-39, 40-59, and over 60). Results revealed a state of diffusion of more prestigious variants associated with more dominant dialect, spreading outward at the expense of socially marked variants. There was consistent statistically significant correlation between high scores of Network Integration and the choice of new variants. Involvement within friendship networks with gilit-speaking migrants has a stronger impact on informants' language behavior than their contacts when they are outside Hīt (i.e. spatial mobility).*

Keywords*: Dialect leveling, Friendship, Social Network Integration, , qəltu, gilit*

Introduction

The notion of Social Network Theory is an innovative tendency in studying variations. Intrinsically, Barnes (1954) introduced it to describe an order of social relationship, which he felt important to interpret the behavior of the inhabitants of the Norwegian village of Hremnes. Milroy and Gordon (2003) delineate Social Networks as "the aggregate of relationships contracted with others, a boundless web of ties which relates out through social and geographical space linking individuals, sometimes remotely" (p.117). Milroy (1980) found that the individuals' linguistic behavior should not be accounted for in terms of SNII speakers' social networks. She assumed that increasing linguistic variable scores are related to increasing network scores. Social networks vary in density. Sometimes they are close-knit; the same group of people live, work, and spend their free time together. Or else, they can be loose-knit, as with neighbors who chat occasionally, or colleagues who meet only at work. Quite often, a person is most closely associated with one network, but has weaker links with several others. All these links potentially affect a person's language. "Study of these social networks can reveal the intricate interlacing of human contacts. Potentially, they can show who influences who" (Ibid, p.49). Aitchison (2004assumes that "young children… listen, and absorb the accent of those

around. Typically, they notice sound changes taking place in the speech of their caregivers" (p.22).

What Dialect Leveling is

Dialect leveling (DL) denotes the assimilation, reduction or elimination of marked differences between dialects over a period. It tends to occur when there is interference of informants of different dialects for extended periods leading to the appearance of unique features. Hinskens (1998) supposes that 'the leveling out of cross-dialectal variation can be structurally independent of the leveling of variation in the dialect standard language dimension' (p.35). Milroy adopts the most socially considered definitions of DL, and deliberates it to be a reflection of the larger-scale disturbance of close-knit localized networks. This reflection arises from internal and transitional migration caused by wars (Milroy, 2002). Intrinsically, DL is defined as "the reduction of structural variation — of both quantitative, internal variation and (either categorical or quantitative) differences between varieties of a language, say: dialects" (Hinskens, 1998, p.36). Accordingly, DL makes dialects more homogeneous and alike. Geographical and social mobility are regarded as the main factors of DL due to language contact.

When DL is observed in a wide geographical area, it should be referred to as Regional Dialect Leveling (RDL) (Kerswill, 2003). RDL can be defined as the "eradication of marked or minority forms in situations of dialect competition, where the number of variants in the output is dramatically reduced from the number in the input" (Britain, 2001, p.1). Williams and Kerswill (1999) assert that RDL is a process that is characterized by a reduction in the differences between regional varieties, disappearance of features, which make distinctive varieties, and the emergence of new features, which are over time adopted by informants over a wide spatial zone. It is, thus, a process of reflecting that the local dialect(s) of a region turns to be less distinctive due to mixing with another dialect(s).

Language changes due to a combination of factors. Two main factors could be listed to "reside in the structure of the language and the minds of the informants" (Aitcheson, 2004, p.134). First, the external sociolinguistic factors that are "outside the language system, outside the structure of language and the human organization" (Al-Mahdawi & Al-Heety, 2016, p.18). Secondly, the internal psycholinguistic factors, which are linguistic, and psychological factors that "reside in the form of language and mind of speakers" (Ibid, p.20). However, the externally motivated linguistic causes contain sub-factors. One of these factors is contact between informants of different dialects. Progressively, dialects might blend.

Contact can be achieved via travel, migration or even communication specifically through mass media, the internet and omnipresent telecommunications. Dialect change is the outcome of increasing contact between people from different places. The short-term accommodation over a period leads to a long-term accommodation in the same informants (Trugil1, 1986a). This could be maintained due to the substratum theory: "the suggestion that when immigrants come to a new area, or when an indigenous population learns the language of newly arrived conquerors;

they learn their adopted language imperfectly" (Aitchison, 2004, p.137). One dialect has a noticed effect upon another when their informants mix. Pronunciation and lexical change can be the result of contact. Language may change because of internal pressures. Hinskens (1998) asserts that sound change could be phonetically motivated due to "some sort of structural imbalance because of asymmetries in vowel systems" (p.38).

The research site

Hīt is located in the west of Iraq to the west of Baghdad, the capital of the Republic of Iraq. It is one of the cities of Anbar Governorate (See Figure 1).
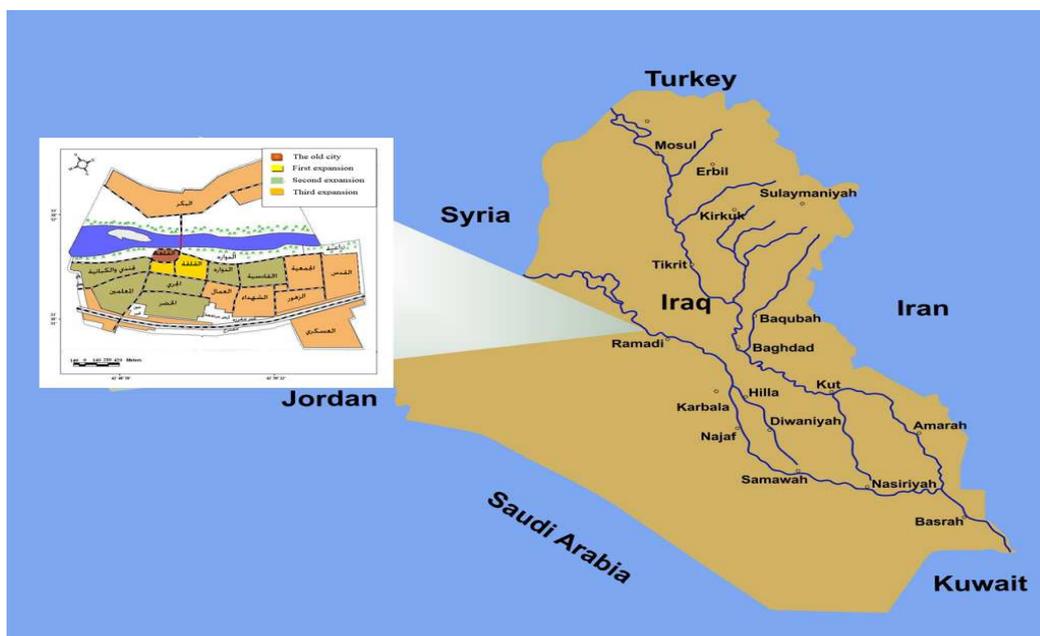

Figure 1 Map showing the location of Hīt and phases of expansion

It lies on the Euphrates River. It has considerable historical importance being one of the oldest cities in Iraq. Its population is an early urban settlement that can be traced back to the Sumerian era (Abdel-Salam, 2005). *Hīt* is a *qəltu*-speaking city that is socially homogeneous and linguistically conservative, with a distinctive set of local linguistic norms. Excessive movement from the *gilit*-speaking area to Hīt breaks these norms. Milroy (2002) contends that mobility is an effective cause of the disruption of large-scale close-knit localized networks, which have over time retained highly systematic and intricate sets of socially built linguistic standards. Hence, these norms are being affected by high levels of internal war-induced migration from *gilit*-speaking cities, mainly from the capital Baghdad.

The Linguistic Situation in Iraq

In Iraq, different languages are spoken: Arabic, Kurdish, Neo-Aramaic, and Turkman. Iraqi Arabic (IA) is regarded as the native for most Iraqis in every day interactions. Standard Arabic (SA) arose because of the spread of education in the Arab world and is nowadays the official variety of media and newspapers (Al-Wer, 1997).
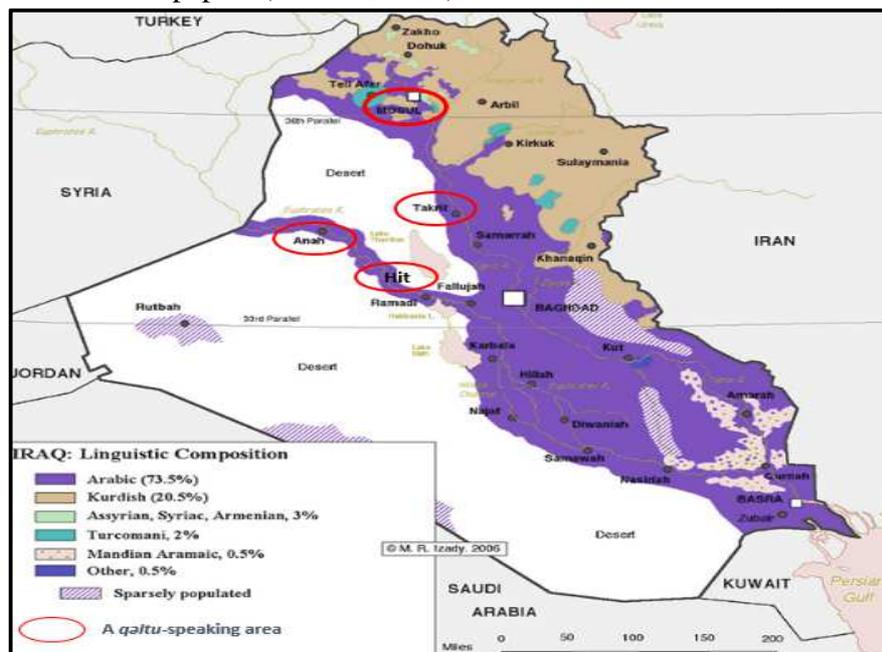

Figure 2 Linguistic map of Iraq showing the four *qəltu*-speaking cities [2] (Arabic area is using the *gilit* dialect)

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines dialect as a 'manner of speaking, language, speech; esp. a manner of speech peculiar to, or characteristic of, a particular person or class'. There are various spoken dialects used by the Arabic-speaking groups. Arabic dialects are traditionally classified in three ways. The first is the geographical distribution, according to which they fall into Eastern and Western dialects. The second classification is the Bedouin versus Sedentary dialects, which is based on a sociological stratification. Bedouin communities are more conservative, while sedentary communities are more innovative due to their openness to contact which leads to change (Watson, 2011). The third way is the communal affiliation, according to which Arabic dialects relate to the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities. These dialects undertake specific changes by time due to various causes. Some of these causes would be tackled in this paper to come into a conclusion of which from them has the most effect, why, on whom, and to which extent.

Iraqi Arabic falls into two spoken dialect groups: the *gilit* group 'I said' and the *qəltu* group 'I said' based on the verb *qultu* 'I said' (Blanc, 1964). The *gilit* group has a Bedouin origin. It

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[2] Map downloaded from https://borderlessblogger.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/iraq_languages_map.jpg with editions by the researchers.

shares most of the dialect features of Arabic and Syrian being spoken on the Iraq-Syria borders (Abu-Haidar, 2006). The Bedouin and the sedentary populations of the Muslim majority in Baghdad and the south of Iraq (Abu-Haidar, 1991) speak it. Moreover, the *qəltu* group is mainly related to the religious minorities. Christians and Jews of Baghdad, and Muslims and Jewish communities in Mosul, Tikrit, Anah and Hīt. Al-Ani (1978), Mansour (1991), speak it and Khan (1997) asserted that the *qəltu* dialects, especially the dialect in Hīt, are being influenced by the *gilit* dialects. Blanc (1964: 166-167) added that the *qəltu* dialects are 'direct descendants of the dialects spoken by the urban population of the Abbasid Iraq'.

Until the 20th century, no studies have been conducted on the dialects of IA. The earliest studies were in the 1960s and 1970s, and were carried out by Malaika (1963), Blanc (1964), and Jastrow (1978). These studies have investigated IA in terms of regional distribution and religious affiliation. Several works were conducted on IA in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Among these works are those of Jastrow (1978), Al-Ani (1978), Bakir (1986), Abu-Haidar (1989, 1991, and 2004), Mansour (1991), Ingham (1997), Khan (1997), Al-Abdely (2002), Tawfiq (2010), and Ahmed (2012).

Blanc (1964) adopted a specific approach to study vernacular dialects and investigated the Arabic dialects of Iraq, specifically the Baghdadi dialect. His study has inspirited researchers to study IA. The qəltu-gilit dichotomy becomes the interesting concept upon which most of the following studies relied.

Hīti Arabic (HA)

Khan (1997), who investigated the variety used by the Jews in Hīt (KH), conducted the first dialectological description of the *qəltu* dialect spoken in Hit. He gathered data from a number of families who were living in the Beersheba area, in Israel in 1991 as they originally descended from the Jewish community who had been in Hīt until the early 1950s, before migration to Israel. His study broadly described the phonology, morphology, and syntax used by the Jewish community of Hīt. One of the research's questions was if the Jews dialect in Hīt differs from that of the Muslims in the town (Khan, 1997). Bedouinisation was one of Khan's assumptions supposing that HA was influenced by the gilit group where some words were pronounced with the *gilit* variant [g] instead of the qəltu variant [q]. The study revealed that Hīti dialect is of a mixture of the *qəltu* and the *gilit* dialects. This study showed also that though this dialect is one of the *qəltu* dialect groups, it contains no ʔima:la.

In the 2000s, many studies have been conducted on the *qəltu* dialects of Hīt, Rabi'a, and Mosul. Out of these studies, two are related as they were conducted on HA. The first was Al-Abdely's (2002). Al-Abdely investigated the syllable structure and syllabification in HA with reference to RP in English (RP). As his study was pedagogically oriented, he tried to analyze potential differences in the syllable structure in HA and RP English, claiming their effect in learning them as foreign language varieties. Data for HA came from words that were elicited from recorded individual interviews, obtained from native informants of HA. The English data

were extracted from some studies in English. The study has exposed the differences of the two varieties in syllable structure, type, phonotactics, and stress placement (Al-Abdely, 2002). This study did not describe the phonological system of HA nor related the dialect to other *qəltu* dialects. Actually, the study deals with the comparative and pedagogically oriented aspects.

The second study was an ethno-graphic study of HA and was conducted by Ahmed (2012). He tried to investigate the processes of intrusion, elision, and ʔimāla in HA, with reference to Standard English. The study shows how close HA forms to other SA ones. In contrast to Khan (1997), Ahmed (2012) claimed that HA displays ʔimāla. Interestingly, he has noted that uneducated older male and female informants tended to use the original variety of pronunciation; HA is more than their peers did.

Causes of Leveling in HA

Since the early 1980s, families have migrated to Hīt in large numbers from most cities of Iraq, mainly the *gilit*-speaking cities, such as Baghdad, Hillah, and Basrah due to specific factors. The most significant factor is the First Gulf War (1980-1988) between Iraq and Iran. Hīt has one of the largest military camps. Thus, hundreds of officers and soldiers with their families, who were speaking *gilit* dialect, settled in Hīt. Next, hundreds of families sought refuge in Hīt in fear of the military operations during the Second Gulf War (1991). Later, Hīt welcomed a massive influx of displaced employees, academics and army officers with their families from different parts of Iraq after the Third Gulf War (2003). Coming from Baghdad, Kirkuk, Basrah, Hillah and Ramadi, where the *gilit* dialect is spoken, these families affect HA due to direct contact. Consequently, some phonological variables have begun to be replaced by those originally non- *qəltu* ones (See Figure 3). This level of migration has amplified from 500 families in the early 1990s to more than 1200 families in 2013 (Al- Hīti, 2010).
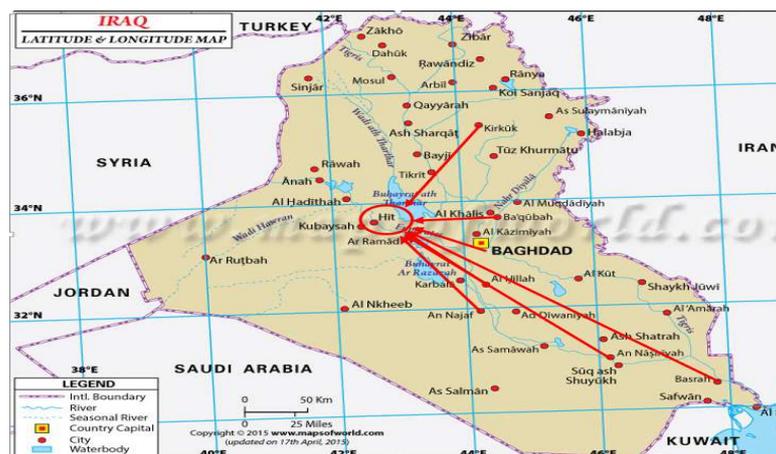

Figure3: Migration form the gilit area to Hīt[3]

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[3] The map was downloaded from:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governorates_of_Iraq#/media/File:Iraqi_Governorates.svg, with editions made by the researchers.

Social Network Integration

Sociolinguists follow various strategies to measure the social network structure; being an effective means of communication. Milroy (1980), for instance, relied on what she called Network Strength Scale (NSS) by which she related her informants' network to indicators of integration to the local networks such as kinship, work, and friendship ties. These indicators rage from 0-5. The degree of integration an individual has towards his community is expressed by assigning him/her one point for each of the following conditions (Milroy, 1980, p.142):

1. Membership of a high-density cluster.
2. Ties of kinship in the neighborhood.
3. The same place of work as at least two from the same area.
4. The same place of work as at least two of the area and sex.
5. Friendship with workmates in leisure time.

Milroy used condition 1 as an indicator of density, whereas conditions 2, 3, 4, and 5 as indicators of multiplicity. Scores range from zero for the informant who fulfills none of the conditions and is said to have no integration with his local community, to five for informants who perform them all, and who are closely integrated into the community in that their kinship, work and friendship ties are all contracted within it. Boronti-Ricardo (1989) studied the sociolinguistic changes in the Brazilian city Brazlândia in a different orientation. Instead of testing how informants approximate towards the standard norms, she focused on the extent to which they lose their local stigmatized dialect. Her study examines the loose-knit networks. Her Urbanization Index Scale (UIS) included indicators such as schooling level, work, the degree of spatial mobility, social participation, exposure to the media, and political awareness.

In her study of language change in progress in the Austrian village of Grossdorf, Lippi-Green (1989) used a16-point scale to measure her informants' social integration. She tackled three criteria in the measurement of individual communication networks. In the first criterion, she focused on determining whether individuals' networks are open or closed i.e. whether they expand outside the community or restrict to established networks within the community. As the second criterion concentrated on density, all contacts within a personal network know each other this network tends to be 100% dense. If none of them knows each other, this network is 0% dense. Therefore, she used two indicators to test density.

The first was the extent to which an individual is related actively or passively to the core families by clan membership, whereas the second indicator of density was network of workplace. The third criterion of network measurement was multiplexity. It shows how contacts within the individual's network are related. On the one hand, if the contacts are related in more than one level of interaction, such as friendship, work, neighborhood, etc., this network tends to be multiplex. On the other hand, the network is then uniplex if they are related in one level of interaction. The indicator that Lippi-Green used to test multiplexity was whether informant's co-workers are from Grossdorf (uniplex) or from Bregenz Forest (multiplex). Her main finding was that integration into networks of workplace and adoption of non-local language forms scored the best correlation of conservative linguistic behavior. She imputes that to the fact that integration

into workplace networks is 'a better and more refined indicator of voluntary community integration' (Lippi-Green, 1989, p.225).

Edwards (1992) also used indicators of kinship, friendship, and workplace, but adopted a scale of integration called Vernacular Culture Index, or VCI, constructed from responses to ten statements, ranging from 1 to 4 and corresponding to Strongly Disagree and to Strongly Agree, respectively. The first five statements of his VCI tested informants' physical integration, while the second five statements tested their psychological integration. It seems that the former corresponds to our lifestyle information, while the latter refers to attitudes information. In his study on the linguistic accommodation of Moravian migrants in Bohemia, within the Czech Republic, Wilson (2010) used 13 questions to measure his informants' lifestyle information and 15 questions to measure their attitudes towards Common Czech.

Methodology

This study follows the variationist framework pioneered by William Labov and colleagues in 1960s. It attempts to examine the phonological change potentially to be occurring in HA and to grasp the social factors that govern these change patterns currently in use in HA.

The Sample

Eighteen native speakers of HA (9 males and 9 females), who have been born and grown up, or been resident in Hīt for almost all their lives were randomly chosen. Age and sex differences among individuals are examined. The sample is stratified into three age groups of an equal number of male and female informants (20-39, 40-59, and over 60). Intrinsically, the study has few informants, as studies on language variation and change do not necessarily require large numbers of informants following the pioneering studies on language change. It is affirmed that even for large communities a sample of 150 individuals is 'redundant' (Sankoff, 1980).

Table 1 The distribution of informants by sex and age

Age group	Males	Females	Total
20-39	3	3	6
40-59	3	3	6
over 60	3	3	6
Total	9	9	18

Interviews

Interviewing the informant is one of the techniques preferred by the majority of sociolinguists. The linguistic behavior of each of the eighteen informants was recorded, with special emphasis on the phonological variables chosen for the study. Each informant was interviewed for about 30-40 minutes either individually or with a third party to be present in the interviews. Mostly, there are more than one informant from the same family. Data was collected over a one-month period from May to June 2016 via sociolinguistic interviews. The female

researcher providing a list of the topics interviewed six female informants and questions, a collection of pictures, and a consent form to be signed by informants. Because the research topic was chosen, the informant's age, sex, interests, previous experience, lifestyle habits, and social information were fixed to make the informants more relaxed. Furthermore, a correlation between the informants' age and the topics were taken into consideration. For example, when we asked old informants about stories related to wars and traditions from the old days, they were able to talk in details. As for younger informants, peers and school days were interesting topics for them. Below are the topics that were discussed in the interviews:

1. Childhood and early school days
2. Games
3. Marriage customs
4. Jobs and work
5. The Hīt castle and memories of old town
6. Times of war and conflict
7. Fasting of Ramadan
8. Cooking
9. Neighborhood

Measuring the Social Network Integration

Informants are assigned a score from 0 (unintegrated) to 10 (highly integrated). They are scored according to criteria that were expected to affect their integration to the *gilit* speakers. Collectively, we named the index the Social Network Integration Index (SNII). Informants are initially grouped into three categories depending on the number of points they scored on the SNII: '0-3points, '4-7 points' and '8-10 points'. Then, the scores of these three groups are compared by means of an analysis of variance test. The informants of HA share a specific degree of integration with their peers in the migrant community. This is explained by means of two groups of indicators in an attempt to interpret the motivations for RDL. The first group includes indicators of SNs, such as friendship, work, study, and leisure activities. Other indicators include exposure to the gilit dialect through the media and pre-migration period. The extent to which informants were exposed to the migrant community through pre-migration contacts is examined to detect if the change occurs due to contact after the migration process. Thus, we tried to ascertain whether they had lived in any of the gilit areas, and if so, the length of time and reasons for living in these areas.

In the present paper, the SNII is used to calculate informants' network integration scores. Table 2 shows informants' scores on this social network index.

Table 2 Informants' scores on the SNII.

SNII score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Number	0	0	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0

Informants' network integration score was calculated along with a fifteen-point continuum (the network integration index), informants being assigned a score from 0 (unintegrated) to 15 (highly integrated). A highly integrated individual is the one whose social networks are open (i.e. one who extends friendship networks outside the local community), has a dense network (i.e. all his/her contacts know each other), whose networks are multiplex (i.e. his/her links are related to each other in more than one level of communication), is exposed on a regular basis to the *gilit* community in various ways, has most of his or her friends from that community, travels regularly to the *gilit*-speaking areas for work, study and leisure purposes, and plans to spend most of their future life in these areas. An unintegrated individual is the one who preserves strong social relations with his or her native community, has less dense networks with the *gilit* community, travels very rarely to the *gilit*-speaking areas and has the majority of friends and workmates from the Hīt community. The lifestyle questions used with the potential answers are listed below:

1. Dialect of Informants' Close Friends
Q/ what dialect your close friends speak?
1. Most of informant's close friends speak the HA dialect.
2. Half of informant's close friends speak the HA dialect.
3. Most of informant's close friends speak the *gilit* dialect.

2. Exposure to the Migrants' Dialect from Parents:
Q/ Are any of your parents born in a *gilit* city?
1. Neither or one of the informant's parents was in a *gilit* area.
2. One of the informant's parents was born in a *gilit* area
3. Both of the informant's parents were born in a *gilit* area.

3. Spatial Mobility:
Q/ How often do you travel the *gilit* areas?
1. Informant never or travels one a month.
2. Informant travels several times a month.
3. Informant travels daily.

4. Exposure to the *gilit* Dialect at the Workplace Network:
Q/ Do most of your workmates speak *gilit* or HA dialect?
1. Most of informant's workmates speak the HA dialect.
2. Half of informant's workmates speak the HA dialect.
3. Most of informant's workmates speak *gilit* dialect.

5. Social Activities
Q/ What do you do in your leisure time?

1. Informants spend most of their time with relatives, who are Hītis and speak the HA dialect.
2. Informants spend most of their time with friends most of them are Hītis.
3. Informants go on trips to a *gilit* place.

These questions were divided into sub-variables and were scored according to asset of criteria. Although these sub-variables are interrelated, it is likely that some will affect informants' linguistic behavior more than others will.

The Linguistic Variable

The linguistic variable examined in the present paper is the uvular stop /q/with the *qəltu* variant [q] vs. *gilit* variant [g], as in [qabil] and [gabul] 'before'. The realization of this defining feature plays a significant role in the distinction of Iraqi dialects as *qəltu* and *gilit*. Blanc (1964) asserts that the informants of the *qəltu* dialects have kept using [q], but the informants of the *gilit* dialects retain it as [g]. To our knowledge, no correlation between these variables and social variables, such as sex and network integration is available since there are no empirical studies examine the synchronic variation of this variable in Iraq.

Essentially, using the uvular stop (q) is one of the criteria used to classify Arabic dialects in certain countries such as Iraq (Blanc, 1964), Egypt (Schmidt, 1974), Bahrain (Holes, 1983), Jordan (Abd-el-Jawad, 1987), and Syria (Jassem, 1987) where the realizations of (q) reflect regional, social, and communal variations. On the contrary, it is conserved in urban dialects. Thus, it is replaced by [g] in most of the Bedouin Arabic dialects, such as Jordanian dialects (Abd-el-Jawad, 1986, 1987). In Iraq, the distinction between the *qəltu* and *gilit* dialect groups is realised via (q). The *qəltu* dialects could be a stereotypical feature, whereas the *gilit* dialects are referred to as 'g-dialects' as they have pronounced [g]. Due to the contact between the two dialects, we expect informants of grasp that [g] HA. Table 3 below highlights the minimal pairs, which illustrate the phonemic contrast between [q] and [g] realizations of (q) in Iraq:

Table 3 Realizations of (q) in the *qəltu* and *gilit* Dialects

SA	*qəltu*	*gilit*	Gloss
[aqu:l]	[aqu:l]	[agu:l]	I say
[qa:m]	[qa:m]	[ga:m]	He stood up
[aqribaʔ]	[qara:ba]	[gara:ba]	Relatives

In several Arab regions, the SA (q) has been enlightened in a number of studies. In Bahrain, Holes (1983) confirms that (q) has four variants depending on communal stratification; [q] and [y], which are spoken by Sunnis and [g] and [ʤ], which are used by the Shi'i population. Holes (1983, 1986, and 1987) investigated this variation deeply.

In Syria, Sallam (1980) shows that the SA (q) has four variants; the voiceless uvular stop [q] used in the rural areas, the voiceless glottal stop [ʔ] spoken in the urban centers, such as the capital Damascus, the voiced velar stop [g], and its voiceless version [k] which are spoken by the

immigrants in the Golan Heights. Jassem (1987) finds that the older informants used the variant [g] more than the younger informants did in his study on phonological variation and change in the speech of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war immigrants in Syria.

Abd-el-Jawad (1986) conducted his study in Jordan. He found that the SA (q) has three variants; the voiceless velar stop [k] used in rural Palestinian dialects, the voiced velar stop [g] spoken in Bedouin and rural areas, and the voiceless glottal stop [ʔ] used in urban centers. Then, Abd-el-Jawad (1987) conducted a sociolinguistic study in Jordan to examine the influence of regional dialects competing with SA. He shows that Arab sociolinguists care a lot about SA being the prestigious variety in Arabic as they are influenced by the case in Western languages, such as English, where the concepts prestigious and standard are used interchangeably. Concerning age, he found that older informants maintained the local variant [q], while younger informants tend to use the urban variant [ʔ], which they feel more prestigious (Ibid).

Results and Discussion

The social distribution of [g] and its correlation with the independent variables is discussed in this section. The inter-correlation between the independent variables is examined to examine which variable has the greatest impact on the linguistic behavior of informants.

Age

Figure 4 Use of [g] according to age group
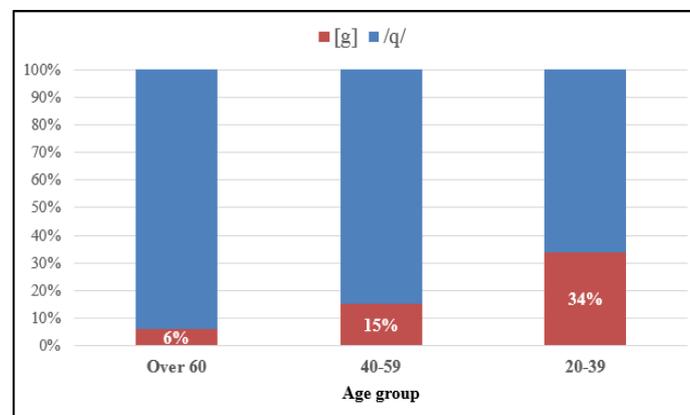
Figure 4 clearly shows that informants in the younger age group used most of the *gilit* variant [g] than the older informants. The older informants have used [g] 6% of the time, this frequency increased gradually in the middle-aged group to 15%, but it jumped significantly to 34% in the younger informants. The fact that the older informants have actually used [g] indicates that it is not recent. It also indicates that (q) is in a state of change in progress in that it has neither gone completely to [g] nor stopped completely. Two evidences come from two Iraqi researchers, who have claimed that the *qəltu* dialect spoken in the Euphrates towns Anah and Hīt is witnessing a

state of change. The first evidence comes from Al-Ani (1978) who has found that some of his participants from Anah and Hīt pronounced (q) as [g].

Some of those informants, it can be predicted would be among our older informants, who were in their twenties or thirties at the time Al-Ani conducted his research. Khan (1997) who has mentioned that the qəltu dialect in Hīt is being under the influence of the gilit dialects made the second evidence. He called this 'beduinization'. We have reason to believe that HA is in a state of change in progress. The younger informants in our data were born at the beginning or just before the first wave of migrants to Hīt from the *gilit* area. Consequently, some supra local variants, such as [g] are being spreading among informants of HA. During data collection, when we asked our informants what sounds are distinguished in their dialect, Most of them mentioned (q), but very little are aware of the differences in the realizations of vowel features, such as epenthesis. I start discussing the use of [g] as a variant of (q). It looks that the social awareness of this stigmatized variable is not limited to the Iraqi speech communities, but extends to other countries. For example, in Jordan, Abd-el-Jawad (1987) found that older speakers retained the local variant [q], while younger speakers used the urban variant [ʔ], which they consider as more prestigious. Jassem (1987) found that the older informants used the variant [g] more than the younger informants did in his study on phonological variation and change in the speech of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war immigrants in Syria. Abd-el-Jawad (1987) conducted a sociolinguistic study in Jordan to examine the influence of regional dialects competing with SA. He found that older informants maintained the local variant [q], while younger informants tend to use the urban variant [ʔ], which they feel more prestigious.

The linguistic behavior of informants in the three age groups points out a case of dialect leveling towards the *gilit* dialect. The adoption of [g] is progressing among informants of HA living in Hīt. It seems that the adoption of this variant has further progressed in the speech of younger informants. Differences among the three age groups are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Results of a Pearson Correlation test indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between informants' age and their use of [g], (r= -0.50, P= 0.03). In terms of the differences among age groups, result of test of variance ANOVA shows that the differences among informants age and use of [g] is statistically insignificant, P= 0.20.

There is a relationship between migration-related contact and informants' behavior in terms of (q). The jump in the younger age group can be interpreted in terms of the informants' ages in relation to the three waves of migration from the *gilit* area to Hīt. Table 4 shows the average ages and years of birth of informants in the three age groups.

Table 4 Mean ages and years of birth of informants in the three age groups

Age group	Mean age	Year of birth
Over 60	65	Late 1940s- early 1950s
40-59	45	Mid 1960s- early 1970s
20-39	34	Early 1980s

The first wave of migrants from the gilit area to Hīt took place in the early 1980s during the Iraq-Iran war. At that time, the older informants were in their third and fourth decades of life, and the middle-aged informants were aged approximately between 15 and 20 years old. In contrast, the younger informants were still 5-10 years old. In order to test the relationship between the waves of migration to the town and informants' use of [g], the three age groups were stratified into two generations. The pre-migration generation is represented by age groups (40-59+ over 60), while post-migration generation is represented by age group (20-39). In terms of this migration-related variation, the middle-aged and older informants were merged into one group and compared with the younger informants.

Table 5 T-test among age groups in the use of [g]

Age groups compared	T-test
20-39 vs. 40-59	0.685
40-59 vs. over 60	0.203
20-39 vs. over 60	0.159
20-39 vs. (40-59+ over 60)	**0.020**

While none of the between-groups differences are significant, result of T-test shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between age group (20-39) and age groups (40-59+ over 60), P= 0.02. This reveals a relationship between migration-related contact and informants' behavior in terms of [g]. Most of our informants, especially the older ones, have mentioned that they are observing more words pronounced with [g] instead of [q] among younger people in Hīt, they termed these words 'non-Hīti'. They added that younger people use these words more than older people do. It looks that informants of HA are aware of how their local dialect is changing.

The alternation between [q] and [g] is restricted to four syntactic categories: verbs, nouns, adverbs, and adjectives. They are presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 5 Distribution of [g] according to syntactic categories and age
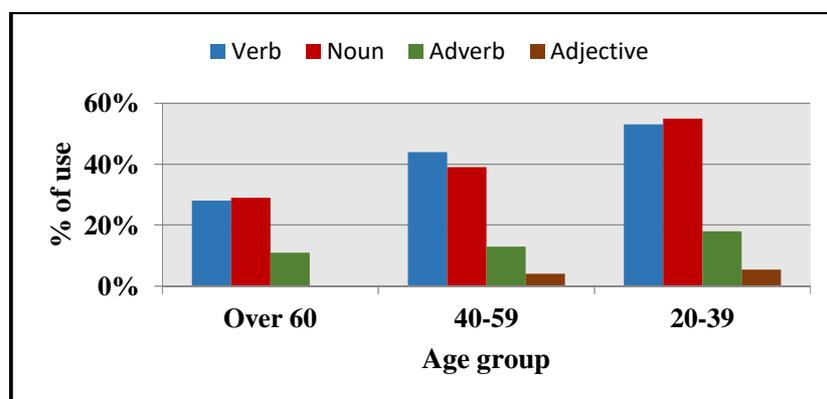
Informants in the three age groups have used [g] in nouns the most and in adjectives the least. The older informants used it 29% of the time, this frequency increased slightly in the middle-aged informants to 39%, but jumped to 55% in the younger informants. The overall use of [g] is less when it occurs in verbs. In the older age group, when (q) occurs in verbs, it is realized as [g] 28% of the time. The middle-aged group realized verbs with [g] instead of (q) 44% of the time. This percentage rose gradually to 53% in the younger age group. Informants in the three age groups did not exceed 18% of [g] realizations of (q) when it occurs in adverbs. Unlike the case with verbs and nouns, there was only negligible difference among the three age groups in the use of [g] in adverbs. The middle-aged informants used it the least with 13%, the older informants used it slightly higher, 11%, and the younger informants used this variant in adverbs 18% of the time. The observation that the older informants did not change [q] to [g] when it occurs in adjectives indicates that it is more recent compared to the other three syntactic categories. Moreover, the middle-aged informants used it only 4%, which has been doubled in the younger age group to 6%.

Sex

Figure 6 Use of [g] according to sex
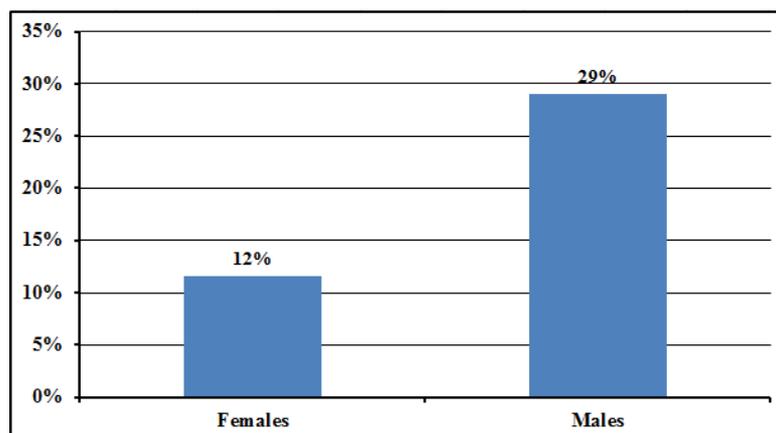
The pattern in Figure 6 replicates the usually reported pattern in previous sex-related studies, which investigated the use of (q) in other Arabic dialects. In Jordan, Abd-el-Jawad (1986) found that male informants used the rural variant [g] more than female informants, who use the urban variant [ʔ]. However, it contravenes the sex differentiation that has been found in other languages. For example, in his study on language change in New York City, Labov (1966) found that women adopt the post-vocalic [r] variant more than men adopt, and consider this variant more prestigious. The observation that can be made of the data in Figure 3 is that men appear to favor the *gilit* dialect by adopting the variant [g] more frequently than women do. While male informants used [g] 29%, this variant accounted for only 12% of the total tokens with (q) in the speech of female informants. However, this difference is statistically insignificant, F= 2.15, P=

0.10. This indicates that sex is less important than age with regard to the use of [g]. In terms of the grammatical categories (Figure 2), the variation between male and female informants is statistically significant only when it occurs in verbs.

Table 6 Use of [g] in relation to the grammatical categories

	Males	Females	Level of significance
Adverb	**16%**	10%	0.219
Verb	**57%**	15%	**0.054**
Noun	24%	**75%**	0.455
Adjective	**3%**	0%	0.768

Male informants seem to lead the use of the *gilit* variant [g] in adverbs, verbs, and adjectives. For example, the adverb [qidda:m] 'in front of' and the verb [jisqi] 'to water' are realized as [gidda:m] and [jisgi], respectively. The variation is statistically significant only in the case of verbs (P=0.05). Whereas men used [g] in verbs the most (57%), women preferred to use this variant in verbs only 15% of the time. The variation in the use of [g] in adverbs is not significant (P=0.21) because there is only negligible difference, with men using it 16% and women using it 10% of the time. Both male and female informants used realized (q) as [g] the least when it occurs in adjectives. Although women [g] in nouns three times than men did, this difference has no statistical significance (P= 0.45).

Network Integration

In contrast to the correlation between sex and the use of [g], informants' use of [g] seems to be highly influenced by their integration to the *gilit* community. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient show that there is a strong relationship between [g] and network integration (r= 0.69) and that this relationship is highly statistically significant (P= 0.00). Before discussing the variation in the use of [g] on the individuals' level, it is important to refer to the significance of the difference among the sub-variables. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient reveal that the friendship and spatial mobility are the most important sub-variables in terms of individuals' adoption of [g]. There was a strong and highly statistically significant relationship between friendship and use of [g], and spatial mobility. There was no important relation between the other social network sub-variables and the use of [g]. Figure 7 presents levels of significance of the correlations of [g] and the network integration sub-variables.

Table 7 Correlations of [g] and NI sub-variables and significance levels

SNII sub-variable	Strength of relationship (r value)	Level of significance (p value)
Friendship relation	0.715***	P= 0.001 (**P< 0.01**)
Spatial mobility	0.631**	P= 0.005 (**P< 0.01**)
Parents birth	0.270	P= 0.297 (**P>0.05**)

Leisure time activities	0.306	P= 0.217 (P>0.05)
Relatives	0.352	P= 0.152 (P>0.05)
***= Correlation is highly statistically significant * = Correlation is statistically significant * = No statistical significance		

Figure 7 Individuals' use of [g] according to spatial mobility
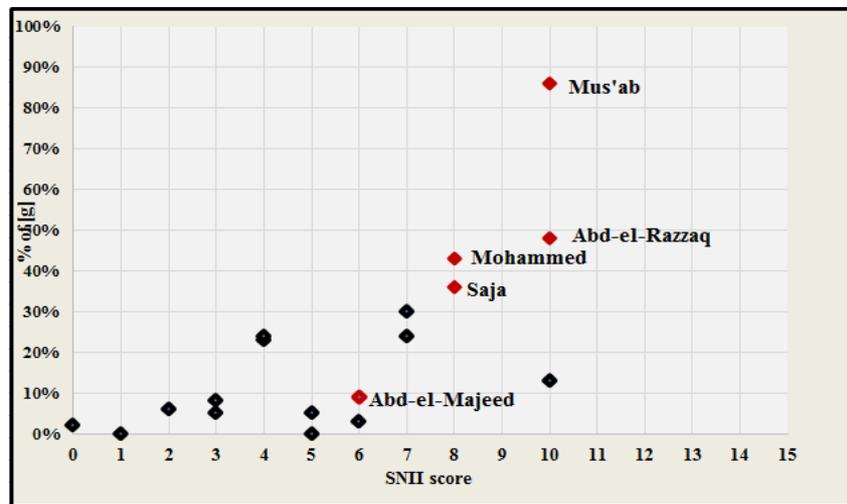
The data in Figure 7 explain the male-led use of [g] discussed in the previous section. Out of the four highest scores in spatial mobility, there are three male informants and one female informant. Mus'ab, a younger male informant was the highest user of [g], who used it 86%. This informant scored 10 points in the SNII; his integration to the *gilit* community comes from friendship in that he has been in extensive contacts with the *gilit* speakers by means of daily travel to the university located in Ramadi. Abd-el-Majeed is also a young male, who is highly integrated to the *gilit* community (10 points). He shares Mus'ab in almost all other lifestyles sub-variables, but differs in the level of spatial mobility in that he travels to the *gilit* area once a year. This influenced his use of [g], which was only 13%. In the middle of these two informants comes Mohammed, whose use of [g] (43%) looks to be influenced by his spatial mobility. He travels to the *gilit* area once a week. The second highest user of [g] was Abd-el-Razzaq, an older male informant, who used it 48%. His integration to the gilit community came from exposure to that community in pre-migration time; since he had lived twenty years in Baghdad for study and work purposes. The only high score female was Saja, who used [g] 36% of the time. She reported that she travels to the *gilit* area once a year for health appointments.

Interactions between independent variables

Among the three independent variables, network integration seems to be the most important variable reflecting the highest level of significance, P= 0.001. Within network integration, friendship and spatial mobility were the most important sub-variables. The second important social variable was age with level of significance at P= 0.020. However, although the younger informants were more innovative, the differences between their scores and those of the middle and older informants were statistically insignificant as far as comparison among the three age groups is concerned. Sex did not prove to be important. The next step is to look for interactions between independent variables to determine which affects which. In accordance with these values, we will first look at age in relation to network integration and friendship separately.

Age

In order to explain the role of other social variables in determining this linguistic behavior, let us look at the correlation between age and adoption of [g] with regard to SNI. Table 7 includes descriptive data of informants in the three age groups according to network integration.

Table 8 Cross-tabulation of age and network integration

Age group		Network Integration NI			Total
		0-3 points	4-7points	8-10 points	
Younger (20-39)	Count	0	2	**4**	6
	% within Age group	0.0%	33.3%	**66.7%**	100.0%
	% within NI	0.0%	25.0%	**80.0%**	33.3%
Middle-aged (40-59)	Count	2	**4**	0	6
	% within Age group	33.3%	**66.7%**	0.0%	100.0%
	% within NI	40.0%	**50.0%**	0.0%	33.3%
Older (over 60)	Count	**3**	2	1	6
	% within Age group	**50.0%**	33.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within NI	**60.0%**	25.0%	20.0%	33.3%
Total	Count	5	8	5	18
	% within Age group	27.8%	44.4%	27.8%	100.0%
	% within NI	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The distribution of informants from the three age groups according to network integration shows a negative relationship between informants' age and their integration to the *gilit* community. As informants grow older, they become closer to the *gilit* community. The majority of younger informants are high network scorers.

Out of the six younger informants, there are four informants (3 males and 1 female) in the high integration group (8-10 points). The other two are in the middle network group (4-7 points) and are female informants. There are no middle-aged high scorers. The four middle-aged informants in the 4-7 points integration group are three males and one female. While older informants come in the second position in the high integration scores, they outscore other age groups in the low integration scores. The only high scorer is a male informant; one of the two old informants in the 4-7 points group is male, and all three low scorers are females. Among the mean network score of the younger informants (7.5 points), the middle-aged informants (4 points), and that of the older informants (6 points) there is a difference of 3.5 points between the younger and middle-aged groups, and 2 points between middle-aged and older informants, which is likely to be important. Almost half (8 informants) of the informants in all age groups are in the 4-7 points network group.

The differences between age group and their integration to the *gilit* community proved significant with $P < 0.05$. The cross-tabulated data in Table 8 repeat a pattern that has been reported by studies conducted on other Arabic dialects. These studies have revealed that adolescents resist their parents' linguistic forms because of their integration with friends. For example, in Jordan, Abd-el-Jawad (1986) found that younger informants the [g] variant more than older informants, who retain the local variant [q]. He assumed that this tendency might be ascribed to the social pressure imposed on younger informants by neighborhood, study and work peers. Table 8 is a cross-tabulation of friendship and age groups.

Table 9 Cross-tabulation of close friendship and sex

			Friendship network		Total
			Closed friendship	Open friendship	
Sex	Male	Count	3	6	9
		% within Sex	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	30.0%	75.0%	50.0%
	Female	Count	7	2	9
		% within Sex	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	70.0%	25.0%	50.0%
Total		Count	10	8	18
		% within Sex	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

While there were more male informants in the open friendship sub-group, female informants retained closed friendships with peers from the local community. In total, there were just below

half of informants, who tended to build friendship with peers from the *gilit* community. Of these, 75.5% were males and 25.5 % were females. While the majority of the male informants (66.7%) were in the open friendship group, only 22.2% of the female informants were involved in that friendship group. On the other hand, of the 10 closed friendship informants, there were seven females against two males. While 77.8% of the female informants preferred to keep closed friendship relations with MH speakers in Hit, there were only 33.3% of the males, who preserved this preference. Pearson chi-square (P= 0.05) indicated that close friendship and age are dependent. A good interaction between close friendship and age group holds as shown in table 10 below.

Table 10 Cross-tabulation of friendship networks and age

			Friendship network		Total
			Closed friendship	Open friendship	
Age group	Younger (20-39)	Count	1	5	6
		% within Age group	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	10.0%	62.5%	33.3%
	Middle-aged (40-59)	Count	3	3	6
		% within Age group	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	30.0%	37.5%	33.3%
	Older (60+)	Count	6	0	6
		% within Age group	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	60.0%	0.0%	33.3%
Total		Count	10	8	18
		% within Age group	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
		% within Friendship network	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Friendship with peers from the *gilit* community was the highest in the younger age group, where five out of the six informants have their close friends from out of Hīt community. From the analysis of close friendship in combination with age groups, it is plain to see that just below half of informants from all age groups had *gilit* speakers as close friends, 62.5 % of them were from the younger age group. Moreover, 83.3% of the younger informants established friendship relations with *gilit* speakers. While 50.0% of the middle-aged informants tended to open friendships with *gilit* speakers, all the older informants tended to keep friendship relations with their peers in Hit. There is clear pattern of interaction between age group and friendship. The distribution of men and women into the friendship sub-groups revealed a strong interaction between age group and friendship network with Pearson chi-square value of (P= 0.01).

Figure 8 Rates of [q] vs. [g] for informants with open friendship networks
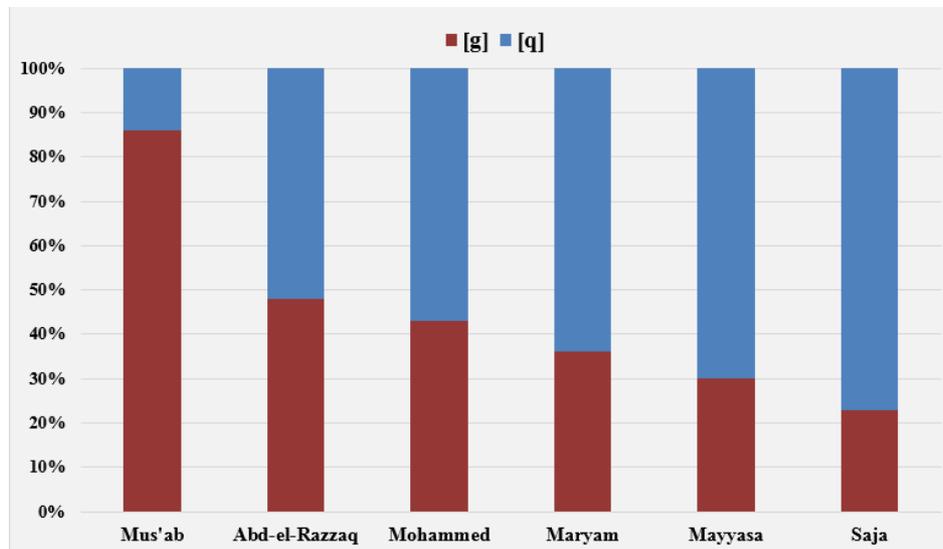
It is found that friendship network is the most important network integration sub-variable. We are interested in explaining how informants' close friendships with *gilit* speakers influenced their use of [g]. As Figure 5 shows, four out of the six informants, who have most of their close friends from the *gilit* community, are from the younger age group (Mus'ab, Mohammed, Maryam, and Saja), one from the older age group (Abd-el-Razzaq), and one middle-aged informant (Mayyasa). During the interviews, all the six informants reported that they formed their friendship networks with peers, who migrated with their families from various *gilit* cities to Hīt. As Figure 5 shows, Mus'ab produced very much [g], he pronounced 86% of the (q) tokens with [g]. All of his close friends are from the *gilit* community and speak the *gilit* dialect. Although he has been traveling to Ramadi in almost a daily basis between 2013 and 2015, where he was doing his Master in Al-Anbar University, he mentioned that he did not form friendships with peers, who live in Ramadi. He instead established friendship relationships with *gilit* speakers, who moved to Hīt and settled there. Although Mohammed is same age of Mus'ab, he used less rate of [g] (43%). He mentioned that he does not meet his friends on daily basis, which might be the reason behind his low use of [g]. The second highest user of [g] in terms of friendship is Abd-el-Razzaq, an older male informant, who meets his friends (who moved from Baghdad and settled in Hīt after 2003) on daily routine in cafes and fishing. He used [g] in 48% of the time. Although Maryam is same age and sex of Saja, she pronounced (q) as [g] in 36% of the time compared to 23% by Saja. In the middle of them comes Mayyasa, the middle-aged female, who used [g] 30%.

Conclusions

It was shown that HA is currently undergoing change in one of its most distinguished sounds (i.e. q) due to numerous social factors, mainly network integration. The integration of HA speakers in three age groups into the *gilit* community is measured quantitatively by a Social

Network Integration Index (SNII). Findings indicate that the variant [g] is being adopted by HA speakers on the expense of the local variable [q]. It is suggested that [g] is spreading victorious to the town via migrants, who moved from the *gilit* areas to Hīt since early 1980s. It was also revealed that [g] is significantly favored in the context of verbs the most. Next to this, the properties of [g] and the ways that Hīti informants perceive them in casual speech are to be focused in the present paper. The overall picture of this research provides evidence of regional dialect leveling in HA rather than resistance. It goes in line with Al-Ani (1978), who claimed that the *qəltu* dialects, particularly in Hīt, are in a state of change under the effect of the *gilit* group. However, our results contrast more recent research on the *qəltu* variety spoken in Mosul, which was found to resist change the sound (q) (Yaseen, 2015). The results indicated that informants, especially young males, are usually subconsciously mimic their *gilit-* speaking close friends. That is why this variant is used by more informants by time. The statistical analyses revealed that the involvement within friendship networks with *gilit*-speaking migrants has a stronger impact on informants' language behavior than their contacts when they are outside Hīt (i.e. spatial mobility). It is to be recommended that further studies needs to be conducted on other *qəltu* varieties, such those spoken in Anah and Tikrit to establish a specific description of potential phonological changes in Iraqi dialects.

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