

Dialect Levelling in the Iraqi *gelet* Varieties with Reference to First Vowel in the faʕʕa:l / faʕʕa:la Pattern Nominal Forms

Sura Mustafa Fadhil*

Wasan Alsiraih

University of Basra / College of Education for Human Sciences

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Date of Article</p> <p>Received : 2024/1/18</p> <p>Received in revised form: 2024/1/22</p> <p>Accepted: 2024/1/30</p> <p>Available online: 2024/6/12</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Dialect Levelling, <i>gelet</i>, Iraqi Arabic, Urban/Rural</p>	<p>This research investigates the occurrence of dialect levelling in the <i>gelet</i>-speaking area, focusing on a specific variable: the first vowel in the faʕʕa:l / faʕʕa:la pattern nominal forms. The primary objectives include examining the direction of levelling, exploring factors influencing or contributing to the process, identifying the gender associated with this phenomenon, and the age group where levelling is most prominent. Data collection involved interviews and a picture description task. The findings reveal that levelling is indeed happening within the <i>gelet</i> variety, targeting the urban variety. Additionally, mobility, marriage, and prestige emerge as key factors in influencing dialect levelling, with female speakers leading this process more than male speakers. Furthermore, the study indicates that younger individuals are more inclined towards levelling their speech compared to middle-aged and older individuals.</p>

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1-Introduction

Iraq is a country that embraces a wide variety of individuals that belong to different religious, ethnic, and geographical groups. These differences, in one way or another, are all reflected through the way members of the society speak.

The Iraqi dialect, often known as Mesopotamian Arabic, is the most widely spoken dialect in Iraq. The Mesopotamian basin of Iraq, which includes sections of neighbouring Syria, Turkey, and Iran, is home to a continuum of Arabic variants known as Iraqi Arabic (henceforth IA).

There is a variety of Arabic dialects because of the many distinct communities. Since Islam is the official religion of Iraq and Muslims far outnumber Jews and Christians, Abu-Haidar (1989) states that the Muslim dialect is the one which operates as the lingua franca. Therefore, the dialect used by Muslims is the language of choice for communication between non-Muslim Iraqis and Muslims from different dialect areas (Blanc 1964).

Blanc's (1964) study was the first and, perhaps, most crucial of Iraq's linguistic landscape. While categorising the variations found in and around Iraq, he took into account their social

and religious contexts. He (ibid) classified dialects into two ways: the first was a presentation of the three main community types of Baghdad dividing them into Muslim, Christian, and Jewish; all of which shared the same city, but spoke distinct dialects; in the second grouping, he divided all of Iraq and the Mesopotamian region into two groups speaking different varieties of Arabic: the *gelet*, spoken by sedentary and non-sedentary Muslims, and the *qeltu* spoken by non-Muslims who reside in lower Iraq and the sedentary Iraqis (Muslims and non-Muslims) in the rest of the region. The terms *gelet* and *qeltu* originate from the classical Arabic *qultu* which is the first person, singular, and perfect tense, meaning 'I said' in English.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Northern, Central, and Southern Varieties

In addition to the two main dialect group classifications into *qeltu* and *gelet*, Blanc (1964) also employed the terms Upper Iraq and Lower Iraq suggesting that these are the only appropriate categories within which to classify the dispersion of the *qeltu* and *gelet* dialects among the various regions of the country.

Ingham (1976) later divided the *gelet* group into Central and Southern Iraqi. In fact, some researchers consider the two main dialects spoken in Mesopotamia, the *qeltu* and *gelet*, difficult to categorise geographically due to the region's rich cultural and linguistic diversity (Watson, 2002). As a result, Iraqi dialects were divided into three sub-groups: Northern, Central and Southern, which are the three main geographical categories of modern Iraqi dialects.

Each of the three regions has been considered to be represented by a major city: Mosul for

the north; Basra for the south (Talay, 2011; Asiraih, 2013); Whereas Baghdad, which is the site of the central dialect, represents the central region (Al-Khalesi, 2007; Talay, 2011; Alsiraih, 2013).

A third category of classification is one made by Ingham (1976) which includes urban and rural dwellers from the Southern Iraqi provinces and of Ahwaz or Khuzestan in Iran. This southern group is further subdivided by Ingham (ibid) into the following four regions: 1. Shaṭṭ Al-Arab and lower Karun, 2. Amara and the marshlands, 3. the Euphrates, 4. Zubayr and parts of Faw. He (ibid) also notes that the group of Zubayr and Faw is rather different from the other three. However, Ingham (1997; also cited in Bellem, 2007; Talay, 2011; Alsiraih, 2013) later presents somewhat a detailed account of the central and southern groups, where the central one encompasses dialects of Baghdad, Mussayab, Hilla and Karbala; whereas the southern covers varieties of Basra, Nasiriya and Amara.

The current study adopts Ingham's (1997) above classification regarding the northern, central, and southern varieties. However, such provinces as Wasit, Najaf, Diyala, Diwania and Muthana are not stated by Ingham or any of the other mentioned researchers; hence they will be added to his classification due to the present study having participants from these cities. Meanwhile, since they have not been included in previous classifications, and due to them all belonging to the *gelet* group, they are classified geographically but also by taking into account the similarities and/or differences among the speakers of these dialects. Accordingly, Wasit, Najaf, Diyala and Diwania are to be considered as belonging to

the Central *gelet* group; while the dialect of Muthana is similar to the Southern dialects than to the Central dialects and is geographically located in the south; therefore, it will be included within the southern group.

2.2 Urban and Rural Varieties

Blanc (1964) states that although there is often a strong connection between *urban* and *sedentary* Iraqis, and also between *rural* and *Bedouin* Iraqis, yet using these terms interchangeably, especially when describing language classification, would be inaccurate. He (ibid) adds that in the Iraqi geographical context, the terms *urban* and *sedentary* have been associated with the *qeltu* dialects of Iraq, whereas *rural* and *Bedouin* have been linked to the *gelet* dialects.

Local taxonomy is used by Ingham (1976) to distinguish between the '*arab*' nomadic population and the '*hadhar*' sedentary population. In his viewpoint, the labels '*arab*' and '*hadhar*' do not match exactly the *urban/rural* division, even if the term '*hadhar*', according to him, encompasses all *urban* inhabitants inside Mesopotamia; and people classified as '*arab*' are in all cases *rural*. Even though there is no agreed-upon definition for these phrases, the fundamental differences between them can be summarized here. According to Ingham's (ibid.) research, the term '*hadhar*' refers to riverside communities that have been there for some time, while '*arab*' refers to the wandering communities who settle away from the riversides.

According to Blanc (1964), the dominant Muslim dialect in Baghdad was of the *qeltu* type and hence was characterised by the features *urban* and *sedentary* until at least the fourteenth century. Starting in the fourteenth

century, and especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the *gelet* speakers began migrating to Baghdad, bringing with them a more *rural* and *Bedouin* way of life and reshaping the city's linguistic identity so that today *gelet* is the dominant language spoken there (Palva, 2009).

The above mentioned viewpoints raised by scholars suggest that there is no agreed upon explanation for the *urban/rural* classification in Iraq. Alsiraih (2013) tackles the binary *urban/rural* classification by stating that the *urban* communities are those residing in the city centres while *rurals* are those countryside residents. This explanation might as well serve as a summary extracted in one way or another from all the aforementioned statements raised by Blanc (1964), Ingham (1976), Abu-Haider (2006) and Palva (2009). The current study thus adopts Alsiraih's (2013) explanation concerning the urban/rural axis. Accordingly, *rural* here refers to people who live in the countryside and outskirts of the cities, while *urban* refers to those individuals who live in the city centres.

2.3 Dialect Levelling

Trudgill's research on dialects in contact provided a comprehensive framework for understanding and studying dialect levelling.

Trudgill (1986: 98) conducted a study on dialect levelling providing a definition of the phenomenon considering it as the process of "the reduction or attrition of marked variants"; where the term "marked" pertains to forms that are considered "uncommon or present in a minority." According to him (ibid), the phenomenon of levelling occurs as a result of numerous occurrences of short-term linguistic accommodation between individuals who

speak different linguistic varieties. He (ibid) added that the frequent usage of certain linguistic variations leads to their eventual permanence over time. These modifications were then inherited by subsequent generations as their native variety. This implies that the modifications that individuals make during the processes of adaptation and levelling entail the loss or diminishment of the most prominent characteristics of their own indigenous dialect. Speakers, thus, adapt to their audience and may include novel language elements into their linguistic repertoire. Trudgill (ibid) further add that the exchange of linguistic forms between two individuals has the potential to lead to greater variability within a particular dialect over an extended period of time. Consequently, the forms that are considered to be the most uncommon or infrequent within the speech community are likely to be eliminated through a process known as *dialect levelling*.

The phenomenon of language variety and change, particularly dialect levelling, often shows a correlation with location, whether it be geographical or social in nature. This phenomenon occurs when a language variant gains broader socio-spatial recognition, leading to a decline in the usage of more regionally specific forms (Britain, 2009). Trudgill (2000) attributes the death of many dialects and dialect features to increased mobility during the twentieth century via the process of dialect levelling. Trudgill (1986) also posits that the phenomenon of dialect change is frequently perceived as a consequence of interactions between individuals from a particular community and immigrants arriving from different regions. In certain instances, there is

contact that takes place between communities which have immigrated to a recently established locality, such as a newly constructed town. Lodge (2004) finds the presence of immigrants a determining factor in the process described, since a lower number of immigrants relative to the local population in the host area would result in a gradual assimilation of the immigrants towards the dialect spoken by the local community. Furthermore, over time, the native dialect of immigrants not only diminishes but also fails to leave any discernible impact on the vernacular of their host community.

Dialect levelling is intricately connected to the social psychological phenomenon of speech accommodation, which is believed to be the underlying cause (Trudgill, 1986; Giles and Powesland, 1997). This process involves interlocutors linguistically converging, given the presence of mutual willingness. In scenarios where individuals with diverse yet mutually comprehensible languages converge, a multitude of individual instances of short-term adjustment gradually result in long-term accommodation among these individuals over time (Trudgill, 1986; Trudgill, 2000).

In addition to mobility and accommodation, prestige also appears to be operating in the process of dialect levelling. Linguistic prestige refers to the level of honour and societal worth attributed by individuals within a speech group to specific language varieties or linguistic characteristics (Trudgill, 1986; 1975). Speakers commonly employ a specific language variation or linguistic feature due to its social acceptance and high prestige. In the majority of instances, linguistic prestige is closely linked to socially and politically

powerful groups. One illustration, as shown by Abu-Haidar (1991), demonstrates Christians residing in Baghdad using the linguistic variety of Muslims. This adaptation involves the abandonment of the phoneme /q/ in favour of /g/, which is perceived by the Christians as a linguistic trait associated with power and representative of the dominant Muslim population.

3. First Vowel in the faʕʕa:l / faʕʕa:la Pattern Nominal Forms

The present study is limited to investigating the difference between the varieties of IA regarding the characteristic vowel in the faʕʕa:l pattern nominal forms which is /i/ in the urban varieties and /a/ in the rural ones. The word that is taken as an example to represent this feature is (man) whose MSA pronunciation is /radʒul/ with an open, front and unrounded /a/ in the onset and a close, back and rounded short vowel /u/ in the coda. The word has two realisations in the *gelet* dialect: 1-/ridʒdʒa:l/, 2- /radʒdʒa:l/. These two different pronunciations between rural and urban areas are generally very significant in drawing a border line between the two varieties (Abu-Haidar, 1988). Hence Abu-Haidar (ibid) considers them as: urban /ridʒdʒa:l/ and rural /radʒdʒa:l/. However, sometimes it appears that there are no clear decisive boundaries to the use of each variant within the *gelet* speaking area. Some *gelet* speakers attempt to use a variant that is a hallmark of an area other than the one they live in or belong to. In this account, Alsiraih (2021) who studied speech variation in the dialect of Basra in southern Iraq observed that, in the urban Basri dialect, the common is /a/, but interestingly they show more diversity also

using /i/. Alsiraih (2021) also found out that many urban Basris aim for the Baghdadi /i/. She (ibid) further adds that rural speakers would use /i/ in a word such as /ridʒdʒa:l/.

The time period between Abu-Haidar's (1988) study and that of Alsiraih (2021) along with their results and observations suggest a change that needs to be thoroughly studied and other social factors need to be tackled, such as age and gender, which are included to investigate the roles they take in the use of each of these variants. There is however a third variant in addition to these two variants of the word 'man' which is /zilma/ that can be heard along the *gelet* speaking area. Thus, it is significant to include it in this study as well and see the demographics of using this variant along with the former two /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

The sample is a number of 60 participants selected from different places in the *gelet* area, divided into 30 from urban area (24 southern and 6 central) and another 30 from rural area (also 24 southern and 6 central). The southern/central distinction also exists between participants, yet the number is not equal due to the difficulty of reaching participants from Central area as the researchers reside in Basra, a southern city. In total, there are 48 participants from the southern cities as opposed to 12 from central cities. Among them are 30 interviewees representing rural and urban groups, which include 15 males and 15 females. The sample also embraces a range of ages that can be put into three age groups: the young (19-25 yrs), the middle aged (26-32 yrs), and the older age (46-60 yrs).

As for the social class parameter, it has been found that the social class does not have one particular clear image of classification of the *gelet* society; therefore, it was left to the audience (i.e. participants) to decide on how they think the society in which they live is layered, and in which layer they put themselves. However, answers gathered from the participants did not help in clarifying how social class impacts members of the *gelet* area. Hence, social class is excluded from the study.

4.2 Data Collection

4.2.1 Interview

The first procedure used to extract the data is the interview. This procedure was very useful on many levels. It helped to palliate the mood of the participants and eliminate their feeling of stress. The choice of topics for this method assisted in changing how the speakers felt and helped them to be at ease and comfortable with themselves, leading them to eventually feel exited to share information with the interviewer; such topics included talking about: the family and what they love and hate about their lives in their families; their academic status and majors; their hobbies, interests, and how they spend their free time.

Almost half of the interviews were conducted in person for those who live inside Basra city, which is where the researcher lives, or those who came to Basra for whatever reason (work, study, visits, etc.). The remaining participants were interviewed online via Telegram calls. They were not being informed about the purpose of the interview until after the interview is finished. All the interviews were recorded using the mobile phone recording app Voice Memos, version 15.7.9. The shortest interview was 15 minutes long while the

longest one was 50 minutes long. For some of the participants, the interviews took place at the University of Basra/College of Education; for others it was their working places (companies and schools); while the majority were interviewed in their dwelling places.

4.2.2 Picture Description Task

The second procedure which was used to collect the data is the picture description task. This type of method is very specific and straightforward, since it is structured and therefore more controlled than the interview in eliciting the required data whereby the task was to show the participants a number of pictures and ask them to describe what they see in those pictures. The pictures contain different objects, but all the participants are expected to provide the same answers making it easier to handle the data than it is with the interview. If the participants missed the expected answer, they are asked to explain more about what they see or to try to say it in a different way. A number of 19 pictures was used, some of which were described in one word while others required more explanations. Some questions were raised in between seeing pictures, in order to extract as much data as is possible.

5. Analysis of Results and Discussion

5.1 The Urban/Rural Distinction

In the rural variety, the first vowel /a/ of the MSA /radʒul/ is preserved, another /dʒ/ is added to represent the gemination, and the final vowel is replaced with a long, front, open, unrounded /a:/, thus resulting in /radʒdʒa:l/. In the urban variety, on the other hand, both vowels are replaced. A short front, close, unrounded /i/ replaces the /a/, and a long, front, open, unrounded /a:/ replaces the final /u/ of

the MSA equivalent, with a double /dʒdʒ/ for gemination as well. The word is then pronounced as /ridʒdʒa:l/. There is however another equivalent word to refer to a 'man' in IA that is /zilma/. It is widely used along with the two rural and urban varieties; therefore it will be included in the analysis.

Although the two variants /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ create two dialectical groups into which users of each variant belong, it appears that it is not always true that whoever says /ridʒdʒa:l/ is considered urban and whoever says /radʒdʒa:l/ is a rural person. Nowadays such judgments based on using which of the two variants might be quite misleading due to many reasons, mainly being due to dialect change. Adding to what has been stated above, differences in the dialects between the southern and central areas of the Iraqi *gelet* scope has its serious impacts. The effects of the southern/ central distinction on the urban/ rural variants is that the dialects of the southern area whether rural or urban shares a lot of features with the general rural variety than with the urban one, and the same is true between the central area and the urban variety. These distinctions and factors will be stated and discussed here.

5.1.1 The Rural Areas

The participants of the rural group from the centre and the south areas of Iraq were closely observed during the open interviews and the picture description task to decide whether they use the rural feature /radʒdʒa:l/ or the urban one /ridʒdʒa:l/ or whether they use the third variant /zilma/ or if both features are used together. The data collected from interviewees are presented below via table (1) and figure (1):

Table (1): Numbers and percentages of the central and southern rural participants using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

area	variant	number	%
Southern Iraqi	ridʒdʒa:l	3	13%
	radʒdʒa:l	14	58%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	2	8%
	zilma	5	21%
Central Iraqi	ridʒdʒa:l	6	100%
	radʒdʒa:l	0	0%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0	0%
	zilma	0	0%

Rural Speakers Using /radʒdʒa:l/, /ridʒdʒa:l/, and /zilma/

Area	Variant	Percentage
Southern Iraqi	ridʒdʒa:l	13%
	radʒdʒa:l	58%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	8%
	zilma	21%
Central Iraqi	ridʒdʒa:l	100%
	radʒdʒa:l	0%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0%
	zilma	0%

Figure (1): Percentages of the southern and central rural participants using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

The figure demonstrates that 13% of the total number of rural area participants from the southern part of Iraq use the urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/. The percentage is less than that of the central area participants which is 100%. The latter makes the whole number of the central rural area speakers. These numbers of rural area individuals using the urban variant instead of the expected rural one /radʒdʒa:l/ combined together, marks that a change is taking place. This however does not impact the

percentage of those rural group participants who preserved their original rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ as appears in the figure. There is a percentage of 58% of the southern rural group use /radʒdʒa:l/ as they are expected to; whereby no central rural area speakers used this variant. The number of those who used both variants /radʒdʒa:l/ and /ridʒdʒa:l/ is a small number which make the percentage 8% of the total rural group members all of whom are from southern areas. The third variant /zilma/ is also used by some participants in the rural group. Out of 24 speakers, 21% individuals use /zilma/ rather than /radʒdʒa:l/ or /ridʒdʒa:l/ all of which are male speakers from the south areas of Iraq.

We need now to dig deep into what makes the possible reasons for the percentages of each of the selected variants above. Several possible reasons might clarify why 13% adopted an urban variant. Checking the background information stated by the rural area speakers about themselves, it has been found that reasons like urban origin of one of the parents, movement, and strong contact with urban group members might be the reasonable factors that lead these southern rural speakers to adopt an urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/ rather than the rural one /radʒdʒa:l/. The first and last factors apply also to the majority of the 100% of the central rural individuals. It is however significant to mention that there exist a small number of individuals (who use /ridʒdʒa:l/) on whom none of the above mentioned factors apply, yet they also use the urban variant in place of the rural one. The same justification might explain the 8% of the southern speakers who use both features

interchangeably though the effect of the urban variety is of less strength.

No explanations needed for the southern rural participants who preserved their rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ since this is an expected percentage (58%). For those who use /zilma/, it appears that this variant is popular and used widely in the south of Iraq. The 21% who used /zilma/ where from Nasiria, Basra, and one person was from Amara but born in Basra. Rural speakers from the rest of the *gelet* speaking areas (the centre) did not use /zilma/.

5.1.2 The Urban Areas

After presenting the data gathered from the rural group participants, the discussion now tackles the urban area participants in the exact same manner. Table (2) and figure (2) below outline percentages of each variant used by the urban members from southern and central areas:

Table (2): Number and percentages of the central and southern urban participants using /ridʒdʒa:l/, /radʒdʒa:l/, both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/, and /zilma/.

area	Variant	number	%
Southern Iraqi	ridʒdʒa:l	9	38%
	radʒdʒa:l	12	50%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	1	4%
	Zilma	2	8%
Central Iraqi	ridʒdʒa:l	5	83%
	radʒdʒa:l	1	17%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0	0%
	Zilma	0	0%

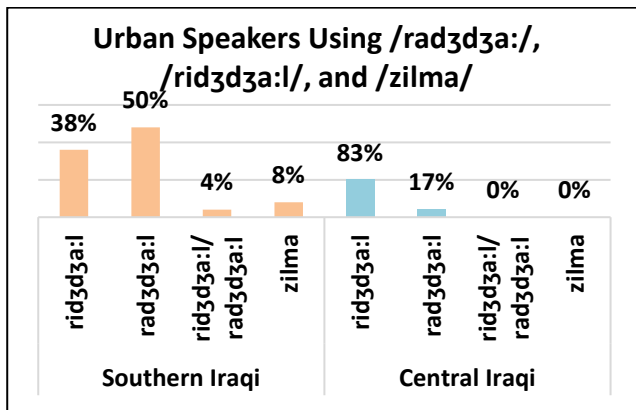


Figure (2): Percentages of the southern and central urban participants using /rid3d3a:l / , /rad3d3a:l / , both /rid3d3a:l / and /rad3d3a:l / , and /zilma /.

Out of the total number of the urban area interviewees, 38% from the south of Iraq use the urban variant /rid3d3a:l / . This equals 9 out of 24 urban individual which is higher than the number of the southern rural people who use the urban variant /rid3d3a:l / 13%. 83% out of the central urban individuals use /rid3d3a:l /, which makes the majority of them.

The number of the southern urban group members who use the rural variant /rad3d3a:l / rather than the original urban /rid3d3a:l / is 50%. These urban area participants, who are from the south of Iraq (mainly Basra but also Thi Qar, Samawa, Maysan), are more likely to use rural features than urban ones as opposed to what is seen in the central areas of Iraq. The 17% of the central urbans who uses the rural /rad3d3a:l / has rural origins and it appears that the rural variant has not been replaced by the urban variant yet.

Only 4% use both features /rid3d3a:l / and /rad3d3a:l / together. Again it is the southern/central distinction that is in charge in this case. This one speaker is a female whose parents are from the rural southern areas of Iraq, particularly, Thi Qar but she was born in

Baghdad and settled in the centre of Thi Qar after marriage. She is partially affected by the urban variety (of the centre), yet the effect was not enough for the urban variant /rid3d3a:l / to completely replace the rural /rad3d3a:l / . Only 8% of the urban group use the third variant /zilma / all of whom are southern individuals. The number is lower than the 21% of the southern rural areas. This further proves that the variant /zilma / is widely used in the rural areas more than it is in the urban ones and that it is generally used in southern areas rather than the central ones.

Generally speaking, concerning the /rid3d3a:l / vs /rad3d3a:l / variants it appears that the dialect of the centre areas is more stable than that of the southern one. The latter undergoes notable change towards the urban variant /rid3d3a:l / . Southern speakers tend to incorporate the urban variant /rid3d3a:l / within their variety.

5.2 Gender

After displaying the participant's uses of the variants and their numbers and percentages, this subsection is dedicated to tackle one of the social parameters to observe the way gender behaves in such survey regarding the use of /rid3d3a:l / , /raja:l /, and /zilma /. The two groups 'rura/urban' are studied initially as a whole group, later each one in isolation. Table (3) and figure (3) below display the data gathered from the 60 participants with relation to gender:

Table (3): Number and percentages of male and female participants using /rid3d3a:l / , /rad3d3a:l / , both /rid3d3a:l / and /rad3d3a:l / , and /zilma /.

area	variant	number	%
female	ridʒdʒa:l	15	50%
	radʒdʒa:l	11	37%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	3	10%
	zilma	1	3%
male	ridʒdʒa:l	8	27%
	radʒdʒa:l	16	53%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0	0%
	zilma	6	20%

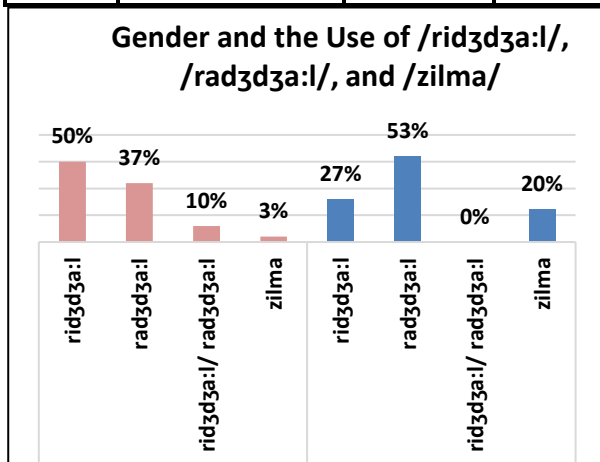


Figure (3): Percentages of male and female participants using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

Figure (3) imply that the majority of the females 50% use the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ as opposed to the majority of the males 53% who use the rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ . The percentage of females who use the rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ is 37%. On the other hand, females who use both urban and rural variants together are 10%, while females who use the third variant /zilma/ is 3% only.

The second highest percentage of the males is that of those who use urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/ which is lower than that of the females 50% mentioned above. This percentage is followed by the 20% of males who use /zilma/.

Regardless of the urban/rural and the southern/central distinctions, it appears that females are more prone to use the urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/ which is seen in the 50% and also in the 10% of the two features together. Similarly, males tend to use the rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ more than the urban /ridʒdʒa:l/ . The 0% indicates that no process of change is going on. The variant /zilma/ is generally used by males more than it is used by females if the two percentages (3% and 20%) are to be compared.

5.2.1 Gender of the Rural Areas

Table (4) and figure (4) present the data collected from an even number of male and female participants (15 each) from rural areas along with the percentages of each variant:

Table (4): Numbers and percentages of the rural male and female participants using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

area	variant	number	%
females	ridʒdʒa:l	6	40%
	radʒdʒa:l	6	40%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	2	13%
	zilma	1	7%
males	ridʒdʒa:l	3	20%
	radʒdʒa:l	8	53%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0	0%
	zilma	4	27%

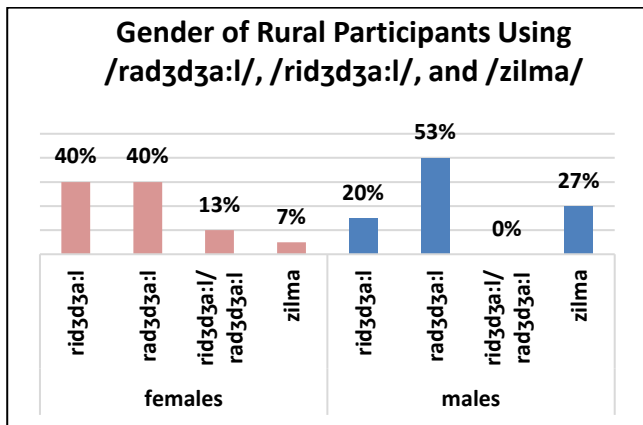


Figure (4): Percentages of the rural male and female participants using /rid3d3a:l/ , /rad3d3a:l/ , both /rid3d3a:l/ and /rad3d3a:l/ , and /zilma/.

The number of rural group female participants using the urban feature /rid3d3a:l/ is the same as the number of those who use the rural feature /rad3d3a:l/ (40%) that is 6 out of 15. Female speakers who use both the rural variant /rad3d3a:l/ and the urban variant /rid3d3a:l/ are 13% while only 7% use the variant /zilma/. The rural male participants on the other hand who use the urban variant /rid3d3a:l/ are 20% which is less than the percentage of the female participants who use /rid3d3a:l/ (40%). Male speakers who use the expected rural variant /rad3d3a:l/ make the highest percentage here with 53%. No one out of the 15 male members used both urban and rural variants together. Finally, 27% of the male participants use /zilma/ which is higher than that of the female speakers (7%). This might indicate that not only is this variant used in southern areas but also that it is generally attached to males than it is to females.

These data become more agreeable when related to the other information provided by the speakers. Thus, it appears here that the female speakers are more prone to have

changes in their dialects than male speakers do. The 40% of the rural female members who use the rural variant /rad3d3a:l/ does not need further explanation but the other 40% of the female participants who adopted the urban variant /rid3d3a:l/ however, needs to be elaborated on. Rural female speakers, according to their answers, have less relationships with people from other places (urban areas in this sense). Therefore, it is less likely to attach this percentage to impact of friendships with urban individuals. What is left of the general possible explanations is the most significant southern/ central distinction where female participants of the central areas are more prone to use the urban variant rather than the rural one. The percentage might also be due to early origins of one or both of the parents and marriage to urban people. All these factors apply to the 6 females and also to the two who use both /rid3d3a:l/ and /rad3d3a:l/ variants together. The only rural female speaker who uses /zilma/ was asked by the interviewer why did she use it instead of /rad3d3a:l/ or /rid3d3a:l/ answered that even though she uses it, she usually corrects herself and use /rad3d3a:l/ instead because she doesn't like /zilma/, she believes that it has an overrated sense of masculinity. This claim might be the reason that the variant is widely used among males.

Rural male speakers, on the other hand, have the major percentage of using the rural variant /rad3d3a:l/ (53%). Yet, impacts of the urban variety on male participants are seen with the 20% who use the urban feature /rid3d3a:l/ . This percentage is less than that of the female

participants which might indicate that male speakers are less prone to have changes in their dialect compared to female speakers. Nevertheless, the same possible explanations that were discussed with female speakers can be applied to male speakers as well. However, when it comes to male participants the more reasonable factor might be external impacts caused by urban friends. The variant /zilma/ is generally used by rural male more than female speakers which might imply that it belongs to a jargon used mostly by males.

5.2.2 Gender of the Urban Areas

Similar to the past subsections of gender, participants from the urban areas are grouped into male speakers and female speakers to consider in what manner does gender contribute to the uses of each variant. Figure (5) and table (5) below present the data gathered from 30 urban males and females (15 each).

Table (5): Numbers and percentages of the urban male and female participants using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

area	variant	number	%
females	ridʒdʒa:l	9	60%
	radʒdʒa:l	5	33%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	1	7%
	zilma	0	0%
males	ridʒdʒa:l	5	33%
	radʒdʒa:l	8	53%
	ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0	0%
	zilma	2	13%

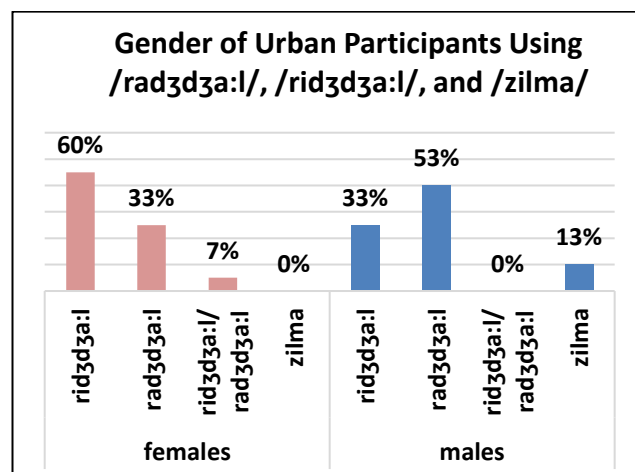


Figure (5): Percentages of the urban males and females using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

As appears in the figure above, the majority of the urban female group 60% use the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ which makes the highest percentage in the urban group. The number then decreases to from 60% to 33% for those who use the rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ instead of the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ . Moreover, the percentage of the urban female participants who use both features together is 7%. As for the urban female participants who use the third variant /zilma/ the percentage is 0%.

Urban male speakers who preserve the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ are 33% of the total number which is less than the 60% of the female speakers. The male participants who use the rural feature /radʒdʒa:l/ have a percentage of 53%. This is the second highest percentage of the urban group, after that of the female speakers who use /ridʒdʒa:l/ . On the other hand, no urban male participant uses both the rural and urban variants together. Moreover, the variant /zilma/ is used here by 13% of the male participants only.

We can now draw an outline for the percentages and say that the dialect of urban

female speakers appears to have undergone some sort of adoption towards the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ more than the dialect of the male speakers. Since the number of the male participants who use the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ is lower than that of the female participants. Female speakers who use the rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ are, on the other hand, lower in number than that of the male speakers. Since the majority of the sample are from southern areas, this explains the rural variant uses made by female participants (33%) and the 53% of the male participants. What needs to be thoroughly discussed is the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ which is seen mostly among female speakers (60%) and less so among male speakers (33%). Some of these male and female participants are from central areas and therefore using an urban variant is a normal case. However, the central participants are small in number (12 only). Other reasons need to be provided for the rest of the urban variant users. Factors like origins, marriage to a central individual, and movement apply among the male speakers and some of the female speakers who used the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ and also those who use both rural and urban feature together (7%). The rest of the female group includes those who only use this feature to sound more prestigious and those who are externally affected by the urban variety of the central areas via strong relationship with central friends. The final variant to elaborate on is the /zilma/ variant which is used by 2 male participants and no female participant. This further proves the assumption that this word belongs to a jargon used mostly by the male group.

5.3 Age

After analysing the collected data in accordance with gender as a social parameter, it is significant to carry the analysis to tackle age as another essential social parameter. The information is gathered and organised in the form of a figure and also more information is provided in an informative table.

5.3.1 Age of the Rural Areas

The following analysis deals with the rural area group where speakers are selected to reflect three age groups (young, middle aged, old) as figure (6) and table (6) illustrate:

Table (6): Numbers of the rural age groups using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

	young	%	middle	%	old	%
ridʒdʒa:l	5	31%	3	30%	1	25%
radʒdʒa:l	8	50%	3	30%	3	75%
ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	1	6%	1	10%	0	0%
zilma	2	13%	3	30%	0	0%

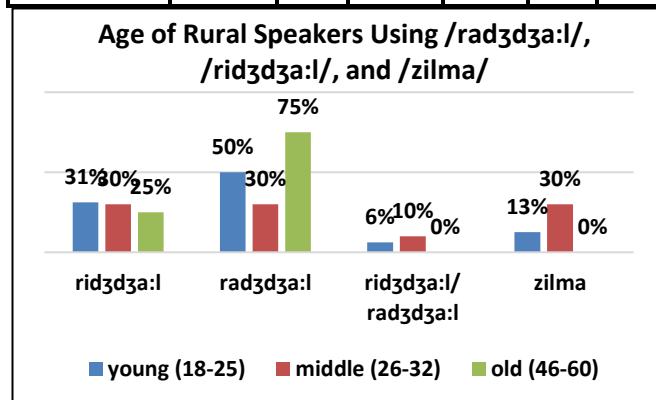


Figure (6): Percentages of the rural age groups using /ridʒdʒa:l/ , /radʒdʒa:l/ , both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ , and /zilma/.

The figure displays that the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ is used by all the three age groups. Nonetheless, the young are the most urban variant users 31% in comparison with the middle-aged group 30% which follows in

number and the old 25% who come after (as the figure shows). The rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/ dominates among the young 50% (8 out of 16 young speaker) and the old age group 75% as compared to the other variants. While it takes an average level among the middle aged group 30%. Both variants /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/ are used together by one young individual 6% and one middle-aged 10%, they are not used by any old group members. The third variant /zilma/ is on the other hand used by 13% of the young speakers and 30% middle-aged.

Generally, young group members are easily affected by any factor that might cause a dialect change be it an internal impact such as origins, or external such as movement and impacts of friends. This explains the 31% of the young rural individuals who use the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ and those 6% who use both features together not to forget that some of them are from central cities where the urban variant is likely to be used among the rural areas.

Speakers, who belong to the middle-aged rural people use the rural variant /radʒdʒa:l/, the urban one /ridʒdʒa:l/, and the third variant /zilma/ evenly (30%) that is, 3 speakers each, with only one participant 10% using both the rural and the urban variants together. Only one of these middle aged members who selected the urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/ is from central cities. While the majority of old group members 75% use the rural feature /radʒdʒa:l/, only 25% selected the urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/ which are from the central areas.

5.3.2 Age of the Urban Areas

The use of the three different variants /radʒdʒa:l/, /ridʒdʒa:l/, and /zilma/ are discussed in the urban areas according to the

three age groups as appears in figure (7) and table (7) below:

Table (7): Numbers of the rural age groups using /ridʒdʒa:l/, /radʒdʒa:l/, both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/, and /zilma/.

	young	%	middle	%	old	%
ridʒdʒa:l	10	67%	3	27%	1	25%
radʒdʒa:l	5	33%	6	55%	2	50%
ridʒdʒa:l/ radʒdʒa:l	0	0%	1	9%	0	0%
zilma	0	0%	1	9%	1	25%

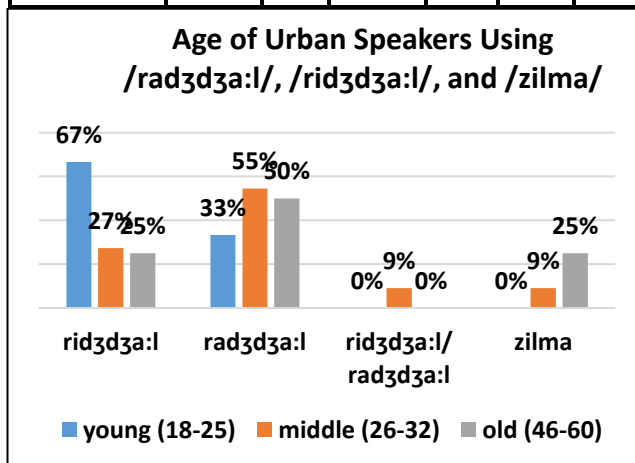


Figure (7): Percentages of the urban age groups using /ridʒdʒa:l/, /radʒdʒa:l/, both /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /radʒdʒa:l/, and /zilma/.

The figure illustrates that the majority of the young age group 67% (18-25 yrs) use the urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/ more than the other variants and also more than the other age groups use it. The number 67% means that two thirds of the young urban group total number. This is the highest percentage followed by the 33% of the young speakers who use the rural feature /radʒdʒa:l/. Factors like, being a southern speaker, having southern rural origins, being affected by the rural dialect due to movement are found here. No member out

of the young group members used both features together and none used the third variant /zilma/.

The majority of middle aged groups 55% oppositely use the /radʒdʒa:l/ variant that is, the number is more than the number of those 27% who used the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ which follows in percentage. Ultimately comes the percentage of users of both variants together, and the third variant /zilma/ which is 9% each. Middle aged people appear to cover all the four options. Old group members used the rural /radʒdʒa:l/ with the highest percentage 50%. Followed by even percentage of the urban /ridʒdʒa:l/ and /zilma/ users (25% each).

Having that the majority of the urban sample is from southern areas (24) with only few (6) central individuals, these percentages might imply that a notable number of young and middle aged people adopted the urban feature /ridʒdʒa:l/. This is seen in the numbers of those who used the urban feature and those who used both features together. The third variant /zilma/ is used only by middle and old groups (1 each), which indicates that urban speakers in general and young urbans in particular prefer other feature whether urban or rural on /zilma/.

6. Conclusions

The current study investigates and described the phenomenon of dialect levelling within the scope of Iraqi Arabic in the *gelet* speaking area. The data analysis of the two realisations reveals that dialect levelling is taking place in the *gelet* area. A notable levelling is observed to be towards the variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ which is mostly used in the central urban areas and less so in the southern parts of Iraq. The general

results show that there is an adoption of the /ridʒdʒa:l/ feature by both urban and rural participants of the southern areas and also by rural participants of the central areas. As for the third variant /zilma/, it has been concluded that it is widely used in the rural areas than in the urban ones and that it is generally used in southern areas rather than the central ones. In addition to that, /zilma/ is generally attached to male participants than to female ones.

The factors behind this adoption are found to be at most: mobility, marriage, and prestige. Mobility serve as the most affective factor since individuals usually accommodate subconsciously to the environment they live in. Marriage between individuals who use different varieties is seen to be very effective in that a variant can be easily adopted by the spouses due to the long years of living together. Marriage also causes variants to be passed to and used by children even if the environment uses a different equivalent. Prestige, on the other hand, plays an essential role in the adoption of /ridʒdʒa:l/ by participants in general whether they acquired the feature through mobility, marriage, or for the sake of prestige in itself, seeking to use the dialect of the capital city, Baghdad. /ridʒdʒa:l/ is seen to be more prestigious than the /radʒdʒa:l/, therefore many participants prefer /ridʒdʒa:l/ over /radʒdʒa:l/.

The data reveals that dialect levelling of the variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ is mostly led by female participants with percentages more than those of their male counterparts. It is concluded that females are usually prone to select the most prestigious variants even if they do not belong to the dialect they normally use. Female participants seek to use the central urban

dialect or more specifically the Baghdadi dialect which is commonly described as being a dialect of prestige. Male participants, on the other hand, appear to be indifferent of which dialect they used; they do not hesitate or feel ashamed of their dialect at all, nor do they try to modify their selection of words, despite this happening with a number of female speakers. The study has also concluded that the phenomenon of dialect levelling occurs within the young aged speakers than the middle aged or the older aged ones. The young aged appeared to be very much influenced by the central urban variant and this can similarly be linked to the above mentioned factors of mobility, marriage and prestige. The outcomes of dialect levelling are evident with the second generation than the first one. Many of these young individuals have one or both of their parents from an urban speaking area (city centres) or from the centre of Iraq, thus adopting the feature used by them. The middle aged individuals are less affected by the urban variant /ridʒdʒa:l/ than the young aged group, however they show a more /ridʒdʒa:l/ adoption than the old aged who preserved their dialect and choice of /radʒdʒa:l/.

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ظاهرة التسوية اللغوية في لهجة ال (كلت) بالاشارة الى الحرف
الصوتي الأول في الأسماء التي على وزن فعّال / فعّالة

سُرَى مُصطفى فاضل

وسن السريح

جامعة البصرة / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث ظاهرة التسوية اللغوية في مناطق لهجة ال(كلت)، مركزاً على متغير معين وهو الحرف الصوتي الأول في الأسماء التي على وزن "فعّال/ فعّالة". وتشمل الأهداف الرئيسية للبحث التالي: دراسة اتجاه هذه التسوية، استكشاف العوامل التي تؤثر أو تساهم في هذه العملية، تحديد جنس المتحدثين باللهجة المرتبط بهذه الظاهرة، وكذلك تحديد الفئة العمرية التي تكون فيها التسوية أكثر وضوحاً. جمعت البيانات عن طريق المقابلات الشخصية بالإضافة إلى استخدام مجموعة من الصور والطلب من المشاركين وصفها. لقد أظهرت النتائج أن التسوية تحدث فعلاً داخل لهجة ال(كلت) مستهدفة النمط الحضري. بالإضافة إلى ذلك تظهر تأثيرات التنقل، الزواج، والرقى (البرستيج) كعوامل رئيسية تؤثر في تسوية اللهجة، مع تحديد دور أكبر للمتحدثات من الإناث مقارنة بالمتحدثين الذكور في قيادة هذه العملية. علاوة على ذلك، تشير الدراسة إلى أن الأفراد الأصغر سناً هم الأكثر استعداداً لتسوية كلامهم مقارنة بالأفراد الذين هم في منتصف العمر وكبار السن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التسوية اللغوية، لهجة ال(كلت)، اللهجة العراقية، الريف / الحضر.