

## **Stopposites: Exploiting cross-linguistic conflict sites to explore the socio/linguistic interface**

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It is typically difficult to investigate interactions between social and linguistic constraints on language variation. For example, do linguistic salience or variant frequency (Childs & Van Herk 2014, Van Herk & Childs 2015) encourage greater social meaning to be attached to a particular variant? Do linguistic factors like phonetic naturalness (Kroch 1978) encourage social class effects? Cross-variety comparisons help, but only to a degree. Even in very different language varieties, the same variants tend to occupy the same social position – an older or stigmatized variant is older or stigmatized everywhere.

This paper attempts to address this issue by exploiting a cross-linguistic quirk: both Arabic and English feature socially-conditioned variation between interdental fricatives and stops (*e.g., that thing vs. dat ting, mathalan vs. matalan* ‘for example’), but in opposite directions: in English the stop variant is stigmatized as rural or uneducated (*e.g., Dubois & Horvath 2000*), while in Arabic it is the fricated variant that is stigmatized (*Abdel-Jawad 1986, Al-Wer 1999*).

We conduct multivariate analyses of interdental variation in similar urbanizing communities, one in Jordan (N=1756) and one in Newfoundland (N=1524). In each case, similar social constraints are found: a move away from the rural variant, led by women and non-locally-affiliated men (see also Kristian 2018, Assiri 2008). Linguistic constraints (*e.g., word frequency, syllable position*) also largely match. The Jordanian situation adds complexity with a new sibilant variant (*e.g., masalan*) strongly associated with urbanity and women.

But the most striking finding is that two linguistic factors – voicing and stress – have precisely opposite effects in the two communities. In Newfoundland English, stressed syllables and voiceless contexts favour the (standard) fricated form; in Jordanian Arabic, stress favours the (also standard) stop form, while voiceless contexts favour the stop variant over the new sibilant form, but only for men. We argue that in both cases, the linguistic factors do not have a direct linguistic effect, but rather increase the salience of the token, thus increasing its potential socio-symbolic value and encouraging speakers to use it for social identity work.

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