

## Dialect Stigma and Group Conflicts

### Abstract

*"It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth, without making another Englishman hate or despise him"*

*George Bernard Shaw*

As the quotation above indicates, social prejudices held on languages in general and dialects in particular are longstanding, and, despite the advance in the domain of sociolinguistics, they continue to exist. It seems that people do not see any reason to stop telling jokes and funny stories about regional dialects and evoking social stereotypes which go far beyond language itself. This problem exists as a product of society. The dialects of Liverpool and Birmingham, for instance, are vivid examples which are looked down in England. Similarly, the dialect of Jijel is a vivid example of the sort in Algeria.

The aim of this paper is to support, through an analysis of the attitudes towards the dialect of Jijel, the standpoint that all languages are equally good and that any judgements, therefore, as to the superiority or inferiority of a particular dialect are but social judgements, not linguistic ones.

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### ملخص

إن التنكيت باللغات عموماً  
واللهجات خصوصاً ليس وليد اليوم.  
ورغم التقدم الملحوظ الذي عرفه  
ميدان اللسانيات، فإن المجتمعات  
لا ترى سبباً للكف عن سرد القصص  
التي تسيء للهجات الجهوية  
واستحضار الصور النمطية لمجتمع  
ما والتي تتعدى إلى ما وراء اللغة  
نفسها. وما هذا إلا نتاج المجتمع.  
فلهجات مدن ليفربول وبورمينغهام  
في بريطانيا، مثلاً، تعتبر أمثلة حية  
على ذلك. فهي لهجات ينظر لها  
بدونية، وهو حال اللهجة الجيجلية

I have noticed in travelling about the country a good many differences in the pronunciation of common words .... Now what I want to know is whether there is any right or wrong about this matter .... If one way is right, why don't we all pronounce that way and compel the other fellow to do the same? If there isn't any right or wrong, why do some persons make so much fuss about it? ' Cited in Fromkin Victoria and Robert (1978: 257).

Cited in Fromkin Victoria and Robert (1978: 257).

التي عانى ويعاني أهلها من نفس  
النظرة في الجزائر.  
إن الهدف من هذا المقال هو  
التأكيد بأن اللغات كلها سواسية، وأن  
أي حكم يقضى على أن لغة أفضل  
أو أسوأ من أخرى، ليس إلا حكماً  
اجتماعياً لا يمت بصلة إلى  
اللسانيات أو العلم.

### Introduction

People make value judgements about languages in general and dialects in particular. This is clearly reflected in jokes and funny stories about some pronunciations and efforts made in the imitation of regional dialects, which create a kind of inferiority complex to most of the speakers of the stigmatized dialect.

The aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, I want to point to some of the features of this dialect that are mostly stigmatized. I hope that this will make some speakers conscious that linguistic variation does not necessarily lead to evaluation. On the other hand, I want to make a plea for a better understanding of certain linguistic realities. It is my hope that, after reading this article, those who evaluate other people's languages will not be as harsh in their linguistic judgements as they have been.

### The social significance of language variation

There is enormous variation across languages at absolutely all levels. If modern researches have shown anything, it is this. And, where there is variation, there is evaluation. We tend to evaluate these variants as right or wrong, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, and so on....

The more conscious we are about certain types of variation, the more value judgements we associate with them. We have to be aware of the fact that most people may notice all kinds of peculiarities in our own use of language.

I think that questions of language attitudes and evaluations of different language varieties in Algeria- a Diglossic and bilingual country- (Diglossia is a term used in an article written by Charles Ferguson in 1959 entitled: *Diglossia*) are important. I feel a certain pleasure in expressing my views on the subject and contributing with this article which is strongly motivated by the sufferings of the population of the province of Jijel especially after showing the films of 'L'Inspecteur Tahar' (played by El Hadj Abderrahman, an Algerian actor who is known for his imitation of the Jijel dialect) which used the accent of Jijel as a source of fun and laughter. I would say that such T.V. shows can be amusing and friendly as well as they can also be offensive and aggressive. You can hurt people with them; many people find it hard to defend themselves against verbal aggression. Of course, you can be rude and mean using any kind of language.

All speakers, or almost all of them, are proud of their language. But it seems that a considerable number of Jijel speakers are not. They have been all their life long complexed by other speakers and mostly by the Constantinians (I will give reasons for that) and the T.V. shows of l'Inspecteur Tahar who has spread the matter nation wide. This is why the population of Jijel is deprived of many privileges because of dialect stigma. These privileges lie in the fact that educated people fear communications in seminars and conferences, university students fear contribution in classes (especially at the University of Constantine), gifted singers fear appearance before audiences etc... All this is for fear of being laughed at. A concrete example – there are many other examples - which happened in the department of letters at Mentouri University – Constantine - is worth mentioning. A teacher once asked a girl student who comes

from the province of Jijel to pronounce the sound |q| (ق) in Arabic. The student said |k| (something like |k| in 'coffee' - A sound which is not as back as |q| but which is not, as the non-speakers of the Jijel dialect claim, as front as |k| in |kalb| (كلب) (dog), for example. It is articulated in the mouth exactly as the |k| in (café) is. This explains the hypotheses that the sound |q| in the province of Jijel is an influence of the French and the Turkish sound |k|, because of colonization, in replacement of the sound |q|. Immediately after the pronunciation of the sound by the student there was laughter in class. The teacher remembered that the sound |q| is not part of the sound system of the Jijel dialect. The girl student never contributed again. 'A speaker who is made ashamed of his own language habits suffers a basic injury as a human being; to make anyone, especially a child, feel so ashamed is as indefensible as to make him feel ashamed of the colour of his skin.' (Halliday 1979: 87).

Countries all over the world do have several languages spoken within their boundaries. Like all these countries, though the linguistic situation is not as complex, Algeria is a country where three genetically unrelated languages are used, namely Arabic, French and Berber and, thus, it is a multilingual situation. Dialectal Arabic is the mother tongue, Standard Arabic is the first language in school and French is the first foreign language. The latter is also used while code switching with dialectal Arabic in the case of educated families, i.e., families with varying degrees of instruction. Berber is also the native language of number of Algerians. Algeria is also a community where there is the coexistence of two varieties of the same language, and thus is a diglossic situation. As Charles Ferguson (in Andrew Freeman, 1996) says 'Diglossic speech communities have a high variety that is very prestigious and a low variety with no official status, which are in complementary distribution with each other'. In this case, the high variety is Standard Arabic and the low variety is all other varieties of this same language. The high variety is used in the domains of school, law, media, and literary discourse, whereas the low variety is used for ordinary conversations. The high variety is written while the low one is only spoken. Probably the most important component of this diglossic situation is that the Arab speakers hold the personal perception that Standard Arabic is the 'real' language and that the low varieties are 'incorrect' usages. In other words, the Arabs speak about Standard Arabic as being 'pure' Arabic and the other dialects spoken all over the Arab world as being 'corrupt' forms. This standard Arabic has not undergone considerable changes in terms of syntax and morphology since the pre-Islamic era. Of course, the lexicon has known some changes according to the needs and conditions of the speakers. By contrast, the various dialects which have always coexisted with Standard Arabic have continued to evolve but with no attempt to standardize any of them, although, it should be noted, colonialism tried to actively suppress Standard Arabic and replace it by some other forms. The Ottomans produced all their official documents in Turkish. The French in Algeria tried to suppress Standard Arabic and use French instead. The English tried their best to make the Egyptian dialect of Cairo the official language and so on ... All these varieties existing in the Arab World are generally intelligible among all Arab speakers except that the lexical variation can be problematic especially between Maghrebi and Middle-eastern dialects. For example: |ma:Si| (ماشي) means, among its various meanings, 'all right' in the Middle East but in the Maghreb it means 'no'.

|alhamma:m| (الحمام) in Egypt means 'toilet' but in the Maghreb, it means 'bath'. These variations also exist in different regions within the same country.

Like all Arab speakers, all Algerians, or nearly all of them, speak one of the varieties of Arabic. There is in reality a great deal of variation in the way in which people from different parts of the country use their language. This variation can be a source of interest in the field of sociolinguistics. Many, if not all, of us are fascinated by the different types of Arabic that are spoken in different regions of the country. Some of us even tell funny stories and make jokes about them. This article aims at answering such questions as:

- What is the social significance of differences of grammar and accent among people speaking varieties of the same language?

- Is it wrong, for example, to negate the verb and not the subject as in: |marajah.S| (مارايحش) 'I am not going' which is used in the region of Jijel and some other regions of the country as opposed to the other regions where people use: |maniSra:jah00| (مانيش رايح) 'I'm not going'.

- Do some people have the right to evaluate the speech of others?

- Why should people pronounce and accept, for example, |qa:l| or |ga:l| and not |ka:l| as in Jijel?

- Should we change such constructions?

- Will people using such constructions suffer (have a sort of inferiority complex) once out of their speech community?

The aim of this paper is to attempt to answer questions like these and discuss the nature and causes of prejudices on the Jijel dialect on the basis of some empirical observations.

To start with, it should be specified that in Algeria there is only one type of dialect which prevails: the regional dialect; the social one is not so obvious. Much of the linguistic variation, thus, to be found in this country has a regional basis, not a class one. Speakers from Jijel do not sound like Constantinians, and the language spoken in Algiers is different from that of Oran. Also the language used in Tebessa is easily distinguishable from that of Tlemcen. ... This is often a question of pronunciation – accent – but it may also be a matter of vocabulary and structure. When you hear a person say: |wa:h| (واه) 'Yes', you immediately think that he comes from somewhere in the west, since people in the Center, the east, and the south say: |i:h| (ايه), |hi:h| (هيه) and |n'am| (نعم) respectively. There are also differences in pronunciation, and grammar, and we are all aware of such differences, and are able to place a person regionally by his speech in an accurate kind of way. This linguistic heterogeneity appears to be a universal property. And since all societies of the world are internally differentiated in many ways, we can say, simply, that all languages are variable. We can find regional variation in France, in England, and even in the smallest societies such as Iceland where there are no more than 200,000 people. Evidently, answers to how this linguistic diversity arises, or why everybody in Algeria or elsewhere does not speak their language in the same way are not easy to find, but one of the most important factors is that language is a changing phenomenon; it is never static. In much the same way, Arabic undergoes changes like all other languages. It is quite obvious that the Arabic used by El Shanfara's (A pre Islamic poet) is different from Modern

Arabic and is quite difficult to understand, and may actually require translation. Linguistic change is something we can not shirk; it is inevitable. Many features of today's Arabic which are now taken for granted and are found perfectly acceptable, such as |ittifa:qija:t| (اتفاقيات) : (conventions); |bida:?i| (بدائي) : (primitive), instead of: |ittifa:qa:t| (اتفاقات) and |buda:?i| (بدائي) were completely rejected by conservatives when they first appeared in Standard Arabic. The diversity of language is a natural phenomenon and does not mean, in any way, 'corruption' or 'decay' as was believed in the past. The maintenance, however, of a certain number of linguistic barriers to communication is sometimes a good thing. These barriers may ensure the continuity of different speech communities. And the separation of the country's population into different groups using different languages favours the emergence of cultural diversity. A country where everybody speaks the same language can be said to be a dull and stagnant place. '...nothing benefits a country more than to treasure the languages and cultures of its various peoples because in doing so, it fosters inter-group understanding and realises greater dividends in the form of originality, creativity and versatility.' (Janet Holmes, 1992: 63).

### **Linguistic Attitudes: Linguistic or Social?**

Different field researches carried out by prominent sociolinguists such as Labov, Trudgill, and Chambers..., prove that many people hold the belief of 'good' and 'bad' dialects, be they regional or social, and conceive of accents as 'nice' and 'ugly'. A distinction is to be made clear here between accent and dialect. Accent has as the main components pronunciation and intonation while dialect is mainly composed of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. (Certainly there are some other features which may also characterize them, but those I have cited are probably the most obvious ones). Of course, differences between dialects exist at the level of these features, and, as I said earlier, where there is variation there is evaluation.

A French academic once said that when teaching English at a well-known secondary school in Paris he delivered all his lectures in English in order to avoid his regional accent which his pupils tended to mock as provincial. In the 1980s a woman who participated at an evaluation experiment on accents and who admired certain non-standard ones a lot, said that even though she had always appreciated the Beatles, 'the Scouse accent had always got on her nerves'. (John Honey, 1989:63), (The Beatles are a famous group of singers from Liverpool. And Scouse is the Liverpoolian accent with a negative connotation in England). Moreover, speakers with strong Glaswegian accents make comments to imply that they recognize that R. P. English accent 'sounds nicer'. This gives the impression that it is probably true that the majority of speakers who comment on dialect and accent differences believe that the basis of their judgments is a matter of taste – aesthetic such as distinguishing a good piece of music from a bad one. But accepting accent judgments on the basis of beauty is not as simple as that. Take for example Cockney English, (one of the broadest and most heavily stigmatized accents in Britain). People say that the Cockney vowel system is unpleasant in that it turns the sound |eI| into |I| and |aI| into |OI|, and thus converts 'make' and 'break' into |mIk| and |brIk|, and 'I' and 'my' into |OI| and |mOI|. But if we look at these Cockney 'unpleasant' sounds we will find that they exist in Standard English. So why are they ugly in Cockney but nice in R.P? The word 'tie' |tai|, for instance, is pronounced 'toy' |tOI| in Cockney, but 'toy' already exists in Standard English, and no one has ever

claimed that the sound of ‘toy’ is ugly. It is unpleasant only when it is pronounced by Cockney speakers. Also the bus |bVs| in R.P. becomes |bus| in the North of England. The sound |u| exists as a perfectly respectable sound in Standard English. So, why should it suddenly become ugly when it appears in the non-Standard language?

In America, where the majority of dialects are relatively free from stigma, one dialect has been victim of overt prejudice. This is the English spoken by the black community members in the United States, and which is generally referred to as Black English. The distinguishing features of this Black English go back to the historical discrimination against the blacks in America where segregation pushed these disliked people to be isolated in ghettos. And it goes without saying that where social isolation exists, dialect differences intensify. This is why we see systematic differences between Black English and Standard English. All dialects of all languages of the world show lexical, phonological, syntactic differences. And it is the existence of that relation – relation of sameness – between Black and Standard English that makes the differences between the two so apparent. That is, if Americans found difficulties in comprehending Black English the same way they found difficulties in comprehending Chinese, for instance, they would probably give more prestige to it. But, despite the fact that Black Americans represent the minority in the American society, they continue to look at their dialect as a means which reflects their identity, and therefore no longer consider it to be inferior or corrupt. Rather they see it as rule-governed as Standard English. Consider the following sentences from Standard English and Black English:

S. E.	B. E.
Affirmative form – He wants something.	- He want something.
Negative form – He does not want anything.	- He don’t want nothing.
Negative form – He wants nothing.	- He want nothing.
Affirmative form – He loves somebody.	- He love somebody.
Negative form – He doesn’t love anybody.	- He don’t love nobody.
Negative form – He loves nobody.	- He love nobody.
Affirmative – He has had some.	- He had some.
Negative – He hasn’t had any.	- He ain’t had none.
Negative – He’s had none.	- He had none.

Those who follow the lead of prescriptive grammars would claim that it is illogical to say ‘He don’t want nothing’ in that double negation gives affirmation, as is stated in traditional grammar which is modelled on the grammar of Latin. Notice that in Black English, when we negate the verb, the indefinite elements: ‘something’, ‘somebody’, and ‘some’ are also negated and become: ‘nothing’, ‘nobody’, and ‘none’. In Standard English, when we negate the verb, the indefinite elements become: ‘anything’, ‘anybody’, and ‘any’. The forms: ‘nothing’, ‘nobody’ and ‘none’ are used in Standard English when the verb is not negated. Both Standard English and Black English have got rules to negate sentences. The rules are practically the same, but differ only at the level of a small detail. Both dialects are rule-governed, exactly as every dialect in the world is. The only thing is that the rule of the Standard is viewed as simple, elegant, and logical, but the non-standard is viewed as complicated, ugly, and illogical.

The same thing applies to the Jijel dialect in relation to the other dialects. In comparison to Constantine where we say |waInah| to mean ‘which one?’ in Jijel we say |dama| and |daInah|. We notice that in |waInah| and |daIna|, only the phonemes |w| and |d| are different, and who says that the sound |w| is better than the sound |d|? Such question markers are rule-governed. If in Constantine, instead of saying |waInah|, which means ‘which one?’ we say |waIn|, it becomes ‘Where?’ and similarly in Jijel if, instead of saying |daInah| which also means ‘which one?’, we say |faIn|, it becomes ‘where?’. The rules are practically the same. They differ only at the level of a small detail. But because of being the capital city of the east of Algeria, Constantine has a covert prestige, and thus its dialect is viewed as good and logical, but the Jijel dialect is viewed as bad and illogical.

If some people believe that they can direct speakers to what they think is right on the basis of logic, we can say simply that not every aspect of language is logical. For example, the word |qami:s| (قميص) ‘shirt’ in Standard Arabic is singular masculine, which would suppose the plural of it to be masculine as well. But it is unexpectedly feminine in plural: |ʔaqmisa| (أقمصة) ‘shirts’. In Standard Arabic we say for example: |qami:sun Zadi:dun | (قميص جديد), |ʔaqmisatun Zadidatun|. The marker of the plural feminine is the phoneme |t| (ة). That is, logic is definitely not involved in language, otherwise words like: ‘guerre’ or ‘violence’, for instance, in the French language should be masculine since it is men – and not women – who are – or at least have been mainly concerned with them. This can also be applied on some parts of the woman’s body which are fully female but linguistically not feminine, but rather masculine. For example, ‘le sein’, ‘le bassin’ ...

Many theorists, however, argue that a standard language is spoken with an accent which has become associated with the ‘ruling classes’, the establishment’, and the people holding power and prestige. It is spoken by those who are at the top in social, political, and economic terms, and they exploit its special standing in order to keep themselves at the top. All other varieties of accent are downgraded in comparison with it, and the speakers of even the most disfavoured accents have come to adopt this rating scale which combines respect for the standard with devaluation of their own accents. They do this either because they genuinely admire the power and prestige which are associated with the standard, or, more commonly, because they have been ‘brain-washed’ to an extent which makes it very ‘unlikely’ that they can evaluate accents ‘objectively’. (Honey, 1989:65).

### **Bad language or Bad People?**

The process of prescribing language rules and comparing languages had existed long before the appearance of sociolinguistics or even modern linguistics. Latin and Greek were once considered the best languages of the world. Such judgements still exist in nowadays societies despite the considerable development of sociolinguistics. These judgements are neatly reflected in jokes about some pronunciations and/or efforts made in the imitation of dialects, which create a kind of inferiority complex to the speakers of the stigmatized dialect. The dialect of Liverpool is a vivid example which is looked down in England. Similarly, the dialect of Jijel is a vivid example of the sort in Algeria.

Now, the question is: Are some dialects really better than some others, more expressive, nicer, richer, and more attractive? The answer to this question is absolutely no. Attitudes of this type are not linguistic attitudes at all; rather, they are social attitudes. Such judgements are based on social and cultural values, and have much more to do with the social structure of our community than with language. The point is, some societies have much more prestige than others and, thus, their dialects and accents tend to be better evaluated than other varieties.

In fact, 'they are judgements about speakers rather than about speech', (Trudgill, 1975:29). That is, the major thesis of what I want to say is that prejudice is socially reproduced through discourse. 'If we want to understand this important property of the social communication of 'ethnic' attitudes, we must examine the structures of such discourse in detail, that is, both its forms and contents'. (Van Dick, 1987:30). Such an analysis allows us to assess the way underlying attitudes are strategically expressed in discourse in various social and communicative contexts. And, conversely, the structural analysis may give us clues about the cognitive organisation and strategies of prejudice. Via discourse analysis, we can examine how prejudiced talk also depends on constraints of the communicative interaction, and how recipients of such talk interpret it. In other words, discourse is, in many respects, the central element in the processes of the interpersonal communication of prejudice, and discourse analysis is a key method for the study of the cognitive and social structures and strategies that characterize these processes. In our everyday life, we usually formulate, reproduce, and, thus, socially share our experiences through talk, and this also explains the evaluations, norms, and attitudes that underlie the interpretation of such experiences. In other words, social cognitions, in general, and 'ethnic' attitudes, in particular, are acquired, shared, validated, normalized, and communicated primarily through talk rather than through perception and interaction.

In fact, talk about minority groups exhibits different topics in prejudiced discourse which conceal various psychological backgrounds. The prevailing stereotypical topics in majority members towards minority groups turn around the following: - contacts, policies, social problems, work and (un)employment, rights and duties, cultural differences, and education.

a. Contacts: Speaking about contacts and human relations is a major topic which is discussed among the majority groups. Examples are often given to guarantee that maintaining good contact with them (the pronoun 'them' is often used by in-group members to refer to out-group people) is almost impossible. It seems that it is taken for granted in the in-group discussions that the pronoun 'them' refers to the out-group members and that they have a pleasure in using it. Such expressions as the following are always heard in majority group discussions:

1. I have no contact with them.
2. I want no contact with them.
3. I know them from my work only.
4. I have had contacts with them in the shop.
5. I used to have contacts with them, but not now.

What can be noticed from the above expressions is the attempt to deny contacts with outsiders-minority groups.

b. Policies: A major category of the structure of such a prejudice is the origin of these outsiders. This means that people have specific opinions about how the outsiders went there in the first place. Who does not know the background of the nickname 'Hrika' given to the community group living in Constantine and who came originally from the province of Jijel (from El-Milia, to be more exact)?

The attitude held by many Constantinians is as follows:

1. They should not be allowed to settle in Constantine.
2. They should be sent back.

Many people correctly recall that these 'Hrika' outsiders were in Constantine to fight against the French army and, so, they were very welcome at the time. Nowadays, there is a feeling of regret to have welcomed them and accepted them.

c. Social problems: This type of topics is featured in stories with which minority groups are associated. Many of these topics have a prejudiced nature such as:

1. They are involved in unsociable acts.
2. They are harsh.
3. They cause the deterioration of the town and its facilities.
4. They have caused the housing shortage.

d. Work and (un)employment: This is one of the most specific social topics which is associated with the presence of outsiders. It is the most widely discussed topic among the majority groups. The following are but some examples:

1. They work hard.
2. They do all sorts of cleaning jobs.
3. They do not want to work.
4. They occupy the best jobs.
5. They take our jobs.
6. They cause unemployment.
7. They are lazy.

From the above examples, we first may conclude that there is a contradiction, in that there is a dominant belief that holds that the 'outsider' people work hard and do the dirty jobs, and on the other hand, there is the belief that they do not want to work. Obviously, such apparent inconsistencies must account for the uses of prejudice.

e. Rights and duties: Minority groups are often accused of not knowing the limits of their rights and duties. Therefore it is believed that:

1. They have all the rights.
2. They are equal to us.

f. Cultural differences: Differences in life-style are perceived to emerge especially in different family structure, such as the number of children and the treatment of women which is viewed as 'backward'. Attitudes and behaviours that originate from minority groups are often rejected for being different from their own. It seems all that is different is bad. Hence, we have the following opinions:

1. They have to adapt to our norms and rules.
2. They have different life-styles.
3. They have many children.
4. They treat their women differently (worse).
5. Their women accept being treated as such.

g. Education: Education is a less prominent topic of discussion. Yet, the prevailing view in the domain of education is that the children of the outsiders cause problems. Consequently:

1. Their children cause problems at school.
2. They are trouble-makers.
3. There are cultural differences between their children and ours.
4. Their accent causes laughter in class.
5. They do not pronounce sounds the way our children do.
6. They leave school at an early age.

It should be noted that all such topics manifest themselves in forms of negative attitudes towards the way of speaking of the minority groups. That is, there is a substitution of expressing hatred towards minority groups. Instead of saying overtly: We hate you because of the above reasons, the majority groups would put it in forms of jokes and funny stories via the minority groups' language.

If we do dislike an accent, it is because of a complex set of factors that have to do with our own social, political and regional biases rather than with anything aesthetic. We like and dislike accents because of what they stand for, not for what they are.

The verbal aggression, prejudice, stereotypes, and stories that emanate from the Constantinians towards the Community of Jijel are not random. There are historical and social backgrounds for that. Historically, the Constantinians may still remember bitterly the invasion of Ibn El Ahrache to Constantine. That was on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1804 - that is during the Ottoman's reign - when the leader of the tribes of Jijel, Ibn El Ahrache, gathered his army and attacked Constantine. (Khennouf, 2007: 34). The social background goes back to the French burned land policy when the inhabitants of the region of El Milia (fifty kilometres to the east of Jijel) displaced to Constantine, and when they were asked for the reasons of their exodus they replied: |hrabna mən laHrika di laZba:l| (هربنا من الحريكة دي الجبال) 'our mountains are burning, so, we have fled away'. At first, the degree of prejudice towards those people was low and even reduced to almost nil, only because they had the same aim with the Constantinians: To fight colonialism. When Algeria got its independence, those outsiders refused to go back home. Not only that, they also occupied by force all that belonged to the colonists and settled there forever. From that time on, the idea of the in-group and out-group came to manifest itself in Constantine in forms of popular dictions and stories illustrating the stereotype of the inhabitants with Hrika origins. For example: |wra kull brika h0rika| (ورى كل بريكة حريكة) 'behind each brick there is an outsider -a Hrika'. The meaning behind that is the number of these people is increasing rapidly and therefore might be a threat for the in-group. Or again: |ila xallas lak h0rika qahwa ?a!!;raf belli rahunasablak!!| (إلا خلصك حريكة قهوة اعرف بلّاه ناصبك على غدا) 'If a Hrika pays you a coffee you have to know that he is planning for a lunch in return'. The meaning behind that is the Hrika is stingy and mean. Another example is: |lah0rika daiman ʔandu ʔagrab fi dZi:bu| (الحريكة دائماً عندو عقرب في جيبو) 'The Hrika always carries a scorpion in his pocket'. Again, the meaning behind this is that the Hrika is never generous as to put his hand in his pocket to pick up money to pay something for someone. There are also other stories and jokes which imply that the Hrika is stereotyped as stupid, uncivilized and thankless.

In fact, taxing other people is not just a characteristic of the Constantinians, but also of many people in the world. And because people come from distinct horizons, live in different social and economical conditions, it is quite normal that each community has a specificity which would distinguish it. And even if the times change, life conditions and exterior elements influence man's attitudes and behaviours, the stereotypes remain always engraved in man's mind and resist to that change. They are stereotypes which go directly to the depth of the popular heritage reflecting a certain reality, but with exaggeration, a bit of humour and a lot of mockery, as is explained by the famous socio-economist Galal Amin, (2008:17). As a matter of fact, the natives of Jijel have always preferred to have jobs in the public sectors so as to feel more secured. And despite all that is said about them, many of them keep their heads up and show an attitude of pride and superiority. They believe that the mockery of the majority-group, be it in Constantine or Algiers, or elsewhere, is no more than a sign of envy. They do not stop telling those people who practice prejudice over them: 'You envy us because we have proved competence and success in all domains, and the most prominent figures of the nation are from Jijel. President Houari Boumediene, Ferhat Abbas, Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Abdelhak Benhamouda, Louiza Hanoune – to cite only a few – all originate from the province of Jijel'. What any Algerian can easily notice about these disliked people is that they know how to gain their living. They practice bakery trade, pastry making, hair dressing, carpentry, and farming. What is unfortunate about all stories and jokes about the out-groups, which are transmitted orally from generation to generation, is the fact that they are almost never positive. Even their generosity is referred to as naivety. Positive acts are transformed into negative ones. Once a Constantinian from the University of Constantine asked one of his best friends, who also teaches at the same university, but who originates, from the province of Jijel, to lend him his car. The latter gave him the keys. The former commented friendly: 'I am not sure I will take it; its registration number is 18'. (18 is the registration number of Jijel).

Let us say that in societies where we judge people according to a popular heritage, and put them all in only one plate, the question: 'where do you come from?' is always asked. And knowing where we are from means for many who we are - a judgement which gives a limited vision about you and an idea on your identity with great confusion. The practices of such attitudes, even when they are meant to be friendly, have given rise to negative results both in terms of human relations and in terms of discourse. These are neatly reflected in one of the most important functions of language which is maintaining equilibrium in society and keeping cohesion within social groups. This function of language is perhaps more important than people realize. Greetings and routine polite questions as: 'How are you?', 'How's life?', and 'How's the family?' are not meant to seek information, but rather to open up the lines of communication between people. This type of language is called by sociolinguists 'sweet-nothing', which means it is sweet at the level of human relations, but nothing at the level of meaning. In the phatic function of language it is not what one says that matters but the fact of saying it at all. Human beings want to show that they are friendly and, thus, indulge in communication with others. Eric Berne - an America Social Psychiatrist - says both the addresser and the addressee take this phatic language as 'a mutual stroking ritual, in which a balance is maintained between the amount of pleasure

administered and received' ( Leech 1973: 63). What is known about this type of language is the fact that it functions in a way that if you say, for instance, 'nice day, isn't it?' No one can possibly disagree with you. Or again if you say 'how are you?' the participant is not supposed to reply: 'I'm not fine', and starts complaining. If he does, it means he has mistaken the phatic function for the referential one. According to Eric Berne (1973:64) what is universally known, as far as discourse is concerned, is that when two persons meet, the following may happen:

1. The same number of strokes is used by both speaker A and speaker B and, thus, balance is maintained.
2. Speaker B strokes too much and, thus, A will have the feeling that B wants to take advantage of him.
3. Speaker B strokes too little or does not stroke at all and, thus, A will have the feeling that B wants to keep distant or to be hostile.
4. Speaker B mistakes the phatic function for the referential one and, thus, misunderstanding will occur.

If we take the British culture as an example, when two English people meet they start making remarks about the weather. They do so not because they find the subject interesting, but maybe because in such situations, it can often be quite embarrassing to be alone in the company of someone and not speak to them. If no communication is held, the atmosphere can be rather artificial. But talking about any neutral topic, be it the weather or anything else, may lead to the establishment of relationships with others without having to say much. Such conversations are a good example of the social function which is performed by language. In fact, the information communicated within these types of conversations is not as important as maintaining contact between people. Another explanation may be that the first English person wants to get to know certain things about the second - their job, social status, and identity. Such personal things cannot be asked for, but intelligently can be guessed through language. But still, these things cannot be known from what the other person says as much as from how they are said. This is because when we speak, we cannot conceal clues which would give our listeners an idea about our origins, our backgrounds, where we come from, and the sort of person we are. All this information can be used by our participants to help them have an opinion about us. This is neatly summarized in Zuhir Ibn Abi Selma's verses (1985:69) which say:

| waka:ʔintara: minsa:mitin laka muʔdZibin  
 Zija: datuhu ʔaw nuqsuhu fi ttakallumi  
 lisa: nu lfata: nisfun wa nisfun fuʔa:duhu  
 falam jabqa ʔilla: su:ratullahmi waddami |

وكانن ترى من صامت لك معجب      زيادته أو نقصه في التكلم  
 لسان الفتى نصف ونصف فواده      فلم يبق إلا صورة اللحم والدم

Which means it may happen that you meet a person and before even he says a word you admire him. This admiration increases or decreases when he speaks. One's language is half of us and the other half is our heart; without them both, we are nothing but a body of just flesh and blood. These two aspects of language are crucial in establishing social relationships on the one hand, and in playing a role in conveying

information about speakers, on the other. This makes it clear that there is a close inter-relationship between language and society.

Contrary to what has been said about the phatic language, a phenomenal way of using the social functions of language has come into existence in Constantine where two groups are in competition: the Constantinians (the in-group) and the 'Hrika' (the out-group). In this society, the rules of discourse are completely violated. The following dissatisfactory stroke rituals as Eric Berne (1973:63) are no more than expressions of distance and hostility between group members in conflict and in competition:

eg. 1/ A: | waSra:k? | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | la:ntatbiib | (لا أنت طبيب؟) 'Why? Are you a doctor?'

- Here B deliberately deviates the phatic function to the referential function, though pretending to be friendly.

The result is that the conversation is over.

eg. 2/ A: | waSra:k | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | Gir mannak | (خير منك) 'Better than you.'

- Here B is bad intentioned, he is expressing his deep seated competition.

The result is a quick interruption of the conversation.

eg. 3/ A: | waSra:k | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | wkingullak maniSml:i:h0waS ra:jah ddirli ra:jah0 tawanni | (وكنقولك منيش |  
(واش راك؟) 'And if I tell you I'm not fine, are you going to help me?'

- Here B's reply implies that there are no solid relations between people. No one relies on the other.

eg. 4/ A: | waSra:k | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | walla:hi nəh0mad rabbi | (والله نحمد ربي؟) 'I swear by Allah that I'm fine.'

- Here B's reply does not leave any field of doubt. He wants to show that his state is always at a peak.

eg. 5/ A: | waSra:k | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | mangullakS | (منقولكش) 'I am not telling you.'

- Again B here converts the phatic function into referential. He simply wants to imply that this is the business of none.

The result is, as usual, no room is left for the conversation to continue.

eg. 6/ A: | waSra:k | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | maniS mli:h0 ra:si jewdjə wədzidlinta | (منيش مليح، راسي يوجع وذيديلي ننت.) 'I'm not fine. I have a headache. Leave me alone!'

- Here B finds a justification for himself to avoid communication.

eg. 7/ A: | waSra:k | (واش راك؟) 'How are you?'

B: | la:nta tbi:b | (لا أنت طبيب؟) 'Why? Are you a doctor?'

A: | nō, veterin3r | (non vétérinaire) 'No, veterinarian.'

- Here A has found a defence mechanism. It seems A has now expected B to reply mockingly, and consequently is treating him as an animal.

Notice that in all seven examples the conversation is violated and the contact is cut off. When such language behaviour occurs, in any society, human relations will become rather strained.

### Conclusion

The idea that no language is better or worse than any other runs counter to the thinking of ordinary people. Social prejudices towards languages and dialects are longstanding, and do not seem to disappear quickly. To stop them means to change the stereotypical views and perceptions of the social status of language users. Reaching such an aim is, no doubt, something which is not easy. But, after such an advance in the domain of sociolinguistics, we hope that people now learn how to change their thinking and their belief about languages in general and dialects in particular, and how to be objective about them and about their users. We also hope that people will be aware of the fact that being different does not necessarily mean being better or worse, but just different. God Almighty says 'And among his signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours; verily in that are signs for the universe.' (Sourah Erroum – Sign: 22). This verse from the Holy Koran makes it clear that variation is one of the secrets of language and is something which is as great as the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the skin colours of human beings. This is, of course, a greatness which is not given to anyone.

Finally, because we cannot ask the speakers of the stigmatized dialects to change their way of speaking, and because we cannot ask people to stop mocking the others, we have but to ask the speakers of the stigmatized dialects to take jokes and funny stories about their accent friendly and accept them as such, together with being as self confident as to consider their language as a reflection of their identity.

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