On The Social Use Of 'Urban Ammani Arabic' By Adult Female Speakers In The Amman Metropolitan Area

Marwan Jarrah[1] iD **, Nahed Emaish**[2] iD **, Sukayna Ali**[3] iD **, Ekab Al-Shawashreh**[4] iD **, Yousef Aljabali**[5] iD **, Bashar AL-Kasasbeh**[6] iD

Abstract: This article examines the significant phenomenon of the use of what we term "Urban Ammani Arabic" (UAA) by most adult female speakers in the Amman metropolitan area, particularly when this dialect differs from the one they acquire or use in their domestic environments. To explore this, 132 adult female speakers were selected to participate in both sociolinguistic and semi-structured interviews. These interviews aimed to uncover the metapragmatic indexical values associated with UAA, focusing on the motivations behind its use by adult female speakers. The findings revealed five major factors driving the use of UAA: displaying softness and attractiveness (gender identity), achieving certain social goals (such as improving marriage prospects and enhancing job opportunities), fostering social bonds among female speakers, showcasing educational prestige, and projecting the appearance of belonging to a higher socioeconomic class. Additionally, the results highlighted that the preference for certain factors varies with age, as older females (>45) tend to have different motivations compared to younger ones (<35). This finding is crucial, as age not only influences females' linguistic choices but also shapes their attitudes toward these choices.

1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that people adapt their language throughout discourse to accommodate diverse conditions. This tendency can be observed in numerous contexts and across a wide range of individuals, who adjust their speech to achieve specific social goals or intentions (Giles, 1973; Elhami, 2020). These linguistic adjustments manifest in various forms, including, but not limited to, accents, speech pace, pitch, volume, lexical choices, sentence structures, and even dialects (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013; Dragojevic et al., 2015). A notable occurrence of dialectal variation can be found among adult female speakers in the metropolitan city of Amman, where they exhibit a unique and widely observed tendency to use a relatively different dialect, particularly characterized by its phonology and lexical choices, in their communicative exchanges, especially in non-domestic environments. Adult female speakers tend to diverge notably from the dialect they initially acquired during childhood or used in their home environment.

Despite the presence of various subdialects of broader Jordanian Arabic (JA) in the city of Amman, adult females predominantly favor a specific dialect, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. In other words, their parents or adult relatives can be easily identified by the regional dialects they employ (e.g., Rural Dialect, Bedouin Arabic, Urban Arabic, Bani-Hassan Arabic, Ma'ani Arabic, etc.; see Cleveland, 1963; Sakarna, 2005; Al-Shawashreh et al., 2021; Harb et al., 2022 for discussions of different JA subdialects). In contrast, adult females often use one dialect, which does not necessarily reflect their tribal or regional affiliations (e.g., Rural, Bedouin, Bani Hassan). We refer to this dialectal urban variety, predominantly used by female speakers in Amman, as 'Urban Ammani Arabic' (UAA), locally known as the as *ʔaːl w-ʔullna* dialect.[7]

This research article provides evidence that adult females using UAA in non-domestic contexts adjust their communication styles to diverge from their families'

Corresponding Author(s):

Marwan Jarrah

Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan. Emial: m.jarrah@ju.edu.jo

[1] Department of English Language and Literature, School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.
[2] Department of French Language and Literature, School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.
[3] Department of English Language and Literature, School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.
[4] Department of English Language and Literature, School of Arts, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.
[5] Department of English Language and Literature, School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.
[6] Al-Balqa' Applied University, Al-Balqa, Jordan.

[7] The local name of UAA comes from the fact that in UAA the phoneme /g/ used in rural and Bedouin dialects is replaced across the board with the glottal stop /ʔ/.

speech patterns in order to fulfil specific social functions or goals. This evidence is based on data from semi-structured interviews with a sample of 132 adult female participants. The functions and goals include displaying softness and attractiveness (key markers of female gender identity), fostering social bonds and harmony, improving marriage prospects, enhancing job opportunities, exhibiting educational prestige, and projecting a higher socioeconomic class. Thus, adult female speakers do not use UAA to signal attitudes towards each other or their respective social groups (cf. Giles & Ogay, 2007). Instead, they use UAA to achieve broader social functions and intentions that extend beyond displaying prestige or reinforcing gender identity, which are commonly cited in the literature (see Hachimi, 2012).[8]

This study aims to address two main research questions:

- **Question A**: What factors influence the prevalent preference of female Ammani speakers to use UAA, despite not acquiring it from their parents or using it at home with family members?

- **Question B**: To what extent does age affect the motives for using UAA among adult female speakers in the city of Amman?

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the major dialects of Jordan, with a particular focus on Amman. It references studies investigating JA speakers' linguistic preferences over the years. Section 3 outlines the methods employed in data collection and analysis. Section 4 presents the key factors motivating adult female speakers to use UAA in their interactions. Section 5 delves into the theoretical rationale underlying this linguistic preference, while Section 6 examines the significance of age as a factor influencing female speakers' attitudes towards their language choices. Section 7 concludes the article.

2. Background

2.1. Urban Ammani Arabic (UAA)

Amman, the capital city of Jordan, has historically been recognized as a hub for immigrants from diverse backgrounds and regions (Al-Wer, 2007; Cotter, 2020). The origins of these immigrants include Circassian, Armenian, Chechen, Kurdish, Turkish, and several others. These ethnic groups now speak Arabic alongside their native languages (Hamed-Troyansky, 2017). However, the primary influx of immigrants originated from Palestine between the years 1948 and 1967 (Abd-El-Jawad, 1986; Al-Raba'a, 2016). Given these circumstances, it is not surprising to observe a variety of dialects in Amman, including Urban, Rural, and Bedouin dialects (Alomoush, 2016; Hamdieh et al., 2022). Each of these dialects represents the cultural identity and tribal association of its native speakers (Suleiman, 2004). The influx of Palestinian refugees into Jordan directly led to dialectal contact between Jordanian and Palestinian sub-varieties (Theodoropoulou, 2017). This influx also contributed to the rapid growth of urban centers in Jordan, accompanied by a diminishing importance of rural and Bedouin regions. [9] Al-Wer (1991: 25) asserts that newcomers to cities have the opportunity to introduce "new social standards, and perhaps new linguistic norms, from larger communities into the communities of their hometowns."

The city of Amman thus emerges as a relatively new and substantial speech community. Notably, third-generation speakers in Amman exhibit a linguistic shift, different from that of their parents (second generation) and grandparents (first generation), incorporating more features of the urban dialect, such as the use of a glottal stop in place of rural and Bedouin /g/. These linguistic variations are largely perceived by third-generation speakers as symbols of urbanity and modernity. Al-Wer (2020: 560) notes:

"The mixture and variability we saw in the second generation is much reduced in the third generation; there is, instead, stability in the usage of many features, including intermediate fudged forms, new patterns, and new features that were not present in the input varieties. The third generation agree on the characteristics of Ammani and have intuitions as to what you can and cannot say in this dialect."

According to Al-Tamimi (2001) and Al-Wer (2007), advancements in communication, increased social mobility, and improved access to education contribute to greater dialectal contact among younger speakers, fostering the adoption and acceptance of the urban dialect within the younger generation (Al-Shawashreh, 2016). Al-Wer (2007) proposes that the evolution of Ammani Arabic is significantly tied to demographic stability and the creation of a distinct Ammani community with its own unique character. In this research, we treat UAA as parallel to Ammani Arabic with urban features (e.g., the use of the glottal stop as a replacement for /g/ found in other Jordanian dialects) (see also Abdel-Jawad, 1986). [10]

Similar to other dialects, UAA possesses a number of phonological characteristics. As mentioned earlier, the most distinctive feature includes the replacement of the phoneme /g/ with the glottal stop /ʔ/ (e.g., Rural *galam* 'a

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[8] Prestige in this study is understood as the positive social valuation of certain linguistic forms, which may be used by speakers to align themselves with particular social groups or to gain social advantages. It is often reflected in the preference for standard language varieties, which are seen as more prestigious due to their association with higher social status and educational attainment (Labov 2006).
[9] In Jordan, two main types of dialects exist. Firstly, sedentary dialects include all Levantine-type dialects, which are in the majority and represent the mainstream traditional dialects, spoken in all of the old cities, towns and villages. Secondly, Bedouin dialects include the dialects traditionally spoken by the Bedouin tribes; however, none of them is nomadic; they are all settled communities (Sakarna 1999).
[10] In this paper, the term UAA is employed to differentiate the version of Ammani Arabic spoken by adult female speakers from other variations used in Amman, all of which can be collectively categorized as Ammani Arabic.

pen' >>> *ʔalam*). Other significant phonological characteristics include the substitution of the phoneme /dʒ/ with /ʒ/ (e.g., Rural *dʒazar* 'carrot' >>> *ʒazar*), the substitution of /θ/ with /t/ (e.g., Rural *θalaːθ* 'three' >>> *tala*), and the substitution of /ðˤ/ with /z/ (e.g., Rural *ðˤulum* 'unfairness' >>> *zulm*) (see Al-Wer, 2020 for the major linguistic features of Ammani Arabic among third-generation speakers, or UAA as we refer to it in this paper).

Consider the following illustrative examples that highlight the contrast between the Bedouin dialect (of Bani Hasan) (2) and UAA (3) while expressing the same statement in Standard Arabic (1):

(1) ʔal-manaːðˤiru ʔallaːti: nuʃaːhiduhaː taʃraħuː qalbi:
'The scenes that we see warm my heart.'

(2) Bedouin dialect: ʔal-manaːðˤir ʔalli nʃu ʔitwannis galbi
(3) Urban dialect: l-manaːzir ʔilli binʃuːfha: bitfarriħ ʔalbi

In the examples above, alterations between Bedouin Arabic and UAA include the replacement of the voiced dental fricative /ðˤ/ in the Bedouin dialect with the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ in the word *ʔal-manaːðˤir* in UAA. Additionally, the phoneme /g/ in the word *galbi* in the Bedouin dialect is substituted with the glottal stop /ʔ/ in UAA. [11]

It is important to highlight that adult female speakers tend to use UAA, while adult male speakers typically adhere to their native dialects (e.g., Bani Hasan, Rural, and Bedouin), which are closely tied to their tribal, regional, or familial roots. It is relatively easy to determine the background of an Ammani adult male speaker, whether they come from a rural area, Bedouin heritage, or a Palestinian background. In contrast, identifying the background of female speakers is more challenging because UAA does not reflect any particular origin or background.

2.2. Sociolinguistic market of Jordan

In the 1980s, several studies explored the dialects preferred by Ammani speakers, including Standard Arabic (SA) as one of the competing options. However, by the 1990s, SA was rarely considered in this context. For instance, Sawaie (1987) found that university students preferred SA over regional dialects, perceiving it as more favorable and esteemed among locals. In contrast, regional dialects (e.g., Rural) were viewed negatively. Hussein and El-Ali (1989) conducted a similar study examining the attitudes of university students in Jordan towards the use of various linguistic variants (i.e., dialects). Their findings indicated that SA was also rated the highest. Among the Jordanian dialects, the Bedouin variety received the highest level of favorability, followed by the rural dialect, while the urban variety received the least approval.

In subsequent years, perceptions of the most prestigious dialect, particularly among females, have shifted significantly. From the early 1990s to the present, the prevailing view is that the urban dialect is considered the most prestigious. Al-Wer (1991) suggests that variation in language use among females is influenced by two key factors. The first involves the concept of identity concerning language differences between Jordanians and Palestinians, along with the resulting implications for their respective identities. The second factor is the influence of gender, with males tending to employ local language variants, while females gravitate towards urban dialects, which are prevalent in Palestinian urban centers. Al-Wer (1991) also proposes that age and education play a role in the dialects used by females, with younger, educated females showing a greater inclination to consciously use urban dialects.

Similarly, Al-Tamimi (2001) suggests that among the *falaːħi* (rural) population in Irbid City, individuals residing in the same geographical region with similar social and cultural characteristics tend to use the urban dialect (see also Abu Ain, 2016). The study revealed that gender and social class are the primary factors influencing the adoption of the prestigious urban dialect. In this context, it is evident that women display a greater preference for the urban dialect compared to men. Moreover, there is an inverse relationship between social class and the frequency of local rural characteristics: the higher the social class, the less frequent the use of the rural dialect.

According to Al-Raba'a (2016), the social status of Jordanian dialects can be significantly influenced by the standards set in the capital city of Amman and other major urban centers, such as Irbid. Al-Raba'a proposed that major cities have the capacity to establish benchmarks for determining the prestige associated with different dialects. Al-Raba'a's (2016) study explored the perspectives of four distinct groups (i.e., old rural participants, young rural participants, old urban participants, and young urban participants) regarding the dialects used in urban and rural settings. Al-Raba'a noted that the urban variant received higher ratings than its rural counterpart in terms of accuracy, desirability, and societal standing, although there was considerable variability among the four groups. Similarly, Gwasmeh (2021) observed that Jordanians tend to exhibit a sense of pride in their respective dialects. However, the Jordanian urban dialect is generally favored by the population as a whole. The Bedouin dialect considered the original dialect of Jordanian society, carries historical significance (see Mashaqba et al., 2023, for similar discussions).

Against this background, it becomes evident that although numerous studies have focused on delineating dialects in Jordan, much of the research emphasizes the observation that females generally prefer the urban dialect,

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[11] Actually, this is a simplistic overview of the major features of UAA. See Abdel-Jawad (1986), Zawaydeh (1997), Miller (2007), Fadda (2019), Ech-Charfi (2020), Nahel (2021), and Alshaboul et al. (2022), for more discussion of several phonological and lexical features of UAA.

primarily due to its prestigious status among speakers of broader Jordanian Arabic. However, these studies fall short of exploring other factors that might influence females' preference for the urban variety. The common belief that the urban dialect is used primarily for its prestige is largely based on subjective impressions. Prestige is often assumed to be the default reason for choosing the urban variety in Jordan. In contrast, the results of this paper, which draws largely on self-reports from adult females in Amman, point to five major factors behind the use of UAA: displaying softness and attractiveness (gender identity), achieving certain social goals (e.g., improving marriage prospects and boosting job opportunities), developing social bonds among females, emphasizing educational prestige, and projecting a higher socioeconomic class.

Understanding why females gravitate toward urban dialects involves exploring various social and cultural factors, which can be highly beneficial for sociolinguistic theory. First, identifying these factors can help explain how and why language use differs between genders, shedding light on broader patterns of how men and women navigate social and linguistic expectations (Plug et al., 2021). This also reveals how language use is influenced by gender roles and how females specifically may use language to align with or challenge these roles. Furthermore, investigating the preference for urban dialects can illuminate the sociolinguistic impact of urbanization, highlighting how language practices adapt in response to changing social environments (Pennycook, 2010). For example, understanding why females might prefer these dialects helps explore the mechanisms of linguistic prestige and its influence on language choices. Moreover, as we show below, females' preference for urban dialects reflects aspirations for social mobility and economic opportunities. This aligns with broader sociological studies on how individuals use language to signal their social position or ambitions, and how language choices are tied to perceptions of modernity and identity formation (see Heller, 2006). Finally, understanding these preferences can explain how language is used to navigate in-group and out-group dynamics, and how females might use language to position themselves within different social networks (Sharma & Dodsworth, 2020). Analyzing why females prefer UAA in Jordan allows us to better understand the forces driving language variation and change in different communities and deepens our knowledge of the relationship between gender and language use.

3. Methods

3.1. Speech community

In investigating language use (and variation) within a speech community, it is essential to associate the study with this community to examine the extent to which social factors influence the use of one linguistic form (or a subdialect) over another. To this effect, we targeted the local community of the Amman metropolitan area (the largest population center in Jordan, with 4,000,000 citizens) to select our potential participants. According to Germanos (2007: 147), urban sociolinguistic approaches "urban places as a space that produces new variations." Milroy and Gordon (2003: 133-134) note that the classical description of a speech community involves specifying a "particular location and [...] a series of putatively relevant social categories such as gender, class, or a generation cohort." One of the primary reasons for targeting the Amman metropolitan area is that Amman is a relatively new urban center (less than 80 years old). It is a locus of extensive dialect mixing or koinéisation (Ferguson, 1959; Mitchell, 1986) due to immigration from Palestine, Syria, and rural areas of Jordan. Additionally, in Amman, it is highly observable that females, unlike males, use UAA in non-domestic settings. This indicates that certain social functions or roles underlie the use of UAA, which this study aims to scrutinize.

3.2. The Interviews

For the purposes of this study, we followed an interviewing protocol consisting of two stages. The first stage involved conducting interviews with female participants to ascertain their actual use of UAA. This step was crucial to ensure that responses in the second stage were gathered from individuals who genuinely employ UAA in their speech, rather than those who merely claim its use. We first drew on a corpus collected using a sociolinguistic interview methodology (Labov, 1984) to audio-record female speakers living in the Amman metropolitan area in 2023. Our insider status as bona fide members of the Amman metropolitan community enabled us to access members of the speech community using the 'snowball technique' (Milroy & Milroy, 1977). Using our personal social networks, we were able to secure most of the participants required for this study. Additionally, to find more participants, two of the researchers (who are female) approached adult females in public places (cafes and malls), where they were maximally available for interaction (Labov, 1984). The female researchers briefly introduced themselves as scholars conducting research on the local community of the Amman metropolitan area and explained that they wanted to interview some females from this community. We did not highlight language use as the main focus of the study. Some females immediately showed their willingness to participate, while others declined. The data were recorded in sociolinguistic interviews (Labov, 1972) lasting between 10-15 minutes, designed to elicit the vernacular speech style, which is "the most systematic data for linguistic analysis" (Labov, 1984: 29). Sociolinguistic interviews were structured to maximize the interviewees' speech and minimize their attention to their speech. To achieve this, we prepared a number of conversational modules (Labov, 1984) to obtain vernacular speech by focusing on the personal experiences of the interviewees at different stages of their lives (e.g., childhood, schooling, wedding customs, and traditions). These questions were "formulated to be as colloquial as possible, avoiding any 'bookishness' of syntax and lexicon" (Milroy & Gordon, 2003: 60) to reduce the level of formality during the interview (see also Al-Shawashreh, 2016).

After conducting the interview, we could determine whether the female interviewee used UAA or not. If she did (using the main phonological characteristics of UAA), we proceeded to inquire whether her parents or brothers also used UAA. If her response was negative, we invited her to participate in a semi-structured interview, as outlined by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006). This protocol is crucial as it provides independent verification of females' use of UAA. Our observations revealed that a few women attempted to mimic UAA but did not consistently succeed. To ensure the validity of our analysis, we focused exclusively on female speakers who genuinely and consistently used UAA. In total, we conducted 145 sociolinguistic interviews. Of these, we excluded 13 females because they either did not use UAA consistently and spoke their own dialect, such as the rural variety, or their parents were found to use UAA as mentioned by the female herself.

In the second stage of our interviewing protocol, 132 adult females living in the Amman metropolitan area in 2023 were further interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Participant recruitment was effectively achieved through the use of existing community connections, allowing us to gather a significant sample size. Additionally, we distributed an invitation link to broaden participation. The invitation explicitly outlined the study's focus on Amman Arabic, encouraging voluntary involvement. It should be mentioned that female speakers were initially divided into two age cohorts: younger speakers aged 22-35 years (n = 71), and older speakers aged over 45 years (n = 61).[12] This division enabled us to compare the motivations for using UAA over time (Boberg, 2004) and whether age plays a role in prompting adult females to speak UAA.

Each participant was requested to read and endorse an oral consent form outlining the primary research goals, data collection procedures, and the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality for participant identities. In strict adherence to ethical guidelines, our interviews focused solely on topics directly related to the main research objectives outlined in this article. Additionally, we upheld the confidentiality of each participant by assigning unique numerical codes. In instances where speech extracts from recorded interviews are used for illustrative purposes, no personal details are disclosed.

Each interview lasted between 15-25 minutes to elicit detailed answers to our three main questions in the interviews:

i. How long have you incorporated UAA into your vernacular speech?
ii. With whom do you refrain from using UAA?
iii. What are the major factors that motivate you to speak UAA?

These interviews serve as the primary data for the analysis developed in the next section. A functional analysis was employed to discern significant patterns regarding the use of UAA among adult female speakers in Amman. We opted not to transcribe the audio recordings in their entirety. Instead, we carefully listened to all interviews, documented the key factors influencing the use of UAA by adult female speakers, and extracted representative responses for each factor. Factors are categorized as major if they are mentioned by a substantial number of participants, while minor factors are referred to by only a few participants. This categorization into major and minor factors is crucial as it establishes a hierarchy that serves as a "critical diagnostic for comparison" (Tagliamonte, 2013: 130). This hierarchy enables us to pinpoint the primary social factors that influence the use of UAA among adult female speakers in Amman. [13]

4. Results

In this section, we present and discuss the major findings of this article, focusing on the key factors that influence the use of UAA among adult female speakers in Amman.

4.1. Major Factors Motivating Adult Female Speakers to Use UAA

Upon a thorough examination of the semi-structured interviews and careful analysis of all participants' responses, we identified the main factors that motivate adult female speakers to use UAA in the Amman metropolitan area. These factors are outlined in Table 1, along with the frequency of each factor across all interviews. It is important to note that participants were specifically prompted to articulate the most crucial factors influencing their incorporation of UAA into their speech. Some participants highlighted a single factor, while others identified two or three reasons, all considered equally important in motivating the use of UAA. In total, we documented 275 instances of these factors.

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[12] Eckert (2017: 151) mentions that "age is a person's place at a given time in relation to the social order: a stage, a condition, a place in history." This statement indicates that it is the social, rather than biological, status of age which matters in its correlation with variation. Eckert (2017) divided age cohorts into four stages: childhood, adolescence, adult and old age. As our study focuses on the speech of those who are (22+) years old, we followed Eckert's classification, categorizing participants to young and old (see Al-Shawashreh et al. 2024).

[13] It should be mentioned that factors mentioned by "a few participants" are no less important although we consider them 'minor'. In sociolinguistic research, it has repeatedly been demonstrated that anomalous behaviour can be pivotal to interpretation. Speakers' circumstances and histories vary; and therefore, expecting variation in their motivations must be the norm. Therefore, all factors mentioned by our interviewees are investigated.

Table 1: Major Factors Motivating Adult Female Speakers to Use UAA in the Amman Metropolitan Area

Factor	Frequency	%
Displaying softness and attractiveness	79	28.6
Achieving social goals (e.g., boosting job opportunities and improving marriage prospects)	68	24.7
Developing social bonds and achieving social harmony	56	20.3
Showcasing educational prestige	30	10.9
Pretending to be from a higher socioeconomic class	24	8.8
Others (e.g., speaking with children whose families use UAA at home)	18	6.6
Total	**275**	**100**

As indicated in Table 1, the use of UAA by adult women is not solely based on highlighting gender identity or showcasing prestige, as commonly cited in previous studies. Other contributing factors include the pursuit of social objectives such as marriage or employment opportunities.

In the following subsections, each contributing factor is discussed in detail.

4.1.1.   Displaying Softness and Attractiveness

As shown in Table 1, the primary motivation for adult women to use UAA in their speech is the desire to express softness and attractiveness, which participants frequently grouped together. We suggest that associating these traits with gender identity is warranted, as adult females are expected to embody quintessential feminine characteristics, particularly softness and attractiveness in their speech. Al-Wer (1991) mentions that "indigenous women increasingly adopted urban linguistic features, and these features became associated with female speech, to the extent that the indigenous Jordanian features became perceived as 'tough' and more appropriate for men, while the urban Palestinian features became perceived as 'soft' and therefore more appropriate for women" (p. 41). The urban Palestinian features include the overall replacement of the phoneme /g/ with the glottal stop /ʔ/, the substitution of /θ/ with /t/, and the substitution of /ðˤ/ with /z/, all of which are major phonological features of UAA.

Considering the association of UAA with urbanity and prestige in Jordanian Arabic (Al-Shawashreh, 2016), this dialect can be viewed as an ideal manifestation of femininity, conveying softness. A young female participant stated the following:

1.   *"The urban dialect indicates that the female is tender and charming. I was in a café with friends recently, and a friend of mine placed the order using the Bedouin dialect. The waiter was taken aback by the dialect, which ran counter to the expected kindness and softness of females."*

Another female participant mentioned:

2.   *"Females employ the urban dialect to appear delicate and to avoid appearing 'Jaʕfar,' a Jordanian term denoting a tough male."*

The tendency of female speakers to employ a certain form of language that showcases softness and attractiveness is well-documented in the literature (Labov, 1990; Coates, 2015). Research acknowledges that young females often exhibit linguistic behaviors aligned with societal norms of femininity. These expectations include more mitigated speech, expressions of empathy, and a preference for linguistic forms that promote social harmony (Murphy, 2010). Furthermore, the tendency for women to adopt softer forms of language reflects not only linguistic behavior but also the construction of gender identity, as language is a medium through which individuals negotiate and express their gender roles (Bayard & Krishnayya, 2001). This linguistic tendency can also be viewed as a form of socialization, facilitating girls' integration into societal norms and expectations associated with their gender, while simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes linked to communication styles (Von Hippel et al., 2011). Society, through various channels, communicates implicit norms and expectations regarding appropriate behaviour for girls, and language serves as a powerful vehicle for expressing these societal ideals (Cameron, 2005). The use of UAA by female speakers in Amman can thus be seen as evidence of the intricate interplay between linguistic behaviour and societal expectations.

4.1.2. Achieving social goals: Boosting job opportunities and improving marriage prospects

As shown in Table 1 above, adult female speakers use UAA to achieve social goals, most prominently boosting job opportunities and improving marriage prospects, which are frequently mentioned together in females' responses. As for the social goal (fostering marriage prospects), one participant mentioned:

1.   *"Undoubtedly, employing the urban dialect is crucial for increasing the prospects of marriage. For example, when a man proposed to my Bedouin friend, he stipulated that she must adopt the urban dialect thereafter, as it is considered more feminine".*

Another participant mentioned:

2.   *"A man will contemplate a woman for marriage if she speaks the urban dialect."*

As for the other social goal, i.e., boosting job opportunities, one participant stated:

3. *"The employer will not consider a female for the position if she does not speak the urban dialect; she will be deemed unadaptable and potentially problematic."*

Another participant mentioned:

4. *"If the position at hand is located in Amman, the female must use the urban dialect in order to be considered."*

Multiple studies have posited that specific social objectives or intentions can be linguistically conveyed through the use of particular expressive strategies or techniques (e.g., Al-Khawaldeh et al. 2023). Social goals or intentions are found to be accomplished by employing a specific dialect, which is a practice shaped by societal stereotypes. This assumption is intimately tied to the notion that language is depicted as a strategic tool employed by individuals to achieve distinct social aims (Meyerhoff 2018). In the present context, a number of female speakers employ UAA in order to enhance marriage prospects and improve employment opportunities. This employment is intricately linked to the stereotypical perception of UAA as a supra-local variety, which embodies femininity and softness. UAA is a form of language that extends beyond a local or regional dialect and is understood and used by speakers across Amman, often cutting across different local communities.

Concerning marriage, our participants highlight the fact that the use of UAA, which is for them a prestigious language form, is associated with better educational and economic prospects, further enhancing their appeal in the marriage market. The use of other alternative variants of Amman Arabic or the woman's native dialect spoken at home (e.g., Rural) can be perceived as less feminine and soft, potentially affecting the female's chances of marriage. Given that male-female relationships in Jordan are heavily influenced by strict traditional customs, particularly outside the realms of work and academia (Al-Shawashreh 2016), a female's language becomes a vital tool for expressing herself as soft, aligning with societal expectations for marriage. Similarly, in the context of employment, employers in Amman prefer women who speak UAA, which, as we argue, significantly shapes initial impressions by suggesting cultivation and education, as our participants mentioned. It is noteworthy that nearly all participants in our study observe that UAA is commonly linked to strong communication skills, intelligence, and cultural refinement, creating as such a positive perception of a female. Many studies have proposed that educational attainment and social status are key factors contributing to an individual's overall attractiveness in the marriage and labour market of Jordan (Shteiwi 2015).

4.1.3. Developing social bonds and achieving social harmony

The third remarkable motivation prompting adult women to incorporate UAA into their daily interactions is the desire to cultivate social bonds and foster social harmony. Despite the limited acknowledgment of this factor as influential in motivating female speakers to adopt a specific linguistic form in the Arabic-speaking world, the application of language as a tool for nurturing social connections and achieving communal concord is a thoroughly examined phenomenon within the field of sociolinguistics, as evidenced by, e.g., Romaine (2000) and Brescoll & Uhlmann (2008). Within this context, individuals utilize language as a mechanism to construct and sustain social relationships. In the case of adult female speakers employing UAA in non-domestic contexts, it becomes apparent that they use this linguistic form as a means to bridge social gaps between themselves and other female speakers in Amman. Essentially, the widespread use of UAA by female speakers in Amman signifies the fact that using a different dialect, rather than UAA, might introduce a social distance among women themselves, potentially hindering communication and impeding social harmony. A participant in this study highlighted this aspect by stating:

5. *"Previously, I spoke the rural dialect; however, upon enrolling in university, I adopted the urban dialect in order to avoid being perceived as a black sheep and to foster a sense of connection with my peers."*

Another participant mentioned:

6. *"When conversing with my peers, I employ the urban dialect in an effort to strengthen our bonds."*

The use of UAA by adult female speakers in Amman fosters a sense of belonging among them. Meinhof et al. (2005) posit that the sense of belonging plays a foundational role in shaping and reinforcing individual linguistic choices and collective identity. The use of UAA by females strengthens their connection to gender identity and social roles within the community. Bonvillain (2019) proposes that linguistic expressions reflect shared experiences, values, and traditions, thereby creating a unique bond among individuals who share a common language or background. Therefore, when females employ UAA, they likely perceive that their linguistic expressions align with those of their social or cultural group, reinforcing a sense of community and acceptance. This sense of belonging through linguistic expression not only enriches interpersonal relationships but also contributes to a broader comprehension of one's cultural identity within the larger societal context, as highlighted by Vallentin (2019) and Bazner & Lopez (2022). Thus, UAA becomes a primary means by which adult females in Amman express and negotiate their social identities. In-group features serve as powerful markers of identity, helping individuals signal their belonging to specific communities or social groups. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue, language is not just a medium of communication but also a tool for constructing social identity. Using in-group linguistic features fosters a sense of solidarity and cohesion among group members. In this regard, Snell (2018) argues that while standard forms index status, local forms often index solidarity (see also 'overt' and 'covert' prestige, e.g., Trudgill, 1972). It creates a shared linguistic identity that differentiates insiders from outsiders, reinforcing group bonds and

collective identity. For instance, Eckert's (2000) study of high school students demonstrated how linguistic practices, such as vowel shifts and slang, were crucial in establishing and maintaining social groups like 'jocks' and 'burnouts.'.

4.1.4. Showcasing educational prestige

As discussed in Section 2, the concept of prestige in Jordan is consistently correlated with the use of urban dialects. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the specific attributes that confer 'prestige' upon these dialects. The existing literature provides a broad definition of prestige, often associating it with the high variety of language, particularly in diglossic situations (Bassiouney, 2009; Albirini, 2016). Nonetheless, recent research within the framework of language variation and change in the sociolinguistic landscape of Jordan has revealed that a dialect can be considered more 'prestigious' when it is predominantly used by educated speakers (Al-Shawashreh, 2016; Al-Shawashreh et al., 2024). For this purpose, we use the term 'educational prestige' to express the positive social valuation of speakers who align themselves with higher social status and educational attainment. It is often reflected in the preference for the urban variety. Al-Hloul et al. (2023) recently referred to the fact that certain linguistic forms in Ammani Arabic (e.g., ha 'this') are commonly associated with educated female speakers.

Speakers of UAA are primarily perceived as educated. One participant highlighted this association with the statement:

7. *"The adoption of the urban dialect is now on the rise, and it is currently used to distinguish educated from uneducated people."*

Another participant mentioned:

8. *"We females favor the urban dialect since it is connected with educated and sophisticated ladies, as opposed to other dialects that are more linked with illiterate people and the elderly."*

This association between education and the use of a certain dialect in Jordan and other Arab countries has been the subject of much debate in the related literature of Arabic sociolinguistics (Al-Khatib, 1988; Al-Wer, 1991; Al-Tamimi, 2001; Al-Ali & Arafa, 2007). Owens (2001: 430) asserts that "education is one of the most important elements contributing to variation in modern-day Arabic." According to Owens (2001: 435), "educated speakers adopt SA [Standard Arabic] forms to a far greater degree than do illiterates." Al-Khatib (1988) highlights that prior variationist studies consistently show that education plays a crucial role in determining the use of standard variants in spoken language. [14]

An important observation here concerns the fact that several participants demonstrated a conscious awareness of emphasizing their educational attainment in non-domestic contexts. The use of UAA is understood to facilitate the seamless integration of females' educational background into their discourse, thereby garnering respect from their interlocutors (given that education is still an important criterion of self-recognition and esteem in Jordan). This nuanced interplay between education, linguistic expression, and social interactions is an important factor that makes UAA a preferable option for adult females. UAA is associated with education, making speakers appear more sophisticated. Therefore, this finding underscores the multifaceted role of education as a pivotal social factor influencing linguistic choices in Arabic.

4.1.5. Pretending to Be from a Higher Socioeconomic Class

Another important factor motivating adult female speakers to use UAA in Amman is that this variety is mainly used by people who belong to a higher socioeconomic class. Consider the following statements by two participants:

9. *"When I spoke using the rural variety, a few of my peers would make fun of my 'weird' dialect, which for them is used by rural poor people."*

10. *"I convey to others that I am more refined and of a higher social class by employing the urban dialect."*

The related literature indicates that language is highly indicative of the socioeconomic class of the speaker. Guy (1988: 37) states:

"In many societies, some of the most important of these sociolinguistic divisions are associated with differences in social prestige, wealth, and power. Bankers clearly do not talk the same as busboys, and professors don't sound like plumbers. They signal the social differences between them by features of their phonology, grammar, and lexical choice, just as they do extralinguistically by their choices in clothing, cars, and so on."

This assumption has been extensively examined in subsequent studies, revealing the interconnectedness of language and social class, which can perpetuate socio-economic hierarchies and foster linguistic ideologies (Haeri, 2021). These ideologies may lead to the marginalization of speakers based on their choice of a specific dialect, thereby reinforcing existing societal disparities. We propose that the use of UAA in Jordan is intricately linked to the perception of affluence and social status. Its use significantly influences social interactions and the construction of identity and can contribute to broader societal divisions based on economic considerations. This connection stems primarily from the fact that UAA has been predominantly used by affluent and highly-educated individuals

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[14] In contrast, both Al-Wer (2000) and Al-Tamimi (2001) challenge the correlation between education and the preference for standard variants (see Al-Shawashreh 2016 for discussion).

residing in Amman since the 1960s. UAA serves as the language of influence for those engaged in finance, banking, tourism, real estate, construction, and retail. Consequently, the use of UAA creates the impression that the speaker belongs to a higher socioeconomic class.

5.   Discussion

It is evident that UAA is associated with overt social values. Its use by adult female speakers is driven by five major social factors: displaying softness and attractiveness, achieving social goals (improving marriage prospects and boosting job opportunities), developing social bonds, emphasizing educational prestige, and projecting a higher socioeconomic class. This argument supports Al-Wer et al.'s (2022) statement that "social factors are [...] so meaningful that we need to have a full account of as many social attributes of a speech community as possible at any given time in order to make good use of them in understanding language change" (p. 4). The following subsections provide sociolinguistic accounts for the association between UAA and these five major social factors.

5.1. Convergence, Identity, and Societal Expectations

The results reveal that adult female speakers in Amman view UAA as a means to gain additional social value. A potential explanation for this viewpoint is the assumption that the complexities of social dynamics and power relations are simplified into individual choices to converge or diverge (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Most significantly, convergence can be viewed as an articulation of the 'desire' by female individuals to accommodate social integration and harmony. The data points in this direction: to secure a job or marriage, a young female must adopt UAA as a communicative norm. According to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Giles, 1973), individuals adjust their speech patterns to either converge with or diverge from their interlocutors to reduce social distance and achieve communicative goals. By adopting UAA, women align themselves with urban prestige and the social benefits it confers. This convergence not only facilitates smoother social interactions in various public and professional settings but also signals their integration into the metropolitan identity of Amman, essential for upward social mobility (see Destin & Debrosse, 2017).

Additionally, for women in Amman, adopting UAA serves as a strategic way to construct and project a socially advantageous identity (see Ochs, 1993). This dialect acts as a linguistic marker of modern urban femininity, which is increasingly valued in Amman's evolving socio-cultural landscape. By using UAA, women can navigate social and professional networks more effectively, presenting themselves as part of the urban elite. This language shift helps them blend seamlessly into the urban social fabric, which is particularly important in a diverse and rapidly growing city like Amman (Pilder, 2011), where social integration and acceptance often hinge on linguistic conformity to dominant urban norms. These norms are often associated with refinement, politeness, and a modern lifestyle. Consequently, the use of UAA by women, regardless of their native dialect, reflects a conscious effort to meet these societal expectations (see Green, 2003; Soliz & Colaner, 2017). It also enables them to navigate the gendered dimensions of language use in Amman, where adhering to the urban linguistic norm can enhance social acceptance and reduce potential stigmatization associated with rural or non-urban dialects. This linguistic accommodation aligns with broader gendered expectations for women to present themselves in a manner perceived as socially refined and modern, further cementing their place in the urban social hierarchy (see Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak, 2012). This accommodation not only facilitates social mobility but also aligns with societal expectations for women to embody modern and progressive values, which are often signalled through language use.

5.2. Dialectal Prestige, Culture, and Professional Advancement

The widespread adoption of UAA by women in Amman, even when it is not their native dialect, can be effectively explained through Trudgill's (1972, 1974) arguments on sex, covert prestige, and linguistic change. According to Trudgill, speakers make conscious linguistic choices based on their social standing and the perceived prestige associated with particular language varieties. UAA is widely perceived as the dialect of the urban elite, associated with modernity, education, and economic success. In Amman, speaking UAA signals belonging to the upper social echelons and aligns individuals with the city's cosmopolitan identity. For women, adopting UAA is a strategic move to enhance their social status and align themselves with these prestigious urban attributes.

In Jordanian society, women often face greater scrutiny regarding their linguistic behavior compared to men. There is a strong cultural expectation for women to adhere to socially prestigious norms, which in the context of Amman, includes the use of UAA. By speaking UAA, women meet these societal expectations, projecting an image of refinement, education, and adherence to the dominant urban culture (see Lazar, 2017). This linguistic choice helps women navigate the social landscape more effectively, positioning them favorably in both personal and professional spheres. Therefore, the association of UAA with economic opportunity and professional advancement in Amman plays a crucial role in its adoption by women. As the primary dialect used in business, media, and education, UAA provides women with greater access to economic resources and career opportunities. Mastery of this prestigious form of Arabic enhances their linguistic capital, making them more competitive in the job market and more effective in professional interactions. Women in Amman recognize that speaking UAA not only facilitates social acceptance but also serves as a critical asset in advancing their economic and professional aspirations. This alignment with UAA is thus not merely a matter of social conformity but a strategic response to the economic imperatives of urban life.

5.3. Implications for Sociolinguistic Research

The phenomenon of female speakers converging towards UAA aligns with the broader sociolinguistic understanding of language as a tool for negotiating identity and power within social hierarchies. By adopting UAA, women not only seek to align themselves with urban prestige but also actively participate in constructing their social identities within a rapidly modernizing society. This process reflects the ongoing negotiation of gender roles, where language becomes a critical site for expressing both compliance with and resistance to traditional norms.

Furthermore, the decision to adopt UAA can be seen as a strategic response to the pressures of a globalized world, where linguistic choices are increasingly influenced by the desire to participate in wider socioeconomic networks. As women in Amman navigate these networks, their linguistic choices are informed by the perceived advantages of UAA, which extend beyond social integration to encompass aspirations of economic and professional success. This reinforces the notion that language functions as a currency for social capital, where the adoption of UAA is a deliberate effort to enhance social standing.

Moreover, the data suggest that this linguistic convergence is not uniform across all social contexts but is selectively employed depending on specific communicative goals and interlocutors. This selective convergence indicates a nuanced understanding of the social landscape, where women adeptly navigate their linguistic choices to optimize social and communicative outcomes. By situating the findings within the framework of CAT and broader sociolinguistic discourse, the study underscores the importance of considering the complex interplay between language, identity, and power in understanding linguistic behavior, particularly in gendered contexts. This analysis not only reinforces existing theories but also opens avenues for exploring how linguistic practices in Amman reflect broader social changes, especially in relation to gender dynamics and the evolving concept of urban identity.

In conclusion, the study's findings on the social functions of UAA contribute significantly to our understanding of language change in urban environments by highlighting the role of social dynamics in driving linguistic convergence. As women adopt UAA to align with urban prestige, this shift may indicate an ongoing trend toward the homogenization of dialects, potentially diminishing dialectal diversity in Amman over time. This raises important questions for sociolinguistic research about the future of local dialects in rapidly urbanizing societies, where social and economic factors increasingly shape language use and identity.

In the following section, we discuss the notable observation that the magnitude of these five factors differs when comparing younger females (under 35 years old) with older females (over 45 years old).

5.4. The effect of the age of the female on the use of UAA

Upon careful examination of the responses from our participants, it becomes evident that younger and older females exhibit differences in recognizing the factors that motivate them to use UAA. Consider Table 2, which shows the differences between older and younger females regarding the recognition of the contributing factors behind the use of UAA.

Table 2: The use of UAA according to age

The factor	Frequency	Old	Young
Displaying softness and attractiveness	79	35	44
Achieving social goals (e.g., boosting job opportunities and improving marriage prospects	68	15	53
Developing social bonds and achieving social harmony	56	41	15
Showcasing educational prestige	30	16	14
Pretending to be from a higher socioeconomic class	24	14	10
Others (speaking with kids whose families use UAA in their homes, etc.)	18	3	15
Σ	275	124	151

As shown in Table 2, young and older females do not exhibit major differences in terms of gender identity (displaying softness and attractiveness), showcasing educational prestige, or pretending to be from a higher socioeconomic class. However, distinctions arise in their perspectives on whether UAA is used to achieve social goals, develop social bonds, and foster social harmony. For younger females, achieving social goals is found to be very important in motivating them to use UAA, whereas for older females, developing social bonds and achieving social harmony are more significant. This difference is, in fact, plausible. It is well-known that younger females are often characterized by a more contemporary linguistic style that mirrors evolving language trends, while older females tend to adhere to traditional linguistic norms. Such a difference has been taken as evidence for the dynamic nature of language evolution across generations within a given sociolinguistic context (Coates, 2015). Women's attitudes towards language evolve significantly over the course of their lives. This evolution is influenced by their changing roles and responsibilities, as well as broader societal shifts in linguistic norms and expectations.

This dynamic nature of language evolution is found to be related not only to linguistic choices but also to attitudes towards certain linguistic forms, as demonstrated by the present research. This change in attitudes is

accounted for by the fact that social goals and intentions are subject to the age of the female, which is proven to be an important factor shaping linguistic choices in this context. For instance, almost all older females are already married and have jobs; therefore, their linguistic choices are less likely to be influenced by these factors. On the other hand, as younger females are usually unmarried, newly married, or jobless, it is expected that such factors motivate their linguistic choices, given that language serves as a vehicle for the expression of social needs (Meyerhoff, 2018). A similar argument can be extended to the difference regarding the use of UAA to develop social bonds and achieve social harmony. Many scholars argue that women often develop a deeper understanding of interpersonal relationships, enhanced empathy, and an increased ability to navigate complex social structures over time (see Taylor et al., 2000; Karniol et al., 2003). Older women adeptly interpret social cues, engage in effective communication, and build meaningful connections within their social networks. This is unsurprising, as the sense of socialization is often shaped by a wealth of experiences, including familial relationships, professional endeavours, and community involvement, fostering a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to social interactions (Delamont, 2021).

6.   Conclusions

This research has investigated the unique tendency among adult female speakers in the Amman metropolitan area to use UAA in their daily interactions, especially in non-domestic environments, when this variety is different from the one they acquire at home. One hundred thirty-two adult female native speakers of JA living in the Amman metropolitan area in 2023 were interviewed. The participants were stratified according to their age cohorts (younger and older) to compare the motivations for the use of UAA and assess whether age plays a role in influencing adult females in Amman to speak UAA. The results show that there are five major factors motivating adult female speakers in Amman to use UAA: displaying softness and attractiveness, achieving social goals (improving marriage prospects and boosting job opportunities), developing social bonds, emphasizing educational prestige, and pretending to be from a higher socioeconomic class. Furthermore, the results reveal that age plays a role in both the motives and attitudes of adult female speakers using UAA in Amman, with older females exhibiting different motives and attitudes than younger ones. Younger females consider achieving social goals to be a key motivator for using UAA, while older females focus more on developing social bonds and achieving social harmony. The results further confirm our claim that adult females in Amman use UAA in daily interactions to achieve specific social functions and goals beyond simply demonstrating prestige or emphasizing their gender identity.

We recommend that future research include a comparative analysis with male speakers to provide a more comprehensive view of gendered language use in Amman. Investigating whether similar factors influence male speakers or if distinct differences exist would offer valuable insights into the dynamics of language use across genders.

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About the Author(s)

Dr. Marwan Jarrah is a faculty member in the Department of English Language and Literature at the School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman. His research focuses on linguistics, with particular interests in syntax and pragmatics. Dr. Jarrah has contributed significantly to the study of Arabic linguistics and has published extensively on topics related to syntactic theory, language variation, and pragmatics in Jordanian and Arabic contexts.

Prof. Nahed Emaish is a professor in the Department of French Language and Literature at the School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman. Her work explores language pedagogy, technology-enhanced language learning, and curriculum design. Prof. Emaish's research also addresses issues related to intercultural communication, contributing to both academic research and applied language fields.

Sukaya Ali is affiliated with the Department of English Language and Literature at the School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman. Her work focuses on translation, with a special interest in Arabic-English translation. She has been involved in several projects examining social dynamics in Arabic-speaking communities, contributing to the understanding of urban linguistic trends.

Dr. Ekab Al-Shawashreh is an associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the School of Arts, Yarmouk University, Irbid. His expertise lies in variation, particularly in the areas of the dynamics of language in both academic and social contexts.

Dr. Yousef Al-Jabali is a part-time lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature at the School of Foreign Languages, The University of Jordan, Amman. His research interests include pragmatics and politeness theories.

Dr. Bashar AL-Kasasbeh is a faculty member at Al-Balqa Applied University. His academic focus is on language variation. He is also interested in advancing language education in Jordan through his work on integrating innovative teaching methods into university curricula.