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PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION IN THE SPEECH OF WOMEN FROM THREE
URBAN AREAS IN JORDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates sociolinguistic variation in the towns of Sult, Ajloun and Karak in Jordan with regard to the use of four phonological variables, (Q), (θ), (ð) and (J), according to age and education in the speech of a sample of 116 women. The principal aim of the study is to investigate the extent to which the non-local female prestige features have disseminated in provincial areas where social networks are typically tightly-knit. Analysis of the data obtained show that generally the younger and educated women, who have more contacts with outside communities, accommodate to the non-local variants considerably more often than the older and less educated women who are more liable to local social network pressure. The degree of accommodation to the non-local variants (in the context of the local community) shows an interesting correlation with the variables' *salience*: the higher the salience the lower the degree of accommodation to the non-local variant. Nevertheless, the study also shows that low salient variables also result in low degree of accommodation to the non-local variant. It is therefore variables which are marked by 'moderate' degree of salience which show highest degree of accommodation to non-local variants. In this study, the variable (Q) is a *stereotype* and the variable (J) is an *indicator*. The speakers accommodate least to the non-local variants of (Q) and (J), whereas they accommodate significantly more frequently to the non-local variants of (θ) and (ð).