

# **THE STIGMATISATION OF THE GLOTTAL STOP IN TLEMCCEN SPEECH COMMUNITY: AN INDICATOR OF DIALECT SHIFT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Tlemccen speech, an old urban variety of Arabic, has long distinguished itself from other Algerian Arabic dialects by a number of linguistic features. Its most characteristic phonological trait, not used anywhere else in the country, is the realisation of /q/, the Classical Arabic qāf, as a glottal stop [ʔ], as in [ʔæ:l], 'He said', for CA /qaal/. But, as a result of the massive long-term migration of rural people towards the city and the contact of two types of Arabic dialectal forms, the recent decades have witnessed drastic changes in the dialect of Tlemccen. There is indeed much evidence that native speakers, particularly among younger males, tend to avoid the use of the glottal stop [ʔ] for its tight association with femininity and thus its strong stigmatisation and negative attitudes towards its users.

The present paper raises the issue of assimilation to rural forms of Arabic, in particular the displacement of [ʔ] in favour of the voiced velar [g]. On the basis of empirical investigations and the data collected in the early 1990s, then in the period 2000-2007 as well as the recent observations, we hypothesize that Tlemccen speech is moving towards a kind of dialect levelling, if not dialect shift. We assume, however, that in spite of this apparently high rate of assimilation or language replacement at the phonological level as well as morphological and lexical ones, female native speakers will naturally preserve the substrate of Tlemccen speech and prevent its death.

**KEYWORDS:** Dialect Shift / Leveling, Glottal Stop, Urban / Rural Dialect, Assimilation, Language Attitudes