FEMALE PRAGMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE QELTU-DIALECT OF MOSUL

Qasim Hassan

University of Basra

1. **General**

- In general, the *qeltu*-dialects of Iraq are divided into two broad groups: Tigris and Euphrates groups of *qeltu*-dialects (Jastrow 2007, 1981, 1979; Palva 2006; Blanc 1964). The *qeltu*-dialect of Mosul (q-M, henceforth) belongs to the Tigris-group of dialects.

- The q-M remained away from influences from Bedouin dialects (Jastrow 1994:120, 1981:102). That is in contrast with the *qeltu*-dialects on the Euphrates, which have lost some of their *qeltu*-features by influence of the Bedouin dialects in western Iraq. One example of this may be the *qeltu*-dialect of Hīt, which, for example, affricates the velar plosive /k/ to /č/ and preserves the Classical Arabic /r/ (Abu Haidar 2004:5; Khan 1997:54, 58).

- The preservation of the voiceless uvular stop /q/ as opposed to /g/ in the *gilit*-dialects. With the exception of loanwords, the uvular /q/ is considered hallmark of the *qeltu*-dialects on the Tigris (Jastrow 2007:416, 1982:102).

2. **From *qeltu* to *gilit*: Demographic challenges**

    In the recent few decades, q-M has experienced several abrupt changes due to a demographic disruption triggered, among others, by three recent waves of immigration.

- *The economic-driven movement from gilit- to qeltu-areas of dialects*. The first recent wave of immigrants to Mosul was internal from rural to urban areas in the 90th of the last century.

The newcomers were mostly *gilit*-farmers from the rural hinterland around Mosul, locally known as *ǧaryāwī* (villager).

- *The ongoing sectarian-induced immigration of the southeastern gilit-speakers into the qeltu-areas, particularly since* 2003. This immigration wave was predominantly made up of *gilit*-speaking people from the southern and southeastern parts of the country. In 2003, thousands of south Iraqis have fled their homes due to sectarian unrests in mixed religious communities in the *gilit*-dialects area, and they have therefore settled in the mono-confessional society of Mosul.

- *The organized displacement of the qeltu-speaking non-Muslims on sectarian grounds*. For example, the systematic forced displacement of Yazidi and Christian *qeltu*-speaking minorities following the incursion of the ISIS and its occupation of Mosul.

Immigrants of the two first waves brought along with them their various dialects, which have over time been an indelible part of q-M. In keeping with the model of dialect accommodation (Manfredi 2012, Miller 2005, Trudgill 2005), the coexistence of *gilit*- and *qeltu*-dialectal elements induced leveling of both lexical and phonetic features of q-M towards Standard Iraqi-Arabic. On the account, several q-M lexical and phonetic peculiarities have almost been disappeared from daily life of Maslawi people.

3. **From *qeltu* to *gilit*: Sociocultural challenges**

- It has been argued in the literature about gender identity and language choice that effeminacy of a language may be a good reason for language choice (Dörnyei and Cameron 2006; Kissau 2006; Clément 2001; Rosenthal 1999). For *gilit*-speakers from the surrounding rural areas, q-M sounds sissy and it is therefore stigmatized as effeminate. For this reason in particular, native speakers of the q-M avoid speaking their native language outdoor. Some families I interviewed ask their boys to speak the harsh *ǧaryāwī* dialect outdoor, not their unmanly dialect.

4. **Some Selected Female Pragmatic Expressions in q-M**

The following female Pragmatic Expressions (FPE, henceforth) have been observed so far: *xāi, wixš, wī, lāʕištu, ʕištu, ʔiġmād, ʔinhawīt wi-nzawīt, ḥadra w badra.* Note that there is disagreement amongst my informants as to whether these markers are female or not; some of my informants consider them female, while others confirmed their use by men and women in everyday speech. However, in frameworks on q-M like Al-Bakri (2011: 11, 131, 106, 107, 281, 905, 934, and 988) and (Al-Obaydi 2011: 11, 31), these expressions are considered women-exclusive. This disagreement might be due to the fact that these expressions are used nearly solely by female native speakers of q-M, and they therefore sound female for the most part of my informants who originally hail from the surroundings of Mosul. It seems, however, that these expressions are going to be fully grammaticalized female pragmatic expressions in the near future.

FPE in q-M can be subdivided into following three categories:

1. *xāi*, *wixš* and *wī* are **primary** FPEs that do not overlap with other lexical categories.
2. *lāʕištu*, *ʕištu* and *ʔiġmād* are **secondary** expressions which evolved from a verb (*ʕištu*), a negative marker and verb (*lāʕištu*), or a noun (*ʔiġmād*) and became frozen over time, i.e. they no more inflect for number and gender.
3. **Multi-word expressions**: These are set phrases such as *ʔinhawīt wi-nzawīt* and *ḥadra w badra*.

As will be shown below, these expressions appear with different structural and functional features, depending on the mood of the speaker.

4.1. **Functional features**

▪ Chagrin: *xāi, wixš*

xāi/wixš ʔint-ī ʔaḏka minī? FPE Do you think you are more intelligent than me?

▪ The multifunctional expression *wī*. It is the most used FPE in the *qeltu*-dialect of Mosul and it appears with different functions.

- Self-pity

wī lau mā ruḥ-tu aḥsan FPE It would have been better if I hadn't gone.

- Criticism of oneself or others

wī ʔinkasaġ ʔl-glāṣ FPE The glass is broken.

- Frustration: *ʔiġmād*

ʔiġmād (*əb-ġāsk-ī*)[2] *wayṣab kint-i əl-bēḥa*? FPE Where have you been yesterday?

- Hesitation: *ʕištu*

ʕištu ʔit-rīd ʔitṣīr ṭabība FPE She wants to be a doctor![3]

- Sympathy: *lāʕištu*

lāʕištu ʔašqad yiqhaġ FPE He breaks (my) heart.

- Multi-word FPEs: *ʔinhawīt wi-nzawīt* and *ḥadra w badra*

The former is used by women when they bothered by something or when they are mad at somebody, say, her children. The latter is used by mothers in this area of *qeltu*-dialect to protect their children from the evil eye of certain people.

4.2. **Structural features**

- Sentence-initial position

With the exception of the expression *ʕištu,* the most noteworthy feature of the FPEs in the q-M is that their word ordering seems to be restricted to the prefield.

wī ʔakal-tu-nu kullu! FPE you have eaten everything!

*ʔakal-tu-nu (*wī) kullu* (*wī)*! You have eaten everything FPE!

wixš lēš ʔint-i ʔaḥsan min-ī? FPE Do you think you are better than me?

*lēš ʔint-i ʔaḥsan min-ī (*wixš*)? Do you think you are better than me FPE?

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[2] Sometimes this FPE appears in connection with the word *ġās* 'head'.

[3] This FPE is also used in the *gilit*-dialects of Iraq with the same function and structure.

xāi ʔašqad ḥilū fustānkī! FPE What beautiful your dress is!

*ʔašqad ḥilū fustānkī (*xāi*)! FPE What beautiful your dress is!

In this respect, it should be pointed out that structurally the woman-exclusive FPEs of q-M are similar to those in the southeastern *gilit*-dialects area (Hassan 2016). Compare:

yā mā ʔadrī! FPE I do not know.

yā hā čā ġēr ḍarab axū-h ʔl-bārḥa FPE FPE FPE FPE He hit his brother yesterday.

- Combinability

  Another essential structural characteristic of FPEs is combinability, where more than one FPE appears strictly adjacent to each other.

  wī lāʕištu ʔaš-qad yiqhaġ FPE FPE He breaks (my) heart.

  wī ʔiġmād (*b-ġāsk-ī*) *wayṣab kinti əl-bēḥa*? FPE FPE Where have you been yesterday?

- Non-flexibility of word order
  The FPEs are not flexible in the prefield, because it seems that some of these FPEs take positional precedence over others. In the just mentioned examples, the particle *wī* to the left have scope on the particles to the right.
- Optionality
  They can be elided without changing the truth value of the sentence.