

Degemination in Emirati Pidgin Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract : This study examines the production of gemination in Emirati Pidgin Arabic (EPA) spoken by blue-collar workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). A simple naming test was designed to test the production of geminates and a follow-up discussion was conducted with some of the participants to obtain the complementary qualitative analysis. The goal of the test was to determine whether the EPA speakers would produce a geminated or degeminated phoneme. A semi-structured interview was conducted with a subset of the study cohort to obtain participants' own explanation where they degeminated the consonants. Our findings suggest that the exercising of this choice functions as a sociolinguistic strategy in a similar manner to that observed by Labov in his study of Martha's Vineyard. The findings also show that speakers of EPA are inclined to degeminate consonantal geminates to establish themselves as members of a particular social group. Reasons for wanting to achieve this aim were given as: to claim privileges only available to members of this group (such as employment) and to distinguish themselves from the dominant cultural group. The study concludes that degemination in EPA has developed into a sociolinguistic solidarity marker.

Keywords : sociolinguistics, morphophonology, degemination, solidarity, Emirati pidgin Arabic

Conference Title : ICMAM 2021 : International Conference on Morphological Analysis and Modelling

Conference Location : Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Conference Dates : September 29-30, 2021