

Discourse Marking and Gender Correlation in the Jebli Speech Community

Daouia Laaboudi
Chouaib Doukkali University - El Jadida
Morocco
laaboudi.d@ucd.ac.ma

ملخص:

أُجريت بحوث على نطاق واسع بشأن علامات الخطاب في اللغة العربية المنطوقة خلال العقد الماضي، ويتركز التركيز في معظم هذه الدراسات بين وظائف علامات الخطاب وفهرسة الدلالات الاجتماعية. وهكذا، فقد كان التركيز على استعمال علامات الخطاب في الدارجة العربية لبني زروال وعلاقتها بنوع الجنس، وهو مجال لم يحظ بما يستحق من الدراسة في اللسانيات العربية نظراً لندرة الدراسات التي بحثت العلاقة بين علامات الخطاب ونوع الجنس في العالم العربي، ولكون الدراسات التي تشير إلى نوع الجنس غالباً ما تقارن تواتر استخدام تلك العلامات بين الرجال والنساء. وتبحث هذه الدراسة علامات الخطاب المستعملة في المحادثات العادية. والكيفية التي يؤثر بها هذا المحدد الاجتماعي على اختيار علامات الخطاب المستعملة في المحادثات العادية. ويكمن التوجه الرئيسي لهذه الورقة في أن علامات الخطاب تشير إلى نوع جنس المتكلم وشخصيته وموقفه. وبناء على ذلك، فالهدف من الورقة ينقسم إلى ثلاثة جوانب: 1- تحديد علامات الخطاب المستعملة في المجتمع اللغوي؛ 2- بحث علاقتها بنوع الجنس؛ 3- تسليط الضوء على الكيفية التي تقوم بها علامات الخطاب بدور "مواضع للدلالات الاجتماعية المترابطة من حيث المؤشرات".

Abstract

Discourse markers (henceforth DMs) in Spoken Arabic were researched quite extensively over the last decade (Ahmed, 2014; Al-Batal, 1994; Alrajhi, 2019; Bidaoui, 2015; Gaddafi, 1990; Laaboudi, 2021, etc.). The focus in most of these studies ranges from the functions of discourse markers to indexation of social meaning (Bidaoui, 2015; Laaboudi, 2021). Thus, focus was on the discourse markers in use in Bni Zeroual Arabic (BZA) and their correlation with gender, an understudied area in Arabic linguistics in that the studies that have investigated the correlation of DMs with gender in the Arab world are scarce, and those that refer to gender mostly compare the frequency of their use among men and women (Ahmed, 2014). This study investigates DMs and gender and explores how this social determinant impacts the choices of discourse markers used in natural conversations. The main thrust of this paper is that DMs index the social type, personae and stance of the speaker. Accordingly, the goal of the paper is three-fold: (i) identify the discourse markers in use in the speech community; (ii) investigate their correlation with gender; (iii) highlight how discourse markers function as "loci of indexically linked social meaning" (Campbell-Kibler, 2010).

Key words: discourse markers, gender, social indexation, third wave variation, social meaning

1 Introduction

Most of the studies on language and gender have demonstrated that differences in conversational styles span different linguistic areas, including discourse marking (Al-Harashsheh and Kanakri, 2013; Cameron, 1997; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Rosenhouse, 1998; Winkler, 2008; Wouk, 1999, etc.). According to Winkler (2008), men are reported to disregard social “niceties” or any attendance to the needs of others in a conversation with other men, as where they are expected to be “one of the boys” since these practices are traditionally considered to be within the domain of women. Nevertheless, in their conversations with women, they are tentative and use more “affective” features of language (Cameron, 1997). Many studies have found that the female conversational style is more facilitative and solidarity oriented. For instance, in a recent study on the role of gender in conversational dominance, Pakzadian et al. (2018) found that “women show greater acceptance in conversation and due to this feature they try to have more facilitative role in conversation” (p.1).

To account for the differences according to gender in terms of language use, some researchers argue that gender is a salient aspect of identity (Wouk, 1999) and that “variables used more frequently by women throughout the different strata of a community signal female identity in that community, and men who rarely use those variables thereby signal their male identity” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 469). The “difference hypothesis”, on the other hand, attributes the differences to men and women being socialized in different sub-cultures with different norms of behavior (Maltz and Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1991, among others). In short, the theories that account for speech differences between male and females can be roughly grouped into three trends: the difference theory, the dominance theory, and theories of psychological development whereby women develop other orientations and a psychology of caring.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to resolve these differing theories which attempt to account for gender differences in language use. Instead, this study focuses on discourse markers use among males and females in a Jebli speech community, namely Bni Zeroual Arabic (henceforth BZA) and analyzes them to examine how discourse markers (DMs) correlate to gender. More specifically, the paper attempts to identify the makers used in the Jebli Speech community and see, on the one hand, what DMs are used by female and male speakers, and on the other, check for patterns of use and how these patterns relate to social meaning. Therefore, the following objectives have been formulated: (i) to identify DMs used in JMA, (ii) to investigate their correlation with gender, and (iii) to investigate gender patterns in functions. These objectives lead to three distinct research questions, namely:

- 1. What discourse markers are frequently used in Jbala Speech community?
- 2. To what extent do male and female Jebli speakers use the same DMs?
- 3. What patterns exist in male and female use of DMs and how does variation relate to social meaning?

The paper is structured in five sections. The first section introduces the paper and sets the background and the rationale for this research. The second section outlines the methods used to collect data to answer the research question, and the third defines DMS, establishes their importance and reviews the literature. The fourth section describes and discusses the results of this research. Finally, the last section concludes the paper and points out some venues for research.

2 Method

To collect data and answer the questions, the following methods were used:

2.1 Design & Approach

The study draws on a mixed method design, namely the explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2007), which starts with the collection and analysis of the quantitative data followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of the qualitative data.

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 23 people whose age varied from 30 to 70 years old. The informants were all native to the region of Bni Zeroual with little to no education. The 23 speakers partook in 8 conversations of the following types: 3 mixed-sex conversations and 5 same-sex conversations, one males-only, and four females-only conversations. Females outnumbered male speakers in this study since, as a female researcher in a conservative community, it was more difficult for me to gain access to male-only conversations.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Data was collected by using the voice recording feature of WhatsApp. In an attempt to minimize the Observer's paradox, I familiarized the participants with the research objectives, ensured their anonymity, and then engaged with them repetitively in conversations about family matters and daily issues in a natural and casual manner to build rapport and increase familiarity. It should be noted that the conversations that constituted the backbone of data are unstructured and varied in that they ranged from small talks between community members, to narratives about their personal experiences, to heated arguments about some trespassing regarding land and property issues. This makes for authentic data since participants were being spontaneous and considered the researcher as one of theirs and not an intruder.

Given the phonological characteristics of Jebli Arabic in general and BZA in particular such as spirantization, diphthongization, affrication, etc. (see El Aissati, 1996; Laaboudi, 2021, for an overview of the Jbala dialect), the data can be hard to decode, hence the need for transcription. Thus, following IPA, a broad phonemic transcription was adopted with a focus on key sounds, such as emphatics, the bilabial fricative β , the dental fricatives θ/ δ , the post-alveolar $\mathfrak{ʃ}$, palatals $\mathfrak{c}/\mathfrak{j}$, pharyngeals $\mathfrak{h}/\mathfrak{ʕ}$, and the uvular \mathfrak{x} . Another important phonological aspect that is widely attested in JMA is that of imalah, a vowel shift whereby the open vowel [a] is raised to [e]word finally. Finally, although data is drawn mainly from BZA, the term JMA (Jebli Moreccan Arabic) is used in this study in view of the phonological and lexical similarities that exist between the various Jebli dialects.

After transcribing the conversations and deleting interjections, pauses and hesitations, the number of words were counted in the entire corpus and then by gender. DMs were then identified, computed and color coded to determine who says what. To determine the rate of frequency, descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages were used. The percentage of tokens for each DM was calculated both within the overall corpus and within the respective gender. Another important point in this respect is that to detect DMs, the corpus was carefully read and focus was on those items that occur utterance initially and that could be omitted without altering the propositional content of the utterance or the conversation line. Thus, lexical words such *daʕe* 'now', *sʕahbi* 'friend', *sʕafi* 'pure', *ʕæwəð* 'repeat' that have their core meanings, but that also act as DMs in that they are syntactically optional and do not contribute to the propositional meaning (Fraser, 1988; Schiffrin, 1994; Schourup, 1999, among others), were discarded and only instances where they are used as DMs have been considered. The results obtained are summed up in the table below.

Lastly, for the qualitative data, the focus was on a sample of the highly frequent DMs on which a content analysis of their functions was conducted to check out for patterns of use.

Table 1. JMA DMs

Conversations	Participants	Recording Time	Corpus	DM Tokens	Percentage
8	23	2h 20mns	20059	925	4.61%

3 Review of the Literature

In this section, I will briefly define DMs and then review some select findings of the literature, with a focus on the works that dealt with DMs and gender correlation.

DMs have been extensively researched and their definitions vary according to the research aims. In this study, DMs are defined as being a class of words and particles that “signal a relationship between the interpretations of the segment they introduce and the prior segment” (Fraser, 1999). As to their role in discourse, these linguistic elements were reported to play a crucial role in cueing the hearer about the possible interpretation(s) of an utterance, providing coherence of the conversational structure they are found in (Aijmer, 1988; Villegas, 2019 among others). DMs also make this interpretation relevant (Schiffrin, 1994; Schourup, 1999; Villegas, 2019, among others) and provide a pragmatic orientation to the utterance they are attached to (Wouk, 1999, p. 197). Therefore, despite their being syntactically optional, DMs are essential, as pointed out by Villegas (2019), who argues that they are “fundamental in communication due to their function in creating and/or assisting in the creation of, semantic and pragmatic coherence, navigating interactional turn-taking features of conversation, expressing mental and emotional states, and performing speech actions” (p.1).

More evidence for the important role that DMs play in discourse comes from Gonen, Livnat, and Noam (2015) who examined the suggested role of discourse markers across a variety of topics, domains, languages, and media formats. The results indicated that discourse markers are helpful in localizing the stretches of discourse that are believed to contain pragmatic information pertaining to discourse coherence.

Scholarship on gender and DMs is inconclusive regarding the extent to which gender correlates with the use and choice of DMs. In general, there are two camps: one that claims that women use more DMs than men, and another which rejects this claim. Among those who argue that women use DMs more frequently than men, Tavakoli and Karimnia (2017) found, for Iranian EFL learners, there was a significant difference between males and females in terms of the frequency of DMs used. Female learners were reported to use all sub-classes of DMs (elaborative, contrastive, reason, inferential, topic-related, and interpersonal discourse markers) more frequently than male speakers. Likewise, in a study of Limonese Creole Speakers, Winkler (2008) argued that the range of DMs of women is broader than that of males and that women use DMs most frequently to encourage the participation of others, to hedge an assertion, and to signal a shared belief. They use tag questions to affirm information. Men, on the other hand, use tag questions to confirm information when talking to women and for affective reasons. Likewise, Laserna, Seih, and Pennebaker (2014) investigated the use of filler words I mean, you know, like, uh, um across age and gender. Their findings indicated that there was no correlation between gender and age and filled pauses as they were used at comparable rates, unlike discourse markers that were found to be more common among women, younger participants, and more conscientious people.

The same DMs were also investigated by Vanda and Péter (2011), who belong to the second camp and their findings showed no substantial quantitative differences in the DMs use of men and women. The authors reported that men and women used you know, and I mean at a similar rate. As for qualitative functional differences in DM use, the study suggested that variation according to register and context is greater than variation according to gender. For example, men used I mean to summarize and provide conclusions while women used it to clarify a misunderstanding or a misinterpreted utterance. It can

be deduced, then, that research is inconclusive about DMs and gender correlation.

The majority of studies that have focused on DMs and gender targeted mostly Western languages. In Arabic, on the other hand, the body of research on DMs in Spoken Arabic varieties has focused on the meaning and function of individual DMs (Alrajhi, 2019; Alshammary, 2021; Azi, 2018; Bidaoui, 2015, 2020; Gaddafi, 1990; Laaboudi, 2021, etc.). In the same vein, studies that dealt with DMs and gender, such as Ahmed (2014) who investigated the DM ‘bahi’ in Libyan Spoken Arabic, focused on single markers. The findings of Ahmed’s study indicated that males and females used the DM ‘bahi’ in the same way in terms of the intended meaning, although the frequency of use was noted to be higher among women. Additionally, in her discussion of forms of politeness and more specifically tag question in the speech of Moroccan women in the Fes region, Sadiqi (2003) points out that women tend to use “.. words and expressions like *yak* ‘isn’t it?’, *iwa qul* ‘say’, *ha* ‘and’ etc.” (p.156).

It should be noted that none of these studies have examined all the DMs in use and correlated them with gender, hence the need for the present study. In addition to investigating a linguistic aspect that is understudied in Arabic scholarship, namely gender and discourse marking in an understudied variety (BZA), this study further contributes to the general understanding of the role that DMs play in the construction of discourse.

This study is informed by third wave variationist sociolinguistics, which according to Eckert (2016), “views socially meaningful variation as a design feature of language” and “treats variation as a social indexical system with the potential of expressing any and all of a community’s social concerns” (p. 1). According to Eckert (2016), variation in language plays a role in the constantly changing social world. At the core of the third wave are social meaning and speaker agency, as well as the role of stylistic practice in social change and the construction of social distinctions. Social meaning is constructed by linguistic variables, which are both units of linguistic structure and a social mental representation (Campbell-Kibler, 2009; Eckert, 2008a). The main thrust of this approach, also known as Speaker Design approach, is that variation is a strategy used by speakers to create a certain communicative effect, such as the projection of a stance and an interactional personae (Eckert, 2016; Moore and Podesva, 2009), and a stylistic practice that “facilitates our understanding of the social world” (Eckert, 2016). This social world is mediated by social meaning¹, which is indexed through linguistic forms in interaction. Against this background, the main argument defended in this paper is that DMs are sociolinguistic variables that index a social meaning and are used agentively by speakers to negotiate meanings and navigate their social worlds (Campbell-Kibler, 2009; Eckert, 2016; Moore and Podesva, 2009, among others).

4 Results and Discussion

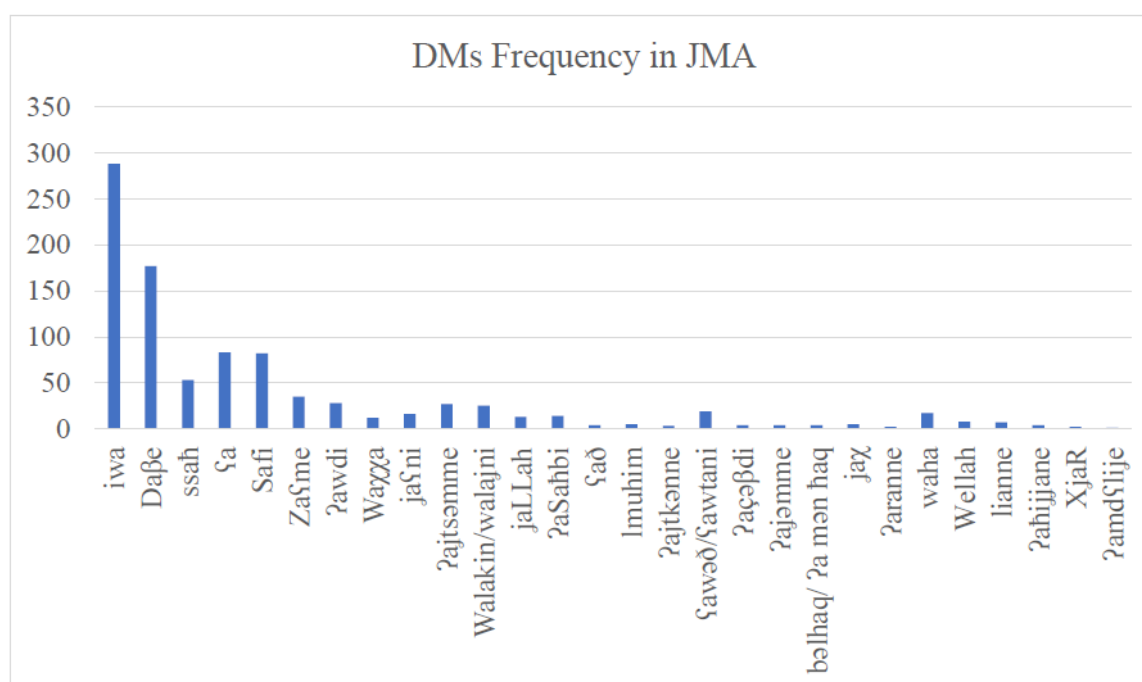
This section describes the findings on DMs found in the data collected from the Jebli Speech Community and attempts to answer the first research question. Thus, focus will be laid on the quantitative figures and how they correlate with gender. This section comprises three subsections, the first of which presents the findings on DMs that are commonly used by both males and females, while the second sub-section focuses on DMs and gender correlation. The third sub-section, on the other hand, describes gender specific DMs.

¹Moore and Podesva (2009) define social meaning as “the stances and personal characteristics indexed through the deployment of linguistic forms in interaction” (p.448).

4.1 Gender Neutral Discourse Markers (DMs)

As an answer to the first research question about the DMs used in the Jebli Speech community, the quantitative findings indicate that JMA speakers use a wide range of DMs; a total of 925 tokens were identified, which represent 4.61% of the total corpus, as Table (1) above illustrates. It should be noted that the number of tokens vary from one DM to another. The details about their frequency are captured by the chart in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Frequency of DMs in JMA



The graph displays 31 DMs that are ranked from the most to the least frequent. The findings show that *iwa* and *dæβe* top the list followed by *ʕa* and *Safi*. The number of tokens for each DM is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. JMA DMs: Quantitative Results

DM	Gloss	Tokens
iwæ	So, well	288
Dæβe	Now	177
ʕa	Just/ only	83
sʕafi	That's it/ enough	82
ssæh	nowadays / now	53
zæʕme	That is	35
ʔæwdi	my dear	28
ʔæjtsəmme	You can say	27
wælækin wælæjɲi	But, however	25
ʕawəd/ ʕawtani [ʕawəd tæni]	Again Again second	19

Two main comments are in order with respect to Table (2). First, the table displays the rate of the frequency of DMs in JMA where some DMs markers are more frequent than others. Thus, the highest frequency rate, scored by *iwæ* and *dæβe*, ranges from above 200 to 177 tokens, followed by those markers, namely *ʕa* and *sʕafi* that score over 80 Tokens. While over 50 tokens were recorded for the DM *ssæh*, four DMs- *zæʕme*, *ʔæwdi*, *ʔæjtsəmme*, *wælækin/ wælæjɲi*- have a frequency that ranges between than 20 and 30. Six DMs have a 10 to 20 tokens frequency as opposed to 13 others that score less than 10 tokens.

Table 2. (continued)

wæha	just	17
jæʕni	That is	16
ʔæsʕhbi	dude	14
jaLLa h	Let's go/ so	13
wæχχa	OK	12
wellah	By the name of Allah	8
liæne	Because	7
ja χ	right?	5
lmuhim	Anyway	5
ʔæçəβdi	My dear	4
ʔæjəmme	Mom	4
bəlhaq/ ʔæmənhaq	But/ in fact	4
ʔæhijjæne	Oh dear me	4
ʕæð	Just	4
ʔæjtkønne	You can say	3
ʔæranne	Meanwhile, on the other hand	2
χja	Is that so?/Ok, fine	2
ʔæmdʕlije	Oh my God!	1

Second, in view of the polyfunctional nature of DMs (Redeker, 1990; Schiffrin, 1994, among others) the glosses are tentative and context bound. Notice that some DMs have the same gloss, which was attributed to them largely on the basis of the context where they occur. For instance, the DMs *ʕæ*, *ʕæð* and *wæhæ*² are all glossed as ‘just’ mainly due to the contexts in which they occur. Further, some markers do not have a gloss because of their versatility. A case in point is *iwæ*, which can have different functions some of which are captured in the excerpt from a conversation in (4) below.

The excerpt is drawn from a conversation about two neighboring land parcels that belong to the female and some other males respectively. The state has recently decided to construct a dam that will be erected on the Oulay Valley in the province of Taounate, more specifically, in the Ratbat commune, to which belongs Bni Zeroual. As a consequence, all the land in the valley will be the state property. To refund the owners, the state commissioned the experts to measure the land. Therefore, the speakers in this conversation are a witness and some landowners, a female and two brothers, who have their parcels next to each other but without clear borders. Hence, they argue over the exactitude of the measurements. The excerpt illustrates the use of the discourse particle *iwa* and its functions within this conversation. In the first instance, the witness uses *iwæ* to preface an inquiry about whether the owners of the land have reached an agreement about the measurements, to which one of the brothers retorts that he couldn't just approve the measurements. As a reaction to this statement, the female speaker tries to coax the man into closing the deal; so she uses *iwæ* and *sʕafi* to prompt the man to agree and to validate the deal. After some negotiations, the man promises to seal the deal if the lady pays him hundred thousand rials; that is five thousand dirhams. The lady laughs and uses *iwæ* to preface a protasis to signal her conditional acceptance. Thus, *iwæ* expresses a range of functions that vary according to the context and cannot be pinned down to a particular meaning or gloss.

To sum up, the different functions of the particle *iwæ* illustrate the multifunctionality typical of DMs and bring to light the difficulty to classifying them into distinct classes. Nevertheless, and despite this overlap, broad categories based on the type of relations that these markers signal remain possible; therefore, the following tentative DM classes are suggested, based on insights from Fraser (1999):

²Unlike other DMs, *wæhæ* occurs utterance finally as in *ʔægi wæhæ* ‘come just; just come’, which might question its status as a DM. However, drawing on insights from Schourup (1999), evidence for its DM status can be based on its being syntactically optional, and its function in limiting the hearer to a possible interpretation.

(4) Multifunctional DMs

M	hijje	ʕəβrəθ	ʔæðqul					
	<i>She</i>	<i>Measured</i>	<i>She says</i>					
	“She says she measured”							
X	iwa	ʕənni	səlləmtule	f ha	lʕβar?			
	<i>so</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>Agreed you (pl.)</i>	<i>In this</i>	<i>measurement</i>			
	“So do you approve of this measurement?”							
M	mæ	ʕandi	kif	bænqi	nsəlləm			
	<i>not</i>	<i>I have</i>	<i>how</i>	<i>I will do</i>	<i>I approve</i>			
	“I don’t have how to approve / there is no way I can approve”							
F	iwæ	sʕafi	səlləmli	ʕənni mælay		nitne		
	<i>well</i>	<i>that’s it</i>	<i>Agree for me</i>	<i>What’ with you</i>		<i>you</i>		
	“well, that’s it, approve of it for me, what’s wrong with you? Come on! Why can’t you agree?”							
M	ʔæɹa li	w æne	bæn	səlləmle	nətfəhmu	ʕlihe	ʔæɹa li...	
	<i>give</i>	<i>and me</i>	<i>I will</i>	<i>approve for</i>	<i>we discuss</i>	<i>on it</i>	<i>give me</i>	
	<i>me</i>			<i>her</i>		<i>(fem.sing)</i>		
	“give me and I will accept; let’s discuss it, give me...”							
F	ʕənni	nqi						
	<i>what</i>	<i>I do</i>						
	“what should I do?”							
M	ha	ntin	ʔæɹali	mjæθæləf	rjæl	w LLa	jɹəbhax	bihe
	<i>there</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>Give me</i>	<i>hundred</i>	<i>rial</i>	<i>and Allah</i>	<i>makes you</i>	<i>with</i>
				<i>thousand</i>			<i>win</i>	<i>it</i>
	“There! you give me hundred thousand riyals and may Allah bless your acquisition”							
F	heheh	iwæ	tænqəβðʕa	heheh				
	<i>heheh</i>	<i>well</i>	<i>When I get hold</i>	<i>heheh</i>				
			<i>of it</i>					
	“heheh well when I receive it”							

As mentioned earlier, these classes are tentative since most of the DMs are multifunctional. They can signal different relations and cut across different classes as is the case of the particle *iwæ* which can express disagreement, change of topic, prompting a speaker, resuming a conversation, etc. Other multifunctional markers are *sʕafi* that can express agreement as well as disagreement, especially when it is used with *iwæ* as demonstrated in (4) above.

4.2 DMs and Gender Correlation

After outlining DMs and their different classes as well as their frequency of occurrence in the corpus, the next section will investigate their correlation with gender. However, since female outnumber male participants, the rate of frequency was checked for each gender separately. Table (6) shows the distribution of DMs according to gender

The descriptive statistics indicate that the female corpus is higher than the males’ and that DM tokens are equally higher in that they represent 5.24% for female speakers as opposed to 4.09% for males. However, the findings in (6) show the percentage of DMs per gender only and do not show the rate of frequency and whether DMs have the same frequency for each gender. To check for this fact, the frequency of the DMs that were attested in both corpora was calculated along with their rate of frequency within each corpus. The findings are summed up in (7).

The frequency of the DMs by gender is consonant with the findings in (4) above, especially for the highly frequent markers, namely *iwæ*, *dæβe*, *sʕafi*, *ʕæ*, *ssæh*. However, the rate of frequency of use of

Table 5: **DM Classes**

Class	DMs	Gloss
Causality and Justification	hiθæš; liʔænne	because
Elaboration	zæʕme	that is
	ʔæranne	[the original expression is ʔæra li na -give to us-
	jæʕni	with regressive assimilation, the /l/ changes to /n/]
	ʔæjtsəmme	When used as a DM, it means: Meanwhile, on the
	ʔæjtkønne	other hand, Which means, that is, Let's say, it means
To introduce or draw attention	bəlhaq	in fact, but
to a comment that is different	ʔæmənhaq	
from the previous statement		
Contrast	wælækin	but, however
	wælæjni	[these two items whose origin is
		wæ lækin 'and but' have the same meaning
		and differ only in their pronunciation]
	waxxa	even if
Inference	iwæ	Well, so
Change of topic	iwæ	Well
	dæʔe	now
Oath	welLah	By the name of Allah
Stance and attitude	ʔæçəʔdi	my dear
	ʔæ s'əhbi	my friend
	ʔæjəmme	oh mom
	ʔæmdæʕlije	oh my goodness!
	ʔæwdi	dude
	ʔæhijjane	oh poor me (this DM is believed to derive from the SA
		expression [ʔæh jæ ʔænæ] which literally is used to
		lament. A similar expression can be attested in Egyptian
		Arabic [ʔæh jæni] 'oh poor me'
Emphasis/	ʕæ	Just, only
corroboration	ʕæwwəð	As a lexical word, this item means to repeat.
		However as a DM it means again
	ʕæwtani	This DM is most likely a blend of the items
		ʕæwwəð and tæni, literally 'repeat/do again'
Temporal	dæʔe	Now
	ssæh	It is believed that this DM derives from the expression
		"hæðihi ssæʕæ", which literally means "this hour"/.
		But in BZA it is used with the meaning of now or currently
	ʕæð	just
	buhra	just/ right now
Agreement	waxxa	ok, fine
	s'əfi	ok
	jaLLah	ok, fine
Irritation/	iwæ	so what?
disagreement	s'əfi	enough/ that's it
	ʕæð	just
	ʕæwtæni	again
	ʕæwwəð	again
	xjar	is that so?
Tag questions	jaχ	right?
Summarizing	lmuhim	anyway

Table 6: **DM Tokens by Gender**

Corpus: 20059 words	Males	Females
	9742	10037
DM Tokens: 925	399	526
Percentage	4.09%	5.24%

Table 7: **DM Frequency by Gender**

DM	F. Tokens	Percentage	M. Tokens	Percentage
iwæ	223	2.22%	65	0.66 %
dæβe	82	0.81%	95	0.97%
ssæh	35	0.34	18	0.18
ʕæ	50	0.49	33	0.33
sʕafi	26	0.25	56	0.57
zæʕme	24	0.23	11	0.11
ʔæwdi	5	0.04	23	0.23
waxxa	8	0.07	4	0.04
wælækin/wælæjni	6	0.05	19	0.19
jaLLah	7	0.06	6	0.06
lmuhim	1	0.009	4	0.04
ʔæjtkønne	2	0.01	1	0.01
ʕæwwəd/ʕæwtæni	6	0.05	13	0.13
wæhæ	15	0.14	2	0.02
weLLah	6	0.05	2	0.02

these markers differs between males and females. Thus, the percentage of *iwæ* use is higher among females, but it is lower among males and is topped by *dæβe*. This interesting correlation will be investigated in more details in the qualitative section (see 4.3. below). Other DMs that show significant gender correlation are *ʕæ*, *zæʕme*, *ssæh* and *wæhæ* for females and *sʕafi*, *ʔæwdi*, *wælækin/wælæjni*, *ʕæwwəd/ʕæwtæni* for males. However, gender correlation was not found to be significant in this sample for some DMs, such as *waxxa*, *jaLLah*, *lmuhim* and *weLLah*, which show equal correlation despite their numerical difference.

The quantitative findings described so far relate to DMs in use in JMA, their frequency in the overall corpus and their correlation with gender. The next section focuses on gender specific DMs; it should be pointed out that most of these markers do not lend themselves to quantification due to their small size as shown in (8) below:

Table 8: **Gender Specific DMs**

Males	Females
ʔæmdæʕlije “oh my goodness”	jæʕni “that is”
ʔæçəβdi “my dear	ʔæjtsəmme “let’s say”
ʔæhijjane “oh poor me”	ʔærænne “meanwhile, on the other hand”
jaχ “ok, is that so?”	sʕahbi “my friend

The illustrate (8) provides a list of markers that were attested in the male and female copra respectively. Quantitatively, these markers varied in their significance in that some show higher frequency than others. For instance, within the male corpus, the frequency rate for the DMs *ʔæjtsəmme*, *jæʕni* and *sʕahbi* varies from 0.27%, 0.16% to 0.14% respectively, while the frequency of the remaining DMs was found to be insignificant as it varies between 0 and 0.04% (see Table 3 above for the exact number of tokens). Using the broad DMs Class in (5) above, these markers can be grouped into three classes: DMs that express personal attitudes and emotions, namely *ʔæmdæʕlije*, *ʔæhijjane*, *ʔæçəβdi* and *sʕahbi*,

elaboration markers, such as *jaʕni*³ and *ʔæjtsəmme* and *ʔærænne* constitute the second class, while the third class is composed of the tag marker *jaχ*⁴. It should be noted that some of the attitude and emotion markers, such as *sʕaħbi* along with others noted earlier (see illustrate 5 above) namely, *ʔæwdi* and *jəmme* are similar to what Kiesling (2004) reports for the word *dude*, which is reported to have developed into a DM and is “used mainly in situations in which a speaker takes a stance of solidarity or camaraderie, but crucially in a nonchalant, not-too-enthusiastic manner” (p.282). It should be noted, however, that of all the attitude and stance markers identified in the JMA corpus, only *ʔæwdi* has developed into a DM in that it has no other lexical uses, while the other items have lexical meanings as well as grammatical functions⁵.

Another important finding related to data in (8) above concerns elaboration markers, which are of two types: gender neutral (see Table 5 above) and gender specific. Thus, the markers *jaʕni* and *ʔæjtsəmme* were used exclusively by male speakers in this study, compared to *ʔæjtkænne* used by females. Also, attitude and emotion markers are gendered in that women tend to use more endearing DMs *ʔaçaβdi* ‘my dear’ compared to the casual *Saħbi* ‘dude’ used by men. Another equally important gender difference relates to markers of concern, such as *ʔæmdæʕlije* that was quite frequent in the female corpus and totally absent from the males’.

4.3 DMs and Patterns of Use: a Qualitative Analysis

The results of the quantitative data analysis above reveal that there are gender-neutral and gender-specific DMs. The former show a significant variation in the rate of frequency, while variation in the latter is less significant due to the small number of tokens attested in the male and female corpora. The next section, on the other hand, investigates DM patterns of use to answer the second research question about the uses and functions of DMs and whether they are gendered. Thus, using a content analysis, a qualitative analysis of the functions of the most highly frequent DMs *iwæ* and *dæβe* was carried out. The data consist of excerpts from two different same sex-conversations, namely one female and one male in an attempt to cross-check the uses and functions of these two DMs. Focus was first laid on the discourse particle *iwæ*. Recall in this respect the sample functions of this particle in (4) above where it was used by male and female speakers. Thus, the male speaker used *iwæ* to inquire about a deal closure, while the female uses it to express her irritation and coax the male interlocutor into validating the measurements and sealing the deal. Further, it should be noted that *iwæ* indexes a range of meanings and functions similar to those identified by Schourup (1999) for *well*, *so* and *now*, and which ranges from agreement/ disagreement, orientation, topic shift to face management. The excerpt in (9) is taken from a conversation between two males in their early thirties gossiping about a couple in their neighborhood.

The first speaker claims that -Layla- the wife who is married to a lazy husband and has twins cannot provide for her husband, but the friend disagrees with this claim and expresses his reaction through the DM *iwæ*. To him it is illogical since the husband doesn’t provide for his family, the wife will have to provide for him regardless of her situation. Thus, it can be deduced that Samir uses *iwæ* to convey

³According to Ghobrial (1993) cited in Bidaoui (2020), this DM indicates the speaker’s understanding of the requirements of the conversation and his or her assessment of the prior participant’s contribution; although this is true, in the corpus it is acting mainly as an elaboration marker.

⁴This DM was noted to correlate more with speakers’ educational level than gender.

⁵Following Hopper and Traugott (2003), grammaticalization is a process whereby lexical items shift into a grammatical marker through one or more of four rather overlapping stages, namely semantic bleaching, extension, decategorization, and phonetic reduction. The DM *ʔawdi* whose core function is a DM, and which according to *Muʕjam lmaʕaani Al Jamiʕ* online, could have as an origin ‘wuddij’ and ‘waddij’ related to ‘wudd’ that is sympathy and affection, can be argued to have developed into a DM through the grammaticalization process. This hypothesis also holds true for the DM *ssaħ*, ‘now/currently’ which is used as a variant of *dæβe*. Al Kayed (2021) demonstrated that this DM “was developed from the phrase *hay ilsaʕah* ‘this hour’ by the process of grammaticalization” (p.937).

(9) Male Conversation

- Halim: *læjle ma ʕænde mæ ðæχdəm ʕlih Læjle huwe wæhhle*
layla not has not works on him layla he Trapped her
bælfæχin ʕænde twæm w hijje muhhule bih
with kids She has twins and she trapped with him
 “Layla can’t provide for him, he burdened her with kids; she has twins, and she is trapped with him”
- Samir: *iwæ ʕçu bæjæχdəm ʕlih*
well who will work on him
 “But who is going to provide for him?”

his disagreement with Halim’s opinion. Another feature about *iwæ* is that it can conjoin with other DMs as illustrated by the excerpts in (10) and (11) below.

(10)

- Mom: *ʕænni ʔæssæχæβ Lʕasʕar hɑðije hehehe. dʒæmmæʕæ*
what You doing ʕasr This is heheh hanging out
 “What are you doing? It’s ʕasr time heheh ...you are hanging out”
- Fatima: *ʕæ gælsse ʒbɑrtni ʕæ ʕæjTəθ zinəβ ʔænehdʕar mʕæhæ*
just sitting You found me was She called Zineb I am talking With her
 “Just chilling, Zineb called and I am talking to her”
- Mom: *iwæ qallu mæzæj lklæm mʕæ nnæʕs lqðæm mæj ʕændem*
well said to him good talk with people old good they have
mæjʕæwðu hæði baqqɑ mænnaʕs lqðæmin hæðije hæʕbuhe ʕlæ nnæʕs
What they This (fem.) remain From old This Count on people
tell lqðæmin hæðije ʕændæ mæðqul bælhɑq ʔæne bælhɑq mʕælf lħajlæle
old This she has What to but me In fact Lost the means
for
me
mænsiβʕæj mænqul w hijje ʕænde kulʕi baqi fraʕa wæχ mʕentʕna
I find not What to And has all still In her Even nuts
a
f ʕæqle ʕæjquɫ ʔæχur mderonje fraʕa w ænde lhɑðʕra mæðe ʕlihe
ntsæʕi
i
in her as says the deranged In her and she the talk tot On her
mind other mind has has forgot ten
qallu mæjænn lklæm mʕæ nnæʕs lqðæm ʕændem lklæm
Said to him good talk with people old They What speaking
to say
dhæði kæðe ʕçu bæjquɫulɑχ sæχ
From this old who Will say it now
to you

“Well, they say that talking to old people is very beautiful, it’s good, they have a lot to tell; this one here is considered one of those, she has a lot to tell. However, me, in fact, I lost it all, I have nothing to say, but she has everything in her head, even if she is distorted in her mind as they say, deranged in her brain, but she knows the stories she never forgets. It is said that it’s good to talk to old people, they have a lot to say; stories from the past, who is going to tell them now...”

(10) *Continued*

- Fatima: *hæðic ʃʃi lli kæjən*
that thing that exists
 “This is true”
- Mom: *hæði mæʃʃe hæði mʃæθ hæði dʒæθ iwæ eh....*
This is going this went this came well eh....
 “This is going, this went, this came, well....eh (a nostalgic sigh)”
- Fatima: *qultɬax zmæn çæ jɬulu hæð'erθəm W dæβe ʔæjɬulu hæð'erθəm*
I said to Old time was they say their talk and now they say Their talk
 you
- Mom: *iwæ dæβe lluya bæhde luya dhæði kæðe ʃçu bæj qulælax*
but now language different language from this old who Will say it to
you
ʃçu bæj dʒiβ ʃlihe sʃsʃah ʔæjɬululax ntin hæði ʔæðʃæwwæð fæ lɬɬajəf
who Will bring on it truth they say to you this She is telling just stories
you
 “But now, the language is different, the language of the old times, who knows about it, they say that this lady is just telling stories”

This excerpt is taken from a conversation between a daughter and her mother engaging in a small talk. The mother uses *iwæ* twice and in both instances the DM is followed by either an interjection ‘eh’ or another DM *dæβe*. In the first occurrence, *iwæ* prefaces an interjection and an unsaid statement that cues the hearer about the nostalgic feelings of the speaker. The second use of *iwæ* conveys the mother’s satisfaction with her daughter’s action and further emphasizes the contrast between the language of the past and the present [*iwæ dæβe lluya bæhde*], and people’s attitudes towards stories from the past. Therefore, *iwæ* is used as a filler word that conveys the affective and emotional state of the speaker as well as the validation of the interlocutor’s idea and signal contrast between the past and the present when used with *dæβe*. The next extract (11) was taken from a mixed-sex conversation.

(11)

- Son: *sʃɑfi ʔæʃæm smohæmmað sʃɑfi iwæ sʃɑfi LLah æʃæm mohæmmæð*
mi mi jæwɬi mi
enough My uncle simohammad enough well enough Allah my mohammad
dude uncle
 Enough uncle Mohammed, enough, well enough! my God dude! uncle Mohammed
- M: *LLah jæhæm wældiç iwæ dæβe lmhiwle ʔænhæwlu ʃliç*
Allah blesses Your parents well now begging We are on
begging you
 May Allah bless your parents, well now we are begging you
- Uncle: *sʃɑqsʃehæ iwæ sʃɑqsʃehæ sʃɑqsʃehæ*
ask her then ask her ask her
 ask her then, ask her!

This excerpt is a gender-mixed conversation between family members who were having a heated argument because the niece trespassed on her uncle’s property and the uncle was complaining about it and blaming the sister and the daughter; so the nephew interfered to calm him down. Both the mother and the son use *iwæ*. While, the mother uses *iwæ* and *dæβe* to signal that she regrets the trespassing and is now begging for forgiveness, the son uses *iwæ* with *sʃɑfi* to show his irritation with his uncle who would not stop whining and cursing. The uncle, on the other hand, uses *iwæ* to show his exasperation and also prompt the nephew into action to cross check with his mother that his sister has trespassed. The analysis of the conversational excerpts reveals that, *iwæ* is used to express different meanings, namely a feeling of nostalgia (10), irritation and coaxing (4 & 11), agreement (10) contrast and a call

into action (4 & 11). Of all these meanings and functions, only the nostalgic and coaxing functions were associated with female speakers only. Despite the limited data, this shows there is no significant gender difference in the way *iwæ* is used and the communicative functions it serves.

Likewise, analyzing the different meanings and functions of the DM *dæβe* in BZA showed that it can function as a temporal adverb and a DM, which is similar to what was reported in the literature elsewhere, namely Schifffrin (1987) for ‘now’ in English, Gonen, Livnat, and Noam (2015) for *axshav* in Hebrew and Alrajhi (2019) for the DM *ʔlhin* in Saudi Arabic among other. As mentioned earlier, adverbial tokens were removed from the data and focus was laid solely on DMs tokens. This DM is noted to pattern with other DMs such as *iwæ* and *sʕafi* to further mark contrast as shown in (10) above. Further, qualitative analysis of *dæβe* shows that this DM indexes a range of communicative functions such as orientation, ideational shift, disagreement, emphasis, and elaboration that are common to both genders. However, men tend to use *dæβe* for elaboration and explanation purposes more than women. To illustrate, consider the excerpt below from a conversation between four men discussing the land measurement and double checking on the borders among their parcels.

(12)

Hamid:	<i>dæβe</i>	<i>hæðax</i>	<i>mən</i>	<i>tæht</i>	<i>mæši</i>	<i>hnæje</i>			
	<i>now</i>	<i>that one</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>under</i>	<i>It is not</i>	<i>us</i>			
	<i>now, that one that is to the south, it is not us</i>								
Marouane:	<i>wæ</i>	<i>dæβe</i>	<i>smæʃ</i>	<i>ʕæβdallah</i>	<i>ʃænmi</i>	<i>ʔæjqul</i>			
	<i>and</i>	<i>now</i>	<i>listen to</i>	<i>Abdullah</i>	<i>What</i>	<i>he says</i>			
	<i>and now listen to what Abdallah is saying</i>								
Zakaria:	<i>wæ</i>	<i>dæβe</i>	<i>ʕæβdallah</i>	<i>djæçum</i>	<i>wæʃ</i>	<i>fəlwesʃ</i>	<i>wəllæ</i>	<i>mən</i>	<i>tæht ?</i>
	<i>and</i>	<i>now</i>	<i>Adbellah</i>	<i>yours</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>In the</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>under?</i>
						<i>middle</i>			
	<i>and now Abdallah is yours in the middle or to the south?</i>								
Abdullah:	<i>djæçum</i>	<i>mən</i>	<i>tæht</i>						
	<i>yours</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>under</i>						
	<i>yours is to the south</i>								

Hamid explains to his friend where the borders of his family land lie and he prefaces this explanation with *dæβe* to convince his interlocutor that he is sure of what he is saying and that he should be trusted. However, Marouane seems to be annoyed because Abdullah holds a different opinion. Thus, in his reply, Marouane uses the DM *dæβe* to compare and contrast between Hamid and Abdullah’s respective statements, which are contradictory. Zakaria, on the other hand, wants to double check with Abdullah on the whereabouts of his land and uses *dæβe* to ask for clarification. Basically, as a DM, *dæβe* serves three communicative functions in this conversation, namely, explanation / elaboration, incipient disagreement and asking for clarifications.

To conclude this section, the findings of the qualitative analysis of the top markers *iwæ* and *dæβe* reveal that these DMs are multifunctional and tend to collocate with each other, which explains their high frequency in the speech of JMA speakers. Further, the range of functions they index overlap, and the analysis did not reveal any significant gendered patterns of use.

5 Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative findings clearly bring to light the correlation between DMs and gender in JMA, which leads to the third research question about how this correlation informs social meaning construction in JMA, in particular, and Moroccan Arabic in general. To answer this question, I draw on insights from third wave approach to sociolinguistic variation (Eckert, 2008b, 2016, 2019; Moore

and Podesva, 2009). More specifically, I argue that DMs articulate a social meaning that indexes the stance and the personae of the speakers in interaction⁶. This argument finds support in the findings that revealed that DMs correlate with gender both quantitatively and qualitatively although with varying degrees. Thus, For the quantitative results, the findings show that men and women differ in the frequency of the DMs they use (see 7 above) as well as the communicative functions they express, as was demonstrated in the conversational extracts' analysis *iwæ* and *dæβe* (9-12) above. Further, the findings on gender specific DMs in (8) above, whereby male and female speakers were found to use gender specific markers for elaboration and stance or attitude and emotions, lend further support to this contention. In other words, speakers' choices and uses are not random, rather this variation is strategic and reflects the personae and the attitude of the speakers. To illustrate, the use of the DM *çəβdi* or *ʔæmdæʃlija*, for instance, by JMA female speakers compared to the use of the casual DM *s'əhbi* by male speakers or the use of *iwæ s'əfi* vs *iwæ dæβe* reveal how the choice of a certain DM to preface a reply is shaped by the personae of the speaker and his/her attitude toward his/her interlocutor and the whole communicative situation, on the one hand. On the other hand, it shows how linguistic behavior contributes in constructing complex identities as pointed out by Bidaoui (2020).

In line with this, and in view of their gender, women tend to use variables that reflect their linguistic style in conversations. The same argument holds for men, who, when addressing their peers, use variables that index their personae as tough and more casual in their social relation; hence, the correlation between linguistic behavior and personae in particular and gender in general. Cross linguistic evidence for the correlation between linguistic behavior and gender comes from Vanda and Péter (2011), Wouk (1999), Tannen (1990), Cameron (1997), Rosenhouse (1998), and Winkler (2008) among others, who all contend that men and women differ in their conversational style and that women have a more collaborative and supportive conversational style. Consequently, it can safely be argued that this difference of conversational style is motivated by the personae and the style of speakers that shape their choice of the DMs along with the different social meanings they construct. Hence, the variation in discourse marking is socially justified.

6 Conclusion

This study has three goals: the first goal is to identify the DMs used in the Jebli Speech community of Bni Zeroual Arabic and their correlation with gender. The second is to investigate patterns of use through the qualitative analysis of the most frequent DMs. The variable of gender was found to influence the use of DMs both quantitatively and, to some extent, qualitatively. The third goal, on the other hand, is to show how a DM indexes the personae and the stance of the speaker in line with Eckert (2016, 2019), and Campbell-Kibler (2009) among others. Therefore, besides providing an inventory of the DMs in use in JMA and analyzing the patterns of use for the highly frequent ones, this study also demonstrated that variation in DMs use is a stylistic device used by speakers to index their stance and personae.

Further and up to the author's knowledge, this study is the first to identify the DMs in use in Moroccan Arabic, classify them into groups and analyze the functions of the most frequent DMs; accordingly, the findings can be useful to researchers in the field of sociolinguistics and socio-pragmatics alike. Additionally, this study touched on some important DMs related issues, such as the grammaticalization process, which is an important area of research that is still under-researched in Moroccan Arabic. Another important aspect raised in this study and that is equally worth investigating is the collocation of *iwæ* and *dæβe* with other DMs, such as *s'əfi*, *ssəh*, *zəʃme*.

⁶“Stance”, “personae” and “social type” refer to the types of social meaning articulated by a linguistic feature (Moore and Podesva, 2009, p. 450)

However, although this research has vouched for a thorough identification of DMs in the Jebli Speech community based on an important sample size, it does not claim to be exhaustive as there are some other DMs that were not attested in the present corpus. Hence, the need for a larger corpus with more interactants. Also, for an in-depth investigation of patterns of use and gender correlation, a qualitative study of other markers is in order.

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