

## Attitudes of Saudi students in the US towards Arabic diglossia

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### Abstract:

This study examines the perspectives of Saudi students in the United States regarding Arabic diglossia, particularly their preferences for Fusha Arabic (Standard Arabic) vs several colloquial Saudi dialects. The study used a meticulously crafted and tested questionnaire to investigate the impact of immersion in an English-centric academic and social milieu on these students' language practices and attitudes. The research seeks to ascertain the degree to which such exposure influences the utilisation of Arabic variants and to determine if regional dialectal backgrounds and demographic characteristics, including gender, contribute to the formation of these views.

The study's findings indicate that, despite extended stay in the U.S., Arabic diglossia is predominantly maintained among the participants. Colloquial Arabic prevails in informal communication, although Fusha Arabic maintains its relevance in formal settings, including religious discussions, media, and education. The impact of English is apparent, especially among Najdi dialect speakers, whose sociolinguistic behaviour seems more prone to alteration. This trend illustrates wider societal processes and corresponds with sociolinguistic ideas on language contact and prestige.

The study highlights the significance of promoting Arabic usage within expatriate populations, particularly in contexts where the original language contends with a prevailing foreign language. These findings enhance the broader discussion on diglossic sustainability and the negotiation of multilingual identity in global contexts.

**Keywords:** diglossia, Fusha Arabic, Colloquial Arabic

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## 1. Introduction:

While previous studies have undoubtedly affirmed that Arabic diglossia is entrenched across contexts (Ferguson, 1959; Albirini, 2011), our current study presents a different lens of investigation that targets dialect specificity. It uses a rigorous statistical analytical method, particularly logistic regression, to measure the effect of exposure to the English language, and it grounds the inquiry in an empirical, sociolinguistic context of one group: Saudi students studying in the United States. This particular group has been neglected in the existing literature yet can shed light on attitudes towards language and behaviours as they are shaped during international educational experiences.

Several sociolinguistic considerations underscore the rationale for choosing Saudi students in the U.S. These students are usually placed in academic settings where the language of instruction and social interaction is English and retain deep cultural and linguistic connections to Saudi Arabia (Grosjean, 2010; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). This bilingual and bicultural environment provides an ideal arena to investigate how residents' prolonged exposure to English interacts with their entrenched cultural and linguistic backgrounds to affect perceptions of and attitudes toward Arabic diglossia. In addition, studying this topic provides insight into dialect-based dynamics—like Najdi and Hijazi Arabic—within a linguistically mixed Saudi student body abroad and shows sociolinguistic adjustments not easily visible in other Arabic-speaking bodies.

It is important to note that the assumption that an English-dominated environment will change Saudi students' attitudes toward Arabic diglossia is based on theories of language contact and sociolinguistic change (Palmer, 2007; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Previous research has shown that English speakers' perceptions of linguistic prestige can be affected by sustained exposure to a socially preferred foreign language (Albirini, 2011; Ferguson, 1959), which may lead to different attitudes towards their native language varieties. In line with the empirical research on code-switching and bilingualism (Grosjean, 2010), such language contact contexts usually compel speakers to become aware of and reformulate their attitudes towards particular languages and even their preference between high variety and low variety.

The will of a language — to continue or not — is determined by such multiple judgements and options. To be clearer: the question of preserving Arabic as a heritage language (or, more accurately, for heritage purposes) has nothing to do with prevailing attitudes towards Arabic diglossia. Heritage language maintenance research has largely been limited to intergenerational transmission and immigrant communities, with a focus on issues of language attrition, cultural identity, and bilingualism (Montrul, 2016). On the other hand, diglossic attitudes concern the values and sociolinguistic roles given to each of the language varieties (Fusha vs. Colloquial) within a single

language community (Ferguson, 1959; Albirini, 2011). This distinction allows the present study to exclusively concentrate on sociolinguistic phenomena of Arabic diglossia and not more general bilingual (linguistic) or heritage language (sociolinguistic) problems.

Like all language speakers across the globe, Arabic speakers also vary in their speech production, marked by their geographical regions. However, the speakers of other languages may not notice that every Arabic speaker of the recent generation is well versed in two different dialects of Arabic: Fusha Arabic and colloquial Arabic, to be precise. This feature resembles the general trait of almost all languages worldwide, which exhibit at least two different varieties serving different functions and situations. The first variety, known as low variety (L), involves informal and non-prestige use of a language in daily communication. High variety (H), the second one, involves the formal and standard use of a language. These two scientific items or terms come under a big umbrella of sociolinguistics which is called diglossia' (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).

The use of the previously mentioned Arabic varieties will be the core of this discussion. Precisely, throughout the Arabic-speaking world, there are three distinct varieties, with each serving a specific mode of discourse. These varieties include a low variety (Colloquial Arabic) and a high variety (Fusha and Classical Arabic) (Palmer, 2007). The present study aims to shed light on the attitudes of Saudis in the United States toward the low and the high varieties of Arabic. Further, it aspires to clarify the contexts of using these varieties, and in addition, it intends to demonstrate the effects that an elongated stay in the United States brings to the speakers of these varieties.

## **2. Literature Review:**

Studying attitudes toward low and high varieties of the Arabic language has been conducted by some researchers previously. Replicating their directions, the present literature review is divided into three categories: discussing diglossia, exploring Arabic varieties and probing the attitudes of the Saudi students toward those varieties.

Regarding regional dialect attitudes in Saudi Arabia Prior research on Saudi attitudes towards dialects plays a vital role in fully contextualising this study in the pre-existing Saudi-specific sociolinguistic literature. Research conducted on Najdi Arabic (see Ingham, 2008; Al-Sweel, 1987) highlights its centrality and the cultural prestige of Riyadh as a metropolitan and administrative hub. Similar to how the Hijazi Arabic dialect, spoken mainly in the coasts of Jeddah and Mecca, has been the subject of significant research, revealing its unique status as an urban dialect heavily influenced by historical ties through trade and pilgrimage (Abu-Mansour, 1991). Understanding regional attitudes toward language purity and prestige is therefore critical to fully appreciating the raised awareness of

language observers involved in southern Arabic dialects, which some studies (Al-Azraqi, 2014) claim are in closer proximity to Classical Arabic. These studies use various research methods to show that people's attitudes towards Standard (Fusha) Arabic vary by region and are shaped by history, culture, and social factors. The current study directly extends this literature by examining whether these regionally informed attitudes remain stable or undergo significant change among Saudi students with prolonged exposure to English in the U.S., thus generating new understanding of the ways that regional sociolinguistic dynamics may interact with language contact contexts.

## 2.1. Diglossia

Diglossia could be a key term for understanding the varieties of a language. It is a grand umbrella term in sociolinguistics that showcases the varieties of a language. It illustrates the relationship between variations in two distinct aspects of any language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). It is defined as

“a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety- the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature either of an earlier period or in another speech community- that is learned largely by means of formal education and used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversations. The superposed variety is the High (H) variety, and the regional dialect is the Low (L) variety” (Ferguson, 1959, p. 336).

The domains of a diglossic situation resemble a hierarchical system starting from a high variety to a low variety. Linguistically, H domains are considered the conservative form of the language, which is the formal dialect for written purposes. Also, H norms are used in public speaking, religious texts, education and some other formal and prestigious cases. On the other hand, L norms are common for informal cases like jokes, street speech, markets, cinema, etc. In some cases, the H variety is the code for the high and powerful section of society (Schiffman, 1997).

In light of the previous definitions, the Arabic language is one of the best examples that illustrate the phenomenon of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959). Every Arabic speech community has at least two varieties of the Arabic language, which are colloquial Arabic (i.e., low variety) and Fusha Arabic (i.e., high variety). Classical Arabic could be the third variety, and it typifies the language of the Holy Qur'an; however, its use is not as common as the H and L varieties (Albirini, 2011). The illustrations below provide more details about those varieties.

## 2.2. Arabic Varieties:

Having varieties is a feature of Arabic in which their speakers have an ability to use the appropriate variety according to the speech communities that they are in. The style of speech can be

changed due to some linguistic motivations, such as the formality of a situation, running across some people with different dialects, getting social approval and citing a writing text and some other ones. (Albirini, 2011; Bassiouney, 2009).

The written form is widely known as Fusha Arabic. Classical Arabic, the language of the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an, connects to this variety. Both Fusha and Classical Arabic are considered respected varieties; however, the classic variety is regarded as more sacred. For the Arab world, Fusha Arabic is commonly known as the official language of media and formal occasions. It can be produced in oral and written forms, and it requires some special skills. (Palmer, 2007). It is considered the H variety according to Ferguson's (1959) classification.

On the other hand, and for Arabic daily conversations, Arabic speakers use colloquial dialects or vernaculars. People view these as informal forms, with most of them remaining unwritten. Each region of the Arab world has a unique culture and dialect (Palmer, 2007), as in Moroccan Arabic (Turner, 2019; Boudlal, 2001); Egyptian (Cairene) Arabic (Broselow, 2018); Yemeni (Sana'ani) Arabic (Watson, 2002); Iraqi Arabic (Ito, 1989); Tunisian Arabic (Sayahi, 2011); Najdi Arabic (Al-Sweel, 1987; Ingham, 2008); and Hijazi Arabic (Abu-Mansour, 1987).

### **2.3. Attitudes toward Arabic Varieties:**

People vary in their attitudes towards languages, and researchers vary in their definition of language attitudes accordingly. Allport (1935: 810), for instance, describes it from a mental perspective as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". From a behaviourist perspective, language attitudes are defined as "any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties or speakers" (Ryan et al. 1982:7). Those varieties significantly influence the cognitive processes of individual speakers and their linguistic expression (Vassberg, 1993). Speakers of Arabic dialects, as a result, differ in their attitudes towards Arabic diglossic varieties (i.e., Fusha and colloquial varieties). In Moroccan, Tunisian, Egyptian, Levantine and Gulf Arabic diglossia, for instance, Fusha is employed in education and other formal settings such as religious gatherings, whereas colloquial Arabic is the medium language among family members and in other informal settings (Abu-Rabia, 2000; Albirini, 2011; Avram, 2017; Fathi, 2024; Ferguson, 1959; Sayahi, 2011).

Studying the negative effects of Arabic diglossia receives less attention among researchers in comparison to other studies examining diglossia, regardless of its negative or positive effects. Fedda and Oweini (2012) find that the phenomenon of diglossia appears to hinder vocabulary acquisition in

Arabic among Lebanese students, providing a rationale for the poorer performance of Lebanese students compared to their American counterparts. This hypothesis was confirmed; however, the second hypothesis, which suggested that the adverse impact of diglossia diminishes over time, lacked validation—at least not for the upper elementary grades within this cohort of bilingual kindergarten and elementary students enrolled in a working-class private institution located in a suburb of Beirut.

Even more interestingly, several studies have discussed the views of learners who learn Arabic as a foreign language. For example, many students recognise Fusha Arabic as the basic source from which regional dialects develop. This perspective strongly reflected the perspectives of native Arabic speakers, who stressed the relevance of Fusha Arabic as an essential part of their linguistic education. Moreover, Al-Mamari (2011) added that some people use dialects as extensions or branches from Fusha Arabic.

There is another study conducted by Aramouni (2011) about the impact of diglossia on Arabic language instruction in higher education: attitudes and experiences of students and instructors in the U.S. He states that most of the students agree that learning colloquial Arabic is quite essential to interacting with the society in the host country. They think that colloquial variety is more common than Fusha Arabic. That does not mean they never used Fusha Arabic; indeed, they did, but they spent much time with natives to communicate easily and to earn the natives' confidence.

Previous studies state that the Arabic language is a perfect example of diglossia. However, none of them particularly studied the Saudi varieties as an aspect of the diglossia of the Arabic language. So, the present study aims to shed light on the attitudes toward Fusha Arabic and Saudi colloquial Arabic for Saudis in the United States.

### **3. Methodology:**

To illustrate the attitudes of Saudis in the United States toward Fusha Arabic and Saudi colloquial Arabic, the methodology of this project is structured according to the established scientific research and project standards.

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to examine the attitudes of Saudi students towards Arabic diglossia. The original items were largely derived from theoretical bases and previous research on language attitudes, diglossia, and bilingualism (e.g., Albirini, 2011; Palmer, 2007; Ferguson, 1959). After its initial design, the questionnaire was validated through several attempts at review conducted by expert linguists in the field of Arab sociolinguistics to determine if each item was clear, valid, and appropriate for the study. The final validated questionnaire was administered online using a secure platform, ensuring ease of access and confidentiality of responses. Neither did it use

qualitative methods, such as interviews or open-ended responses; the aim was to quantitatively assess attitudes and preferences — unambiguously across well-defined demographic and dialectal groups.

### **3.1. Research problem:**

The present study aims to investigate the attitudes of Saudi students in the United States toward Fusha Arabic and Saudi colloquial Arabic.

### **3.2. Research questions:**

- 1- Which of the two varieties, Fusha or colloquial, do Saudi students prefer to use during their stay in the United States?
- 2- Does English language affect the students' Arabic?
- 3- Is the original dialect of the students affected by other Saudi dialects?
- 4- Do demographic factors affect the use of Arabic diglossia?

### **3.3. Subjects:**

This study involved a sample of 45 Saudi graduate students (24 males and 21 females) enrolled at a university in Southern Illinois, United States. Data collection took place during the Spring semester of 2023. The participants had spent approximately one and a half years in the U.S. at the time of the study, and their average age ranged between 25 and 29 years.

The choice of this specific group was guided by both logistical accessibility and theoretical relevance. Saudi students studying in the U.S. experience daily immersion in English-dominant academic and social settings while maintaining ties to their native linguistic and cultural identity. This makes them a particularly suitable population for examining language attitudes toward Arabic diglossia in a bilingual context. Southern Illinois was selected due to the researcher's institutional affiliation and ability to maintain regular communication and secure voluntary participation.

Ethical standards were rigorously upheld in accordance with principles outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) and international ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Prior to participation, all students were provided with an information sheet detailing the purpose of the study, its procedures, any potential risks or benefits, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained electronically through a secure online platform before the survey was administered.

Participants were assured that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. No incentives were offered, and no personally identifiable information (such as names or student IDs) was collected. All responses were stored securely in encrypted, password-protected files accessible only to the principal investigator. Data confidentiality

and participant anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process. For transparency, a sample of the informed consent form used in this study is included in **Appendix 1**.

While the sample provided valuable insights, the relatively small size (N=45) and its restriction to a single institution may limit generalisability. Future research should include participants from multiple institutions and regions and employ stratified sampling to capture a more representative cross-section of Saudi students abroad.

### 3.4. Instrument:

The instrument used is a questionnaire of thirteen questions. We asked the participants to respond to this set of thirteen-question surveys intended to investigate their attitudes toward their diglossic situation.

### 3.5. Variables:

There are three variables for the current study as follows:

- Dependent variable:
  - Effect of L2 English (categorical variable): **Yes** vs. **No**.
- Independent variable:
  - Gender (categorical variable): male vs. female.
  - L1 Saudi Arabic dialect (categorical variable):
    - Southern dialect - Northern dialect - Najdi dialect - Eastern dialect - Hijazi dialect

## 4. Analysis

The results will be analysed using two complementary approaches:

### a) Descriptive statistics and b) Inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics involve methods for summarising and organizing data in a meaningful way to reveal patterns and trends. In this study, bar charts and frequency distributions will be used to illustrate participants' responses to questions concerning their attitudes toward different varieties of Arabic and language use contexts.

Inferential statistics refer to techniques that allow researchers to draw conclusions and make generalizations about a larger population based on data collected from a sample. In this case, **ordinal logistic regression** will be applied to assess the predictive power of variables such as gender and regional dialect on the perceived impact of English on Arabic diglossia. This statistical approach enables the examination of relationships between categorical predictors and ordered response outcomes.



## 5. Results:

The present study aims to investigate the attitudes of Saudi students in the United States toward Fusha Arabic and Saudi colloquial Arabic. The results indicate that the participants are generally familiar with different types of Arabic and tend to use Fusha Arabic in formal situations (like in the media or religious talks) and colloquial Arabic in casual settings (like talking to family).

It is worth explaining the procedural and statistical steps taken to generate the descriptive and the inferential statistics presented in the current study. For Figures 1 to 6, descriptive statistics were employed. The raw data from participants' responses were categorized based on variables such as gender, dialect, and context of language use. Frequencies and percentages were calculated, and bar charts were generated using spreadsheet software to visually present trends in language awareness, usage, and preferences across different social domains. For Figure 7, which visualizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression, we used statistical software (e.g., SPSS or R) to model the relationship between independent variables (gender and regional dialect) and the ordinal dependent variable (perceived impact of English on Arabic use). The heatmap was created to highlight predicted response distributions based on model output.

Table 1 presents the cross-tabulated distribution of participants according to gender and regional dialect. This was derived directly from participant responses and organized using basic frequency analysis. Table 2 summarizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression model, including coefficients, standard errors, z-values, and p-values. This table was automatically generated using the output from the statistical software used for inferential analysis.

### 5.1. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive results are organized into three main thematic sections: Awareness and Use of Arabic Varieties, Contextual Language Preferences, and Influence of English and Dialect Variation.

#### 5.1.1. Awareness and use of Arabic varieties

As depicted in Figure 1, all participants are familiar with the varieties of the Arabic language (i.e., the existence of colloquial and Fusha Arabic) regardless of their age or gender.

**Figure 1**

*The awareness level of Arabic varieties among Saudi students varies according to their age and gender.*

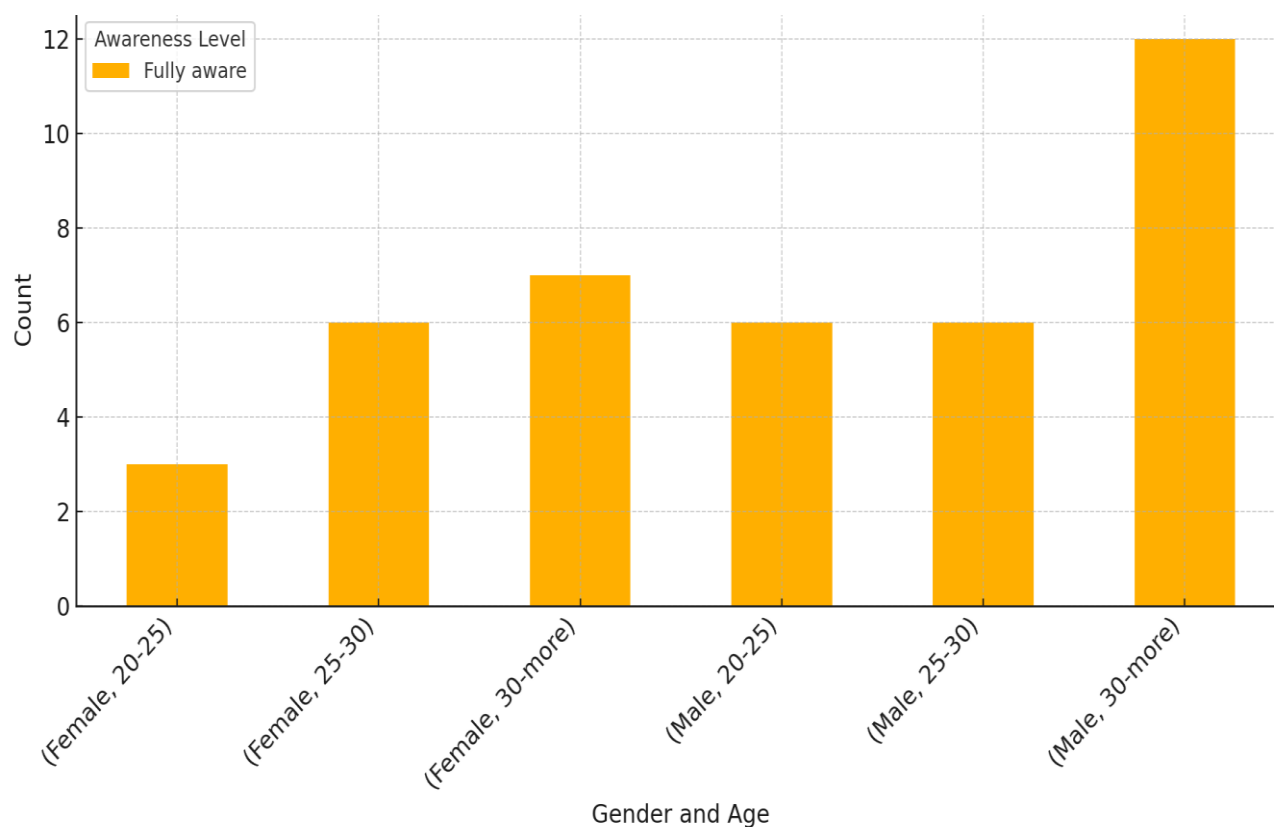
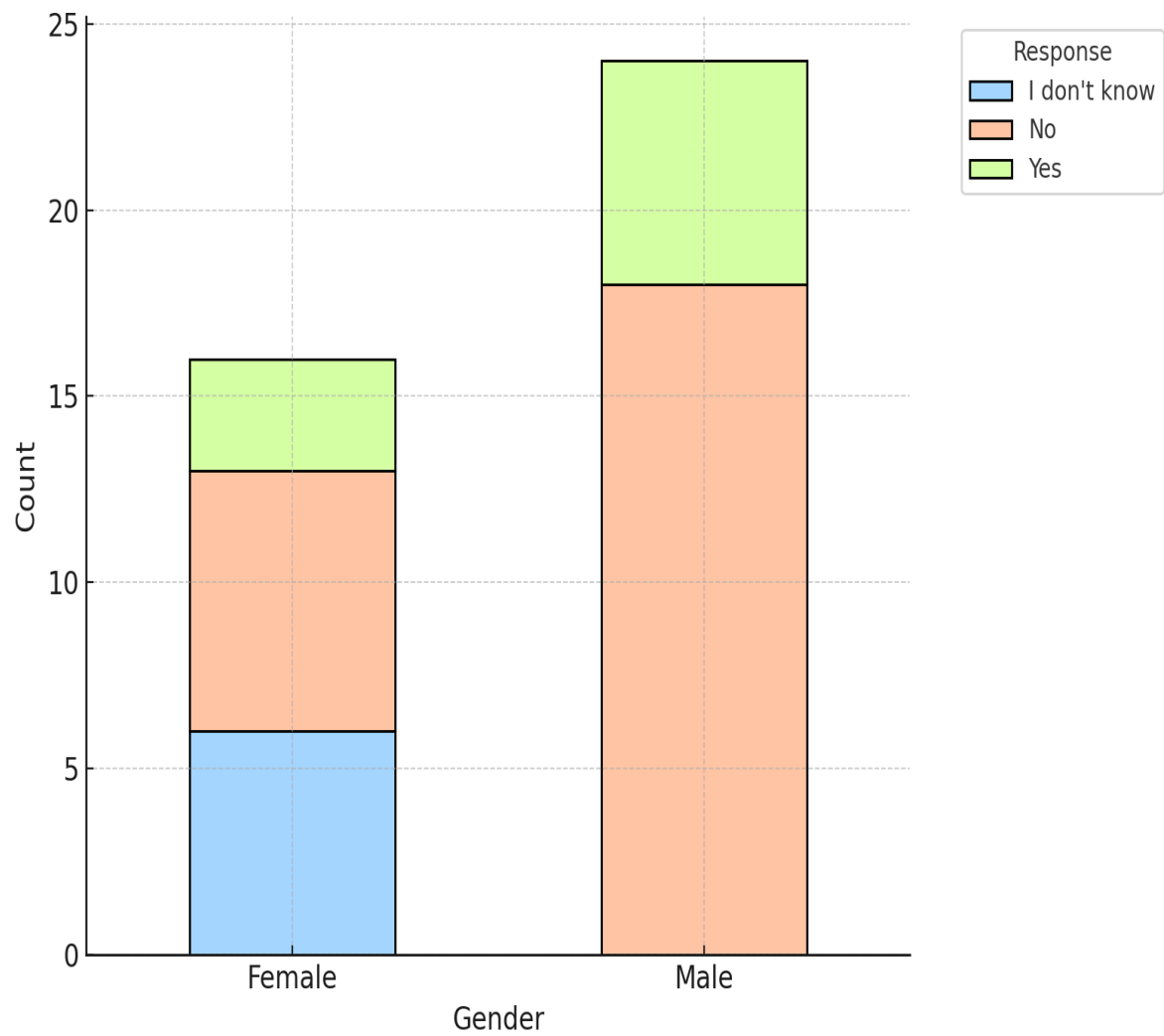


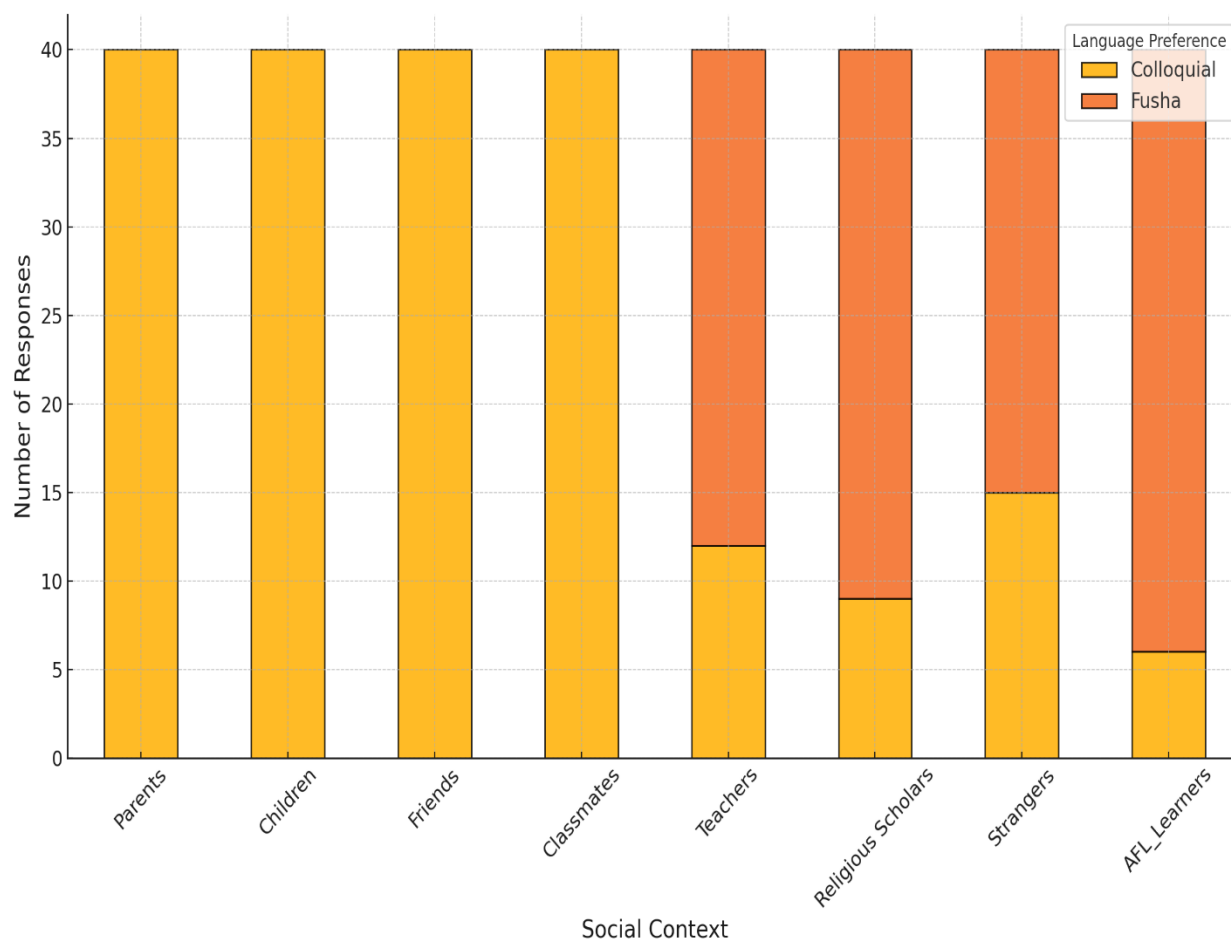
Figure 2 shows the daily use of Fusha Arabic among Saudi students in the United States. About two thirds of the participants do not use Fusha Arabic during their daily life. Female students tend to use Fusha Arabic less than the male counterparts.

**Figure 2**  
*Daily use of Fusha Arabic by gender*



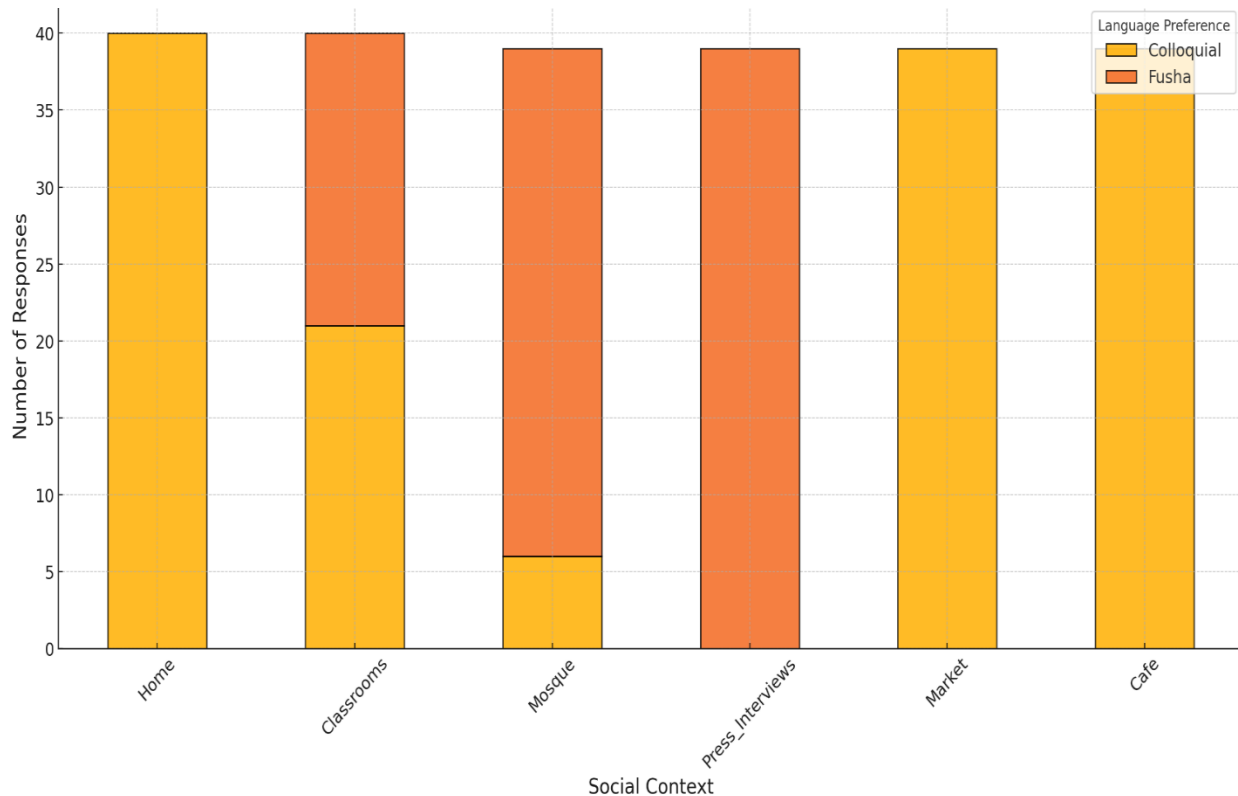
### 5.1.2. Contextual language preferences

**Figure 3**  
*Interlocutors report language preferences in different social contexts.*



Participants were asked to determine the appropriate Arabic variety across various social contexts. Participants use their own colloquial Arabic when they talk to parents, children, friends and classmates, as shown in Figure 3. However, they tend to use Fusha Arabic when they talk to teachers, religious scholars, strangers and learners of Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL). Talking to the religious scholars could be in the most formal setting, as two-thirds of the participants claimed to use Fusha while talking to them.

**Figure 4**  
*Language preferences vary depending on the location and environment.*

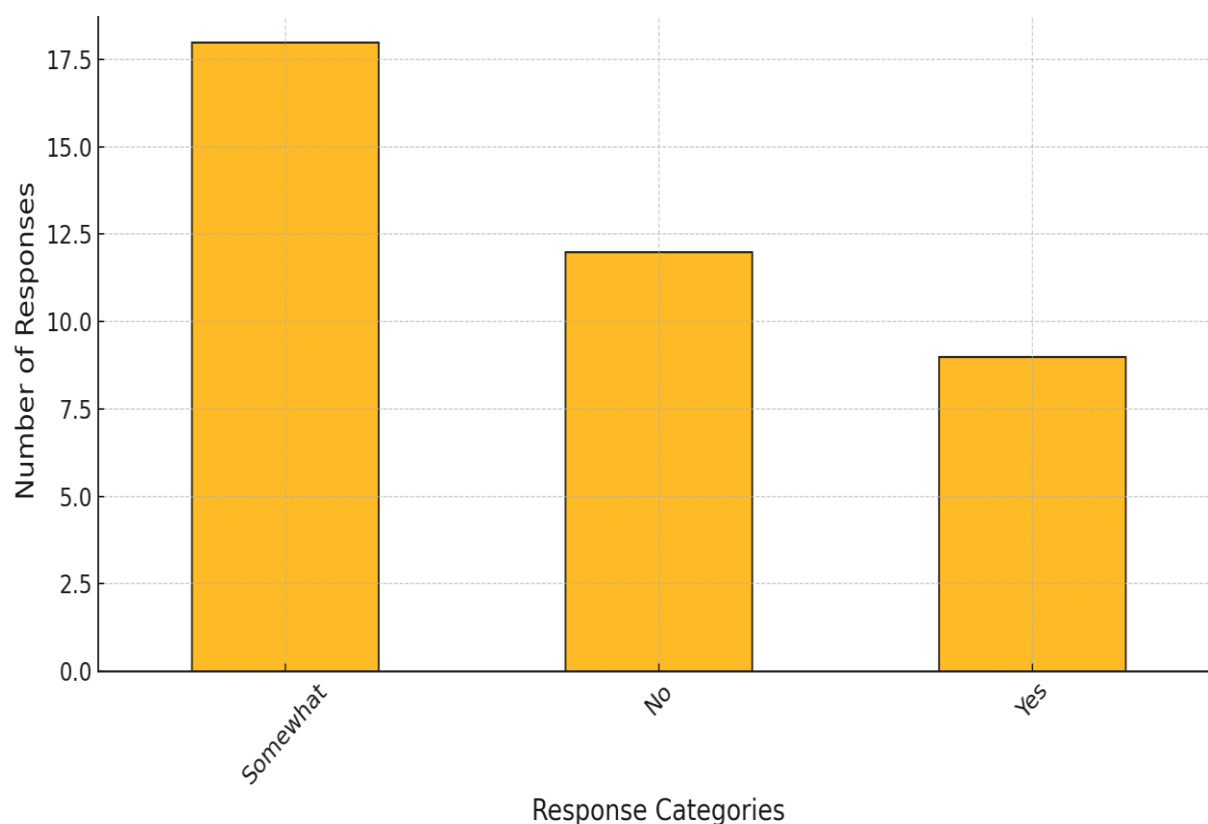


Participants were asked to find out which of the two types (Colloquial and Fusha) is more often used in different situations, as shown in Figure 4. All participants believe that colloquial Arabic is a common variety used at home, in the market, and in cafés. Conversely, Fusha Arabic is more likely to occur in press interviews, whereas Masjids and educational classrooms could see a mixture of both varieties.

For Saudis in the United States, the responses about how English affects their Arabic are grouped into three categories: (a) some impact, (b) no impact, and (c) a clear impact. The tallest bar in the figure shows that many feel English has some effect on their Arabic, while nine participants acknowledge that it does. The highest bar in the figure indicates the partial effect of English on Arabic, whereas nine participants admit the effect of English on their Arabic in contrast.

### 5.1.3. Influence of English and dialect variation

**Figure 5**  
*Impact of L2 English on Arabic use*



Students' dialects were also investigated. They were asked to determine their regional dialects as they belonged to diverse regions of Saudi Arabia. (See table.1).

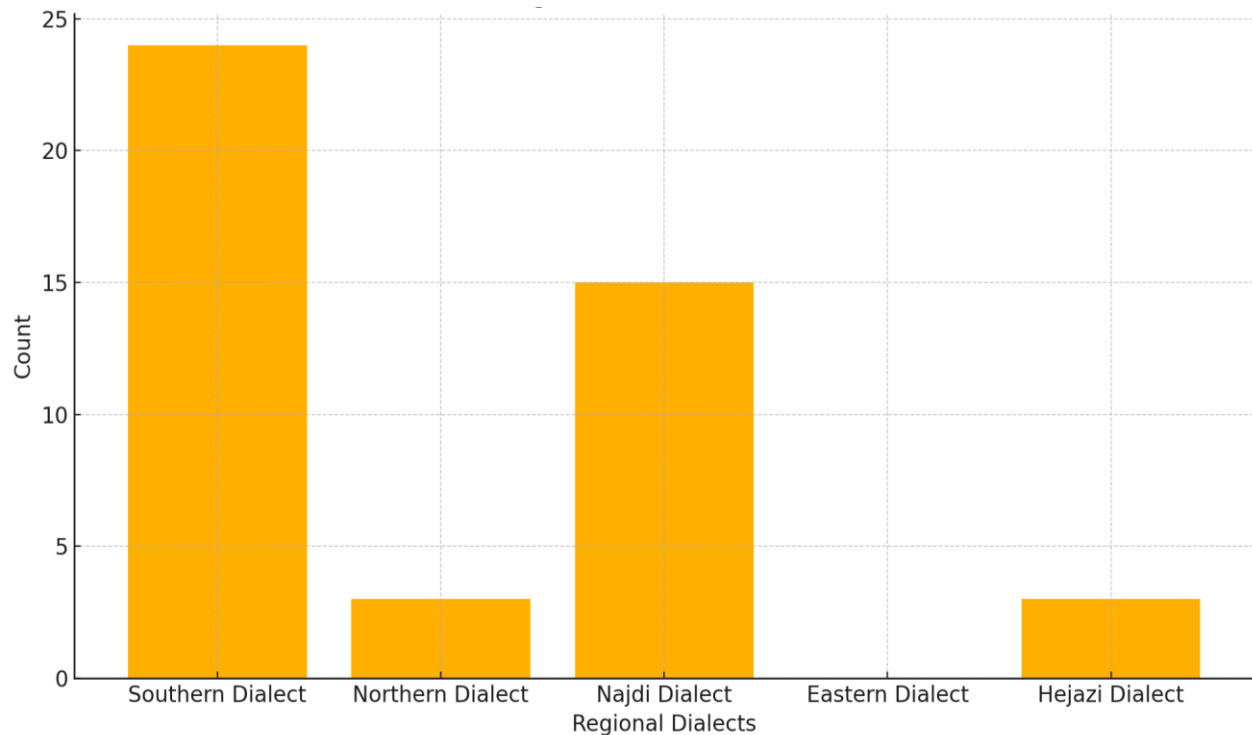
**Table.1:**  
*The dialect of the participant in the present study.*

Gender	Regional dialects				
	Southern dialect	Northern dialect	Najdi dialect	Eastern dialect	Hejazi dialect
Male	6	3	12	0	3
Female	6	6	6	0	3
Total	12	9	18	0	6

Lastly, we investigated the closest Saudi dialect to Fusha Arabic. Half of the participants believed that the southern dialect was the closest to Fusha Arabic. According to one-third of participants, the

Najdi dialect is the most similar to Fusha Arabic. Finally, only four of the participants suggest that Northern and Hejazi dialects could be the closest varieties to Fusha Arabic.

**Figure 6**  
*Closeness of regional Saudi dialects to Fusha Arabic*



## 5.2. Ordinal Logistic Regression Predicting "Impact of English on Arabic Use"

The statistical test provided below explains to what extent the impact of English on Arabic use is predicted by mother tongue dialect and gender as summarized below:

**Table 2**

*Ordinal logistic regression model summary predicting "impact of English on Arabic use"*

Predictor	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-value	P-value
Gender	1.875	0.748	2.508	0.012
Saudi Dialect	2.017	0.511	3.949	<0.001

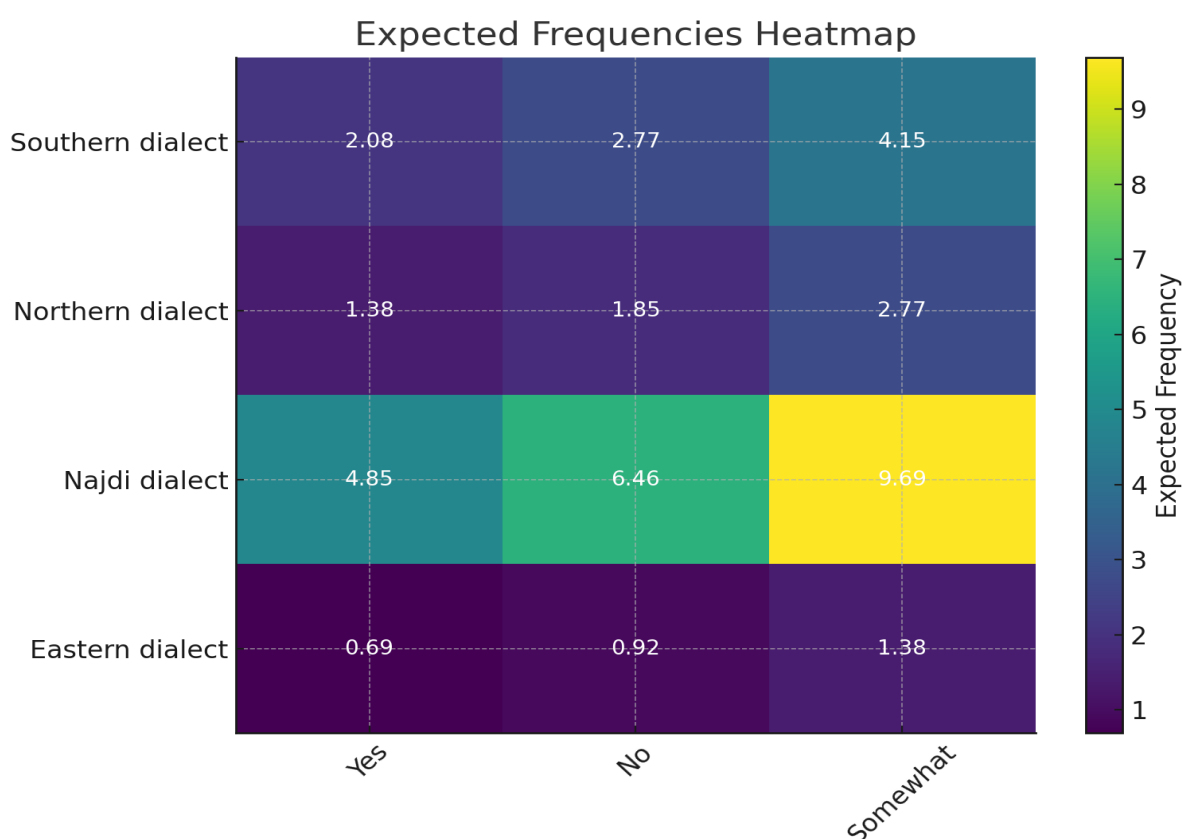
The results of our logistic regression indicates a considerable impact of both gender and Saudi dialect on the outcome. This means that gender and the Saudi dialect spoken by a person have helped predict whether this person will display specific behaviors related to the outcome that we are interested in studying. The output for gender resulted in a coefficient of 1.875 with a p-value of 0.012

demonstrating a statistically significant as one can recognize. Now the odds of this gender category are around 6.5 times higher than those in the reference category. In practical terms, this means that gender makes a difference in the outcome (one gender is much more likely to demonstrate the behavior in question). For the Saudi dialect, the impact is even greater. The coefficient is 2.017 with a significance value (p) less than 0.001 indicating the result is highly statistically significant. This indicates that those who speak this dialect are around 7.5 times as likely to display the behavior as those who's speak the reference dialect. The larger, more statistically significant effect for dialect than for gender suggests that this model predicts better according to dialect than it does by gender.

This helps to confirm those stats visually. As shown in the heatmap of expected frequencies (Figure 7), "Yes" and "Somewhat" responses to the Najdi dialect clearly dominate over other dialects, indicating that it is most influenced by (the structure of) English. Compared to the Southern, Northern and Eastern, the frequencies for such responses as maybe and whatever/whenever are lower, implying a lesser influence of English upon these dialects.

**Figure 7**

*Visualisation of the ordinal logistic regression model summary predicting "impact of English on Arabic use"*





## 6. Finding and Discussion

Overall, the results indicate that English exposure affects how Saudi students feel about Arabic diglossia, but these feelings are influenced by broader social and educational factors that are difficult to change. The findings highlight that being in English-speaking situations, like studying outside of class, can lead to noticeable changes, but they don't completely erase the strong social reasons behind their preference for Standard or Colloquial Arabic. The results show that being in situations where English is the main language, like studying outside of class, can lead to significant changes, but they don't completely erase the strong cultural reasons people have for preferring Standard or Colloquial Arabic. The interplay of educational background, cultural identity, and societal values has an important role in shaping such language attitudes, which can help explain why such diglossic distinctions have largely remained intact even after prolonged exposure to a second language (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010).

It is worth mentioning that this **study** directly addresses basic and modern points of view on linguistic attitudes and diglossia. In particular, Ferguson's (1959) classical theory of diglossia is explored in depth, stressing its significance to the functional divergence between High (H) and Low (L) language types and their corresponding prestige and social settings. Insights from Allport's (1935) psychological model of attitudes are also included, stressing the cognitive and emotional elements that influence linguistic attitudes among bilingual speakers. This theoretical foundation offers a strong framework to understand the results on Saudi students' language choices and their responses to Arabic diglossia in an English-dominated context.

Moreover, the **study** interacts with modern theoretical frameworks such social identity theory and language accommodation theory (Giles, 1982) to better explain how linguistic preferences and attitudes change in reaction to sociocultural constraints felt by students overseas. Reflecting more general sociolinguistic processes of identity negotiation and language adaptation, the conversation clarifies how Saudi students' attitudes towards their native language varieties are shaped by prolonged exposure to English in academic and social contexts by linking empirical findings to these theories. These theoretical improvements obviously place the results into continuous academic controversies, hence greatly enhancing the analytical depth and academic significance of the work.

The table mentioned above in Section 5.2 shows the results of a logistic regression analysis, highlighting important coefficients and what they mean about how English affects Arabic use among Saudi students, making it straightforward for readers without a statistics background to understand. In simpler terms, a significant coefficient greater than zero means that a factor is linked to a higher chance of changes in Arabic language use due to English. In simpler terms, a significant coefficient that is

more than zero shows that a certain factor is linked to a higher chance of students changing their Arabic language use because of English. In particular, the logistic regression results reveal that gender and the Saudi dialect that students speak are important factors in determining students' attitudes toward Arabic diglossia. Compared to all other dialect groups, the Najdi dialect speakers show a pronounced influence from exposure to English. From a sociolinguistic perspective, one can interpret this as follows: Despite being quite atypical for the kingdom, Najdi dialect speakers are largely from Riyadh, a cosmopolitan and increasingly globalised city, where the Najdi dialect serves as a marker of higher education and thus status (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Fortunately, the social structure of Riyadh, which is a city of bustling social interactions and diversity in terms of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, makes Najdi speakers more open and receptive to ambiguous language influence, like English, making the impact on their attitudes about their Arabic language as well as their perceptions of it more prominent than it would have been had they relied solely on speakers from more homogeneous regions.

In the study by Ahmad Dufour and others (2020), it showed how Arabic native speakers, who were the participants, think about the Arabic language based on pronunciation, but it specifically provided evidence about Arabic diglossia in relation to English exposure by focusing on detailed attitudes instead of just mentioning code-switching (Albirini, 2016; Bassiouney, 2009). The results show that being fully exposed to an English-speaking academic and social setting influences Saudi students' views on the importance and use of Standard and Colloquial Arabic (Elyas, 2008; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The results show that being around English-speaking academic and social settings changes how Saudi students feel about the importance and use of Standard and Colloquial Arabic. English as a global language of academia exerted an influence on students' language perception, as, in formal educational contexts and religious environments, students showed subtle shifts in their language to set a standard-orientated language: they began to recognise the appropriateness and prestige of Standard Arabic that kept changing. The implication is that the influence of English goes beyond code-switching as an exterior phenomenon, affecting rather students' deeper judgements and employments of Arabic varieties.

The present study aims to investigate the attitudes of Saudi students in the United States toward Fusha Arabic and Saudi colloquial Arabic. It hypothesises that Saudis use colloquial Arabic more than Fusha Arabic. This study's findings will be discussed in light of the Arabic variety commonly used in the US. The impact of English on Arabic dialects will also be approached according to some demographic information, such as the original dialect of Arabic speakers.

The results indicate that colloquial Arabic is the dominant variety spoken by Saudi students in the U.S., similarly to Saudi Arabic speakers in their original country (i.e., Saudi Arabia) (Albirini, 2011).

This finding implies a poor impact of foreign geographical regions on Arabic speech communities from a diglossic perspective since colloquial Arabic is still used in the informal settings in the US, and Fusha Arabic is still classified as a high prestigious norm of speech regardless of where such varieties are spoken.

This finding does not contrast with the significant effect of English on the Arabic language of Saudi students in the U.S., as their Arabic is impacted by English regardless of the Arabic variety they employ in their speech acts. The intended impact might involve code-switching (i.e., alternating between English and Arabic) rather than affecting Arabic diglossia. With the passing of time, however, Arabic is subject to underutilisation in foreign countries, which may result in losing Arabic diglossia as a first stage, followed by losing the mother tongue language in the final stage (Rouchdy, 200).

As for the impact of English on speakers of Saudi Arabic dialects, Najdi Arabic speakers are significantly impacted by English in comparison with speakers of other Saudi dialects (i.e., Southern, Northern and Hijazi Arabic dialects). The rationale behind this dialectal variation could be relevant to the cosmopolitanism of Riyadh City, which is the centre of Najdi Arabic (Klingmann, 2022). Riyadh embraces social groups, ethnic minorities, and much of civil society; speakers of such a city tend to be culturally and linguistically influenced by cosmopolitanism and the diversity of its residents, which might indirectly influence their Arabic use in comparison with speakers of other Saudi dialects.

It's worth mentioning that one of the limitations of this study was the sample size/scope, as participants were selected from a single university. Although the results provide valuable lessons, they may not fully reflect the diversity of other locations or institutions. In order to improve the generalizability of the findings, future research should focus on a multi university and multi province sampling.

## 7. Conclusion

The study explores Saudi students' attitudes toward Arabic diglossia in an English-dominant context while they are studying abroad in the United States. More specifically, it investigated their linguistic preferences with regard to Fusha Arabic and colloquial Saudi Arabic and the effects of prolonged exposure to English on these preferences.

The findings of the study demonstrated that, regardless of the students being abroad, Saudi students remained adhering to the traditional diglossia, with colloquial Arabic being the language of choice for informal socialisation, while Fusha Arabic is allocated for formal use in education, the media, and religious settings. The findings also showed a significant influence of English exposure on students' language use, especially those who spoke the Najdi dialect. This dialect, mainly successively spoken in the more cosmopolitan surroundings of Riyadh, can be clearly extra open to linguistic change through extra frequent contact with different surroundings of non-stationary contact.

These results have important implications showing that Saudi students overseas must navigate a complex web of sociolinguistic variables in their language preservation efforts. You have data until October 2023.

The study, however, was limited by a relatively small sample size (N=45) from one institution in Southern Illinois. These limitations restrict the generalizability of these results in different settings.

Future work should increase both sample size and geographic diversity, using a multi-institutional, multi-regional design. Characterizing diglossic attitudes more phenomenologically through qualitative methodologies in addition to quantitative analysis may reveal subtler insights about the human intersubjective and emotional factors at play. Furthermore, the longitudinal research design may further investigate how these attitudes change over time especially under the umbrella of extended and diverse language exposure.

## المستخلص

## مواقف الطلاب السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة تجاه الازدواجية اللغوية في اللغة العربية

عبيد عبدالله الأكلبي

تتناول هذه الدراسة آراء الطلاب السعوديين في الولايات المتحدة بشأن الازدواج اللغوي في اللغة العربية، وتركز بشكل خاص على تفضيلهم للفصحى مقابل عدد من اللهجات السعودية العامية. وقد استخدمت الدراسة استبانة مصممة بعناية ومجربة لاستقصاء تأثير الانغماس في بيئة أكاديمية واجتماعية يغلب عليها الطابع الإنجليزي على ممارسات هؤلاء الطلاب اللغوية ومواقفهم. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد مدى تأثير هذا التعرض على استخدامهم لمتنوعات اللغة العربية، ومعرفة ما إذا كانت خلفية اللهجات الإقليمية والخصائص الديموغرافية، بما في ذلك النوع الاجتماعي، تسهم في تشكيل هذه الآراء.

تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الازدواج اللغوي العربي لا يزال سائداً بين المشاركين على الرغم من إقامتهم الطويلة في الولايات المتحدة. إذ تهيمن اللغة العامية على التواصل غير الرسمي، بينما تحتفظ الفصحى بأهميتها في السياقات الرسمية، بما في ذلك النقاشات الدينية ووسائل الإعلام والتعليم. ويظهر تأثير اللغة الإنجليزية بوضوح، لا سيما بين متحدثي اللهجة النجدية، حيث يبدو أن سلوكهم الاجتماعي اللغوي أكثر عرضة للتغيير. وتعكس هذه الظاهرة عمليات مجتمعية أوسع، وتتماشى مع الأفكار اللغوية الاجتماعية حول التماس اللغوي والمكانة الاجتماعية للغة.

وتؤكد الدراسة على أهمية تعزيز استخدام اللغة العربية بين الجاليات المغتربة، خاصة في البيئات التي تتعرض فيها اللغة الأصلية لمنافسة من لغة أجنبية سائدة. وتثري هذه النتائج النقاش الأوسع حول استدامة الازدواج اللغوي والتفاوض على الهوية متعددة اللغات في السياقات العالمية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الازدواجية اللغوية، العربية الفصحى، العربية العامية

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