

The transfer of L1 attitudes towards L2 varieties: A preliminary investigation

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Abstract

With English becoming the lingua franca of the world, there is an increasing need for a better understanding of the different spoken non-native varieties of it on the part of both instructors and learners. However, researchers in the field of language teaching have paid little attention to investigating second language learners' attitudes toward different non-native varieties of the target language especially those learners whose mother tongue is a diglossic language. This paper investigates the possibility of a dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic, one of the very well-known diglossic languages, to English among Arabic speaking learners of English. Three different groups participated in questionnaire surveys and evaluation forms based on the matched guises technique. The first group contained ten Arabic speakers of English. The second group contained ten other non-native speakers of English. The last group contained ten native speakers of English. When analyzed and compared, the results suggested that there was a dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic to English among Arabic speakers of English.

Introduction

In a project entitled "Attitudes towards Accents" (2015) by the BBC, it was found that "[t]hree quarters of people in the UK think they hear a lot more accents in everyday life and on BBC TV and radio than they used to, and 78% enjoy hearing a variety of accents." However, the question is whether this acceptance encapsulates other speech communities across the globe today. The purpose of this paper is to explore the attitudes of Arabic learners of English towards the different varieties of English and whether these attitudes were transferred from Arabic to English. This will be done by evaluating the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of Najdi Arabic (the colloquial variety of Arabic spoken in the center of Saudi Arabia) currently living in Saudi Arabia towards three different varieties of English: British English, American English, and Saudi English. To shed light on factors that may influence the learners' attitudes toward varieties of English, I also surveyed their own dialectal attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic: Classic/Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic. Further, I also compared the Arabic learners' dialectal attitudes with the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of English and ten non-native speakers of English coming from languages that do not have diglossia.



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Diglossia

Definition

The term *diglossia* is driven from the Greek word *διγλωσσία*, literally meaning speaking two languages. The term was brought to English from the French language by Charles Ferguson in 1959. Ferguson (1959) described diglossia as a stable linguistic situation in which two language variations exist in a single speech community, hand in hand, with each having a distinctive role. One of those language variations is considered to be the standard high variety also called the superposed variety, usually syntactically, morphologically, and lexically more complex. The other one is the low variety which may or may not be a regional standard. In his book *The Sociology of Language* (1972), Joshua Fishman expanded the definition to include bilingual situations where two different languages are being used in a single speech community with one being the high variety and the other being the low variety. His list of examples included countries like Bolivia where Modern Spanish (high code) coexists with thirty-six other official native languages (low code), some of which are widely spoken by the population, such as Aymara and Quechua.

Ferguson's (1959) classic examples of diglossic languages include Standard German and Swiss German in Germany, Standard French and Creole in Haiti, Katharevousa and Dhimotiki in Greece, and Classic/Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic in the whole Arab world including countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

Features of Diglossic Languages

Ferguson (1959) categorized diglossic languages into two varieties: high (H) and low (L). According to him, these two varieties can be distinguished in regard to their function, prestige, acquisition, and standardization.

The most distinguishing feature between the two varieties of any given diglossic language is the specialization of their function. In all diglossic situations, the high variety is usually the only variety used in formal situations such as religious ceremonies, political appearances, and news broadcasting. The low variety, on the other hand, is used in all the other day to day situations, such as filming soap operas and buying and selling in the market. In addition, the high variety is always the one that is considered by the speakers in any diagnostic speech community as more prestigious than all the other low varieties. Even if those speakers take pride in speaking the low varieties, this pride is usually covert prestige. In terms of acquisition, the low variety is usually acquired naturally as a first language, but the high variety is learned through explicit teaching in formal settings. Finally, the high variety is always standardized, and the low variety is not. However, in some diglossic situations a standardized low variety may develop on a continuum between the high variety and the low variety (Ferguson, 1959).

The Diglossic Situation in the Arab World

The diglossic situation in the Arab world has attracted much research. The term diglossia was defined for the first time by the French linguist William Marçais (1930), in an article describing the situation in the Arabic language (as cited in Zughoul, 1980). According to Ferguson (1959), the high variety in the diglossic situation in Arabic is called Classic/Standard Arabic, and the low variety is called Colloquial or Vernacular Arabic. Kaye (1972), described the diglossic situation in Arabic as flexible and interchangeable rather than stable. According to her, the diglossic situation in Arabic is not stable due to the interaction between the two varieties of the language. Kaye (1972),

distinguished the two varieties as one being well-defined and the other being ill-defined. To her, the well-defined variety in Arabic was Colloquial Arabic because it is acquired as a native language, and the ill-defined variety was Classic Arabic or, as named by Kaye, Modern Standard Arabic.

To describe the diglossic situation in the Arab world, first I will discuss and define the two main varieties of the Arabic language: Classic/Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic.

Classic Arabic

Classic Arabic, also known as Qur'anic Arabic, is the language of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, and literary scripts in the times before even Islam begun, until today. Some of the most important features of Classic Arabic are:

- A complex grammatical system documented by well-known Arabic grammarians eleven centuries ago which has hardly ever been modified.
- Its highly inflectional nature. It distinguishes between singular, dual and plural in number. The dual and the plural are formed by adding different inflections. It also distinguishes between masculine and feminine nouns, and adjectives must agree with the gender and the number of the preceding noun (see Example set 1).

Example 1

razulun zamīlun [a handsome man, subject]

razulan zamīlan [a handsome man, object]

razulān zamīlān [two handsome men, subject]

razulayn zamīlayn [two handsome men, object]

riḏālun zamīlūn [three or more handsome men, subject]

riḏālun zamīlīn [three or more handsome men, object]

- Its lexical reservoir that contains more than ten-million words according to *Kitab al-'Ayn*, the first Arabic dictionary written by Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi. This characteristic is the result of the flexibility of the language in deriving nouns, verbs, adjective, adverbs, etc. from one root.
- Its social stratification. Illiterate Arabs are usually not able to produce some aspects of Classic Arabic. However, it can be largely understood by them.
- The lack of some of the sounds existing in Colloquial Arabic such as /v/ and /g/.

Colloquial Arabic

Colloquial Arabic, on the other hand, is the term used to refer to all the natively acquired varieties in the Arab world which are spoken by both the illiterate as well as the educated. It is the variety used by the Arabs at home, in the market, and as the medium of instruction at schools. There are twenty-six different main varieties of Colloquial Arabic spoken in the Arab world (see Appendix A). Some of the most important features of Colloquial Arabic are listed below:

- The majority of the Arab countries have more than one distinctive variety of Colloquial Arabic. Those varieties are mostly distinguished by their phonology and lexicon. For example, there are five clearly distinct dialects in the country of Saudi Arabia: Hejazi Arabic, Bareqi Arabic, Gulf Arabic, Najdi Arabic, and Jenubi Arabic.
- Both the grammatical system and the lexicon of Colloquial Arabic are much simpler than the ones of Classic Arabic (see Example set 2).

Example 2

Classic Arabic: *uḥibbu an qirā'a kaḍṭran* [I love to read a lot]

Colloquial/Najdi Arabic: *aḥibb agra kaḍṭr* [I love read a lot]

- Colloquial Arabic is much more open to foreign borrowings than Classic Arabic (see Example set 3).

Example 3

Classic Arabic: *al-ṣabaka al-iliḱturūmā* [literal translation of electric network]

Colloquial/Najdi Arabic: *intirnit* [internet]

- If all the Colloquial varieties of Arabic were to be combined, Colloquial Arabic would have all the sounds of Classic Arabic.

Social Attitudes in the Arabic Diglossia

The diglossic situation in the Arab world has always been described by linguists as a major linguistic problem. There have been many movements against Classic Arabic. One of these was launched by Sir William Willcocks who worked as a British employee in Egypt from 1896 until he died in 1932. Willcocks said that Classic Arabic was to blame for the backwardness of the Egyptians and their lack of invention (Zughoul, 1980). In addition, according to Sotiropoulos (1977), the diglossic situation in the Arab world was indeed problematic and was considered to be a hurdle to the Arabs' educational and economic development.

The diglossic situation in the Arab world is very sensitive, mainly because of religious and national reasons. Any movement against Classic Arabic, especially if it is coming from the West, is considered by speakers of Arabic and Muslims all around the world as a movement against their religious and national identity. The intimate relationship between the Arabic language and the religion of Islam has always been a rich topic for Arab scholars as discussed in many articles and books. For example, according to Shaikh Inayatullah of the University of Punjab (1949, p. 242), "Arabic is of supreme importance as the religious language of the Muslims who constitute about one fifth of the human race . . . [and] whatever may be the living speech of the people . . . prayers are everywhere repeated five times a day in Arabic . . . [and] the Arabic words in the Islamic creed *La elah ela Allah Mohammad rasol Allah* are whispered in the ear of a new born baby." In addition to that, the importance of the Arabic language itself and the fact that the words of God have been revealed in the Arabic tongue, is mentioned multiple times in the Qur'an itself.

Therefore, the existence of Classic Arabic has never been considered by Arabic speakers the source of a problem but a beautiful sacred gift from God that is superior to every other language. In fact, what is described by Arabic speakers as the problem is all the other spoken varieties of Colloquial Arabic. Colloquial Arabic is considered by Arabic speakers not only inferior to Classic Arabic but also a distortion to its beauty and perfection. It has been constantly associated by Arabic scholars with "ignorance and vulgarity" (Abdul Malek, 1972, p. 132) and described as "the tongue of drunkards and servants . . . archaic, confused, having no rules of grammar" (Mubarak, 1970, p. 41-44), a "protégé of ignorance and imperialism" (Nasif, 1957, p. 49), "unworthy of being called a language" and "unfit to fulfill the aims of intellectual life" (Hussien, 1944, p. 236). These views of Colloquial Arabic are not unique to scholars in the Arabic world but also represent the views of most Arabic speakers when it comes to comparing their spoken dialects with Classic Arabic.

Learners' Attitudes toward Varieties in the Target Language

With English becoming the lingua franca of the world, there is an increasing need for a better

understanding of its different varieties on the part of both instructors and learners. Kachru's (1992) three-circle model of World Englishes provides a strong argument supporting the need for acceptance of English as an international language, with all its different varieties, rather than a standard that should be met by second language learners. He divided World Englishes into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle refers to countries where different varieties of English are used as the mother-tongue such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Australia. These are considered some of the norm-providing countries. The Outer Circle refers to countries like India, South Africa, and Nigeria, where English has been used for a long time for "institutionalized functions standing as a language of wide and important roles" (Kachru & Nelson, 2001, p. 13). Those countries are considered to be the norm-developing countries. Finally, the Expanding Circle refers to countries where English is learned as a foreign language for mainly international communication purposes, including countries such as China, Iran, Japan, and Saudi Arabia (Kachru, 1992).

Kachru's three-circle model indicates that there are more second language (L2) speakers of English than native speakers. Second language learning studies indicate that adult L2 learners rarely achieve native-like speech and that reaching a native-like pronunciation among learners who have passed the critical period of language acquisition is close to impossible (Moyer, 2004 & Scovel, 2000). Based on these results, it is safe to say that the majority of spoken English around the world does not subscribe to the rules and criteria of its native standard varieties.

However, there is a tendency among ESL learners to subscribe to certain standards for their own speech. In a study with a hundred ESL adult learners in Canada, Derwing (2003) found that the majority considered speaking with perfectly native pronunciation to be the goal of their language learning process. Timmis (2002) surveyed around four hundred ESL learners from forty-five countries and reported that the majority preferred to acquire a native-like pronunciation. Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard, and Wu (2006) also revealed that 62% of the ESL learners who participated in their study aspired for native-like pronunciation, although only twenty-nine percent of them were able to identify the American accent.

In addition, several second language learning attitudinal studies have shown that ESL learners also have different attitudes toward different native English varieties. Bayard, Gallois, Ray, Weatherall, and Sullivan (2002) found ESL learners particularly from Europe or Southeast Asia prefer Standard American English more than any other native English variety. Another study conducted by Bayard (1990, 1995, 2001) showed that New Zealand English was ranked the least favorable by ESL learners among all the other inner-circle varieties including Australian English, Standard American, and Standard British. Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, and Smit's (1997) study indicated that the EFL learners who participated in their study not only favored British English but also performed better when they listened to speech samples of both NS and NNS of Standard British English and Standard American English. In her study *The Grand Daddy of English* (2005), Evans compared the dialectal attitudes of different ESL learners living in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand towards the four different varieties of English and found that British English is also ranked the highest on status by forty-five to fifty-nine percent of the participants. Evans noted that this is due to the association between British English *and* the notion of correctness and prescriptiveness in regard to different varieties of English.

Research Question

Given that Arabic speakers hold distinct attitudes toward language varieties in their native language, and that learners of English may hold certain attitudes toward different varieties in the target language, is it possible that the attitudes of Arab-English learners toward the two main varieties of Arabic, Classic Arabic and Colloquial Arabic, are transferred to their attitudes towards different varieties of English? This paper explores this question by comparing the dialectal attitudes of ten different Saudi native-speakers of Arabic towards three different varieties of English: British English, American English, and Saudi-English with two other dialectal attitudes. The first one is their own dialectal attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic: Classic/Standard Arabic and Colloquial/Najdi Arabic. The second one is the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of English and ten non-native speakers of English coming from languages that do not have diglossia towards the same three English varieties.

Methodology

Participants

Thirty people participated in this study. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group included ten female native speakers of Arabic holding a bachelor's degree in English and Translation from King Saud University (KSU), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to twenty-eight. Some of them have visited both the United States of America and England but never lived in an English speaking country. The second group included ten female native speakers of Standard American English pursuing their bachelor's or master's degree at Hawaii Pacific University, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to thirty-five, and they came from different states in the United States. Finally, the third group included ten female non-native speakers from countries that did not have a current diglossic situation: Japan, China, Austria, and Norway. They were also pursuing their bachelor's or master's degree at Hawaii Pacific University, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to thirty-six.

Instruments and Data Collection

For this study, three different female speakers were recorded reading the same script using different varieties of English: Standard British English, Standard American English, and Saudi-English. The script was an article from Wikipedia about the country of Saudi Arabia. It had some of the identifying pronunciation features of the three different English accents: British, American, and Saudi such as the /r/ sound (see Appendix B1). Each recording lasted for fifty seconds. In addition, a male native speaker of Arabic was also recorded twice reading a translated version of the same script in different Arabic dialects: Classic/Standard Arabic and Najdi-Arabic which is the colloquial variety spoken in Riyadh of Saudi Arabia (see Appendix B2). Each recording lasted for 50 seconds.

The Arabic participants were asked to fill a questionnaire asking about their name, age, nationality, level of education, and their native Arabic dialect. It also had questions eliciting information about their attitudes toward British and American English in addition to Classic Arabic and their native Arabic dialect (see Appendix C1).

A different questionnaire was given to the remaining participants, eliciting information about their attitudes towards both British and American English in addition to the different spoken varieties of English in Kachru's Outer Circle (see Appendix C2).

After the participants had completed answering the questionnaire, they were asked to listen to each recording once and then evaluate the readers on a five-point scale on their educational,

economic, appearance, and personality traits. The evaluation form used for this study is based on the matched-guise technique developed by Lambert et al (1960) and adapted from Eisenstein’s study on target language variation and second-language acquisition (1987) (see Appendix D).

Findings

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

As shown in Figure 1, the British speaker was ranked the highest on the all overt prestige traits: education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 4.7, 4.5, 3.8, and 4.5 respectively. The American speaker was also highly ranked on all the overt prestige traits: education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 3.5, 3.6, 3.0, and 3.4 respectively. This showed that both the British and the American variety were considered by the Arabic-speaking participants to be high on status. In addition, the American speaker was ranked the highest on both of the appearance traits, height and beauty, with an average of 3.4 and 3.9 respectively—and on one of the solidarity traits, which was friendliness, with an average of 3.7. The American speaker was also highly ranked on the other solidarity trait which was honesty with an average of 4.0. This finding agrees with the Arabic-speaking participants’ overt attitudes shown in their answers on the questionnaire which are going to be discussed in later parts of this paper.

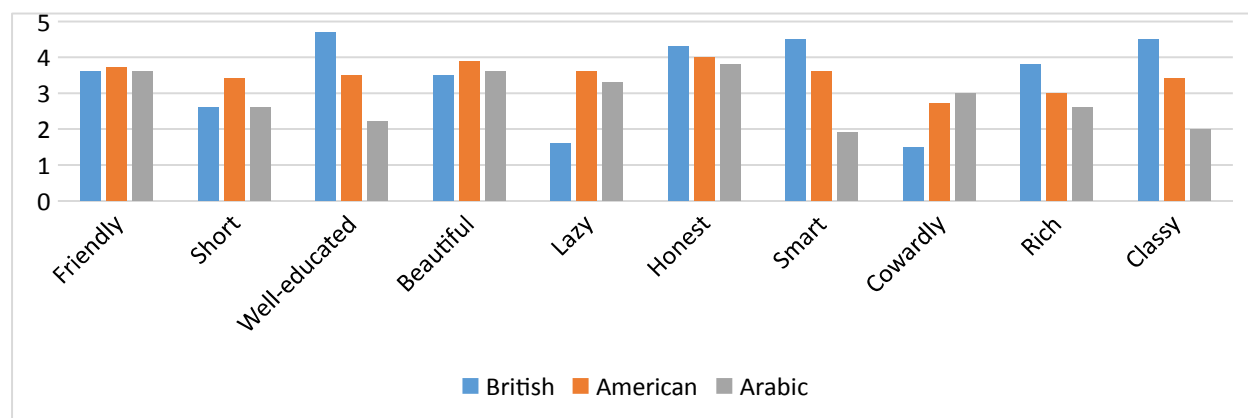


Figure 1. Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

Table 1

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
British	3.6	2.6	4.7	3.5	1.6	4.3	4.5	1.5	3.8	4.5
American	3.7	3.4	3.5	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.6	2.7	3.0	3.4
Saudi	3.6	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.3	3.8	1.9	3.0	2.6	2.0

Meanwhile, the Saudi-English speaker was ranked the lowest on those traits with an average of 2.2, 1.9, 2.6, and 2.0 respectively. This clearly shows that the Arabic speaking participants considered the British variety to be the highest on status, and the Saudi-English speaker to be the lowest. This

conclusion can be further confirmed by looking at the other trait the British speaker was ranked the highest on which was honesty with an average of 4.3. Although honesty is not a status trait, several dialectal attitude studies have shown that people tend to assign it to the variety they consider to be a high prestige variety (Bellamy, 2010). Interestingly, the Saudi-English speaker was also ranked the lowest on the same solidarity trait with an average of 3.8 (also see Table 1).

Other Non-native English Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

As shown in Figure 2 and Table 2, the rankings of the other non-native speakers were much more diverse than those of their Arab counterparts. The British speaker was ranked the highest by the other non-native speakers on only two of the overt prestige traits which were wealth and class with an average of 3.5 and 4.3 respectively and the lowest one solidarity trait which was friendliness with an average of 3.1, and one appearance trait which was beauty with an average of 3.8. Interestingly, the Saudi-English speaker was ranked the highest on the other two status traits which were intelligence and education with an average of 4.1 and 4.6. The Arabic speaker was also ranked the highest on one of the solidarity traits which was friendliness with an average of 3.9. This showed that the other non-native speakers coming from countries that do not have diglossia do not have as strong negative attitudes towards the Saudi-English speaker as their Arab counterparts.

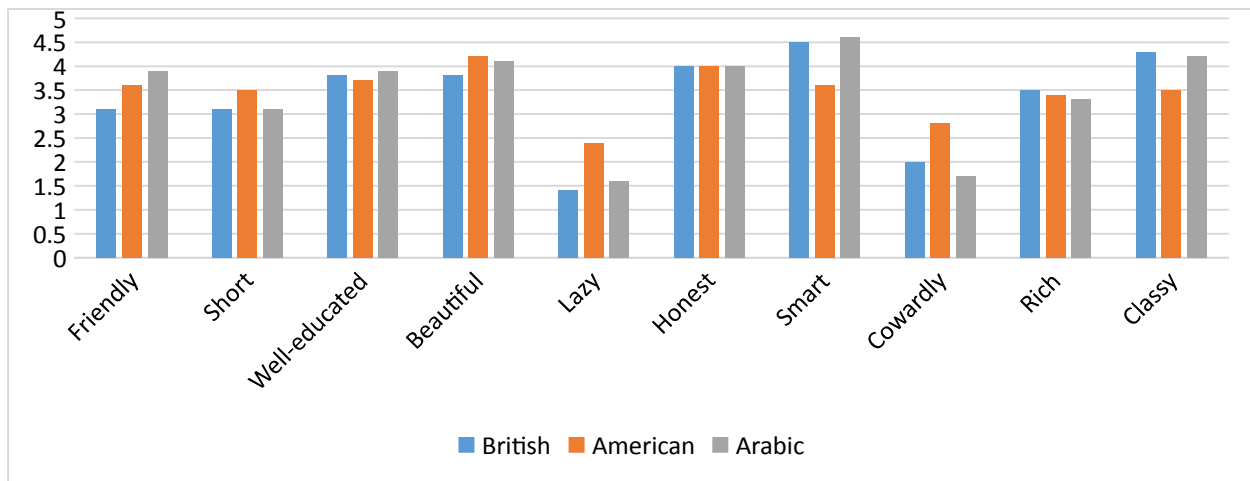


Figure 2. Other Non-Native English Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

Table 2

Other-Non-Native English Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

Non-native English speakers' attitudes towards varieties of English										
	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
British	3.1	3.1	3.8	3.8	1.4	4	4.5	2	3.5	4.3
American	3.6	3.5	3.7	4.2	2.4	4	3.6	2.8	3.4	3.5
Arabic	3.9	3.1	3.9	4.1	1.6	4	4.6	1.7	3.3	4.2

The other non-native speakers and the Arabic speaking participants shared the same attitudes towards the American speaker, ranking her the highest on all the appearance traits which were height

and beauty with an average of 3.5 and 4.2 respectively. At the same time, they also ranked her the highest on two of the negative personality traits which were laziness and cowardice with an average of 2.4 and 2.8 respectively. They also ranked her the lowest on three of the overt prestige traits which were education, intelligence, and class with an average of 3.7, 3.6, and 3.5 respectively. This showed that the other non-native speakers had the most negative attitudes towards the American variety.

Native English Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

As shown in Figure 3 and Table 3, the native speakers seemed to have the same attitudes as their Arab counterparts towards the British speaker. They ranked the British speaker the highest on all the overt prestige traits which were education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 4.5, 4.5, 3.7, and 4.1 respectively, and one of the solidarity traits which was honesty with an average of 4.3. They also ranked her the lowest on one of the negative solidarity traits which was laziness with an average of 1.9. However, they ranked the British speaker the lowest on the two appearance traits which were height and beauty with an average of 2.6 and 3.1 respectively. This showed that the British variety was also considered to be high on status by the American native speakers.

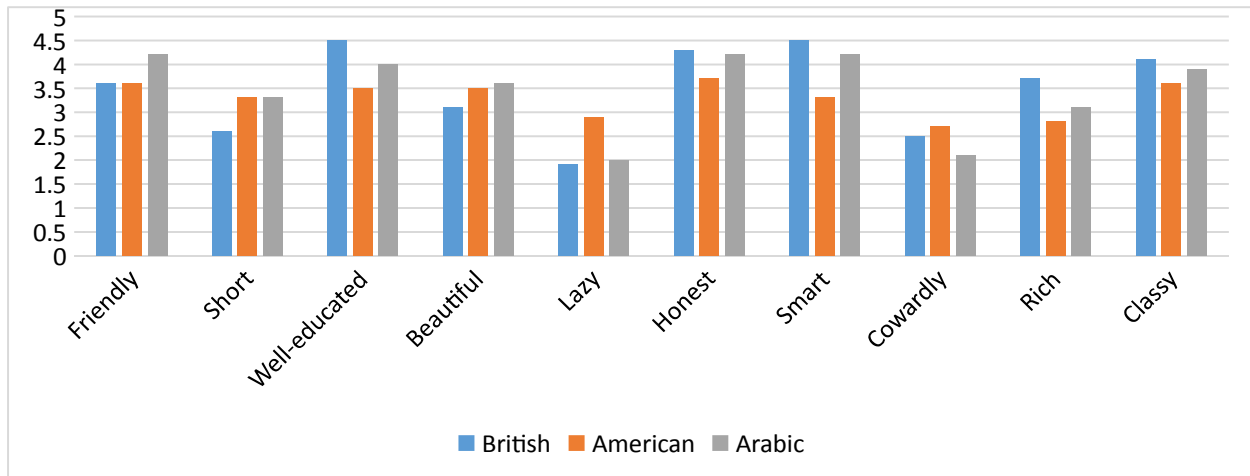


Figure 3. Native English Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

Table 3

Native English Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of English

	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
British	3.6	2.6	4.5	3.1	1.9	4.3	4.5	2.5	3.7	4.1
American	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.5	2.9	3.7	3.3	2.7	2.8	3.6
Arabic	4.2	3.3	4.0	3.6	2.0	4.2	4.2	2.1	3.1	3.9

Interestingly, the American native speakers had strong negative attitudes towards the American speaker. They ranked the American speaker the highest on laziness and cowardice with an average

of 2.9 and 2.7 respectively, and the lowest on intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 3.3, 2.8, and 3.6 respectively.

On the other hand, the native speakers also had positive attitudes towards the Saudi-English speaker. They ranked her the highest on one of the solidarity traits which was friendliness with an average of 4.2 and one of the appearance traits which was beauty with an average of 3.6, and the lowest on one of the negative solidarity traits which was cowardice with an average of 2.1. They also highly ranked her on all the status traits which were education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 4.0, 4.2, 3.1, and 3.9 respectively (also see Table 3).

Language Attitudes of Arabic Speakers Compared with Other Non-native English Speakers and Native English Speakers

As shown in Figure 4, the native speakers seemed to have the same attitudes as their Arab counterparts towards the British speaker. They ranked the British speaker the highest on all the overt prestige traits which were education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 4.5, 4.5, 3.7, and 4.1 respectively, and one of the solidarity traits which was honesty with an average of 4.3. They also ranked her the lowest on one of the negative solidarity traits which was laziness with an average of 1.9. However, they ranked the British speaker the lowest on the two appearance traits which were height and beauty with an average of 2.6 and 3.1 respectively. This showed that the British variety was also considered to be high on status by the American native speakers.

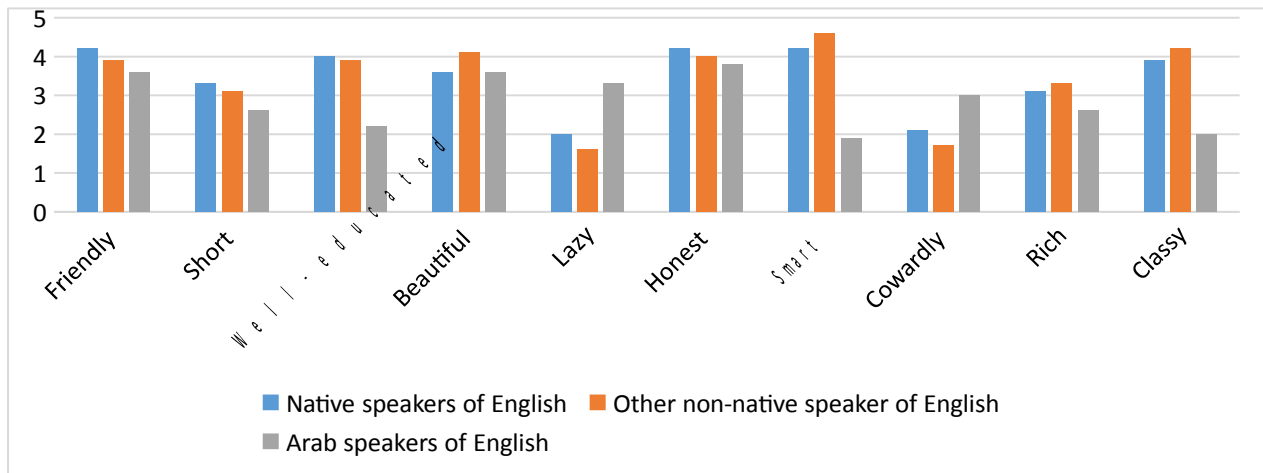


Figure 4. Arabic Speakers' Attitudes vs. Other Non-Native Speakers And Native Speaker toward Najdi-English

When comparing the attitudes of the three different group participants towards Saudi-English, it was found that the Arabic speaking participants had the strongest negative attitudes towards it. The Saudi-English speaker was ranked the lowest by the Arabic speaking participants on 85% of the positive traits proposed on the evaluation form: friendliness with an average of 3.6, education with an average of 2.2, honesty with an average of 3.8, intelligence with an average of 1.9, wealth with an average of 2.6, and class with an average of 2.0. At the same time, they were ranked the highest on 100% of the negative traits: laziness with an average of 3.3, and cowardice with an average of 3.0 (see Table 4). Meanwhile, the other non-native speakers' attitudes were more diverse. In fact, the other non-native speaker had the least negative attitudes towards the Saudi-English speaker. The

Saudi-English speaker was ranked the highest on 57% of the positive traits proposed on the evaluation form: beauty with an average of 4.1, intelligence with an average of 4.6, wealth with an average of 3.3, and class with an average of 4.2. In addition, the rankings of the other non-native speakers on the remaining positive traits were very high compared to the ranking of their Arabic speaking counterparts. Finally, the attitudes of the native-speakers also were not as negative as the Arabic speaking participants. They ranked the Saudi-English speaker the highest on 42% of the positive traits on the evaluation form: friendliness with an average of 4.2, education with an average of 4.0, and honesty with an average of 4.2 (see Table 4).

Table 4

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes vs. Other Non-native Speakers and Native Speaker toward Najdi-English

	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
Native speakers of English	4.2	3.3	4	3.6	2	4.2	4.2	2.1	3.1	3.9
Other non-native speaker of English	3.9	3.1	3.9	4.1	1.6	4	4.6	1.7	3.3	4.2
Arab speakers of English	3.6	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.3	3.8	1.9	3	2.6	2

The data presented so far suggested that the Arabic speaking participants had stronger and more negative attitudes towards Saudi-English. The question is, what may explain the Arabic participants' different attitudes compared to the other non-native speakers in this study? To investigate the possibility of a dialectal attitude transfer among Arabic speakers of English, a comparison between the attitudes of the Arabic speaking participants towards high and low varieties of Arabic was made.

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of Arabic

On the questionnaire, it was clear that Classic Arabic is considered by the Arabic-speaking participants to be the high prestige variety. When the Arabic speaking participants were asked to compare Classic Arabic with their own dialect, all of them clearly stated that Classic Arabic is definitely better than their dialect. They used words and phrases like “Perfect,” “It’s the origin of real Arabic,” “The most beautiful language I have ever heard,” “Hard, complicated, and beautiful,” and “It’s beautiful, a science in itself which makes it very hard but amazingly beautiful.” When they were asked about the risk of Classic Arabic dying, the majority of them got very defensive and equated the dying of the language with the dying of Islam and the Qur’an, which was seen by them as an impossible thing to happen. One of the participants answered that question saying “That might be actually happening; Arabs are actually losing who they are.” It seems that to that participant, Classic Arabic is who Arabs are. This can be further asserted by looking at the results of the evaluation forms.

As shown in Figure 5 and Table 5, the Classic/Standard Arabic speaker was ranked the highest on all the positive traits associated with status, which were: education, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class, with an average of 4.9, 4.1, 4.6, 3.9, and 4.8 respectively. They were ranked the lowest on all the negative status traits which were: laziness and cowardice with an average of 1.5 and 2.0 respectively. On the other hand, the Colloquial/ Najdi speaker was ranked the highest on all the

negative traits associated with status which were laziness and cowardice with an average of 4.2 and 2.7 respectively and the lowest on all the positive status traits which were education, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 1.6, 2.7, 2.4, 2.2, and 1.5 respectively (also see Table 5). With Classic Arabic being the high variety in the whole Arab world including Saudi Arabia, and Najdi Arabic being the low variety, it was anticipated that the Arabic-speaking participants would rank the Classic Arabic speaker highly on all the status traits, in other words, the traits that show overt prestige (Meyerhoff, 2006). However, it was not anticipated that they would also rank her the highest on all the other positive solidarity and appearance traits which were friendliness and beauty with an average of 4.9 and 4.1 respectively. The Arabic-speaking participants also ranked her the lowest on all the positive traits which were friendliness, education beauty, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 3.7, 1.6, 1.6, 2.7, 2.4, 2.2, and 1.5 respectively and the highest on all the negative traits which were laziness and cowardice with an average of 4.2 and 2.7 respectively. This showed that the Arabic-speakers participating in this study had extremely negative attitudes towards the Colloquial/Najdi speaker. This can be attributed to the fact that both Arabic speakers were recorded reciting the same text (see appendix B2). The text used for the purpose of this study was an academic text, and hearing it read using colloquial Arabic may have been perceived by the Arabic-speaking participants as ignorant and improper, hence the negative attitude.

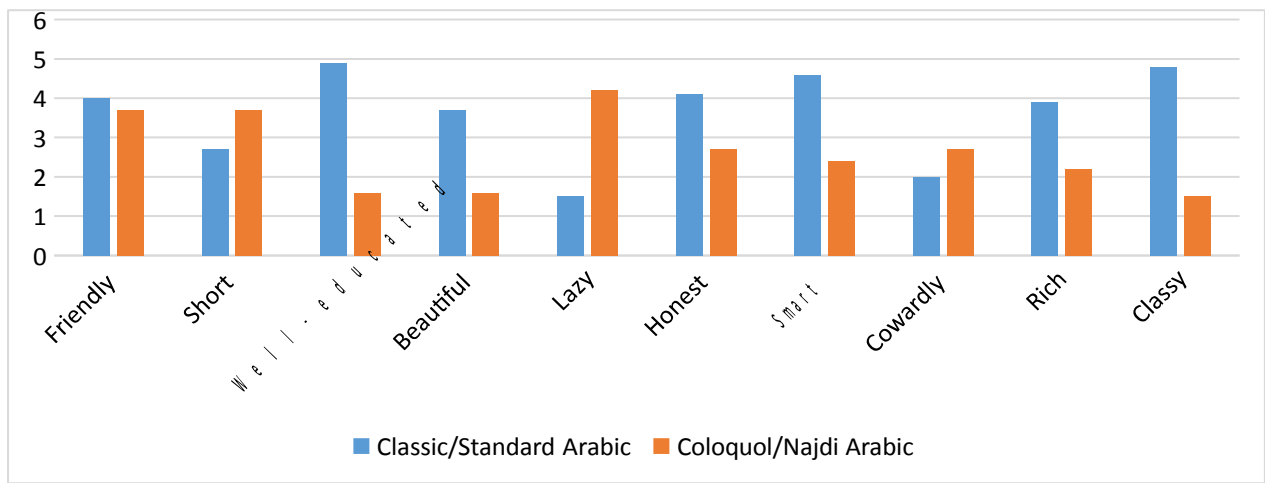


Figure 5. Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of Arabic

Table 5

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Varieties of Arabic

	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
Classic/Standard Arabic	4	2.7	4.9	3.7	1.5	4.1	4.6	2	3.9	4.8
Colloquial/Najdi Arabic	3.7	3.7	1.6	1.6	4.2	2.7	2.4	2.7	2.2	1.5

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards British English and American English

When asked about their attitudes towards both American and British English, two out of the ten native speakers of Arabic wrote that they do not like the British accent at all, and they prefer the sound of the American one. However, they contradicted themselves when they answered the

following question: “Is it a good thing or a bad thing to have an accent speaking English?” with “yes it’s a good thing, but classic is classic,” referring to any standard varieties of English. These two participants also contradicted themselves in the evaluation forms ranking the British speaker as the highest on education and class with 5.0 and 4.0 respectively, and intelligence with 4.0 and 5.0. The remaining eight Arabic-speaking participants described British English using almost the same words and phrases they used to describe Classic Arabic: “Very hard,” “Difficult,” “Classy,” “It sounds like reading an old literature book,” “Formal,” “I like it but prefer to speak with an American accent because it’s easier.”

On the rating form, a strong correlation between the Arabic speaking participants’ attitudes towards Classic/Standard Arabic and their attitudes toward British English was found. The correlation values between the two sets of ratings were 0.5 on friendliness, 0.3 on height, 0.9 on education, 0.7 on beauty, 0.7 on laziness, 0.7 on intelligence, 0.6 on honesty, 0.7 on cowardice, 0.8 on wealth, and 0.7 on class. In addition, the British speaker and the Classic/Standard Arabic speaker were ranked the highest on the same traits: education, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class, with an average of 4.7, 4.3, 4.5, 3.8, and 4.5 (British speaker) and 4.9, 4.1, 4.6, 3.9, and 4.8 (Classic/Standard Arabic speaker) (see Table 6).

Table 6
Arabic Speakers’ Attitudes towards Classic/Standard Arabic vs. British and American English

	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
Classic/Standard Arabic	4	2.7	4.9	3.7	1.5	4.1	4.6	2	3.9	4.8
British English	3.6	2.6	4.7	3.5	1.6	4.3	4.5	1.5	3.8	4.5
Correlation Results	0.5	0.3	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7

A strong correlation was also found between the Arabic speakers’ attitudes towards Colloquial/Najdi Arabic and their attitudes toward Saudi-English on most of the traits on the evaluation form. The correlation values between the two attitudes are -0.2 on friendliness, -0.6 on height, 0.7 on education, 0.6 on beauty, 0.6 on laziness, 0.2 on honesty, 0.7 on intelligence, 0.8 on wealth, and 0.6 on class. In addition, both the Arabic English speaker and the Colloquial/Najdi speaker were ranked the lowest on education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of 2.2, 1.9, 2.6, and 2.0 and 1.6, 2.4, 2.2 and 1.5 respectively (see Table 7).

Table 7
Arabic Speaking Participants’ Attitudes towards Colloquial/Najdi Arabic vs. Najdi-English

	Friendly	Short	Well-educated	Beautiful	Lazy	Honest	Smart	Cowardly	Rich	Classy
Colloquial/Najdi Arabic	3.7	3.7	1.6	1.6	4.2	2.7	2.4	2.7	2.2	1.5
Najdi- English	3.6	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.3	3.8	1.9	3	2.6	2
Correlation Results	-0.2	-0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.8	0.6

Thus, there seems to be a clear parallel in the Arabic participants' attitudes toward Classic Arabic and British English as well as Colloquial Arabic and Najdi-English. This parallel in attitudes can most plausibly be explained by a transfer of social perception about language varieties.

Conclusion

In this paper I first discussed the diglossic situation in the Arabic language in the Arab world with regard to Classic Arabic being the high-prestige variety and Colloquial Arabic being the low-prestige. Based on that outline the question arises as to whether those attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic are transferred to their attitudes towards different varieties of English among Arabic-speaking learners of English. To explore that possibility, the attitudes of ten Arab English speakers towards the two main Arabic varieties were investigated and then compared with two other dialectal attitudes. The first one was their own dialectal attitudes towards three different English varieties: British English, American English, and Saudi English. The second one was the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of English and ten non-native speakers of English coming from languages that do not have diglossia towards the same three English varieties. This central premise of the present study was discussed within the framework of existing research into standard and non-standard varieties and language attitudes. The method of investigation of this comparative study was the matched-guise technique. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group included ten female Saudi native speakers of Arabic. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to twenty-eight. The second group included ten female native speakers of Standard American English. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to thirty-five, and they came from different states in the United States. The third group included ten female non-native speakers from countries that did not have a current diglossic situation: Japan, China, Austria, and Norway. Their ages ranged from twenty-five to thirty-six. A key initial finding was that the attitudes on all three groups towards the British variety were similar. The British variety was considered by both the Arabic speakers and the American native speakers to be the highest on prestige. The British variety was also considered high prestige by the other non-native speakers. However, they did not share the same attitudes towards the American and the Saudi English varieties. The American variety was considered high prestige by the Arabic-speaking participants but low prestige by both the American native speakers and the other non-native speakers. On the other hand, the Saudi-English variety was considered high variety by both the American native speakers and the other non-native speakers but the lowest on prestige by the Arabic speakers. This showed that while the Arabic speaking participants had strong positive attitudes towards the two standard varieties proposed but low prestige to the non-standard variety, the American native speakers and the other non-native speakers did not have as strong negative attitudes towards the non-standard variety.

Although the results of the study show that there is a dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic to English there were some limitations to the validity of its results. One of the limitations was due to the fact that the three different English varieties proposed were recorded by three different females, which might have influenced the participants' attitudes. In addition, only one non-standard variety of English was used to elicit the participants' attitudes. Using another non-standard variety would have further affirmed the negative attitudes of the Arabic speaking participants towards non-standard varieties in general, not only the ones they are familiar with. Another factor that could have influenced the attitudes of the Arabic-speaking participants towards the two main Arabic varieties—Classic Arabic and Colloquial Arabic—was the script chosen to be recorded by the Arabic speaker.

The text that was chosen for this study was an academic text and was used for both recordings: Classic Arabic and Colloquial Arabic. Since Arabic is a highly diglossic language, it was not anticipated by the Arabic speaking participants to hear the text in Colloquial Arabic. I believe that this could be the reason for the extreme negative attitudes of the Arabic speaking participants towards Colloquial Arabic which led to them assigning both positive overt and covert prestige traits to the Classic Arabic speaker.

The next step to further investigate the possibility of a dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic to English was to compare the Arabic-speaking participants' attitudes towards the three English varieties with their attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic: Classic Arabic and Colloquial Arabic. When compared, it was found that there is a strong correlation between the ratings of the Arabic-speaking participants on Classic Arabic and their ratings on British English. A strong correlation was also found between their ratings on Colloquial Arabic and their ratings on Saudi-English. This showed that there is an actual dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic to English.

Based on the results of the study, it is important for ESL and EFL teachers to be aware of the concept of dialectal attitudes in general. It is more likely for students who have negative attitudes towards non-standard varieties of English to shy away from speaking it and consequently be less active in class participation, which could be confused by the teacher with laziness. This could be done by openly discussing the matter and telling the student that the non-native speakers of English outnumber the native speakers. In addition, teachers should expose the students to different native varieties of the target language, such as southern American English, to show them that being different is not something that should be seen as an issue or a shortcoming. Teachers themselves should also be aware of their own dialectal attitudes and know how to distinguish between mistakes that interfere with communication and regional accents.

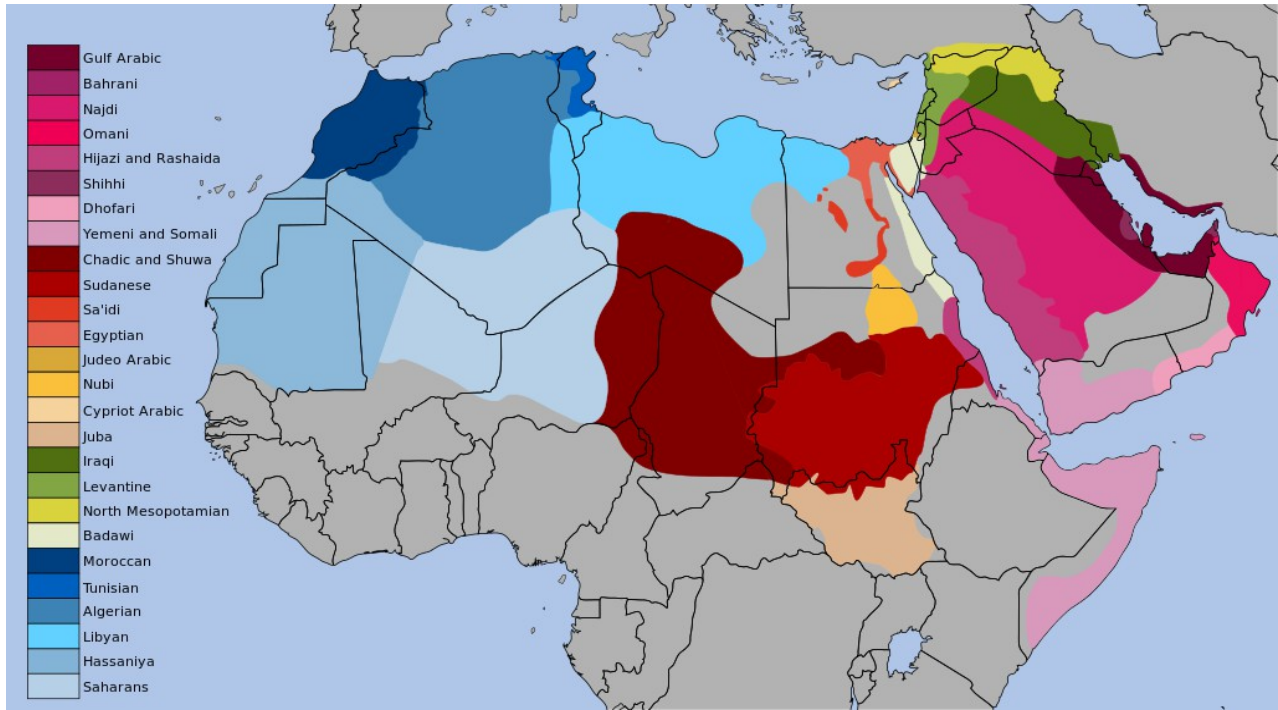
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Appendix A

Different Arabic Dialects in the Arab world



Appendix B1
English Recorded Script

Saudi Arabia, officially known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,^[d] is an Arab state in Western Asia constituting the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the north, Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates to the east, Oman to the southeast, and Yemen to the south. It is the only nation with both a Red Sea coast and a Persian Gulf coast, and most of its terrain consists of arid inhospitable desert.

(Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia)

Appendix B2 Arabic Recorded Script

المملكة العربية السعودية

السعودية ورسميًا المملكة العربية السعودية هي دولة تقع في جنوب غرب آسيا وتشكل الجزء الأكبر من شبه الجزيرة العربية إذ تبلغ مساحتها حوالي مليوني كيلومتر مربع. يحدها من الشمال العراق والأردن وتحدها الكويت من الشمال الشرقي، ومن الشرق تحدها كل من قطر والإمارات العربية المتحدة بالإضافة إلى البحرين التي ترتبط بالسعودية من خلال جسر الملك فهد الواقع على الخليج العربي، ومن الجنوب تحدها اليمن، وسلطنة عمان من الجنوب الشرقي، كما يحدها البحر الأحمر من جهة الغرب. كانت بداية السعودية بتأسيس الدولة السعودية الأولى (إمارة الدرعية) على يد محمد بن سعود سنة 1157 هـ، ثم تبعتها الدولة السعودية الثانية (إمارة نجد) والتي بدأت بعد سقوط الدولة الأولى إلى أن انتهت سنة 1308 هـ.

(Retrieved from

<https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9>)

Appendix C1
Pre-listening Arab Participants Questionnaire

Personal Information Questionnaire

Feel free to answer the questions in Arabic!

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where are you from?

What is your level of education?

What dialect of Arabic do you speak?

Are you proud to be speaking that dialect?

In a few words, what do you think of Classic Arabic (the language of the Qur'an)?

Some people say that Classic Arabic is dying and that using it in schools and writing is not necessary anymore, therefore each country should teach and write using their spoken dialect. What do you think about that?

What do you think of your dialect compared to Classic Arabic?

What is your English level? (Good) (Very good) (Excellent) (Native like)

In a few words, what do you think of Standard British English?

In a few words, what do you think of Standard American English?

Is it a good thing or a bad thing to have an accent speaking English?

Appendix C2
Pre-listening Non –Arab Participants Questionnaire

Personal Information Questionnaire

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where are you from?

What is your level of education?

What languages do you speak?

Is there a standard variety of your language?

Is your dialect close to the standard variety of your language?

What is your English level? (Good) (Very good) (Excellent) (Native like) (Native)

In a few words, what do you think of Standard British English?

In a few words, what do you think of Standard American English?

Is it a good thing or a bad thing to have an accent speaking English?

Appendix D
Post-listening Evaluation Form

Evaluation Form

Name: _____

	Very	Some what	A Bit	Some what	Very	
Friendly						Unfriendly
Short						Tall
Well-educated						Not Educated
Beautiful						Ugly
Lazy						Hard-worker
Honest						Dishonest
Smart						Stupid
Cowardly						Brave
Rich						Poor
Short						Tall
Classy						Vulgar

Circle the level of education of the reader:
(High-school Dropout) (High-school Graduate) (BA Holder) (Master's Holder) (PhD Holder)

Thank you very much for your time!! This is a big help for my research :)