

Attitudes Toward Using Standard Arabic Among Academic Staff at Saudi Arabian Universities

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Abstract—This study explores the attitudes of academic staff toward using Standard Arabic at universities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to determine the extent to which these academic staff members use Standard Arabic in their academic and social gatherings, and whether there are differences in usage between male and female staff members. A questionnaire was modified and distributed to the three leading universities in Riyadh to assess the staff members' attitudes toward Standard and colloquial Arabic, and responses were received from 42 participants of various ages, both genders, and varied educational backgrounds. The study findings reveal that participants have a strong attachment to Standard Arabic, which they perceive as more prestigious than colloquial Arabic. Although respondents were aware that Standard Arabic was restricted to formal settings, they still considered it superior to colloquial Arabic.

Index Terms—higher education, Standard Arabic, language attitude

I. INTRODUCTION

People hold certain attitudes or beliefs toward their own or others' language varieties. In some cases, language can denote status or dominance, but it can also signify solidarity. Therefore, meanings attributed to language use extend beyond literal translations of terms and reflect the underlying social dynamics within a certain group of people. Studying the attitudes of a certain group toward a particular language variety can provide important information regarding how they perceive and identify with other people who speak the same language, which can affect how they interact with a group or individual.

Since Saudi Arabia was never colonized by imperial Western powers, Standard Arabic (SA) has always been the country's official language. Unlike other Arab countries, where colonization influenced the position of SA in the political sphere, SA maintained its position as an official prestigious language in Saudi Arabia. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) developed from the dialect of the Qur'an, which is known as Classical Arabic. Although MSA and Classical Arabic are similar, Classical Arabic is more poetic. MSA is generally taught in schools and colleges, and is utilized in educational environments, government institutions, news broadcasts, and religious sermons.

While speakers from different Arab countries understand SA, it is rarely spoken and its use is limited to certain contexts. Every country has its own dialect or multiple dialects that differ significantly from each other. If one attempts to speak another dialect without disfluency, one is perceived as talented. Since SA is only taught in grammar classes and is not practiced beyond the classroom setting, students often perceive it to be a difficult language requiring a tutor. What is significant is that although an individual might struggle with SA for the above reasons during their school years, they are still expected to master SA when working in the academic arena. This makes it difficult for educators to communicate their thoughts and ideas in the workplace because the focus should be on what they have to offer in terms of innovations and ideas, not how they speak SA. However, in an academic setting, the use of a vernacular variety as a medium of instruction may facilitate learning because teachers and students communicate within the same sociocultural context.

While some studies have already examined the use of SA in certain Arab universities, no such study has been conducted in Saudi Arabian universities.

A. Review of Related Literature

Several studies have included participants from Jordanian institutions. The first such study, "Attitudes towards Standard Arabic: A case study of Jordanian undergraduate students of English" by Bani-Khaled (2014), qualitatively analyzed participants' short essay answers to the question, "How do you personally feel about Standard Arabic?" The screened responses were categorized into 10 factors. The authors also sought an appropriate framework from international references for comparison. A second study, "Attitudes towards using Standard Arabic among academic staff at Balqa University Center in Jordan: A sociolinguistic study" by Mizher and Al-Abed Al-Haq (2014), employed a questionnaire modeled after that of Al-Abed Al-Haq (1998) and slightly adapted to the prevailing social and political milieu in Jordan.

In the first study, participants included 366 male and female English-major students of all classifications who were enrolled at two major state universities in Jordan during the first semester of the 2013–2014 academic year (Bani-

Khaled, 2014). The second study included 25 faculty members at the Balqa Applied University Center and volunteers from the Engineering, Agriculture, Human Sciences, and Planning Departments (Mizher & Al-Abed-Al-Haq, 2014).

In the first study, the collected data showed that students explicitly rejected SA as obsolete, unsuitable for the young, and frustrating to use in public (Bani-Khaled, 2014, p. 2). Implicitly, they favored local dialects. The researcher in the second study was an observer and recorder of attitudes influenced by changes in the Arab world (Mizher & Al-Abed-Al-Haq, 2014, p. 3). The findings revealed how staff members at Balqa University viewed SA as a highly elevated language. However, although they preferred using it in the academic setting, they avoided it in social settings.

The method used in the first study was the more effective. The preparation and conduct were more thorough and superior sociolinguistically because of the young age of sample population; as young people are demographically more numerous; their language use has the strongest influence on society over time.

Al-Asal and Smadi (2012) observe the various Arabicization and MSA expansion techniques used by faculty members in two Arab universities: the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) in Jordan and the University of Damascus (UD) in Syria, with a focus on the use of SA in teaching scientific terms.

In this study, Arabization was defined as the process of transliterating a foreign term according to the Arabic phonological and morphological rules. It finds an equivalent for scientific terms using loan forms, acronyms, abbreviations, and derivations from foreign sources and eponyms. Conversely, Arabic expansion techniques involve finding an equivalent for a scientific term through loan translation, derivation from Arabic roots, semantic extension, classical Arabic vocabulary, and translation-by-definition.

The researchers used an observation checklist consisting of two parts: The first included general information about the faculty, while the second contained questions on the Arabization and Arabic expansion techniques used in the lectures. To collect data, the researchers first sought permission from the university presidents to conduct the study. They then obtained consent from the teachers before administering the observational tool.

The study results showed statistically significant differences in the use of Arabicization and Arabic expansion techniques between the two universities, such that Arabicization techniques were used more frequently at JUST, whereas Arabic expansion techniques were used more frequently at UD. The researchers recommended that Arabic language academies standardize the use of Arabic terminology in all fields.

A sociolinguistic study conducted by Murad (2007) investigated the attitudes of Iraqi native speakers of Arabic toward two varieties of Arabic in Iraq: SA and Iraqi Arabic (IA). The study surveyed 196 participants, of whom 107 were college students and 89 were non-students with no post-secondary degrees. The survey questionnaire included five sections on language preference and use in social interaction, language preference and use in media, language preference and use in the academic domain, language ideology, and open-ended questions.

The student sample was from the University of Baghdad, where one class from each graduating senior was selected from each of six departments: Arabic, English, Religion, Physics, History, and Philosophy. Instructors were asked to allocate 10–15 minutes of time in class to allow students to answer the survey. For the non-student sample, people were randomly selected from different locations, such as streets, mosques, malls, and other places.

The survey results showed that the differences between language attitudes among students and non-students were significant, with students showing more favorable attitudes toward SA and non-students overwhelmingly preferring IA. No significant gender-based differences were observed among participants. The results also showed a significant relationship between speakers' educational level and their views of different language varieties. This finding is similar to that observed by Murad (2007) in Tunisia; therefore, it should not be interpreted as unique to Iraq.

Another study, conducted by Chakrani in 2011, aimed to examine the Moroccan contact situation to challenge the current theoretical understanding that a local language, such as SA, represents local culture and social solidarity, while French represents status-bearing traits and aspects of modernity. The study surveyed 454 university students with an equal male-female distribution at four colleges in two major cities in Morocco. The questionnaire addressed four aspects of language, attitudes, and use: (1) demographics and language in the home, neighborhood, and school; (2) attitudes toward languages in various domains; (3) self-reported language competency and skills in switching among these languages; and (4) open-ended questions related to the current linguistic state in Morocco.

In addition to the survey, a Matched Guise Test was administered to 57 participants in an English language school to investigate the covert language attitudes of respondents based on a cluster of status and solidarity traits. The results showed that, contrary to standard orthodoxies, "languages do not cluster neatly into the status and solidarity paradigms, but are competing to index both" (Chakrani, 2011, p. 176).

A Greek study provided insight into how citizens of one country expressed preferences for their vernacular. Pavlou and Zoumpalidis (2008) demonstrated how Pontic Greeks in Cyprus tended to prefer Standard Modern Greek (SMG) over the Cypriot Greek dialect. Participants included 96 respondents of Pontic Greek origin, aged 15–60 years. All were residents of three urban areas in Cyprus and had migrated from former republics of the Soviet Union. The majority of residents in these urban areas were migrants from Russia who supplied most of the workforce.

Data were collected through both surveys and interviews. For the survey, a questionnaire was designed with sections on demographic information, general linguistic information, social networks, attitudes of Pontic Greeks toward Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek dialects, and the ethnic/social identity of participants. Questionnaires were

administered to 90 respondents. Six people were interviewed using the same questions from the survey, and the researchers tried to elicit as much relevant information as possible.

The findings revealed that the community of Pontic Greeks in Cyprus is bilingual. Researchers also found that the Pontic Greek community in Cyprus does not constitute a single and homogenous speech community because the attitudes toward the Cypriot Greek dialect within the Pontic Greek community vary widely, with some members holding positive views while others have negative perceptions (Pavlou & Zoumpalidis, 2008).

Language choice within the community was also not homogenous. Linguistic behavior was closely correlated with factors of age, geographical provenance, and the degree of desire to become assimilated into the local landscape or maintain a distinct identity. The study also stressed the importance of providing an optimal definition of “speech communities,” a concept that is still being debated by sociolinguists. Social and/or linguistic factors must be considered in establishing boundaries between communities, and the fluid character of “speech communities” at this point poses a challenge in assessing multilingual communities, such as that of Pontic Greeks.

Excluding the Pontic Greek study, related studies included in this review discussed the use of SA in different settings. Studies by Al-Asal and Smadi (2012), Murad (2007), and Chakrani (2011) examined the use of SA in different Arab schools. The respondents for these three studies were also from academic institutions and represented either faculty members or students. In terms of methodology, the studies used surveys, essays, and interviews to obtain information from the participants. Three of the four studies also attempted to determine the respondents’ attitudes toward language use.

The reviewed studies provide insights into the factors that may influence people’s attitudes toward a particular language. Thus far, the factors identified have included the literacy level of respondents and lack of gender-based differences (Murad, 2007). It is also interesting to observe that the findings of Chakrani (2011) and Pavlou and Zoumpalidis (2008) challenge some sociolinguistic concepts, such as the status and solidarity paradigm and the definition of a “speech community,” and demonstrate that the use of language cannot be categorized as black or white. Nevertheless, these factors were used to determine whether they similarly affect attitudes toward SA.

This study shares some similarities with other research because this study also explores attitudes of respondents from different academic institutions toward the use of SA. One survey used an online media platform, such as Survey Monkey, to administer questions to the target participants. This study also differs because it focuses on the use of SA in Saudi Arabian schools.

B. Research Question

The basic questions that guide this study are as follows: To what extent do academic staff members at Saudi Arabian universities in Riyadh use SA in academic and social gatherings? Does gender affect speakers’ preferences for SA in academic or social gatherings? The data were collected from the three leading Riyadh universities.

II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The survey was first distributed during the spring semester and then redistributed during the summer semester. The participants included 42 academic staff members who held varying positions from three different universities in Riyadh. Figure 1 summarizes the participants’ academic positions.

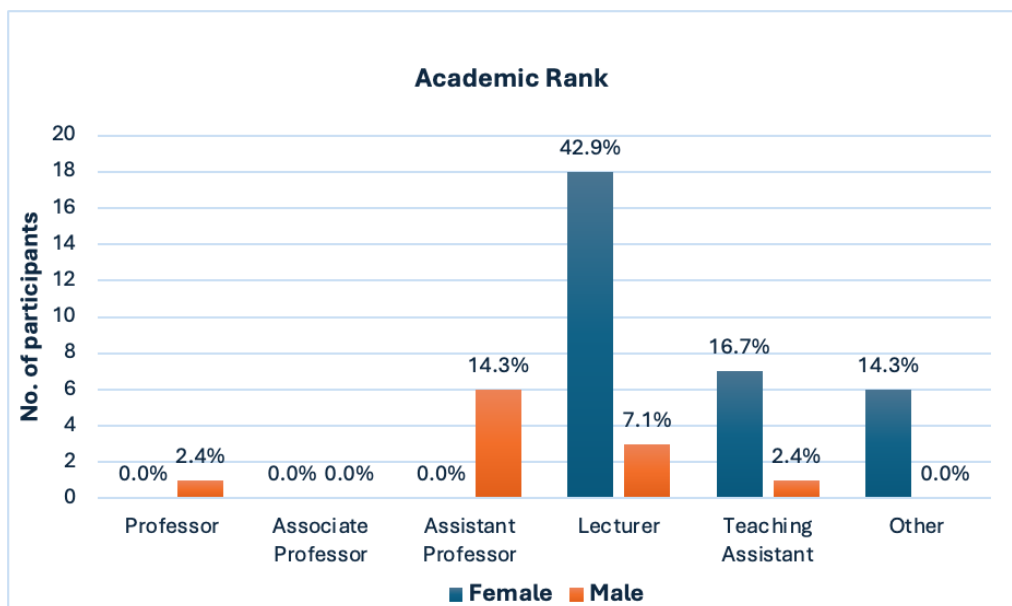


Figure 1. Academic Rank of Participants

The two largest segments consisted of 21 lecturers (50%) and 8 teaching assistants (19.0%). There were also six assistant professors and one male professor. The remaining participants held various positions, including English instructors, English teachers, and instructors. Most participants (50%) held master's degrees, 16.67% had doctoral degrees, and the rest held bachelor's degrees. A total of 19 participants obtained their highest level of education in Saudi Arabia, the remaining 23 from non-Arabic-speaking nations.

Demographically, more men had obtained a higher educational degree, with 63.64% holding doctoral degrees, while a majority of the women had obtained only a master's degree. Moreover, almost all the male respondents had graduated from non-Arabic-speaking countries, while a larger percentage of the female respondents had obtained their degrees in Saudi Arabia. Table 1 shows a cross-tabulation of these demographics, with gender as the primary category.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC CROSS-TABULATION

	Education						Total	Place of Study						Total
	Doctoral		Master's		Bachelor's			Saudi Arabia		Arabic-Speaking Country		Non-Arabic-Speaking Country		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Female	0	00.00%	17	54.84%	14	45.16%	31	18	58.06%	0	0.00%	13	41.94%	31
Male	7	63.64%	4	36.36%	0	0.00%	11	1	9.09%	0	0.00%	10	90.91%	11
Total	9	16.67%	21	50.00%	14	33.33%	42	19	45.24%	0	0.00%	23	54.76%	42

The majority of participants were under 30 years old (54.76%), whereas 40.48% were aged 30–39 and only 4.76% were aged 40–49. Of the 42 respondents who fully consented to participate in the survey, 31 were female and the rest were male. Figure 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

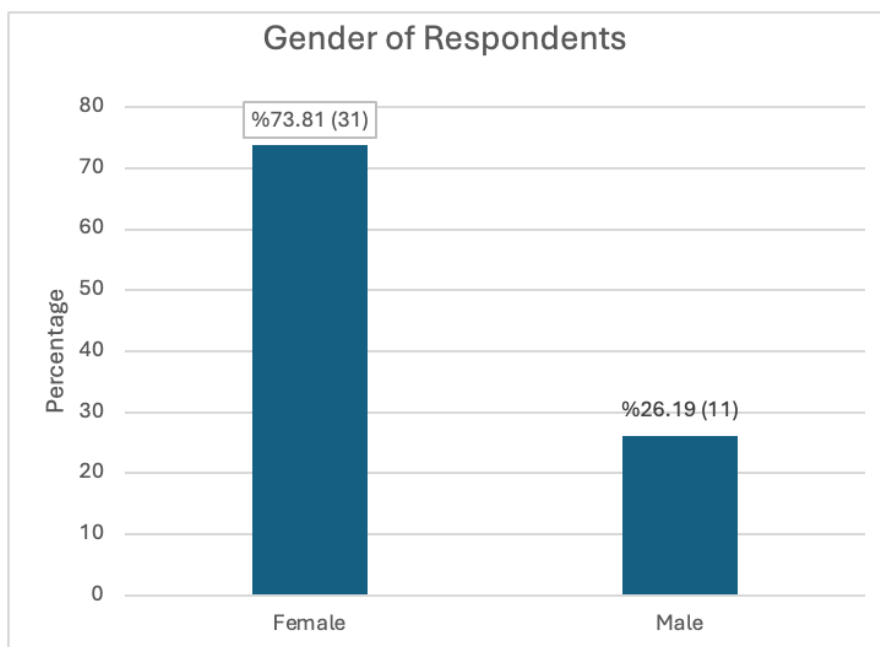


Figure 2. Gender Distribution of the Participants

A. Study Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adopted from Al-Abed Al-Haq (1998), which was distributed in English to assess attitudes toward standard and colloquial Arabic. The questionnaire was modified to suit the current social and educational environment in Saudi Arabia. While Al-Abed Al-Haq (1998) sought to link language attitude to practical issues of the promotion of SA and Arabicization, the present research solely emphasized the attitude toward SA versus colloquial Arabic. This redesign was intended to generate valid and reliable results. For example, the studies conducted by Al-Abed Al-Haq (1998) and Mizher and Al-Abed Al-Haq (2014) did not divide the study population by gender because faculty members in Jordanian universities are mostly male. Moreover, the staff is segregated by gender at the university level in Saudi Arabia, which is not the case in Jordan. Thus, in Saudi Arabia, women may have more opportunities for university-level jobs. Therefore, participants were asked to identify their gender in the survey. The purpose was to examine gender differences in beliefs among university teachers. Also, participants were requested to indicate where their highest degrees were obtained to determine whether studying abroad had influenced their perception of SA, because this is a prevalent belief among people in Saudi Arabia.

Two additional statements were added to the adapted survey: “*I use Arabic as the main language of instruction in the classes I teach*” and “*I only believe that SA is a beautiful language because it is the language of the Holy Qur’an.*” These statements are explained thoroughly in the Results and Analysis section of this study.

B. Limitations of the Study

Although the generalizability of the study results is limited to the participants and questionnaire items, the results are still reliable and valid because the participants share common features that reflect a considerable range of academic staff at different universities. Although all the participants are from universities located in Riyadh, they reflect the majority of Saudi Arabian academic staff because the capital hires professionals from all regions of the Kingdom. Since a majority (73.81%) of the respondents are women, the gender differences in SA language perceptions are mainly interpreted according to the proportion of respondents who agreed or disagreed with the survey statements. However, in the analysis, differences in perceptions by gender are highlighted, as well as their shared beliefs. The findings pertaining to gender are discussed in the conclusion section.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The questionnaire was analyzed from four major perspectives: Standard Arabic Status, Standard Arabic and Academia, Standard Arabic and Cultural Interaction, and Standard Arabic and Social Interaction.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGES AND RAW NUMBERS OF STANDARD ARABIC STATUS ITEMS

Question	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Mean
I use Arabic as the main language of instruction in the classes I teach.	5.00%	12.50%	17.50%	30.00%	35.00%	2.23
<i>n</i>	2	5	7	12	14	
I believe that Standard Arabic (SA) is generally superior to the colloquial.	20.51%	33.33%	15.38%	17.95%	12.82%	3.31
<i>n</i>	8	13	6	7	5	
I believe that SA is a beautiful language.	60.00%	27.50%	10.00%	2.50%	0.00%	4.45
<i>n</i>	24	11	4	1	0	
I only believe that SA is a beautiful language because it is the language of the Holy Qur’an.	27.50%	22.50%	5.00%	30.00%	15.00%	3.17
<i>n</i>	11	9	2	12	6	
I believe we must promote the usage of SA at all levels.	30.00%	35.00%	15.00%	15.00%	5.00%	3.70
<i>n</i>	12	14	6	6	2	
I wish I had a better level of performance in SA.	30.00%	37.50%	7.50%	17.50%	7.50%	3.65
<i>n</i>	12	15	3	7	3	

It was important at the outset to determine whether the respondents used Arabic as the main language of instruction in the classes they taught. This was necessary to determine whether this particular factor influenced (1) the respondents’ perceptions of SA and (2) their preferred language of communication in an academic setting, which could be either SA or a chosen language, such as English. According to the survey results, 26 of the respondents did not use SA as their main language of instruction in class, while 7 did use it and the remaining 7 were unsure. The majority used English or another language as the medium of class instruction. If the respondents taught French- or English-based classes, or even science-related classes, it would be necessary for them to teach in another language.

The results of the two studies reviewed indicated that a significant number of respondents believes that SA remains superior to colloquial Arabic. The results of this survey show similar trends. A total of 21 respondents agreed to some extent that SA remains superior to colloquial Arabic, while 12 to some extent disagreed. The rest were unsure. Notably, most of the 12 who did not believe that SA was superior to colloquial Arabic were female respondents with master’s degrees. None of the female respondents had yet obtained a PhD. Nevertheless, most men who had attained doctoral degrees agreed that SA was superior to colloquial Arabic. Despite the considerable number of respondents who did not believe SA was superior to colloquial Arabic, 35 respondents found SA to be a beautiful language, 24 of whom expressed strong sentiments on this topic. Only one participant did not believe in the beauty of SA as a language, while four did not express sentiments on the matter. However, 20 respondents reported that they only believed in the beauty of SA because it was the language of the Holy Qur’an.

Even though a majority of respondents did not use SA as their medium of instruction in class, the survey showed that 26 respondents believed in the need to promote the usage of SA at all levels. Only eight participants believed that SA should not be promoted, while another six did not have an opinion on the matter. Likewise, even though they used another language for class instruction, 27 reported that they actually wanted to perform better in SA. It is possible that the majority of respondents teach their respective classes in a language other than SA because most are not confident in their SA proficiency. If they become proficient in SA usage, there could be an increased tendency to use SA as a medium for class instruction when the class needs to be taught in another language, such as French. Only 10

participants did not want to perform better in SA, perhaps because they felt they were already performing well or did not see the need to improve their SA skills.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGES, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SA AND ACADEMIC ITEMS

Question	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Mean
I feel that I am not educated if I talk in Saudi colloquial in front of friends from other Arab countries.	2.70%	8.11%	10.81%	59.46%	18.92%	3.84
<i>n</i>	1	3	4	23	9	
I prefer to talk in SA with my Arab friends.	7.50%	25.00%	22.50%	25.00%	20.00%	2.75
<i>n</i>	3	10	9	10	8	
I believe that SA must be used at the university level to achieve maximum mutual understanding.	7.50%	47.50%	17.50%	22.50%	5.00%	3.3
<i>n</i>	3	19	7	9	2	
I believe that the level of competency in SA must be one of the criteria for appointment at a university.	10.00%	35.00%	30.00%	17.50%	7.50%	3.23
<i>n</i>	4	14	12	7	3	
I believe that incompetence in SA will lead to difficulties in academic performance.	5.26%	42.11%	18.42%	23.68%	10.53%	3.08
<i>n</i>	2	16	7	9	4	
I believe that professors must encourage students to use SA.	13.16%	47.37%	26.32%	5.26%	7.89%	3.53
<i>n</i>	5	18	10	2	3	
I believe we must use SA in conferences held at local and national levels.	42.11%	36.84%	10.53%	7.89%	2.63%	4.08
<i>n</i>	16	14	4	3	1	
I believe that there must be a political decree that requires Saudi universities to use SA.	7.89%	21.05%	34.21%	15.79%	21.05%	2.79
<i>n</i>	3	8	13	6	8	
I believe that professors must not be appointed to universities unless they translate their dissertations written in a foreign language into Arabic.	13.16%	15.79%	18.42%	21.05%	31.58%	2.58
<i>n</i>	5	6	7	8	12	
I believe that writing in SA or publishing an article in SA should be one of the requirements of academic promotion.	26.32%	36.84%	10.03%	15.79%	10.53%	3.53
<i>n</i>	10	14	4	6	4	
I believe that instructors who are competent in SA must be given priority over those who are not, for scholarships in training programs.	10.53%	34.21%	13.16%	26.32%	15.79%	2.97
<i>n</i>	4	13	5	10	6	

The survey inquired how respondents perceived themselves when using the Saudi colloquial. Thirty respondents said they do not feel uneducated (or less educated) even if they use the Saudi colloquial when among friends from other Arab nations, while only four believed that speaking the Saudi colloquial somehow degrades their educational status when among other Arab nationalities. In essence, only a few equate the ability to speak another language with high educational status. There is still a general belief that speaking Saudi colloquial, even with people of other Arab nationalities, does not affect educational attainment. In other words, one can speak colloquially in Saudi Arabia and maintain one's educational status. Despite this, 18 respondents still prefer not to speak SA with their Arab friends, as opposed to 13 who do choose to speak SA with Arab friends. It is likely that they choose to speak in other languages with Arab friends because they are more confident in their skills in languages other than SA.

To attain a maximum mutual understanding in the academic setting, 22 respondents said that SA should be used, whereas 11 said that it is not necessary. For these 11, mutual understanding can be achieved even without the use of SA. In terms of qualifying for a university position, 18 respondents believed that SA competency must be one of the criteria for university appointment, whereas 10 did not agree. Similarly, 18 believed that SA incompetence could lead to academic difficulties, while 13 said that it would not. A majority of respondents believed that teaching professionals should encourage students to use SA, while only five said that they should not. A total of 30 survey participants believed that SA must be used during conferences held at the local and national levels, with only 4 stating that this should not be the case. In terms of having a political decree requiring the use of SA in Saudi universities, there is an almost equal distribution of opinions: 11 say that such a decree should be enacted, whereas 14 say that it should not.

Regarding whether professorial appointments should depend on having dissertations translated to SA, 20 respondents disagreed and 11 agreed to some extent. Similarly, 24 respondents said that publishing an academic article in SA should be a requirement for academic promotion, whereas 10 said that this is not necessary. In addition, 17 respondents believed that instructors competent in SA must be given priority for scholarships in training programs over those who

are not competent in SA; however, 16 said that no priority should be given to SA-competent instructors for these scholarships. Perhaps this group believes that equal opportunity should be offered to all and that grants should not be awarded based on one’s SA competency. Nevertheless, respondents appeared to be almost equally divided on this issue.

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGES, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF SA AND CULTURAL INTERACTION ITEMS

Question	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Mean
I believe that students do not like seeing their professors talking in the colloquial language while giving a lecture.	5.26%	15.79%	36.84%	34.21%	7.89%	2.76
<i>n</i>	2	6	14	13	3	
I feel comfortable when talking to students in the colloquial language while giving a lecture.	15.79%	50.00%	18.42%	13.16%	2.63%	3.63
<i>n</i>	6	19	7	5	1	
I feel comfortable when talking to students in SA while giving a lecture.	13.16%	26.32%	18.42%	34.21%	7.89%	3.03
<i>n</i>	5	10	7	13	3	

Moreover, many respondents did not agree that students are *not* in favor of professors who speak colloquially when giving lectures. In other words, they believe that it is acceptable for students to speak colloquially during lectures. This is probably why the majority of respondents felt comfortable speaking to students in the colloquial while lecturing. However, 16 respondents did *not* feel comfortable talking to students in SA during lectures, whereas 15 did feel comfortable.

TABLE 5
MORE PERCENTAGES AND RAW NUMBERS OF OTHER SA AND CULTURAL INTERACTION ITEMS

Question	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Not sure (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Mean
I believe that the usage of SA is a distinctive feature of a well-educated person.	24.32%	43.24%	21.52%	8.11%	2.70%	3.78
<i>n</i>	9	16	8	3	1	
I believe that the importance of using SA is prominent when meeting Arabs from different Arab countries.	13.16%	31.58%	34.21%	18.42%	2.63%	3.34
<i>n</i>	5	12	13	7	1	
I believe it is necessary to speak in SA when I meet Arabs from different Arab countries.	8.11%	27.03%	29.73%	29.73%	5.41%	3.03
<i>n</i>	3	10	11	11	2	
I believe that if I happen to be in another Arab countries, I will talk in SA.	2.63%	36.84%	21.05%	23.68%	15.79%	2.87
<i>n</i>	1	14	8	9	6	
I feel uneasy when Arabs use their colloquial in the presence of other Arabs .	2.70%	16.22%	24.32%	48.65%	8.11%	2.57
<i>n</i>	1	6	9	18	3	

Regarding the perception of educational status, 25 respondents said that the ability to use SA was a distinctive feature of a well-educated person. Moreover, speaking SA has become prominent when meeting Arabs of other nationalities. However, there is little distinction between those who find it necessary to speak SA when meeting Arabs of other nationalities and those who do not. Similarly, there is little distinction between those who say they will speak SA when they are in another Arab country and those who say they will not. In terms of being open to other colloquial Arab languages, the majority are accepting of Arabs using their own colloquial in the presence of other Arabs.

TABLE 6
PERCENTAGES, MEANS, AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF STANDARD ARABIC AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Question	<i>Strongly agree (1)</i>	<i>Agree (2)</i>	<i>Not sure (3)</i>	<i>Disagree (4)</i>	<i>Strongly disagree (5)</i>	Mean
I feel comfortable when I speak colloquially while shopping.	40.54%	51.35%	5.41%	2.70%	0.00%	4.30
<i>n</i>	15	19	2	1	0	
I feel uneasy when I use SA within my local community.	27.03%	40.54%	16.22%	16.22%	0.00%	3.78
<i>n</i>	10	15	6	6	0	
If I use SA at home, I will be approved of by my family.	5.41%	21.62%	21.62%	32.43%	18.92%	2.62
<i>n</i>	2	8	8	12	7	
If I use SA in talking with my relatives, I will be approved of by them	5.41%	18.92%	24.32%	27.03%	24.32%	2.54
<i>n</i>	2	7	9	10	9	
I hope that my children will use SA.	32.43%	45.95%	10.81%	2.70%	8.11%	3.92
<i>n</i>	12	17	4	1	3	
I believe that mockery of SA in the media causes its unpopularity	21.62%	24.32%	27.03%	18.92%	8.11%	3.32
<i>n</i>	8	9	10	7	3	

A remarkable 34 respondents said they are comfortable speaking colloquial Arabic while shopping, and 25 feel uncertain about using SA in their respective local communities. Even at the familial level, the acceptance of SA is a concern; thus, many respondents said that when they use SA at home, it is not likely that their families will approve. The same is true of using SA when talking to relatives. Despite questionable approval from families and relatives, 29 respondents hoped that their children would use SA. Finally, more respondents believed that because SA has been mocked in the media, the language has become widely unpopular. Language is always mocked in the media, and when actors speak SA while playing a role, they are portrayed as being uptight or unmodern. Hence, the results indicate confusion regarding SA.

IV. CONCLUSION

In almost all questions, there was little distinction between the perspectives of female and male respondents, except for two points. One area in which there is a notable difference between female and male perspectives is the perception of the beauty of SA. It appears that more females believe SA is beautiful because it is the language of the Holy Qur'an. Figure 3 shows that 17 female respondents (58.62%) agreed with this statement versus 3 male (27.27%).

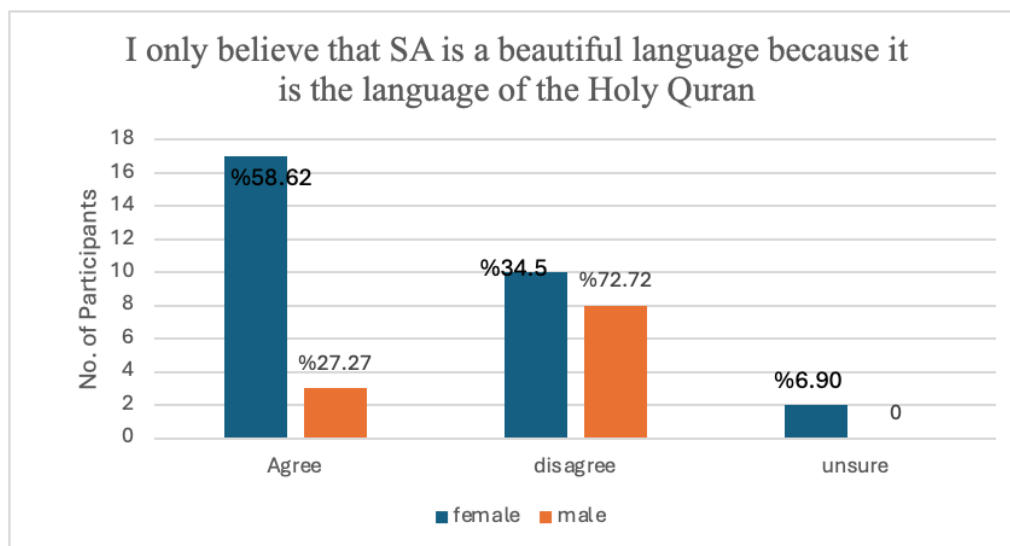


Figure 3. Female and Male Perceptions of the Beauty of SA as Connected to the Holy Qur'an

Thus, more women view and appreciate SA from a spiritual perspective than do men. They connect the beauty of the language to the Holy Qur'an, whereas men appreciate the beauty of the language outside of its religious use. Similarly, more women believe that professorial appointments should not depend on SA-translated dissertations. Perhaps women do not regard SA translation for dissertations as necessary or as a factor in professorial appointments.

Contrary to the findings of Bani-Khaled (2014), this study indicates an appreciation of SA. However, half of the respondents in this study found SA to be superior to colloquial, whereas the student respondents in Bani-Khaled's study expressed a belief in SA's obsolescence, unsuitability for the young, and public embarrassment with its use. In this study, only six (14.28%) respondents indicated uncertainty, while the rest expressed disagreement. Arising from this

appreciation is the belief that SA is pushed at all levels and individuals desire to increase their SA language competency. However, the perceptions of SA usage may vary because the respondents in Bani-Khaled's study were students, while this study included faculty members. Many respondents in Mizher and Al-Haq (2014) also viewed SA as a highly elevated language. In this study, the superiority of SA, the beauty of the language, the promotion of the usage of SA at all levels, and the desire to perform better in SA all received favor. We may conclude that faculty members at Balqa University in Jordan and those at the three Saudi universities in this study have the same regard for SA.

As Al-Asal and Smadi (2012) suggested the standardization of the Arabic language in the academic setting, similarly, a little over half of the respondents (52.38%) suggested the use of SA at the university level. The similarity in results might have arisen from the similar status of the respondents, that is, faculty members, in the two studies. On the one hand, this research aligns with Murad's (2007) results regarding the preference for SA and the seemingly increased preference for SA among respondents with higher educational levels. However, although this study highlighted gender differences in SA perception, Murad (2007) found no significant differences between genders.

This research appears to be consistent with a study of SA perceptions among university faculty members. Members of the academy expressed high regard for SA. This esteem suggests that SA is given greater value at higher educational levels, which is demonstrated by the general appreciation of SA as a beautiful language that is superior to colloquial Arabic. The findings also indicate the relevance of language as a criterion in the promotion and publication of articles in the academic careers of professors.

Meanwhile, variations in perceptions attributed to gender are observed in the finding that more women than men have a spiritual appreciation for SA. In addition, more men than women regard SA as superior to colloquial Arabic. Eight (72.72%) male participants were convinced that SA is superior to colloquial Arabic, while women's perception regarding this matter is more evenly distributed from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. A larger proportion of female respondents (15, 53.58%) provided answers ranging from *not sure* to *strongly disagree*. The beliefs of men and women vary on only a few points. As the majority of male respondents had higher educational attainments than did the females, higher educational attainment must be examined in future research as a distinguishing factor for the usage and perception of SA.

Furthermore, more men (9, 81.82%) who both *strongly agree* and *agree* push for the use of SA at all levels, while fewer women (17, 58.62%) who *strongly agree* and *agree* believe that SA should be used at all levels. Studying in non-Arabic-speaking countries may seem to have a greater influence on the appreciation of the language with regard to its wider application; however, this observation has not been empirically proven. This belief is further supported by most men's contention that SA should be used at the university level to promote mutual understanding. Also, more men who *strongly agreed* and *agreed* (9, 81.81%) desired to perform better in SA, while only 18 (62.12%) of the female respondents who *strongly agreed* and *agreed* wished to do so.

We conclude that although the use SA is diminishing as a daily language, people have a solid connection to it. On an emotional level, they still view it as a symbol of their identity. The participants understand the significance of mastering SA with the specific goal of fitting into a more esteemed group in the workplace. Although new forms of communication have been developed to bridge the gap between the diverse Arabic tongues, this study uncovers that some respondents still feel the need to use SA to communicate with different Arabic-speaking people.

After analyzing the data in this study, it is evident that SA and its different dialects complement one another. They go hand in hand because each has its own functions and purposes, and it is highly unlikely that one will supplant the others. While SA is used in written and formal speaking settings, colloquial Arabic is widely used in all social settings. It is time to desert the antiquated perspective that standards are superior to anything casual, and to begin to grasp the assortment and differing qualities of Arabic vernaculars and praise them.

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